# St Francis Xavier

## Catholic Primary School

## Phonics Policy

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| **Approved By:** | **SLT** |
| **Reviewed On:** | **October 2026** |
| **To be Reviewed:** | **March 2024** |

Our pupils learn to read and write effectively and quickly using the Read Write Inc. Phonics programme. They progress onto Read Write Inc. Literacy and Language and Read Write Inc. Spelling once they can read with accuracy and speed.

## Read Write Inc. Phonics

The programme is for:

- Pupils in Year R to Year 2 who are learning to read and write
- Any pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4 who need to catch up rapidly

In Read Write Inc. Phonics pupils:

- Decode letter-sound correspondences quickly and effortlessly, using their phonic knowledge and skills
- Read common excep
- tion words on sight
- Understand what they read
- Read aloud with fluency and expression
- Write confidently, with a strong focus on vocabulary and grammar • Spell quickly and easily by segmenting the sounds in words • Acquire good handwriting.

In addition, we teach pupils to work effectively with a partner to explain and consolidate what they are learning. This provides the teacher with opportunities to assess learning and to pick up on difficulties, such as pupils' poor articulation, or problems with blending or alphabetic code knowledge.

We group pupils homogeneously, according to their progress in reading rather than their writing. This is because it is known that pupils' progress in writing will lag behind progress in reading, especially for those whose motor skills are less well developed.

In Year R we emphasise the alphabetic code. The pupils rapidly learn sounds and the letter or groups of letters they need to represent them. Simple mnemonics help them to grasp this quickly. This is especially useful for pupils at risk of making slower progress. This learning is consolidated daily. Pupils have frequent practice in reading high frequency words with irregular spellings – common exception words.

We make sure that pupils read books that are closely matched to their increasing knowledge of phonics and the common exception words. This is so that, early on, they experience success and gain confidence that they are readers. Re-reading and discussing these books with the teacher supports their increasingly fluent decoding. Alongside this, the teachers read a wide range of stories, poetry and non-fiction to pupils; they are soon able to read these texts for themselves.

Embedding the alphabetic code early on, means that pupils quickly learn to write simple words and sentences. We encourage them to compose each sentence aloud until they are confident to write independently. We make sure they write every day.

Pupils write at the level of their spelling knowledge. The quality of the vocabulary they use in their writing reflects the language they have heard in the books the teacher has read to them; they have also discussed what the words mean.

Our aim is for pupils to complete the phonics programme as quickly as possible. The sooner they complete it, the sooner they will be able to choose books to read at their own interest and comprehension level.

## Outcomes for children assessing and tracking progress

We assess all pupils following Read Write Inc. Phonics using the Entry Assessment. We use this data to assign them to either Read Write Inc. Phonics or Read Write Inc. Literacy and Language, along with Read Write Inc. Spelling. This gives us a very good indication of how well they are making progress relative to their starting points. We do this for all pupils, whenever they join us, so we can track all of them effectively, including those eligible for pupil premium.

For those on the Read Write Inc. Phonics programme, we record their starting date and entry point on the tracker to monitor the rate at which they are making progress. We can also easily identify those who joined the programme later.

In addition, we use a standardised reading test NFER and the Salford Reading test so that we can ensure that the gains our pupils are making are age-appropriate.

90% of our pupils complete the phonics programme by the end of Year 1. The rest of the pupils, around 97% complete the programme by the end of the autumn term of Year 2. We aim for all children to be accurate and speedy readers by the time they enter Key Stage 2.

We have high expectations of our pupils' progress. In the June 2020 phonic screening check, 83% of our pupils reached the threshold, and in June 2021, 93%. We attribute this to the programme and to the expectations it builds in.

Pupils who are making slower progress usually complete the programme by the end of Year

2. We support pupils who have identified special educational needs for however long it takes until they can read. For example, we identify those who are at risk of falling behind their peers immediately – whatever their age. Highly trained staff tutor them for 15 minutes every day, using the Read Write Inc. One-to-one tutoring programme. If a child arrives in Key Stage 2 reading below their chronological age or with English as an additional language, they are taught Read Write Inc. Phonics until they too catch up with their peers.

By the end of Key Stage 1, our pupils are able to read aloud age-appropriate texts accurately and with sufficient speed for comprehension. This means that we can focus on developing their comprehension, preparing them well for transition to Key Stage 2. Their good decoding skills mean that they have a sound strategy for decoding unfamiliar words when they come across them at whatever stage or in any subject, even into secondary school.

## Impact across the curriculum

Our teachers are enthusiastic about using the *Read Write Inc.* programme because they can see how well pupils learn from it and the progress they make, not just in English, but also across the curriculum.

1. Data is used effectively to ensure gaps are closing between all groups – in particular those eligible for the pupil premium (Read Write Inc. assessment and tracking, standardised reading tests, phonics-screening check).
2. 90%- 97% of pupils complete Read Write Inc. Phonics by end of Year 2 Term 1.
3. Slower progress pupils and those with specific SEN are taught in small homogeneous teaching groups and receive Read Write Inc. one-to-one tutoring.
4. ~~90%+ of pupils meet the standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1 and 100% in Year 2.~~

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The programmes' 'cycle of instruction' means that, after direct instruction and guided practice, the pupils teach another pupil. In this way, they all rehearse and consolidate what they have been learning. This helps the pupils to make their understanding clear to themselves and helps the teacher deal with any misconceptions. 'Partner teaching' is a key assessment tool. We also use this approach very effectively in other subjects.

In Read Write Inc. Phonics, because the pupils are grouped across the school in terms of their reading ability, they are reading at an appropriate decoding level every day. The homogeneous groups in the Phonic lessons help us to focus the teaching and ensure pupils learn to read quickly.
Staff teaching Read Write Inc. Phonics record the results from the Assessments 1 and 2, which take place every eight weeks. This data allows us to intervene in different ways. For instance, we quickly move pupils to another group if they are progressing faster than their peers are. Those who continue to struggle have one-to-one tutoring so that they keep up.

All the pupils are engaged, with a positive impact on their behaviour. They learn to participate fully: we agree with them the rules for working in a group or discussing with a partner. We discourage 'hands up' for answering questions because we believe that all pupils should answer every question. The teacher selects pupils to answer.

The Read Write Inc. programmes have detailed lesson plans. These give the teachers practical day-today guidance, but we work hard to build on these plans so that the lessons are matched carefully to the needs of their particular group. Every activity is prepared thoroughly and has a clear purpose. The teacher explains this at the beginning so that the pupils understand, during the activity, what they are learning and why.

## Additional support for lower-attaining pupils learning to read

Pupils in the 'lowest' attaining group have the widest variety of needs. This is therefore the least homogeneous group. In order to give these pupils, the same carefully targeted teaching as all the other groups, some of these pupils have daily one-to-one tutoring for 10 to 20 minutes, in addition to their group session in the morning. This tutoring helps us to meet their individual needs. Once these pupils have learnt to read they will receive additional support when learning to spell.

## Homework

We support pupils to select appropriate books to take home, depending on what support they might receive at home. Pupils who receive little help take home books that they have already read in the Read Write Inc. Phonics lesson. This means that they are confident to read at home, even if their parents cannot read with them. Pupils also take home stories and non-fiction that they cannot yet read for themselves but that have been read to them. Stories and new vocabulary are explained and discussed so all pupils have access to the books they read.

## Quality of teaching and pupils' progress

The Head of School and reading leader monitor pupils' progress together until every child can read. No child is left behind to struggle.

We record lesson observations and any subsequent coaching alongside the 'teacher tracker' so that we can see if there is a correlation between the quality of the teaching and the progress pupils make.

1. The Read Write Inc. 'cycle of instruction' is embedded across the curriculum – MTYT, TTYP. Pupils do not raise their hands to answer questions.
2. Close grouping in Phonics is maintained – pupils are moved on quickly.
3. The purpose of each activity is clear to both teachers and pupils.
4. In Phonics, pupils read books at home that closely match their word reading ability.
5. Teaching is monitored thoroughly (see Leadership and Management).

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils have very positive attitudes to the programme. Their good behaviour and the virtual absence of low-level disruption in lessons contribute to the progress they make. We support this behaviour by using silent signals for gaining their attention, for setting up partner routines, and for managing the way pupils move around the classroom. Everyone uses the same signals. The teachers are encouraged to use these strategies in other lessons, too, so that the approach to behaviour is consistent throughout the day.

We believe that the partner work and the homogeneous groupings organised to teach Read Write Inc. Phonics, help the pupils learn to work together. Effective partner work has the benefit of helping pupils to work closely with others. Quick bonding activities help new partners to get to know one another. Boys and girls, first and second language learners, assertive and reticent pupils, and pupils of different ages learn to get on together.

Pupils are taught the manners and behaviour that are necessary to work with adults and other pupils. Adults are expected to demonstrate positive attitudes and good manners, and to act as role models for pupils.

Praise for hard work and good behaviour is fundamental to pupils' progress. The values of courtesy, consideration and kindness are at the heart of every lesson, taught through the programme and embedded in other lessons. All the staff use the same positive strategies for behaviour management across the school. Working well together, as part of a team, is at the core of the school's work – for staff and pupils.

1. All staff use the Management signals consistently in and out of lessons.
2. Partner work is modelled and practised until pupils work willingly and supportively.
3. Praise is fundamental in helping pupils make progress and behave courteously.
4. Staff are consistently kind, considerate to each other and to pupils – no shouting, shushing and nagging.
5. Pupils attend every day, unless poorly.

## Effectiveness of leadership and management shared vision

The school's shared vision is that every pupil learns to read quickly and continues to read – widely and often. The Head of School works with all the staff to ensure that this happens. In particular, she works closely with the reading leaders to monitor the quality of teaching and to provide coaching for staff (teachers and teaching assistants). The role of the reading leaders is critical. Alongside the Head of School, the reading leaders drive the teaching of Read Write Inc.

The reading leader's roles include:

- ensuring that our teaching of reading is of the highest quality and that all our pupils make progress
- ensuring pupils in the 'lower progress' group are making good progress and organising one-to-one tutoring for the pupils who need extra support
- keeping the groups homogeneous, i.e. at the same reading level
- providing further training (through masterclasses, coaching/ observation and face-to- face feedback).

The reading team is made up of a team of good teachers and teaching assistants (TAs) who each teach a group of pupils at the same reading level. Our TAs generally teach small groups of four to eight. HLTAs can have up to a group of 12.

## Professional development

A key element of Read Write Inc. is consistent whole-school practice, underpinned by appropriate professional development. The Head of School, all the teachers and teaching assistants are trained to teach reading. All staff have attended two-day Phonics training and the trainer has returned to support us on subsequent development days. We hold at least two Development Days every year to ensure we are aware of up-to-date practice.

## Parents and carers

We invite parents/carers to an initial meeting and we hold workshops regularly to show how they can help their children read at home. We would like them to help their children, but we also recognise that some are not well placed to do this. If they do not, their children will not suffer; it is our job to teach their children to read.

We organise repeat meetings for those who do not or cannot attend. We ensure that pupils whose parents do not attend keep up with their peers. We check that they make good progress in lessons, we give them extra one-to-one lessons, and we encourage them to read to themselves and to siblings at home.

We use the resources on the parent page on the Ruth Miskin Training website:

http://www.ruthmiskin.com/en/parents/

All staff are trained and the school books regular Development Days.

1. The reading leader spends some Read Write Inc. lesson coaching and observing reading teachers - and keeps records.
2. The Head of School observes lessons with the reading leader. They discuss pupil progress.
3. The reading leader meets with the reading team every week for a 30-minute masterclass – focusing on one activity.
4. The Literacy and Language leader meets with teachers fortnightly for a 30-minute masterclass – focusing on one activity.
5. The reading leader organises regular workshops with parents.