Reading at Worth Valley Primary School

2-year provision and nursery

Research underscores the importance of early exposure to sounds, rhymes and phonics for literacy development in young children. In both our 2-year provision and nursery settings, children are introduced to phonemic awareness activities via the *Little Wandle Foundations for Phonics* programme which are critical for developing the foundational skills necessary for reading and writing.

Studies have shown that engaging children in listening games, rhyming activities, and songs enhances their ability to recognise and manipulate sounds. For instance, activities such as clapping out syllables, identifying initial sounds in words and singing nursery rhymes help children develop an awareness of the phonetic structure of language. Additionally, the use of playful, interactive methods to introduce letter-sound correspondences and phonological patterns has been found to significantly impact children's ability to decode and spell words as they progress through school. These early interventions are crucial as they lay the groundwork for more structured phonics instruction in subsequent years, ultimately supporting better reading outcomes in primary school.

Examples of teaching strategies:

- Sound Play: Games that focus on listening to - and distinguishing between - different sounds. For example, "Sound Bingo" where children match sounds they hear to pictures on their bingo cards, or items in a bag which begin with different sounds
- Rhyming Games: Use rhyming picture cards and encourage children to find pairs of words that rhyme. Rhyming stories and songs can also be very engaging
- Syllable Clapping: Clap out the syllables in children's names or common objects around the classroom to help them recognise the breakdown of words into smaller parts
- Letter Sound Matching: Use magnetic letters or alphabet puzzles to help children match sounds to their corresponding letters. This can be done through songs or simple matching games

Developing a Love for Reading:

Enabling our very youngest pupils to develop a love of reading is crucial because it fosters lifelong learning and cognitive development. Early reading experiences enrich a child's vocabulary, enhance comprehension skills and improve concentration and focus. Children who enjoy reading are more likely to engage with texts critically and creatively, which supports academic success across all subjects. Moreover, a passion for reading nurtures empathy and imagination, as children are exposed to diverse perspectives and ideas through stories and informational texts. Ultimately, cultivating a love for reading early on lays the foundation for confident, curious, and capable learners.

Examples:

- Story Time: Timetable daily story sessions where children are read to in an engaging and animated manner. Use books with repetitive text and rhymes to hold their interest
- Picture Books: Provide access to a variety of picture books that children can explore independently. Encourage them to "read" by looking at pictures and telling their own stories
- Library Visits: Visit the school library to expose children to a wide range of books and to participate in storytelling sessions
- Reading Corners: Create cosy reading corners in the setting with comfortable seating and a selection of age-appropriate books



Reception and Year 1

At Worth Valley Primary School we teach Little Wandle Letters and Sounds - a comprehensive systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) programme designed to teach young children how to read. The programme is structured into sequential phases that introduce and build upon phonetic skills. During reception and year 1, these phases progressively introduce grapheme-phoneme correspondences, blending and segmenting words and more complex phonics patterns and spelling rules. The teaching approach is multi-sensory and interactive, incorporating visual aids, manipulatives and engaging activities. Teachers use daily, structured phonics sessions, alongside decodable books and resources, to ensure children can apply their phonics knowledge in reading and writing. Regular assessments help identify pupils who need additional support, ensuring that all children develop strong foundational reading skills.

Children make a strong start in Reception: teaching begins in the first full week of the Autumn term and we follow the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised expectations of progress. Children in Reception are taught to read and spell words using Phase 2 and 3 GPCs, and words with adjacent consonants (Phase 4) with fluency and accuracy. In year 1, children review Phase 3 and 4 and are taught to read and spell words using Phase 5 GPCs with fluency and accuracy. Daily keep-up lessons ensure every child learns to read.

Reading sessions

Alongside daily phonics sessions, we teach children to read through reading practice sessions three times a week.

- Sessions are taught by fully trained adults to small groups of approximately six children
- Adults use books matched to the children's secure phonic knowledge using the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised assessments and book matching grids on pages 11–20 of 'Application of phonics to reading'
- Children are monitored by the class teacher, who rotates and works with each group on a regular basis
- Each reading practice session has a clear focus, so as to not overload the children's working memory and have been designed to focus on three key reading skills: decoding, prosody comprehension
- In year 1, pupils are introduced to specific comprehension skills through *Complete Comprehension*



Developing a Love for Reading:

Research and evidence demonstrate that the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) plays a pivotal role in helping our pupils develop a love of reading in Reception and Year 1. SSP provides a clear, structured approach to decoding words, which enhances reading fluency and accuracy from an early age. By rapidly equipping children with the skills to read independently, SSP fosters a sense of achievement and confidence. This positive reinforcement is crucial in motivating young learners to engage with books and reading activities voluntarily. Furthermore, when children can decode words effortlessly, they can focus on the content and enjoyment of stories, rather than the mechanics of reading, which enhances their overall reading experience. Consequently, the early success and enjoyment derived from reading through systematic synthetic phonics lay a strong foundation for a lifelong love of reading.

Examples:

- Author Visits: Arrange for authors to visit the school and talk about their books and the writing process, inspiring children to read and write (we recently welcomed Bethan Woollvin in April 2024)
- Reading Championship: a real strength of our school, the reading championship recognises and rewards pupils for reading a certain number of times
- Reading Areas: Each class has a reading area with a selection of carefully-chosen, high quality texts which cater to different interests and reading levels
- Daily storytime:

Year 2 and Year 3

In Years 2 and 3, following the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised programme, pupils transition from foundational phonics to more advanced reading skills. Evidence shows that continued systematic synthetic phonics instruction helps solidify decoding and encoding abilities, allowing pupils to read with greater fluency and accuracy. As children master basic phonics, they are introduced to more complex grapheme-phoneme correspondences and spelling rules. This advanced phonics instruction is paired with increased exposure to a variety of texts, enhancing comprehension skills. We use Little Wandle fluency books to ensure our children continue to read confidently and become efficient readers.

Research indicates that this combination of phonics and exposure to diverse reading materials supports the development of critical thinking and interpretative skills, fostering a deeper understanding and enjoyment of reading. Regular group reading sessions and independent reading practice further consolidate these skills, ensuring pupils become confident, proficient readers.

Examples of teaching strategies:

- Fluency: the focus shifts from decoding words to developing reading fluency. Teachers provide ample opportunities for group and independent reading to enhance pupils' speed, accuracy and expression.
- Comprehension Skills: Explicit instruction in reading comprehension begins, focusing on skills such as summarising, predicting, making inferences and understanding themes and main ideas. We use *Complete Comprehension* to ensure our children are equipped with everything they need to become strong, successful readers
- Questioning Techniques: Teachers use a range of questioning techniques to deepen understanding, including literal, inferential, and evaluative questions.
- Reading Comprehension Strategies: Pupils are taught strategies like skimming, scanning, and cloze reading to extract meaning from texts.

Developing a love for reading:

Fostering a love of reading in pupils in Year 2 and Year 3 is crucial for their academic and personal development. At this stage, children are transitioning from learning to read to reading to learn; making it an ideal time to cultivate a passion for literature. We encourage this love of reading by creating a motivating and engaging environment.

We provide access to a diverse range of books that cater to various interests and reading levels, allowing students to find stories that resonate with them personally. Our teachers play a pivotal role by incorporating regular read-aloud sessions, which not only model fluent reading but also bring stories to life through expressive narration.

Examples:

- Reading corners contain a wide range of texts from different genres; including fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and plays. This exposure helps pupils develop a broad understanding of different writing styles and content
- Cross-curricular reading: reading is integrated across the curriculum. Pupils read historical texts, scientific articles and geographical reports - linking reading skills with subject knowledge
- Visual displays and resources: classrooms and school corridors are decorated with reading-related displays, book recommendations and pupil reviews to create an environment that celebrates reading
- Our core reading spine comprises carefully-chosen books which we know our pupils will find engaging, interesting and enjoyable. These books are known as 'Worth Valley Classics' – timeless books by well-known authors proven to ignite a love of reading!

