



# Early reading policy

**Last updated by senior leaders**

June 2021

**Last reviewed by external consultant**

June 2021

**Next review due**

June 2022

## Early reading at St. John's Preparatory School

Through consistent, expert application of a rigorous phonics curriculum from the very start of children's education in the early years, we ensure pupils develop the skills and knowledge they need to develop as confident readers with a love of books.

To achieve this, we ensure that:

- reading is prioritised to allow pupils to access the full curriculum
- there is a sharp focus on ensuring that younger children gain the phonic knowledge and language comprehension necessary to read and write
- a rigorous, sequential approach to the reading curriculum develops pupils' fluency, confidence and enjoyment in reading
- at all stages, reading attainment is assessed and gaps are addressed quickly and effectively for all pupils, including those with SEND
- at the early stages of learning to read, reading materials are closely matched to the learners' phonic knowledge.

### Phonics programme

Our chosen phonics scheme is *Letters and Sounds*. Children receive a daily phonics lesson from Pre-Prep. (nursery) to Lower Transitus (year 2), stringently following this scheme.

### Reading scheme

Our chosen reading scheme is *Rocket Phonics* as it corresponds closely with our phonics scheme. We also have access to the entire *Reading Planet* online library. Children are sent home with a *Rocket Phonics* book once a week that carefully matches the phase they are working within and uses the sounds they have learnt so far to ensure they experience blending success at home. These books also include comprehension questions and a parent guide at the front, pointing out tricky words and the sounds to focus on. In addition, they can also be assigned books from the *Comet Kids* and *Galaxy* range, within the same reading level, to offer breadth and variation in their home reading. Teachers read 1:1 with all children, a minimum of twice a week. Any children identified as working behind expectations are read with daily.

### Reading

Our literacy curriculum is based around engaging and age-appropriate children's texts. In the EYFS, reading is at the heart of the curriculum, with each week planned around a 'book of the week' that links to the current topic. We also send home 'reading for pleasure' books in addition to our reading scheme books. All teachers read to their children every day, modelling enthusiasm for reading and sharing a variety of inspiring children's fiction. We have a popular weekly book club which is well attended by children in the lower school. We are in the process of improving our classroom reading areas even further and have recently updated our selection of independent reading books in the lower school to include a greater variety of fiction and non-fiction, poetry books and books that celebrate diversity.

## **Spelling**

Children learn to encode, using the sounds that they have been taught, throughout phases 2–5 of *Letters and Sounds*. At this stage, children should be able to spell words phonemically although not always correctly. In Lower Transitus, children begin phase 6 of *Letters and Sounds*, becoming more fluent readers and more accurate spellers. Therefore, it is appropriate at this point for our children to start our whole-school spelling programme, following *Headstart Primary Spelling*. This scheme explores spelling patterns in line with phase 6, and children are introduced to taking spelling lists home and participating in weekly spelling tests.

## **Parent workshops**

All parents are invited to a phonics workshop in the first term of Prep. 1. This is a practical workshop where parents are introduced to our phonics scheme and taught the basics. They are introduced to our reading scheme and taught how to support their child at home with phonics and their home readers. Children have reading records to enable staff and parents to exchange information about individual children's reading progress. Parents are regularly kept informed of their child's phonics progress through termly consultations and reports.

## **Staff training**

We work with a senior literacy consultant, Hilary Horton. She comes in regularly to lead phonics training, observe teaching and offer individual feedback, plan phonics with individual teachers and model lessons where appropriate. We also regularly observe each other teach phonics as experts within our phases.

## **Phonics assessment**

Each child has an individual *Letters and Sounds* assessment booklet assigned to them in Prep. 1 that then goes up with them as they move through the phases, ensuring smooth transitions. These can be used at the end of a phase, or more often if necessary, to ensure teachers identify gaps in individual knowledge and teach to these.

## **Phonics trackers**

We track children at the end of each half term. These trackers enable us to monitor progress and identify any children that are falling behind to ensure timely interventions and enable children to catch up with their peers.

## **Timely interventions**

Any children that are working behind the expected phase receive extra phonics teaching in small, supported groups. This usually takes place daily between 8–9 am. They also receive daily additional 1:1 reading with their class teacher. Any child working below expectations and not rapidly catching up with their peers will have individual support plans in place.

## **Phonics screening check**

All pupils in Prep.2 participate in the national phonics screening check, which is carried out in June each year. We consistently aim for 100% of our pupils to pass this phonics screening. However, any pupil who does not attain the required standard will repeat the screening check in Lower Transitus.

## **See also**

- Early years policy
- Handwriting policy
- SEND and EAL policy
- Subject policies
- Curriculum policy.