

Phonics at Medlock

Aims and Expectations

At Co-Op Academy Medlock, we believe that all children have the right to receive high quality teaching and learning and we will strive to provide this at all times. Quality first teaching is essential for children making progress (physically, socially and emotionally as well as academically) and where appropriate, interventions will be put in place to support children's individual needs. Communicating with each other, the children and their parents, is crucial to ensuring the same strategies are used and continued in all areas where learning takes place. Well planned lessons and high quality resources, coupled with the before mentioned teaching and communication methods are imperative to ensuring children's next steps are built upon and therefore make as much progress as possible.

In all areas of the curriculum promoting oracy is at the heart of our teaching and learning. During all lessons and activities planned, there will be opportunities for children to verbally share their ideas with each other and the whole class / group, ask and answer questions and be encouraged to extend their responses.

We aim for all children to leave Medlock Primary School as confident, fluent and expressive readers who can talk eloquently about what they've read and give their opinions about a range of texts.

Starting Point

For teachers to teach phonics effectively they must firstly have a clear understanding of the speaking, listening and reading processes - the cognitive steps that need to happen and how they intertwine for a child to decode and in turn read fluently, a piece of a text. With this in mind, all staff are given the relevant training for them to do this effectively, as well as on-going support with sharpening their teaching of phonics.

The starting point for all teaching staff is the "Foundations For Phonics" document from the school's phonics scheme Little Wandle.

Scheme

As a school we follow the validated SSP (Systematic Synthetic Phonics) programme "Little Wandle, Letters and Sounds Revisited". The scheme's ethos heavily supports our school's ideology of repetitive and simple learning which focuses on what the children need and not overloading them cognitively yet having high expectations in terms of us teaching "all children to read" regardless of any social, economic or academic challenges.

The lessons follow clear planning which states which graphemes should be taught and when as well as lots of opportunities (both weekly and half termly) for revisiting previous learning. This activates prior learning and brings it to the forefront of the children's minds, as well as triggering and supporting long term working memory. By following this planning and using the assessment tools, our children are consistently taught phonics in the same manner from Nursery to Year 2 (and during keep up sessions where appropriate), ensuring that "no new learning" takes place in the forms of different activities, language or teaching styles, so children just have the new grapheme and /or phoneme to concentrate on each lesson.

Structure

The structure of Little Wandle lessons is as follows:

- Revisit and Review - Revisit previously taught GPCs, tricky words and high frequency words.
- Teach and Practise - Teach the new GPC, teach its pronunciation and any spelling rules. Children practise saying and reading the grapheme.
- Practise and Apply - Children practise and apply knowledge of new and previously taught GPCs to read sentences and write one, working on spelling previously taught tricky and high frequency words correctly.
- Grow The Code (Year 1 only) - Recap the alternative GPCs which have the same phoneme but different grapheme.

Daily phonics lessons (lasting between 15-30 minutes based on the children's stage and needs) will take place in the following year groups in whole class groups:

Nursery: Foundations For Phonics, moving the children on to Phase 2 when they're ready.

Reception: Phases 2, 3 4.

Year 1: A revisit half term followed by Phase 5.

Year 2: Little Wandle Spelling.

Children in all year groups from Reception to Year 2 will sit in rows facing the adult leading the session, with all resources facing them directly. Children should not be sat to the side of resources and therefore have to sit awkwardly, crane their necks etc to see the resources correctly. Where an additional adult is present in a phonics lesson, they should support the engagement of the children and any children identified to be struggling with that particular lesson's content. The adult should also note down, in the assessment and gaps book, which children and with which part of the lesson and/or reading skill are struggling so that they can be supported in a "keep up" session at a later time.

In all phonics lessons, staff will pronounce words and phonemes correctly and model using correct standard English. All staff will monitor the children's pronunciation of the phonemes taught and correct where necessary.

When More is Needed

In cases where children are identified as having additional needs which means they're working at a level much lower than their aged expected one, class teachers may decide to have them taught in a smaller group with an additional adult but still learning the same content as specified in the Little Wandle scheme. If this decision is made, it needs to be agreed by either the reading lead, deputy head or SENDCO first and the agreement needs to be shared with these 3 people. If this arrangement is agreed, the class teacher needs to ensure that they teach this group themselves at least once a week. Where teachers think that a smaller group might still not be suitable for any individual children, they should speak to the SENDCO and reading lead for further support.

Children who are identified as not understanding a lesson's content need to have an intervention given as soon as possible (ideally the same day) either on a 1-1 or small group basis. If this child/ children fall further behind more formal "keep up sessions" need to be given to the child/ children in the form of 1-1 or small group sessions, following the content and using the resources outlined in Little Wandle's "keep up" guides.

Children from Year 2 and upwards or children who are new to our school, who are identified as working below the ARE in phonics will be given regular "Catch Up" sessions in line with Little Wandle's guide.

Resources

All resources used in phonics lessons must be from Little Wandle, including phonics mats used at the tables and working wall posters and grapheme charts.

In Reception and Year 1, children work on whiteboards Monday-Thursday to allow them the mental freedom to make mistakes without being anxious about being correct at all times, as well as to support their level of enjoyment of the sessions. On Fridays, during the revisit session, children work in exercise books to give them an additional opportunity to practise pencil control and handwriting of the graphemes learnt that week.

Children will be given a reading book which they will use for 1-1 reading sessions in school and to practise their reading at home. The book will match the GPCS they are working on in school and up to turquoise level, will be picked with an adult.

Assessment

When new pupils attend our school, staff will carry out a "placement assessment" to assess where the child is up to. If the children are identified as working at below the level for their age, "keep up" or "catch up" (depending on the level of need) sessions will be put in place immediately.

Formal assessments are carried out each half term on all children. Any gaps identified are plugged immediately in the form of "keep up" sessions.

Informal assessment is carried out constantly, both in phonics lessons and any other times of the day when reading is taking place. Any gaps identified must be plugged straight away in the form of "keep up" sessions. It is imperative that staff act quickly and not wait until the formal assessments are carried out each half term to act on children not progressing at the expected level.

At the end of each academic year, teachers need to complete the phonics transition document and pass this on to their children's next teacher. This is so that the children's next teacher can implement the appropriate "keep up" or "catch up" sessions right from the start of the year and no lost learning time happens.

Reading Practise

To support the children's phonics lessons, they will also have 3x weekly reading practise sessions where books using the GPCs they have worked on that week will be used. See the reading policy for information on these sessions.

Supporting Parents

In autumn 2 (autumn 1's focus is how reading is taught across the school), Reception and Year 1 will hold a workshop for all parents and carers to explain how phonics is taught at our school and how it can be supported at home. The reading lead will run a workshop for targeted children in Years 2-6. In autumn 2, (to allow the children to have settled into school) Nursery 2 will run a workshop for their parents and carers explaining "Foundations For Phonics" and how this can be supported at home.

Parents and carers will be given access to Big Cat's online reading catalogue so that they can access all books covered in school, at home.

Before becoming fluent readers, all children will take home a decodable book which matches their phonics level. They will be able to read this book with at least 95% accuracy and will always be chosen by a member of staff with the child.