



# Phonics at Barrow Hedges Primary School

## **Rationale**

At Barrow Hedges Primary School we believe that Phonics is at the heart of our children's education. Phonics is the key that unlocks the door for children to become successful readers and writers. We have a responsibility to ensure that children have a clear understanding of phonics in order to fulfil their potential throughout their education and wider life-long experiences.

We aim to equip our children with the skills to read fluently by segmenting and blending unfamiliar words using their phonic knowledge. A child who is immersed in words and language from a young age is more likely to develop a love of reading. We at Barrow Hedges believe this journey begins in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and continues throughout their time with us at school. We constantly strive for exceptional quality in teaching and learning to ensure that all children leave our school as confident, fluent readers and writers.

## **Intent**

At Barrow Hedges Primary School, we acknowledge and celebrate that each child is unique and that they learn in different ways. We provide an engaging, interesting and creative Phonics Learning Journey that allows children to develop their knowledge, skills and abilities to their full potential.

We immerse children in Phonics and early reading from the moment they start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. At Barrow Hedges we have created our own robust systematic synthetic phonics programme using Pearson's Bug Club Phonics progression of sounds and decodable books. We prioritise the importance of teaching phonics by starting with Phase 1 in Nursery and consolidating Phase 6 spelling patterns in Year 3. We have created a phonics progression planner and individual year group 'Road Maps' which clearly show our learning journey of Phonics. We believe phonics does not stop once children are confident from Phase 1 to Phase 6, it is a continuous journey our children continue to develop throughout their time with us in Key Stage 2.

We use a multisensory approach to enable our children to know more and remember more by bringing the learning to life through our use of songs, stories, videos and physical props to enhance our teaching. Our programme enables children to make links to previously learnt knowledge and see the similarities and differences between the alternative spellings of the same sound. For example, 'ai' as 'rain' and 'ay' as in 'play'.

We have high expectations for all children, ensuring no child is left behind and we make sure children have a comprehensive understanding of words alongside their decoding skills to enable children to have high levels of comprehension skills, alongside their fluency and confidence in reading. We promote the love of reading through our learning environments; with inviting book corners, daily teacher read stories, use a range of visual and stimulating props and we encourage children to select books to read for pleasure. We promote children's independence in their reading skills, whilst ensuring children make accelerated progress from their starting point regardless of their ability or background. We aim to inspire children to take risks in their learning by encouraging them to read for pleasure and not to be put off by a book which they think might be too tricky for them. We encourage children to be resilient and persevere when they come across unfamiliar words, use their phonic knowledge to decode the word and make links to prior learning.

Further information can be found on our Phonics Learning Journey Road Maps and our Skills Progression document on our school website.

## Implementation

By creating our own robust systematic synthetic phonics programme using Pearson's Bug Club Phonics progression of sounds and decodable books, we ensure we cater for all learning styles within our teaching. Our phonics teaching helps support our children to know more and remember more. Teachers also support their phonics lessons through using a exciting and engaging resources to bring the learning to life. We also use Bug Club as an online reading resource and have purchased a wide range of Bug Club books to enable our reading programme to be phonically decodable and accessible to all children. We believe it is important that children take home a reading book which addresses the sounds they are learning in their phonics lessons. Children should be able to read their book for pleasure at home and will be able to decode words through using their segmenting and blending skills when coming across unknown words. At school during guided reading, teachers give children a harder book that is slightly out of reach to what the child could achieve on their own, in order to challenge and stretch their ability. We expose children to different types of texts and new vocabulary as we want to immerse children in language rich texts.

In Nursery, the seven areas of Phase 1 phonics is explicitly taught once a week in key worker time and is constantly promoted throughout the learning environment as part of our continuous provision. This includes: environmental sounds, instrumental sounds, body percussion, rhythm and rhyme, alliteration, voice sounds and oral segmenting and blending. From Reception to Year 3 children are streamed across their year group to support and challenge every child's phonics ability. Teachers skillfully question children in order to stretch and deepen children's thinking. Regular assessments are carried out to ensure the pace of learning is correct.

Structured lessons are taught daily from Reception and Year 1, four times a week for Year 2 and twice a week for Year 3. Lessons always follow the same teaching sequence of revisit/review, teach, practise and apply for each new sound. All staff consistently use phoneme buttons and phoneme lines to teach children which sounds are single sounds, digraphs, trigraphs and split-digraphs.

Interventions and tutoring is put in place for children who may need extra support to ensure their phonic knowledge is at the expected standard in their year group. All staff know who the lowest 20% of readers are in their class. Teachers listen to children read during a reading assembly once a week. We feel this develops children's self-confidence and self-esteem and provides a good opportunity for children to showcase their phonic skills and work on any areas for development whilst receiving instant verbal feedback. We also have a specialist teacher of Phonics who uses 'Soundwrite' to support children with identified learning needs. Children receive different reading books to take home to ensure these books are correctly pitched for their learning. These particular children have been identified by the class teacher from their on-going assessments. It is important to recognise that the teaching of phonics may not work for all children, therefore, this is why we use 'Soundwrite' as an alternative phonics approach. With specialist phonics teaching, our identified children make good progress and build upon their existing knowledge and deepen their understanding.

Staff CPD is ran by the Phonics Leaders and English Leader. Staff attend up to date training courses and share all relevant information throughout the school.

Parents are invited to attend a 'Reading Evening' in Reception and another information evening in Year 1 about the 'Phonics Screening Check'. These evening's focus specifically on the teaching and learning of phonics, with clear strategies to support segmenting and blending skills. Parents are also informed about the importance of using pure sounds and the implications this can have on their child's writing if not taught correctly. Parents are exposed to our teaching practices in early reading and given the opportunity to play the games and activities that we use at school to teach the children.

## **Impact**

Phonics at Barrow Hedges Primary School forms the basis of our early reading strategy. We know that children enjoy their phonics learning journey with us at Barrow Hedges, as children read books for pleasure and have confidence to explain the different texts they have read. Children also transfer their phonic knowledge competently in their writing as they know more and remember more. Because of our comprehensive planning and implementation of phonics, the school consistently achieves above the national average in the Year 1 Phonics screening. Children who achieve the Early Learning Goal in reading at the end of Reception are equipped for the future challenges across the curriculum.

Children make good or better progress from their starting points, regardless of their age, gender, ability or background. Phonics is valued as an essential tool for early reading and writing at all levels of the school. Children from Nursery through to Year 6 are able to use their relevant phonics skills and explain their importance when it comes to reading and writing. Parents have a clear understanding of how phonics is taught throughout the school and the impact it is having on their children by referring to our Phonics Learning Journey Road Maps, Skills Progression document and information evenings. Parents also have a deeper understanding of how to further support their child/ren when learning phonics at home.

Phonics teaching and learning at Barrow Hedges is clear and concise, using a synthetic and systematic approach to teaching phonics. As a result, children practise and apply their segmenting and blending skills, expand their knowledge of phonemes in their writing, read books that are phonetically decodable and develop their fluency and comprehension skills.

Formal learning walks allow the Phonics leaders to give year group teams feedback and ensure consistency is maintained throughout our phonics learning journey. Regular, informal conversations between staff mean that we as a school are continually promoting the importance of phonics, and as a result, all staff teaching phonics, consistently use the correct vocabulary, teaching sequence and are confident to plan effectively to meet all children's needs.

The impact of Barrow Hedges' implementation is that by the time children leave us in Year 6, they are confident and fluent readers with a wide range of reading experiences, enabling them to develop their love of reading and do not feel overwhelmed when they come across unknown words. Children show they have a confident and secure phonics knowledge through their application of phonemes in their written work and are equipped with all of the skills necessary to develop their wider potential in their academic education.