



‘Old Heath is a safe place for your child
to learn, achieve and enjoy success.’

PHONICS POLICY 2026

GOVERNING BODY FEBRUARY 2026

‘TRY OUR BEST, THINK OF OTHERS,
TELL THE TRUTH & SHOW RESPECT’

OLD HEATH PHONICS POLICY

Intent

At Old Heath we know that the use of phonics is the key skill in the development of early reading, and which supports our children to become successful, fluent readers. This will not only give them access to the wider curriculum by applying the skills they have been taught, but will foster a love of reading which stay with them for live. The Reading Framework (2021) state that children who find it difficult to read begin to dislike reading and are more likely to struggle right across the curriculum. Consequently, phonics takes a high priority at Old Heath.

The Rose report (2006) emphasised high quality phonics as an important part of the word decoding skills required by children to develop higher level language and comprehension skills.

Bold Beginnings (2017) stated that 'All primary schools should: make sure that the teaching of reading, including systematic synthetic phonics, is the core purpose of the Reception Year.'

We also acknowledge the importance of developing speaking and listening skills from the earliest stages and at Old Heath we ensure that phonics is set within a broad and rich language environment. We aim to deliver a consistent, high-quality approach to the teaching of phonics across the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key stage One and into Key Stage Two for children who require further support.

Implementation

At Old Heath we follow the Letters and Sounds document's principles as a basis for our own phonics scheme. Our Phonics teaching is split into five phases across Early Years and Year 1.

Appendix 1 and 2 outline the **content, coverage and progression** of each Phase across Early Years and Key Stage One.

Phonics is taught daily to all children in Early Years and Year 1. Lessons are high quality, fast paced and engaging. It is the expectation that all children are participating at all times throughout the session.

All staff that deliver phonics including interventions, receive regular updates to training to ensure all children receive quality phonics teaching.

The structure of the phonics sessions is consistent across the classes as is the terminology as outlined in **Appendix 3 and 3a**

Each lesson will include the following sections:

- Revisit - Revise previously taught GPCs and words taught in previous sessions
- Teach – Teach new GPCs/common exception words
- Practice – Practise blending to read words containing new and revised GPCs (including decodable high frequency words) and segmenting words to write
- Apply – Securing knowledge by reading decodable phrases and sentences that match the known GPCs and writing dictated sentences.

Reading decodable books will take place outside of the phonics session. Our children continue to read 1:1 with an adult.

Correct pencil grip and letter formation is taught within the phonics session. This is reinforced using paper and pencils in adult led handwriting lessons outside of the session.

Formative assessment takes place throughout each phonics session to address misconceptions, to identify any GPC that may need to be reviewed and to identify children who may need support either immediately or outside of the phonics session.

Organisation

In Early Years, phonics is taught initially as a whole class for a 20-minute session each day which will increase to 30 minutes as the year progresses. In the Autumn Term, children will begin by writing dictated phrases outside of the phonics session with an adult at a table.

In the Spring Term or sooner if appropriate, based on our assessments, the apply section of the lesson will be differentiated and children will work in smaller groups to ensure that the level of challenge is appropriate.

Dictated sentences will form part of our phonics sessions in the Spring and Summer Term but again, children will also write dictated sentences outside of the session.

Once all of the phase 2 and 3 graphemes have been taught, the children will be to write sentences independently outside the session with words being phonetically plausible.

Other adult led activities outside the phonics session consolidate the application of phonic knowledge both in reading and writing and support in closing any gaps.

Children in Year 1 and Year 2 have daily 30-minute phonics lessons and again, the practise and apply activities are differentiated if appropriate based on our assessments. Whiteboards and phonics practise books are used as appropriate to record any written elements. Children in Year 1 will have opportunity to practise reading 'pseudo words' in readiness for the Phonics Screening Check.

In the Autumn Term of Year 2, children will review learning in Year One before moving onto spelling-based teaching as outlined in the National Curriculum. Phase 5 will continue to be revisited. Any children who are not secure in Phase 5 will receive targeted interventions.

Each class has an Old Heath phonics frieze displayed in the classroom and phonics resources including sound cards, words corresponding to every GPC, sound mats for the tables and tricky words.

All planning and resources required to teach phonics are available to all staff on the OneDrive.

Decodable books

Children practice their reading skills at school and at home with decodable reading books that match or are slightly behind the group of GPCs that they are being taught. They also have access to online games and eBooks which are also allocated to match the GPCs being taught.

Our main reading scheme is from Collins Big Cat which is aligned with Letters and Sounds and so matches the order of the GPCs as they are introduced.

Children continue to read decodable reading books until they can decode unfamiliar words confidently.

Big Cat 7+ decodable books are also available for struggling readers in Key Stage Two. The bookshelves are clearly labelled with each colour, phase and the graphemes included within the set of books.

Age Related Expectations

By the end of Early Years children should be secure at Phase 4 this includes:

- saying a sound for each letter of the alphabet and at least 10 digraphs (ELG)
- reading words consistent with their phonic knowledge by sound-blending (ELG)
- reading aloud simple sentences and books that are consistent with their phonic knowledge, including some common exception words (ELG)
- using phonic knowledge to write simple phrases and sentences
- writing some common irregular words

By the end of Year 1 children should be secure at Phase 5 and this includes:

- applying their phonic knowledge as a prime approach to reading unfamiliar words including those that are not completely decodable
- reading many high frequency words automatically
- reading Phase 5 common exception words
- reading a range of age and phonic stage appropriate texts
- being confident with grapheme/phoneme correspondence for all of the 40+ phonemes up to Phase 5
- passing the Phonics Screening Check

By the end of Year 2 children should be secure in:

- decoding unfamiliar words confidently
- reading words containing common suffixes
- applying phonic knowledge to read unfamiliar words accurately, without hesitation
- reading and spelling Year 1 and 2 common exception words
- reading words accurately without over blending or 'sounding out'
- reading and understanding a range of age-appropriate texts
- applying skills in reading and writing to all areas of the curriculum
- applying a range of spelling strategies including words with prefixes and suffixes, plurals and words containing unusual grapheme/phoneme correspondence

Assessment and Intervention

Teachers make formative assessments through the day-to-day teaching of phonics. Those struggling are given extra support during phonics sessions and will revisit the learning at other times within the classroom during the day either in a small group or 1:1. More formal individual summative phonics assessments will be carried out half-termly including a baseline assessment in Autumn 1. **Appendix 4**

Children are tracked half termly on a phonics tracking grid which is monitored by the phonics lead and any support or interventions are noted **Appendix 5**

Analysis of the assessments and regular tracking by teachers and the Phonics Lead enables provision to be adapted quickly and daily interventions are put in place for children to keep up or for those falling behind in order to close gaps. These interventions consolidate the learning from their phonics sessions, revisiting GPCs, practising oral blending and reading words by blending sounds. Class based interventions are led by a teacher or teaching assistant.

At the end of Year 1, all children take the 'Phonics Screening Check', a statutory assessment. Those who do not pass will re-take the test in Year 2.

Children in Year 3 who have not passed the phonics screening check or children who have been identified as needing intensive catch-up take part in timetabled afternoon interventions with a highly trained TA. Outcomes from these interventions are monitored by class teachers and the Phonics Lead. Children who are only just secure in Phase 5 continue to have support to apply their phonics knowledge and also have extra reading time with an adult to improve confidence and fluency.

Parents

We actively encourage parental involvement and although we cannot control the amount of support given at home, we have tried to provide ways to make phonics at home more accessible, beginning in Early Years.

The Phonics Subject Lead holds a meeting for parents to explain the way in which phonics is taught at school with suggestions for ways to help at home, this includes information about the importance of reading stories and book related talk.

In the Autumn Term parents are invited to stay for 10 minutes after drop off on Friday to watch a short phonics session recapping the weeks learning including the correct pronunciation of phonemes, strategies used for blending and segmenting, learning tricky words and correct letter formation. In the Spring and Summer Term there is a short phonics session at the end of each Stay and Play session.

A phonics folder is given to parents each term which contains all of the weekly sounds, words and sentences to read following the phonics taught in the classroom.

Parents are encouraged to speak to the teacher at any point for clarification and progress is discussed during parents evening. Parents will be informed if their child is needing additional support to keep up.

Children in Year 1 take words home to practise reading and writing in line with the week's learning. Children in Year Two receive weekly spellings.

We also have subscription to Phonics Bug and each child has appropriate e-books and games allocated each week to access at home, again matched to their current learning.

Children are expected to read at home at least 4 times each week. This includes their reading scheme book but also phonics games and word reading. Every child has a home/school reading diary; it is the school's expectation that these are used as a dialogue between teachers and parents. Children who do not read regularly at home have support put in place to ensure that this happens in school.

Impact

Through the implementation of the above, we aim for the children to become enthusiastic readers who can decode unfamiliar words speedily and familiar words 'at a glance' by the end of Key Stage One. They are then able to focus on developing their fluency, comprehension and love of reading as they move through the school. Attainment in phonics is measured at the end of Year 1 by the Phonics Screening Test and is also measured against the attainment of children nationally. Results have been consistently above the national and Essex averages. We believe that reading is the key to all learning and that the impact of our phonics teaching goes beyond the screening test results enabling the children to read for pleasure as part of our reading curriculum.