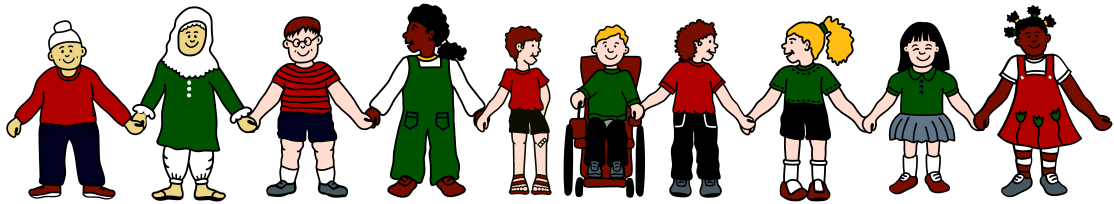# THE GILES

NURSERY

AND

INFANTS' SCHOOL

Phonics Policy

Author: Lisa Hill

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Phonics Policy

Rationale

At The Giles Nursery and Infants' School, we strive to ensure that all children become successful, fluent readers by the end of Key Stage One and believe this is achievable through high quality, discrete phonics teaching. Phonics is taught as the prime approach to reading for all pupils at our school.

This policy sets out our approach to the teaching of phonics across the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage One, through our own bespoke systematic synthetic phonics programme.

Aims

At The Giles Nursery and Infants' School, we aim:

- To provide consistent, high quality phonics teaching that ensures all children have a strong foundation upon which to tackle the complex processes of reading and writing.
- To follow an approach that is rigorous, systematic and used with fidelity, to achieve strong results for all pupils, including the most disadvantaged.
- To ensure continuity and progression in the teaching and learning of phonics throughout the school.
- To have robust assessment procedures in place to regularly check progress and identify pupils in need of additional support or intervention.
- To provide extra practice to pupils who need additional support, with a well-trained member of staff, with minimum disruption to their curriculum access.
- To provide tailored support to pupils who do not meet the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1, in order for them to meet the standard in Year 2.

Phonics Curriculum Journey

Teachers follow the phonics curriculum journey, which provides daily lesson plans for Phase 1 through to the end of Phase 5. It includes the teaching of high frequency fully decodable words as the specific GPCs are taught, as well as common exception words containing irregular GPCs. Once pupils are secure at Phase 5, they move on to phonics for grammar and spelling.

This is an overview of when each phonics phase is taught and the approximate duration of each phase:

Phase	Year group	Duration
Phase 1	Nursery	Continuous
Phase 2	Nursery (introduction) / Reception	6 weeks
Phase 3	Reception	12 weeks
Phase 4	Reception	8 weeks
Phase 5 (new GPCs)	Year 1	8 weeks
Phase 5 (alternative pronunciations)	Year 1	12 weeks
Phase 5 (alternative spellings)	Year 1 / Year 2	16 weeks
Phonics for grammar and spelling	Year 2	25 weeks

The overview provides a guide only and is flexible to take into account different classes and cohorts. Pre-written planning needs adapting to the needs of particular pupils. If necessary, a phonics phase may be repeated with a whole class or year group. For example, Phases 2 and 3 are usually taught twice in Reception to give children the opportunity to secure their learning of new GPCs, digraphs and trigraphs. A condensed version of Phase 4 is repeated at the start of Year 1, to revise lost learning over the summer break.

Approach

At The Giles Nursery and Infants' School, phonics is taught daily through an interactive multisensory phonics session, led by the class teacher. Each session comprises of discrete teaching and opportunities to practise and apply new learning. Sessions last between 20 and 30 minutes and follow the five-part lesson sequence:

- **Introduction:** Learning objectives and criteria for success.
- **Revisit and review:** Recap previously taught grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs), blending / segmenting skills, reading / spelling common exception words.
- **Teach:** Teach a new GPC or words.
- **Practise:** Practise saying and reading the sound through games and activities.
- **Apply**: Apply new learning to read / write words, captions or sentences.

There is a balance of reading and writing in all discrete sessions. Sessions are fast paced and well-structured to ensure pupils receive clear, direct instruction that builds on their prior learning and reduces cognitive load. Repetition and reinforcement of learning is key within all phonics lessons. Pupils are taught simple, transferable routines to practise and apply their new phonic learning. Pupils actively participate during phonics sessions, either working in pairs or individually. All pupils should participate for listening and responding, and by practising and applying what they are learning.

Activities that do not include all pupils should not be used. For example; one pupil should not be asked to write on the board while others watch and pupils should not be asked to take turns to read letters and words. In addition, activities such as painting, colouring, modelling or playing in sand take away the integrity of the phonics learning and do not provide sufficient practice in word reading.

Pace of learning ensures pupils are engaged and session time is used to its full potential. Pupils are taught an average of four new GPCs plus new common exception words across a week. These correspond to the letter sets and word lists detailed in our phonics curriculum

journey. Pronunciation of phonics sounds is short and clearly enunciated, for example; 's' not 'suh'. This is central to a pupil's ability to blend and segment sounds in words.

Phonics sessions are delivered to the whole class and are differentiated according to need. If pupils require additional support to secure new learning, this takes place at another time during the day. All pupils access whole class teaching, to enable them to keep up with the programme of teaching.

Pupils sit together on the carpet close to the teacher for direct teaching, so that pupils can clearly see the adult's mouth to support the correct pronunciation of sounds. Individual whiteboards can be successfully used during whole class teaching to allow pupils to show their understanding and knowledge and enables the teacher to quickly assess pupil's responses. Whiteboards provide a safe space in which to practise without the worry of it being permanent, allowing for multiple tries.

Activities that allow pupils to record longer written outcomes on paper should also be included, giving opportunities to learn correct pencil grip and practise handwriting. Where possible, pupils sit at a table on a chair when practising segmenting for spelling and applying in writing. In the EYFS, there is no requirement for pupils to physically write simple words or dictations until their fine motor skills are fully developed. This is expected for all pupils from Phase 3 onwards.

Teachers model spotting, identifying, blending and segmenting sounds for reading and writing. Opportunities are then given to pupils to practice these skills through games, tasks, challenges and independent activities.

In addition to the daily phonics session, phonics activities are available at other times in the school day. In Nursery and Reception, phonics activities are available during child-initiated learning. In Key Stage One, phonics games are available during social engagement time and if pupils finish a learning activity. Phonics is also practised during shared and guided reading and writing sessions, which builds up to approximately one hour of phonics a day. Reading decodable books is not part of the phonics teaching sequence.

Resources

It is important to have a whole school approach to the teaching of phonics, which includes using the same agreed terminology and resources. These are consistent across year groups, classes and catch-up sessions. This is especially supportive for vulnerable pupils transitioning through the school.

Phonics vocabulary is taught explicitly and is used consistently by staff and pupils. All school staff use the terminology detailed in the English Key Vocabulary: Glossary of terms used in phonics, handwriting, spelling, punctuation and grammar document. Terminology that is used regularly includes:

- **Common exception word:** A word which does not follow the common phonetic spelling rules of the language, or where the usual rules act in an unusual way. These should not be referred to as 'tricky words'.

- **Phoneme:** A sound which makes up all or part of a word. For example, the word 'light' is made up of the phonemes: /l/, /igh/ and /t/.
- **Grapheme:** A letter or string of letters that represents a spoken sound.
- **Digraph:** A sound represented by two letters, for example; /ee/ or /th/.
- **Trigraph:** A string of three letters which make a single sound, for example; /igh/.
- **Split digraph:** A digraph that is split by a consonant. These usually represent long vowel sounds /a_e/ (cake), /i_e/ (five), /o_e/ (code) and /u_e/ (rule).
- **Blend:** Saying aloud the letter sounds before putting them together to read the whole word.
- **Segment:** Breaking a spoken word into letter sounds to help with writing. For example; 'dog', 'd'-'o'-'g'. Also referred to as 'sounding out'.

In Phase 2 and 3, new phonemes are introduced and modelled using agreed actions and mnemonic cards. Throughout the phases, phoneme buttons are used to distinguish the sounds within written words. Robot arms are used to distinguish the sounds within spoken words.

Smart Kids flashcards, phoneme displays, word cards and phonics games are used across the school. Teachers ensure phonics displays are kept up to date with the phonemes being taught at that time. Phonics charts are displayed near the teaching area at child height and referred to by the teacher. Phonics displays for 'decorative' purposes, such as GPC bunting, should not be used as these can be confusing for pupils.

For pupils who require additional support with earlier phonics phases, smaller versions of the phoneme displays are provided for them to refer to. The same flashcards, displays and resources are used in catch up sessions.

Alphabetically ordered high frequency word lists and common exception words lists are provided for pupils to use during independent writing.

Template interactive whiteboard files are used for whole class teaching to ensure a consistent approach. Teachers are encouraged to adapt these as they see fit to add activities and teaching approaches, as long as the background colour, font, teaching sequence and terminology remain consistent.

Pupils respond well to phonics computer programs and online resources, during whole class teaching and independent learning. Programs can be used to teach new phonemes, alternative pronunciations, alternative spellings and common exception word spellings. Games provide an opportunity for pupils to practise and apply their phonic knowledge and blending / segmenting skills. Teachers and support staff make use of Phonics Play and ICT Games to enhance teaching and learning. They are mindful to select activities and games that are consistent with the teaching sequence. Should staff find additional online resources that they wish to use, these should be checked with the phonics curriculum leader before they are introduced to pupils.

Phonics and Reading

To ensure pupils build their confidence as independent readers, it is essential that they are provided with phonetically decodable reading books that match their developing phonic knowledge and learning of common exception words.

All of the independent reading books at The Giles Nursery and Infants' School have been audited to ensure their alignment with the planned phonics teaching sequence. Classroom staff read regularly with all pupils, one to one or during group reading, so they have an excellent knowledge and understanding of each pupil's phonics and comprehension skills. This ensures they are able to check that the reading book a pupil chooses is appropriate and suggest a suitable alternative if they see fit.

A list of approved publishers is provided in the reading curriculum journey. It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure this is adhered to.

Phonics and Handwriting

Handwriting is taught discretely at The Giles Nursery and Infants' School, but phonics sessions provide an excellent opportunity to model and embed correct letter formation. As new GPCs are introduced, staff take the opportunity to model letter formation using the agreed patter. All staff model the correct start and exit points for each letter in all writing.

Phonics and Spelling

As pupils begin to learn phonics, they will make phonetically plausible attempts in their independent writing. Plausible attempts refer to representing the sound heard with an appropriate alternative, if not the accurate one. As a pupil's knowledge of the alphabetic code increases and they are introduced to alternative spellings, teachers should encourage correct spelling by modelling alternative GPC choices, but not demoralise a pupil's confidence by correcting too many errors. Adults should always demonstrate correct spelling only.

Assessment

Continuous assessment of phonics is essential to determine next steps and identify pupils who may need immediate extra support to keep up with the pace of the whole class phonics sessions. In each session, staff identify pupils who require intervention to help them secure the learning objectives. These pupils attend a targeted, small group session later the same day, led by a teacher or trained teaching assistant.

Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND are prioritised during ongoing daily assessment to ensure they do not fall behind in their phonics learning.

In addition, pupils are assessed formatively every term / at the end of each phonics phase. Teachers complete checklists to identify which GPCs pupils know and assess skills in blending and segmenting. They also complete high frequency word and common exception word checklists (reading and writing). Assessment evidence can also be gathered during guided reading sessions and shared writing, as teachers are able to assess whether phonics skills are embedded and applied across the curriculum.

These assessments are used to closely monitor progress using the phonics tracking document. The tracker identifies which phase pupils are working on and who is secure at each phase. Trackers are discussed with the phonics curriculum leader and assessment lead during pupil progress meetings and suggestions provided to help teachers adapt their teaching to differentiate activities, create further opportunities to learn and apply skills, and work with parents.

Year group leaders compile the class trackers on to a cohort tracker, analysing data and cross referencing with guided reading trackers. They identify any anomalies with the data and put support in place where needed.

Additionally, phonological awareness assessments are completed with Year 1 pupils that do not achieve the good level of development (GLD) at the end of the EYFS, and Year 2 pupils that do not reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Targeted intervention is then provided where necessary, focused on securing phonological gaps to improve outcomes in phonics.

Additional Support

Prior to the daily phonics session, teachers should provide support staff with clear instructions detailing particular pupils who require support, methods to support them and individual learning goals, if appropriate.

Pupils who are identified as requiring intervention to help them secure the daily learning objectives attend a targeted, small group session later the same day, led by a teacher or trained teaching assistant. This is a short 15-minute session, which follows the teaching sequence of the session earlier that day. It takes place away from the bustle of the main classroom and without impacting on access to other areas of the curriculum.

Pupils who are identified on the phonics trackers as working below the expected phase will attend targeted phase / GPC sessions, planned by the class teacher. SMART targets will be set and regular assessments made to ensure sessions are effective.

Phonics Screening Check

At the end of Year 1, pupils take part in the statutory phonics screening check in which they apply their phonics knowledge to read real and pseudo words. This is repeated in Year 2 for pupils who have not reached the required standard or pupils who were not eligible / in our education system at the time of the Year 1 phonics check.

The phonics screening check is taken individually by all pupils in Year 1 in the summer term. It is designed to give teachers and parents information on how a pupil is progressing in phonics. It helps to identify whether a pupil needs additional support at this stage so that they do not fall behind in this vital early reading skill. It is a school-based check to make sure that pupils receive any additional support promptly, should they need it.

It checks that pupils can:

- Sound out and blend graphemes in order to read simple words.
- Read phonetically decodable one-syllable and two-syllable words, for example; 'cat', 'sand', 'windmill'.
- Read a selection of nonsense words, which are referred to as 'alien' words.

Pupils apply their phonics to decode alien words, as this allows teachers to assess whether they are able to use their knowledge and blending skills to read unfamiliar words. Practising reading alien words can be incorporated into the phonics teaching sequence in moderation, but it is more beneficial to provide opportunities to practise reading familiar and unfamiliar real words. Past papers will support pupils with the process of the screening check but should not be used as an indication of progress or attainment, as the checks do not include all of the GPCs that need to be assessed.

Teachers are encouraged to carry out error analysis for pupils who do not meet the expected standard to determine particular gaps in knowledge, alongside ongoing phonics assessment to ensure all GPCs are covered.

The school reports results of the phonics screening check to parents by the end of the summer term as well as to the local authority.

Beyond Phonics

Phonics teaching does not stop with the phonics screening check at the end of the Year 1. Even the most confident readers need time and support to practise and embed phonics in their spelling and writing. In Year 2, pupils continue to learn the Phase 5 alternative spellings, with teaching sessions focusing on writing and choosing correct spellings. The teaching sequence then moves on to 'phonics for grammar and spelling', which incorporates the learning objectives set out in Appendix 2 of the National Curriculum 2014.This includes unusual spellings, rules for adding suffixes, homophones, contractions, apostrophes and spelling the Year 2 common exception words.

Parental Support

In the autumn term, all year groups invite parents and carers to attend a presentation about reading at our school, which includes a section on phonics and how parents can support their child at home.

Each year, Reception staff invite parents and carers to a phonics talk. They share how phonics is taught in our school and give ideas of how to support pupils with phonics in a fun and engaging way by sharing useful websites, books and games.

In Year 1, staff invite parents and carers to attend a presentation about the phonics screening check. They provide information about the check and useful resources to support phonics learning at home.

Staff Training

All teachers and support staff are required to attend annual phonics refresher training at the start of each academic year to ensure they are up to date with the phonics policy, curriculum journey and terminology. The phonics curriculum leader provides additional training throughout the year as necessary, particularly if phonics trackers or teaching observations highlight a specific need.

Inclusion and Equal Opportunities

All pupils are given full access to the National Curriculum. We endeavour to ensure that all pupils reach their potential, irrespective of race, gender, age, home background or ability.

The Giles Nursery and Infants' School is committed to promoting equality. When planning and teaching phonics, staff will make reasonable adjustments to promote equality of opportunity. We embrace diversity and seek to celebrate and reflect the diversity of our pupils and staff in our curriculum.

Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are supported in phonics sessions using a 'quality first' teaching approach, that includes differentiated learning and support. If required, pupils will have a phonics target on their SEND provision map.

Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND are prioritised during ongoing daily assessment to ensure they do not fall behind in their phonics learning.

Speech and language base pupils are fully integrated into mainstream classes. Learning is made accessible with the assistance of a specialist teacher, teaching assistants and speech therapist.

Role and Responsibilities of the Phonics Curriculum Leader

The phonics curriculum leader is responsible for improving the standards of teaching and learning in phonics through:

- Monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the phonics curriculum.
- Lesson observations of teachers to ensure they are carrying out the aims of the phonics curriculum, using the phonics observation document.
- Monitoring the quality of the learning environment.
- Analysing phonics tracking data and cross referencing with guided reading trackers, identifying anomalies with the data and putting support in place where needed.
- Supporting the Year 1 leader to analyse phonics screening check data, including error analysis.
- Supporting colleagues with CPD, including annual phonics refresher training and full training for new members of staff.
- Auditing, purchasing and organising resources.
- Keeping up to date with developments in the teaching, learning and assessment of phonics.
- Informing SLT, year group leaders and governors of any issues relating to phonics.

- Regular reporting to the Governing Body on the progress of phonics within termly English review meetings.

This policy will be reviewed every two years or in light of changes to legal requirements or school practice.