



Early Reading Journey

2025 – 2026





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The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go."
Dr. Seuss

At Hammer Lane Academy we have the highest expectations and aspirations for all our pupils. We want them to learn, know and grow. We recognise that reading is a key and fundamental skill which underpins development in all areas of learning and development. We are committed to providing every child with the best possible opportunities to learn to read. We recognise that reading cannot be taught in isolation and needs to sit alongside the EHCP Areas of Need of Cognition and Learning, Communication and Interaction and Sensory/Physical.

Learning to read is a complex process that involves learning many skills. First, children need to learn to communicate and build their vocabulary. As they grow and develop, they need to learn about the alphabet and to make connections between spoken and written words.

We recognise the individual and specific needs of all our learners and that they will not follow a traditional or linear reading journey. Our Reading Journey is based around the Cherry Garden Curriculum, Pre-Key Stage statements, Launchpad for Literacy and Little Wandle SSP Phonics and our learners' EHCP outcomes and Areas of Need.

Why at Hammer Lane we believe Reading is vital and how we support Language Comprehension

- Young people expand their language and vocabulary from listening to stories and rhymes
- Book related talk prepares young people to become committed and enthusiastic readers
- Motivation – access to interesting and meaningful reading material including self- representation.
- Learn more to know more.
- Reasonable adjustments – strategies and resources adapted to engage all learners
- Phonics progression – engagement scales and pre-literate progression leading into systematic synthetic approach. Bespoke delivery.
- Engagement in reading is one of the most important ways to make a difference to life chances

How we provide Motivation and Purpose for Early Reading

To read independently, children must have the motivation and inspiration to read in the first place. They need to understand that reading has meaning and that the words they read have a purpose. This understanding will come from seeing adults and others around them using reading for a purpose and modelling the use of reading in a range of contexts, such as shopping lists,



books, magazines, text messages, emails, greetings cards, storytelling and so on.

Adults should find opportunities to model and encourage reading in everyday and playful contexts and model reading for specific audiences, for example when reading a story at the end of the day.

To prompt children's motivation to read, adults should start with the child's interests and find relevant opportunities in children's self-initiated play to model and encourage reading. Each class also has a dedicated reading session within the day where children have access to Little Wandle reading books, reading for pleasure books and materials and reading and listening games.

Each class has a dedicated story time at the end of the day which may include songs and rhymes, a visual on-screen story or a teacher reading a story, depending on the stage and needs of the learners.

All children are given the opportunity to engage in a Book Share with an adult at least three times per week.

Books are always available as an option during Learning Through Play opportunities and we strive to provide books linked to popular culture and our learners' specific interests.

The Stages of our Reading Journey

At Hammer Lane Academy our learners progress through the following stages as part of their Early Reading Journey. Due to the needs of our learners our Reading Journey is based upon stage rather than age. Below is an outline of the stages of our Reading Journey and what this might look like as part of our teaching and learning.

At all Stages of Reading our learners will be supported by visual and verbal prompts and signs and symbols. We recognise the importance of technology in reading and our learners will be given opportunities to use technology to engage with stories, songs and rhymes or use Widgit for symbolic representations.

Visual supports such as Now and Next boards, visual timetables, communication folders, symbols and schedules form a key part of our reading journey at all Stages.

Children may spend significant time working at each Stage as they progress from accessing activities with physical or visual prompts to being able to do this independently.

Pre-Literate Stage



This stage links to the Routes for Learning Stages of the Cherry Garden Curriculum and may be exemplified by some of the behaviours in the Engagement Scales. It is based upon our learners' behaviours relating to exploration, anticipation, initiation, realisation and persistence. At this Stage our learners may explore Sensory stories and use AAC devices such as a Big Mac.

Links to Cherry Garden Branches 1 to 3 of the Reading Strand

Emergent Stage

At this Stage our learners begin to develop a greater awareness of print in the environment. Book handling skills are practised and children are encouraged to share books with an adult or peers. Children may begin to show some Phonemic awareness through songs and rhymes and language play such as rhyming, alliteration and syllable play. This Stage is supported by activities from Launchpad for Literacy and Foundation for Phonics from Little Wandle. Children working at this Stage will also be developing pre-intentional mark making skills.

Links to Cherry Garden Branches 4 and 5 of the Reading Strand

Early Stage

At this Stage our learners begin to develop their knowledge of the alphabetic code through exposure to our chosen SSP, Little Wandle. Children will begin to recognise graphemes and the associated phonemes and may begin to copy and make some Phonic sounds. Although we follow the SEND Pathway of Little Wandle, to ensure we meet the complex needs of our learners Phonics may be delivered in a variety of styles for example through the use of Sensory opportunities or through technology and games. At this Stage early comprehension skills begin to develop and children may begin to answer simple Why? And What? questions based on the texts and illustrations they read. Children will begin to develop some early writing skills and begin to represent some letters either by using a writing tool or typing letters. Children will be taught to recognise their name and exposed to key sight words through the Whole Word Approach.

Links to Cherry Garden Branches 6 to 8 of the Reading Strand

Transitional Stage

At this Stage our learners begin to become more fluent and independent in their reading and understanding. They will be more consistent in linking letters and sounds and be able to read and match some cvc words through using oral blending and segmenting. Children may play word games such as CVC bingo. They will read some familiar words which may extend to sentences. To support this, children read books matched to their Phonic level as well as choosing books based on their interests. Our learners' comprehension skills will develop to make comments and simple predictions based on what they have read. Our



learners will begin to write their name from memory and use phonic strategies and visual supports to write some cvc and phonetically regular words. At this Stage children will typically be working at Phase 3 and 4 of Little Wandle.

Links to Cherry Garden Branches 9 and 10 of the Reading Strand

Fluency Stage

At this Stage our learners are beginning to be more confident, independent and fluent readers. They can read for a purpose, show enjoyment of reading and gain information and understanding from what they have read. Our learners can engage in simple comprehension-based activities. They can discuss characters and events in familiar stories. Phonic knowledge will have extended and embedded and children will show awareness of more complex graphemes including digraphs and trigraphs. Children will be beginning to write simple sentences using appropriate visual supports. At this Stage children will be confident at Phase 5 of Little Wandle.

Links to Pre Key Stage Standards for Reading and readiness for National Curriculum

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