



St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Phonics Overview and Policy

Intent

At St Thomas More, we believe every child deserves success right from the start. Reading is the gateway to all learning, and we put it at the heart of our curriculum.

Our intent is to:

- Ensure all children develop secure phonics knowledge, enabling them to become fluent readers and confident writers.
- Provide an inclusive, ambitious and systematic phonics curriculum so no child is left behind.
- Identify and support children who need extra help quickly, through high-quality interventions.
- Foster a love of reading that extends beyond phonics into a lifelong passion for books.

Rooted in our Catholic ethos, we value each child as a unique individual and seek to develop their God-given potential through the joy of reading.

Implementation

We follow Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised, a DfE-validated systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) programme.

Lesson structure

- Daily phonics sessions: every child in Reception and Year 1 takes part in a fast-paced, interactive phonics lesson (approx. 30 minutes).
- Each lesson follows the structure: Review → Teach → Practise → Apply → Review.
- Children revisit previous learning, are taught a new grapheme or tricky word, practise blending/segmenting, apply knowledge in reading/writing, and consolidate at the end.
- Keep-up sessions mirror the structure of the main lesson but are shorter, more intensive, and highly targeted.

Reading Practice Sessions

- Children read in small groups three times a week with an adult.
- Decodable books are closely matched to their secure phonic knowledge.
- Each session has a focus: decoding, prosody (expression), and comprehension.
- Books are then taken home to practise, alongside a sharing book chosen for pleasure and vocabulary development.

Tricky words

Alongside grapheme–phoneme correspondences (GPCs), children learn *tricky words*. These are words that cannot be fully decoded using phonics at the early stages (e.g. *the, said, was*).

Children are taught to read these by sight while also recognising the phonically regular parts.

Over time, as their phonic knowledge develops, many tricky words become decodable.

Progression

Nursery – Foundations for Phonics

Term	Focus	Details
Autumn 1	Rhyme Time	Daily nursery rhymes, rhythm, and listening games.
Autumn 2 onwards	Tuning into Sounds	Short, multisensory sessions to develop phonological awareness and oral blending.

Reception

Term	Graphemes	Tricky words
Autumn 1	s a t p i n m d g o c k c k e u r h b f l	is, I, the
Autumn 2	ff ll ss j v w x y z zz qu ch sh th ng nk	put, pull, full, as, and, has, his, her, go, no, to, into, she, push, he, of, we, me, be
Spring 1	ai ee igh oa oo ar or ur ow oi ear air er	was, you, they, my, by, all, are, sure, pure
Spring 2	Review Phase 3 (longer words, double letters, -ing, compounds)	—
Summer 1	Short vowels with adjacent consonants, longer words, compound words, suffixes (-ing, -ed, -est)	said, so, have, like, some, come, love, do, were, here, little, says, there, when, what, one, out, today
Summer 2	Phase 3 long vowels with adjacent consonants, longer words, suffixes (-ed, -er, -est)	—

Year 1

Term	Graphemes	Tricky words
Autumn 1	Review Phases 2–4. Phase 5: ay, ou, oy, ea	Review of Phases 2–4 tricky words
Autumn 2	ir, ie, ue, u, o, i, a, e, a-e, i-e, o-e, u-e, e-e, ew, ie (/ee/), aw	their, people, oh, your, Mr, Mrs, Ms, ask, could, would, should, our, house, mouse, water, want
Spring 1	y (/ee/), ea (/e/), wh, oe, ow (/oa/), g (/j/), ph, le, al, c (/s/), ve, ey, ui, ou (/oo/)	any, many, again, who, whole, where, two, school, call, different, thought, through, friend, work
Spring 2	or (/ur/), oul, are, au, tch, ture, al (/ar/), a (/or/), ear (/air/), wr, sc, ch (/c/), ch (/sh/), ze	once, laugh, because, eye
Summer 1	Phonics Screening Check preparation	—
Summer 2	eigh, aigh, ey, ea (/ai/), kn, gn, mb, ere, eer, su (/zh/), dge, y (/i/), ge, ti, ci, si (/sh/), ore, oar, augh, our	busy, beautiful, pretty, hour, move, improve, parents, shoe

Year 2

- Children consolidate knowledge of graphemes and tricky words.
- The focus is on fluency, spelling patterns, and comprehension.
- Pupils who did not meet the expected standard in the Year 1 Phonics Screening Check are supported and retake in June.

Interventions

Daily Keep-up

- Children identified through daily assessment receive immediate support.
- Keep-up sessions are delivered either 1:1 or in small groups and follow the same structure as the main lesson.
- Flowcharts guide staff in Reception and Year 1 to target specific needs.

SEND Graduation Approach

- Children with additional needs access a bespoke version of Phonics.
- Sessions are short, multisensory and carefully scaffolded, focusing on sound awareness and oral blending.

Rapid Catch-up

- Used for children in Key Stage 2 or older pupils who are not yet fluent readers.
- A fast-paced, structured programme covering all key GPCs and tricky words.

Assessment

- Daily Assessment for Learning within lessons.
- Half-termly phonics assessments inform planning and interventions.
- Reading books are matched to each child's secure phonic knowledge, ensuring success.

Phonics Screening Check:

- In June of Year 1, all children take the statutory check (40 words: a mix of real and pseudo-words).
- This confirms whether they have secure phonic decoding.
- Children who do not meet the expected standard receive additional support and retake in Year 2.

Staff training & monitoring

- All staff receive regular CPD to ensure fidelity to the Little Wandle scheme.
- Leaders monitor teaching through observations, coaching and book looks to ensure consistency.
- Staff work collaboratively to share best practice and maintain high standards.

Parent engagement

We know children make the best progress when school and home work together. At St Thomas More, we support parents through:

- Parent workshops in Reception and Year 1, introducing Little Wandle and how phonics is taught.
- Access to online resources and videos from Little Wandle to model pronunciation of phonemes and blending strategies.
- Guidance on how to read at home, including the use of decodable books (matched to children's secure phonics) and sharing books (to develop a love of reading).
- Regular updates via newsletters and the school website.

Love of reading

Phonics is the foundation, but we also prioritise developing a reading culture:

- Daily story time to expose children to a rich vocabulary and diverse literature.
- Opportunities to read for pleasure across the curriculum.
- Strong links with parents so reading is celebrated at home as well as in school.

Impact

As a result of our phonics teaching, children at St Thomas More will:

- Read fluently and confidently by the end of Key Stage 1.
- Apply phonics knowledge in writing, spelling accurately or phonetically.
- Develop comprehension and a love of reading that lasts a lifetime.
- Be fully prepared to access the wider curriculum with confidence.

For support at home, visit the [Little Wandle Parent Page](#).