



**Hazel Oak School**

# A Guide to Phonics and Reading for Parents and Carers

# phonics

Phonics (sometimes called synthetic phonics) is the system schools use to teach children to read.

Phonics teaches children the link between letters and the sounds they represent. It has its own vocabulary which can make it sound more complicated than it really is. Phonics levels are progressive e.g. Phase 1 focuses on environmental sounds whereas pupils working within Phase 6 are more fluent in their reading and more accurate in their spelling and therefore learn spelling rules such as adding suffixes and prefixes to words.

## FAQs

### **What is the age expectation to teach phonics?**

In mainstream, phonics is taught in the Early Years and Primary phase. However, our learners need more time to process, apply and consolidate these sounds, therefore phonics is taught beyond Primary age. For older students, although the same Little Wandle synthetic scheme is used, teaching staff consider age appropriate delivery and resources.

### **How often is phonics taught at Hazel Oak?**

Phonics is taught daily and regularly assessed using the Little Wandle synthetic phonics scheme.

### **What is Letters and Sounds?**

Letters and Sounds is a phonics programme published by the Department of Education and Skills. Many published phonics schemes follow the structure of Letters and Sounds.

[Letters and Sounds Guide](#)

### **What is synthetic phonics?**

Synthetic phonics is just the technical term for the style of phonics teaching taught in our schools. Synthetic phonics requires the early reader to locate and sound out the individual sounds in a word and blend (or synthesise) them together to say the word.

### **What intervention is in place for older pupils?**

Pupils may receive targeted intervention which supplements phonics. Interventions may include:

- Dancing Bears
- Precision Teaching
- Mnemonics
- Action words

### **What provision is in place for Hazel Oak pupils working beyond Phase 6?**

Pupils receive spelling lists in line with DfE Literacy curriculum. Depending on the cohort, pupils may receive targeted support and/or grouped activities i.e. carousel or 1:1/small group intervention. The type of approach may include whole word recognition, mnemonics, precision teaching or Action Words. Pupils in KS4 and 5 may practice spellings in preparation for their exams and non-examination modules.

# READING

Hazel Oak aims to develop pupils' skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening. By the time that pupils move on from our school, our aim is for them to:

- Develop children's love of reading, writing and discussion and prepare our learners for life Have a positive attitude towards books and reading, reading widely for pleasure and information
- Nurture a culture of developing language and literacy skills across all areas of our curriculum and support children to become confident communicators. For example, accessing language through: hearing, seeing, finding, feeling, and creating
- Be curious and creative when it comes to reading and writing – for example, by being interested in learning the meaning of new words
- Learn early functional literacy skills that will help pupils develop a sense of self and where possible, independence
- Provide a range of communication strategies to provide them with choices and give them 'a voice', increasing their ability to convey their needs and wants and in turn supporting emotional regulation.
- Access Literacy life skills that are transferable to all areas of learning in and out of school
- Support pupils overcome low self-esteem and motivation around reading and writing
- Provide an Inclusive Reading Curriculum that has Language and Communication, cultural capital and social integration is at the heart
- Adhere to the shared understanding that progress is wider than reading and writing levels- for instance, progress can be achieved through attention, vocal/physical engagement, confidence and enjoyment.
- Provide learning pathways that supports our broad range of learners so they can all achieve an accreditation by the time they leave Hazel Oak.

## FAQs

### Are phonics lessons different to reading lessons?

Yes, although they are strongly linked as pupils are offered materials which are in line with their phonics knowledge.

### How is reading taught?

Depending on development stage and age, pupils may receive the following:

- All pupils receive ongoing exposure to reading. Time is therefore invested across the school day and not isolated in literacy lessons.
- 1:1 reading
- Group reading
- Whole class reading
- Opportunities for independent and shared reading in order to bridge learning- e.g. coding verbal reasoning, decoding, literacy knowledge and vocabulary. Again, time is invested across the school day and not isolated in literacy lessons.

### Are there any reading enrichment opportunities?

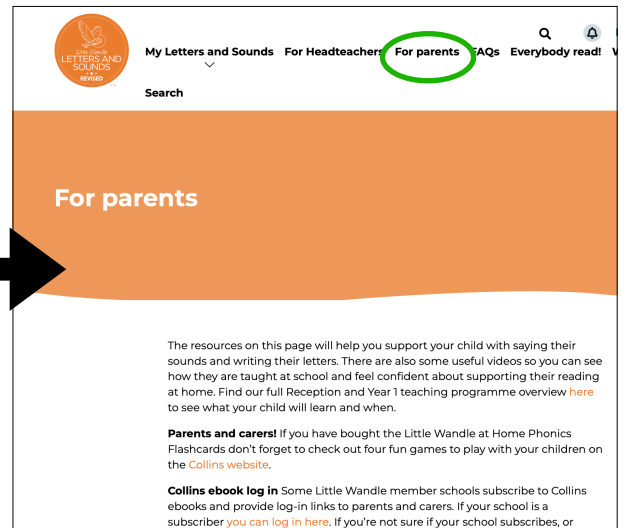
- **Bookworms inc.** This is a pupil-run club linking into Key Stage 4 accreditation Life Skills projects. Pupils are currently tasked with creating a new inclusive library. We also have Bookworm Reading Ambassadors who read with Lower School Students.
- **Solihull Children's Book Club:** They loan Hazel Oak recently published books, and in return, pupils vote for their their favourite titles. The author with the most votes wins the a national Children's Book Award.
- Hazel Oak are signed up to the **English Hub**, Little Sutton School. Little Sutton is one of 34 schools across England appointed by the DfE to support local schools, academies and free schools to improve the teaching of phonics, early language and reading.
- **Teach us Too-** are a charity promoting the right for all children to be taught to read and write, whatever their label or diagnosis. We are currently supporting them with a research project.
- **World Book Day** (6th March 2025) This will involve:
  - Pupils wrapping up books, then swapping with their peers. Everyone loves presents!
  - Usborne Books organise 'Ready steady read/ listen' where pupils are sponsored to read with their parents/ carers. All money raised will contribute towards books for the School, plus a percentage of free books from Usborne.

# HOME LEARNING

Although your child will be taught to read at school, you can have a huge impact on their reading journey by continuing their practice at home.

Follow the Little Wandle link to access home learning resources.

<https://www.littlewandlelettersandsounds.org.uk/resources/for-parents/>



The resources on this page will help you support your child with saying their sounds and writing their letters. There are also some useful videos so you can see how they are taught at school and feel confident about supporting their reading at home..

There are two types of reading book that your child may bring home:

- **A reading practice book.** This will be at the correct phonic stage for your child. They should be able to read this fluently and independently.
- **A sharing book.** Your child will not be able to read this on their own. This book is for you both to read and enjoy together.

## Reading practice book

This book has been carefully matched to your child's current reading level. If your child is reading it with little help, please don't worry that it's too easy – your child needs to develop fluency and confidence in reading.

Listen to them read the book. Remember to give them lots of praise – celebrate their success! If they can't read a word, read it to them. After they have finished, talk about the book together.

## Sharing book

In order to encourage your child to become a lifelong reader, it is important that they learn to read for pleasure. The sharing book is a book they have chosen for you to enjoy together.

Please remember that you shouldn't expect your child to read this alone. Read it to or with them. Discuss the pictures, enjoy the story, predict what might happen next, use different voices for the characters, explore the facts in a non-fiction book. The main thing is that you have fun!