



Phonics & Early Reading Policy

Intent

At St Mary's Catholic Primary School, we are passionate about ensuring that every child becomes a confident, fluent reader and writer. We recognise that early reading is the cornerstone of academic success and lifelong learning. Aligned with the DfE Reading Framework (2023), we prioritise decoding, fluency, and reading for pleasure from the earliest stages.

To support this, we implement **Monster Phonics—a DfE-validated systematic synthetic phonics programme**—across our Early Years and Key Stage 1 settings.

Monster Phonics is distinctive in its multisensory approach, using colour-coding, character cues, and engaging visuals to make phonics instruction accessible, inclusive, and memorable for all learners.

This method not only supports decoding skills but also builds enthusiasm and enjoyment around learning to read. We are committed to fostering strong early reading foundations that empower pupils to thrive across the curriculum and beyond.

Our aims:

- ✓ Deliver high-quality, consistent phonics teaching daily.
- ✓ Enable all pupils to develop secure phonics knowledge and fluency.
- ✓ Ensure early identification and support for struggling readers.
- ✓ Foster a lifelong love of reading.
- ✓ Support families to reinforce learning at home.

Implementation

Nursery Programme

Our nursery phonics provision is not about introducing formal reading too early—it is about laying the vital foundations that ensure children are ready to thrive when they begin phonics instruction in Reception.

Based on 'Phase 1' phonics, the Monster Phonics Nursery Programme supports early literacy by fostering rich, engaging learning experiences. Its flexible approach ensures these experiences are developmentally appropriate and play based. It is in line with Development Matters, Birth to 5 Matters, and the EYFS statutory framework, and is part of our broader commitment to early language and literacy development.

The programme is designed to:

- Develop children's phonological and phonemic awareness, including rhyme, alliteration, syllable segmentation, and sound identification.
- Nurture a love of stories and rhymes.
- Boost confidence in speaking and the ability to express ideas clearly.
- Improve listening skills and conversational turn-taking, essential for classroom readiness.



Key features of our implementation include:

- Providing activities that build focused listening and attention, including oral blending and sound discrimination.
- Prioritising rich, high-quality vocabulary and back-and-forth conversational opportunities across all areas of provision.
- Sharing high-quality, stories, nursery rhymes and action rhymes to support rhythm, memory, and language play.

By establishing these early foundations, we ensure that children are well prepared to begin learning grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) and blending in Reception. Research consistently shows that strong phonological and phonemic awareness in the early years are among the strongest predictors of future reading success. Through this carefully structured but playful approach, we help close learning gaps before they appear, giving every child the opportunity to succeed from the very start.

Implementation

School Programme (Reception to Year 2)

Daily Teaching

Phonics is taught with full fidelity to the Monster Phonics progression, ensuring clarity, consistency, and secure development for all pupils, including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). By following the programme's carefully sequenced structure, we provide every child with the best possible start in reading.

Daily Monster Phonics lessons are delivered from Reception through to Year 2, using a highly structured and systematic synthetic phonics approach. This consistent delivery creates a predictable and secure learning environment, which promotes pupil confidence, engagement, and success. Using a single, unified programme across all classes ensures that phonics instruction is clear and coherent, avoiding confusion that can arise from the use of multiple methods. This shared approach enables pupils to build a strong and connected understanding of phonics, forming the foundation for fluent, independent reading.

Skills are taught in a systematic, cumulative sequence, with each lesson building directly on previously taught content. This allows children to move through the stages of reading development with confidence and accuracy, deepening their understanding at each step.

Lessons are designed to be engaging, well-paced, and responsive, supporting all pupils in mastering key reading skills, including:

- Grapheme–phoneme correspondences (GPCs)
- Blending and segmenting for reading and spelling
- Decoding fluently and accurately

This structured and consistent approach ensures that all pupils, regardless of starting point, are given the tools they need to become proficient and enthusiastic readers.



We follow the Monster Phonics progression:

Reception Progression Map

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
TEAM 1	h, o, l, p	l, n	ph, ig	o, c, k, ck	e, at	h, s	z, z, z, z	z, z, z, z	z, z, z, z	z, z, z, z	z, z, z, z	z, z, z, z
TEAM 2	ow	cc	ur	al	or	oo	oo	igh	cl	ck	ck	ck
TEAM 3	cvcc	ccvc	cvc-	cvc-	ccvcc	ccvcc	cvc-	cvc-	ccvcc	ccvcc	cvc-	cvc-

Year 1 Progression Map

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
TEAM 1	ff, aa, ee, oo, oo	ch, sh, th, ph	ss, ss, ss, ss	ll, ll, ll, ll	tt, tt, tt, tt	pp, pp, pp, pp	kk, kk, kk, kk	gg, gg, gg, gg	zz, zz, zz, zz	xx, xx, xx, xx	yy, yy, yy, yy	ww, ww, ww, ww
TEAM 2	igh	ck	ck	ck	ck	ck	ck	ck	ck	ck	ck	ck
TEAM 3	ccvcc	ccvcc	cvc-	cvc-	ccvcc	ccvcc	cvc-	cvc-	ccvcc	ccvcc	cvc-	cvc-

Year 2 Progression Map

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
TEAM 1	qu, qu, qu, qu	qu, qu, qu, qu	qu, qu, qu, qu	qu, qu, qu, qu	qu, qu, qu, qu	qu, qu, qu, qu	qu, qu, qu, qu	qu, qu, qu, qu	qu, qu, qu, qu	qu, qu, qu, qu	qu, qu, qu, qu	qu, qu, qu, qu
TEAM 2	qu	qu	qu	qu	qu	qu	qu	qu	qu	qu	qu	qu
TEAM 3	ccvcc	ccvcc	cvc-	cvc-	ccvcc	ccvcc	cvc-	cvc-	ccvcc	ccvcc	cvc-	cvc-

Intervention & Support

Regular and rigorous assessment underpins our phonics provision. We are committed to ensuring that every child makes strong progress in early reading, and we use ongoing formative assessment to closely monitor each pupil's development, identifying gaps in learning as soon as they emerge.

Assessment outcomes are used to:

- Inform and adapt daily teaching, ensuring lessons are tailored to the needs of the class and individuals.
- Track the progress of all pupils, including vulnerable groups and those with SEND.
- Guide same-day interventions and rapid catch-up sessions, so that misconceptions are addressed immediately and children can continue learning without falling behind.

Our approach is designed to be both proactive and responsive, ensuring that all children receive the targeted support they need, at the right time. Teachers use precise assessment data to plan tailored interventions, helping each child to consolidate key phonics knowledge and skills with accuracy and confidence.

This model of continuous assessment and intervention ensures that all learners are supported effectively and without delay. It enables us to maintain strong momentum in learning while promoting equity in outcomes across the cohort, so that no child is left behind in their journey to becoming a fluent and independent reader.

Teaching Reading using Decodable Books

Children take part in three reading practice sessions per week, working in small, adult-led groups to develop essential reading skills. These sessions are a core component of our phonics implementation and are designed to provide structured, focused, and meaningful reading experiences.

We use Monster Phonics decodable books, carefully matched to each child's secure phonic knowledge using the Monster Phonics Placement Procedure Chart. This ensures that all children read texts that are fully decodable for them, enabling success, fluency, and confidence.

Each session focuses on one specific reading skill, to avoid cognitive overload and to embed learning effectively:

- Decoding – applying phonics knowledge to accurately read words
- Prosody – reading with expression, intonation, and understanding
- Comprehension – using rich, interactive discussion to explore the meaning of the text

Children read each book three times across the week. This repetition supports the development of phonemic awareness, vocabulary acquisition, comprehension, and positive reading behaviours. Through this repeated exposure, children build fluency and deepen their understanding of texts.



All sessions are delivered by fully trained adults, ensuring high-quality instruction and the ability to respond to individual needs within the group. This consistent, focused support helps to close gaps quickly and ensures that every child has the opportunity to succeed.

By Year 2, we ensure that all pupils have completed the core decodable reading programme, equipping them with the skills and confidence required to access a broader range of texts as they transition into more advanced reading.

Targeted support is also prioritised for children who need additional help, including those with limited access to reading materials or adult support at home. These pupils are given additional one-to-one or small group reading time to develop fluency, vocabulary, and confidence.

Home Reading

We recognise the vital role that families play in supporting early reading development. To strengthen the home–school partnership and reinforce the learning that takes place in school, we provide a carefully planned home reading offer that includes both decodable reading books and high-quality sharing books.

- Decodable reading practice books are sent home regularly and allow children to practise and consolidate decoding skills independently, promoting success and confidence in front of family members.
- Alongside these, we also send home a variety of high-quality children’s literature for shared reading experiences. These ‘read-aloud’ books are designed to foster a love of reading, broaden vocabulary, and enrich language exposure beyond what the child can decode independently.

To empower parents and carers to support reading at home, we offer a range of parent engagement opportunities through workshops and online information sessions.

By aligning home reading with each child’s current phonics stage and providing enjoyable shared reading opportunities, we ensure that all families are included in the reading journey. This dual approach supports both technical reading development and a lifelong love of books.

Impact

Assessment

Assessment is central to the success of our phonics and early reading provision. We implement a robust and responsive system of formative and summative assessment to track progress, identify learning gaps early, and ensure that no child is left behind on their journey to becoming a confident, fluent reader.

Formative assessment is embedded in daily classroom practice and is used to:

- Monitor pupil understanding during and after phonics lessons
- Identify children who require same-day intervention or additional support with specific grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) or tricky words
- Inform the adaptation of teaching in real time, ensuring children receive timely reinforcement and repeated practice as needed

Teachers assess through observations, oral responses, and short review tasks, using these insights to guide their instruction and address individual needs throughout the school day.



Summative assessments are conducted regularly using the Monster Phonics assessment tracker across all year groups. These provide:

- Heatmaps and summary reports for individuals, classes, and cohorts.
- Insight for teachers, Reading Leaders, and senior leaders to analyse progress and identify specific gaps.
- Evidence to guide targeted interventions and adjust teaching strategies.
- Data to support strategic monitoring by SLT, ensuring that trends in attainment are addressed and that vulnerable learners receive appropriate support.

Children who are not meeting expected milestones are reassessed every three weeks to monitor their response to intervention. Placement assessments are used to accurately baseline new starters and ensure they are supported at the right level from the outset.

Statutory Assessment – Year 1 Phonics Screening Check

Children in Year 1 sit the national Phonics Screening Check, which assesses their ability to decode using GPC knowledge. Children who do not meet the expected standard resit the check in Year 2. To prepare children and track readiness:

- We use both formative classroom assessments and scheduled summative assessments to evaluate progress.
- Data is used to ensure pupils are on track and to implement additional support where necessary.
- Regular tracking allows teachers and leaders to monitor cohort performance and adjust planning or provision strategically.

Evaluating Impact

The impact of our phonics and early reading approach is measured not only through formal assessments, but also through what children can remember, apply, and articulate in both familiar and unfamiliar reading contexts. We observe progress in pupils' confidence, fluency, and comprehension, as well as in their ability to approach increasingly complex texts with independence and understanding.

Our comprehensive assessment framework, combined with high-quality, structured instruction and targeted intervention, ensures that all pupils are supported to make strong and sustained progress. This ongoing cycle of assessment, responsive teaching, and strategic support allows us to address individual needs in a timely and effective manner.

By remaining focused on inclusion and equity, we are committed to closing attainment gaps and ensuring that every child develops the phonics skills necessary for fluent, lifelong reading.

Review of Policy

This policy is reviewed annually by the Reading Lead and SLT, reflecting changes to statutory guidance, pupil needs, programme updates, and school context.