

# ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL



## Phonics and Early Reading POLICY

### **Mission Statement**

At St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary, God is at the heart of our school  
**We** try, everyday, to follow Jesus' commandment 'Love one another as I  
have loved you'

**We** do this through love for our families, our friends, and our school

**We** respect our environment and recognise our responsibility for it

**We** encourage in each other a love of learning

**We** rejoice in each others' uniqueness

**We** place prayer and worship at the centre of everything we do

**We** are a community of love dedicated to God

Our school is somewhere **We** can grow together

## **Whole school intent**

At St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School, we are deeply committed to developing the gifts and talents each pupil has been given by God. The school's direction stems from its Mission Statement, 'Our School Is Somewhere We Can Grow Together'.

We deliver an engaging and challenging curriculum for every child that attends our school. The National Curriculum forms the foundation for all learning, which has been carefully sequenced to ensure that all children, in particular the disadvantaged and those with Special Educational Needs, are exposed to the richest and most varied opportunities that we can provide.

We have ambitious expectations and will support the spiritual wellbeing of each child by instilling the knowledge, skills and understanding that they need to be aspirational, successful young people, who are confident and well-rounded in an ever-changing world.

## **Intent**

At St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School, we strive to ensure that all of our pupils become confident, enthusiastic readers and writers. Phonics is an essential skill that allows our pupils to communicate their understanding in all curriculum subjects. For pupils to develop into effective and confident readers and spellers, they need to develop and use a range of reading and spelling strategies. For this to be achieved, phonics is taught actively and explicitly with the understanding that the greatest impact is achieved when children are challenged and encouraged to apply their skills throughout their curriculum learning.

The systematic teaching of phonics is fundamental. Our children in EYFS and KS1 develop a strong phonic awareness with effective segmenting, blending and decoding skills through the DfE approved systematic synthetic phonics programme, Song of Sounds. We are ambitious for all children and individual needs are continually assessed to ensure children, including disadvantaged and those with Special Education Needs leave St Francis of Assisi school with a solid foundation of reading from which to progress in the future.

## **What is Song of Sounds?**

Song of Sounds is a systematic, synthetic phonics programme which runs from EYFS to Year 2. The programme teaches children to read and write by introducing children to the sounds that they can hear in words (phonemes) and their written equivalent (graphemes). All pupils at St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School are taught to read and write 44 graphemes in the English language and will have specific strategies to identify and decode common exception words (red or tricky words).

Song of Sounds is also a multi-sensory phonics programme. It is hands on and interactive with music, movement and practical activities at its core, to ensure children enjoy the phonics learning process. The programme ensures that children become fluent readers and knowledgeable spellers by the end of Key Stage 1.

Key features of the programme...

- Multi-sensory with kinaesthetic, auditory and visual activities that reinforce skills through a variety of learning styles making it ideal for pupils with English as a second language.
- Song is integral to the programme to help children remember every phoneme, a highly active approach with whole-body actions and lots of games to aid learning.
- Although lessons are taught whole class it is carefully differentiated and contains support and challenge tips to cater for every child in the classroom.
- GPCs and tricky words are taught in clearly-defined, incremental sequence and constantly revised and consolidated throughout the programme.
- Decodable readers (Big Cat letters and sounds) are carefully matched to the children's secure knowledge guided by regular assessment.
- Bring phonics to life with a fresh, lively, hands-on approach to teaching phonics with engaging, interactive activities that reinforce learning.

### **Phonics lessons**

Learning is reinforced with a range of games and activities that appropriately challenge all learners. Daily taught sessions in EYFS and KS1 ensure our children are taught how to begin to read and write words and sentences using their knowledge of the phonemes they learn, through the process of blending and segmenting. Letter formation is taught alongside GPCs and common exception words to ensure handwriting skills are developed and correct letter formation is achieved.

The programme is built around differentiated, daily direct whole class teaching sessions, four of these lasting 15 minutes each and one extended weekly session, on the basis that giving the children the opportunity to consolidate and apply their phonics skills at the end of a week reinforces learning.

## **Assessment**

Children's progress in developing and applying their phonics knowledge is carefully assessed through half termly checks that are built into the scheme, as well as regular informal assessments as we read with children. These checks assess the child's phoneme knowledge as well as their ability to read tricky words by sight. To enhance progress in tricky word reading, children take home 'tricky word bookmarks'. These assessments inform the book band colour from the 'Big Cat Letters and Sounds' books that children take home. Their learnt knowledge and skills are carefully matched to the correct book band colour using these assessments.

Teachers also use daily phonics sessions to monitor children's progress and assess children through their reading and writing. Pupils (the bottom 20%) that are not making expected progress are supported in interventions outside of whole class phonics lessons.

## **Classroom environment**

All EYFS and KS1 classrooms will have a display of the Song of Sounds phoneme friezes. Each class will have a set of phoneme flashcards, green words, red tricky words appropriate to the year group. Phoneme finders and tricky word mats will be accessible to all EYFS and KS1 pupils for any activity that requires reading or writing. Each classroom will have a Felicity Fairy puppet, along with a range of costumes and props to support teaching in role as characters featured in the scheme. Phonics is embedded throughout EYFS and KS1 and pupils are encouraged to apply their phonics skills in all curriculum areas. To assist the transition into Lower Key Stage 2, pupils have access to grapheme mats and tricky word mats from Stage 3 Song of Sounds, and Lower Key Stage 2 teaching staff are trained in the Song of Sounds phonic scheme and terminology.

## **Year 1 Phonics Screening Check**

In the summer term, all children in year 1 will undertake the National Phonics Screening Check. The children will be assessed on their ability to blend a range of 40 real and nonsense words. The intention of the test is to gauge the children's understanding of the phonemes learned and give the school knowledge of where the gaps are. Children who are not secure in recognising and blending these words will not pass the assessment and will be given further support as they enter Year 2. The assessment will be repeated in the summer of Year 2. If a child does not meet the expected standard in Year 2 then phonics teaching and learning will be supported into KS2.