



# **Harbinger Primary School**

## **Phonics and Early Reading Policy**

**Policy Agreed: October 2025**

**Review Date: October 2026**

# THE Partnership Phonics Programme (based on Letters and Sounds)

## Intent

At Harbinger, we are proud to offer all pupils a text-rich learning environment where imagination and creativity can be fuelled. Through our rigorous phonics curriculum, we ensure all pupils develop the skills and knowledge they need to develop as confident readers who have a love of books. Through reading in particular, pupils have a chance to develop culturally, emotionally, intellectually, socially, and spiritually. Literature, especially, plays a key role in such development. Reading also enables pupils both to acquire knowledge and to build on what they already know. All the skills of language are essential to participating fully as a member of society; only pupils who learn to speak, read, and write fluently and confidently can effectively participate in wider society.

## To achieve this, we ensure that:

- There is a **sharp focus on** ensuring that younger pupils gain **the phonics knowledge and language comprehension necessary to read and spell.**
- **Reading is prioritised** to allow pupils to access the full curriculum offer.
- **A rigorous, sequential approach to the reading curriculum develops pupils' fluency, confidence, and enjoyment of reading.**
- At all stages, **reading attainment is assessed and gaps are addressed quickly** and effectively for all pupils.
- At all stage of learning to read, **reading materials are closely matched to our learners' phonics knowledge.**

## There are four key concepts that we teach to all pupils, these are:

1. Letters are symbols (spellings) that represent sounds.
2. A sound may be spelled by one, two, three or four letters:  
**E.g. dog street night eight**
3. The same sound can be spelled in more than one way:  
**E.g. rain acorn cake day**
4. Many spellings can represent more than one sound:  
**E.g. head seat break**

## There are three key skills that we teach to all pupils, these are:

1. Blending: the ability to push sounds together to build words.
2. Segmenting: the ability to pull apart the individual sounds in words.
3. Phoneme manipulation: the ability to insert sounds into and delete sounds out of words. This skill is necessary to test out alternatives for spellings that represent more than one sound.

In order for all pupils to make rapid progress through the cumulative stages of the phonics programme, we ensure the teaching is systematic and progressive throughout foundation stage, key stage 1, and in key stage 2 for those pupils needing interventions to support phonetic knowledge and understanding.

Teachers rapidly identify and address gaps in knowledge and/or skills already covered, while at the same time, moving on to teach new code knowledge and understanding of the concepts.

It must always be remembered that **phonics is the step up to fluent word recognition. Automatic and effortless reading of all words is the goal.** By repeated blending, segmenting and manipulation of words, pupils get to know them, and once this happens, they should be encouraged to read them straight off when reading text, rather than continuing to sound and blend them aloud because they feel this is what is required.

## Implementation

At Harbinger, phonics is taught, beginning in nursery through to year 2. We follow [THE Partnership Phonics Programme](#). This is a DfE approved phonics teaching programme. This SSP (systematic synthetic phonics) programme provides a structured route for all pupils to meet or exceed the expected standard in the year 1 PSC (Phonics Screening Check) and all national curriculum expectations for word reading through decoding by the end of key stage 1. The programme allows for progression within each phase and is fully resourced, including planned interventions and tracking systems. The programme is linked to a scheme of fully decodable books\*.

Prior to beginning the programme of teaching GPCs (Grapheme Phoneme Correspondences), activities concentrate on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills, phonological awareness and the key skills of oral blending, segmenting, and manipulation. These experiences are intended to be used as part of a broad and rich language curriculum that has speaking and listening at its centre, links language with physical and practical experiences, and provides an environment rich in print and abundant in opportunities to engage with high quality books. **This phase paves the way for pupils to make a good start when they begin learning GPCs.**

**All year 1 children take the 'Phonics Screening Check'** - a statutory assessment required by legislation.

- Those who do not meet the pass mark will be given support and intervention programmes in year 2, to provide them with sufficient knowledge and understanding to retake the 'Phonics Screening Check' and obtain a pass mark.
- Those children who do not obtain the required level set by the 'Phonics Screening Check' will receive phonics interventions in year 3 and beyond until they have reached the end of Phase 5.

In key stage 2 interventions are based around the gaps identified through teacher assessment. Lessons are quick in pace, multi-sensory, engaging and challenging for all children within the lesson.

**Each Phonics lesson includes the following sections:**

- **Revise** – Over learn the previous graphemes and words
- **Hear** – Introduce a new grapheme by tuning into its sound
- **Read** – Develop knowledge through reading focus GPC and words containing focus GPC
- **Write** – Accurately spell focus GPC in words containing GPC
- **Apply** – Use the focus GPC to read phrases/sentences or write dictated sentences to secure knowledge
- **Assess** – Monitor progress within each phase to inform planning

## Organisation

### Pupils in Nursery

- Are taught phase 1 through a differentiated approach within the setting daily.
- Staff will teach phase 2 to any children identified as secure at phase 1.

### Pupils in Reception

- Are taught a discrete phonics session daily for a 20-minute period as a whole class.
- Intervention groups are put in place if or when the need is identified to ensure learners successfully access and move through the programme.
- During the apply section, the activities are differentiated to ensure that all pupils reach their full potential within a challenging and supportive environment.
- Continuous provision and the outdoor learning environment in EYFS supports pupils in closing the gap and consolidating their phonic knowledge.

- Phonics skills are embedded in writing and reading tasks in English sessions and phonics mats are freely available in each area of learning and outdoors.
- **The driving ethos is for all pupils to have completed or be accessing phase 4 by the end of reception.**

### Pupils in Year 1

- Will deepen their understanding **starting phase 5 in the first half of the autumn term.**
- Pupils who have not reached the expected level by year 1 will receive additional phonics support.
- Pupils in year 1 have access to high-quality daily phonics sessions for 20/25 minutes.
- The apply activities are differentiated to ensure all children reach their full potential.
- **The underlying aim of year 1 is to ensure all children have completed phases 4 and 5 and be ready to begin the spelling programme upon entry into year 2.**

All staff teaching phonics receive training about the principles underpinning the SSP programme, and how to successfully deliver daily lessons to ensure consistency of teaching and learning of early reading for all pupils.

### Classroom Environment

- In each class has a phase appropriate phonics display, concentrating on both sounds and key words that the pupils are currently learning.
- Phonics mats are available in every lesson to support pupils' early reading and writing across the curriculum; and are available in continuous provision.
- In EYFS, the displays reflect the letters and sounds that the children have been taught.
- The working wall is updated weekly.
- Phonics activities are available in the provision.
- The outdoor learning environment provides opportunities to consolidate learning and both the indoor and outdoor environment is rich with print.

### Early Reading

As pupils move through the phonics programme, they will be **reading materials closely matched to the learners' phonics knowledge**, both in school and at home. In this way, pupils will be encouraged to use their phonics skills and knowledge as their primary reading strategy. As pupils find that they can decode words quickly and independently, they will read more and more so that the number of words they can read automatically builds up. Increasing the pace of reading is an important objective.

We read books from **Phonics Bug Club. (in line with THE Partnership Phonics Programme).**

Pupils will be encouraged to read aloud as well as silently for themselves. As pupils continue to progress through the phonics programme many pupils will begin reading longer texts with more complex words independently and with increasing fluency. This process culminates in a shift from learning to read to reading to learn. Pupils then move on to reading both for pleasure and for information.

### Online learning

During exceptional circumstances of extended school closure, it is important children have access to remote learning. **THE Partnership Phonics Programme** provides short online videos to support with remote learning.

It is also important to continue to provide opportunities for children to practise their reading. Reading groups will take place online via video calls. These groups follow the same format as reading lessons in school:

- Read and discuss the front cover and blurb.

- Use the story introduction to introduce the book to the group.
- Explain identified vocabulary.
- Pupils read the inside cover: sounds, decodable words and tricky words
- Pupils read through the text, using phonics knowledge to access the words
- If it is the second read, discuss a key question as posed by the adult running the group

If children do not have their reading practice book at home, fully decodable eBooks which are matched to the children's phonic ability are used. Alternatively, a teacher (or other supporting adult) will aim to listen to these pupils using a shared screen and a visualiser.

## Impact

### Regular assessment of pupils' progress takes place.

Reading focus and dictation focus lessons are completed by pupils at the end of each set of sounds taught. These lessons provide opportunities for retrieval practice. They are designed for pupils to work independently and so provide assessment information for teachers as pupils move through each set and phase of the programme.

End of phase assessments, carried out by the teacher, are also included in the programme for each phase. Due to the length of phase 5, there are three assessment points (at the end of set 18, set 22, and set 27).

Teachers make use of all the assessment outcomes to inform them of the progress children are making. It also enables teachers to adapt the provision if necessary to ensure the needs of individual pupils are met. Targeted interventions alongside high quality learning environments, ensure that no child is left behind.

As pupils begin to learn to read, they move to banded books and their progress through the bands is carefully tracked and analysed. Running records are used to identify strengths and weaknesses, and next steps.

*\*The Bug Club Phonics books referred to are taken from the DfE validated Bug Club Phonics Systematic Synthetic Phonics Programme produced by Pearson Education Limited.*