



Waterton
Academy Trust

Reading Policy

2025 – 2026



watertonacademytrust.org



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The context of our school

Hammer Lane Academy is a specialist setting for Communication and Interaction needs. All of our pupils have an EHCP and require high levels of support across the curriculum. A number of our pupils are pre-verbal. It is essential that our approach to teaching phonics and reading is accessible to all learners, regardless of background and level of need.

Intent

Phonics (reading and spelling)

At Hammer Lane Academy we believe that all our children have the potential to become fluent readers and writers. This is why we teach reading through Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised, which is a systematic and synthetic phonics programme. We teach phonics throughout Hammer Lane Academy and follow the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised progression, which ensures children build on their growing knowledge of the alphabetic code, mastering phonics to read and spell as they move through school. We follow the SEND strand of Little Wandle, which has a key focus on appropriate pace and delivery for our pupils. We make any further necessary adaptations to create a bespoke and personalised Phonic teaching approach. Our pupils may take longer to work through the programme but our aim for all our pupils is to complete the Little Wandle programme.

By the end of the programme, all our children should have strategies to decode any unfamiliar words as they read. At Hammer Lane Academy, we also model the application of the alphabetic code through Phonics in shared reading and writing, both inside and outside of the phonics lesson and across the curriculum. We have a strong focus on language acquisition and development for our children as we know that having communication skills and the ability to show attention and listening skills underpin all areas of learning.

Comprehension

At Hammer Lane Academy we recognise reading as a crucial life skill. Our aim is that by the time our children leave us, they will have the skills to be able to read confidently at an appropriate level and enjoy reading for pleasure. We recognise the adult's role in supporting and leading this where appropriate. We encourage our children to see themselves as readers for both pleasure and purpose.

As we believe teaching every child to read is so important, we have a Reading Leader who drives the early reading programme in our school. This person is highly skilled at teaching phonics and reading, and they monitor and support our whole team, so everyone teaches with fidelity to the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised programme.

Implementation



We are a 'needs led' setting and so children work their way through the programme at the pace that is appropriate for their own level of need and development. This means that we do not set learning pathways by age but by each child's unique journey.

First Steps and Foundations for Phonics

- We provide a balance of child-led and adult-led experiences for all children that meet the curriculum expectations for 'Communication and language' and 'Literacy'. These include:
 - ☐ sharing high-quality stories and poems
 - ☐ learning a range of nursery rhymes and action songs, including sensory rhymes and stories
 - ☐ activities that develop focused listening and attention, including oral blending, body percussion and sound discrimination
 - ☐ Intensive Interaction and modelled language
- We ensure children are well prepared to begin learning grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) and blending in the next stage of their journey

Phase 2 Onwards Phonics teaching

- We teach phonics for a set block of between 5 and 15 minutes a day, this is done individually or in small groups. In addition to this we also share daily oral blending games and children regularly revisit sounds during their provision sessions and directed tasks linked to their EHCP.
- We follow the Little Wandle SEND programme:
 - ☐ This programme covers all the key components and aspects of the Little Wandle programme but does so at a pace appropriate to each individual child. Some of the sessions are delivered in a more practical 'hands on' way but the key themes and sounds taught remain the same as the main programme.
 - ☐ Our aim is for our children to achieve to the very best of their abilities and to achieve this through their own personal learning journey.

Teaching reading:

- We teach children to read through daily Phonics sessions. In addition to this each class has a daily timetabled reading session. These sessions provide an opportunity for children to read Little Wandle reading books with an adult, access Reading for Pleasure books, picture books other reading materials including newspapers, comics, signs, symbols and environmental print. Children may also play listening games and reading games. In this session children are also given access to the Whole Word Approach which supports the development of sight vocabulary.
- Each reading session has a clear focus for individuals, so that the demands of the session do not overload the children's working memory.

Home reading



We recognise that due to the level of needs of our families and children reading at home is not always possible or practical. Therefore, we offer the option of taking books home but this is not an expectation.

- The decodable reading practice book can be taken home to ensure success is shared with the family.
 - Reading for pleasure books can also go home for parents to share and read to children. We share the research behind the importance and impact of sharing quality children's books with parents through workshops, leaflets and the Everybody read! resources.
 - We use the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised parents' resources to engage our families and share information about phonics, the benefits of sharing books, how children learn to blend and other aspects of our teaching. This is done both through signposted online resources and through workshops.

Ensuring consistency and pace of progress

- Every teacher in our school has been trained to teach reading, so we have the same expectations of progress. We all use the same language, routines and resources to teach children to read so that we lower children's cognitive load.
- Weekly planning grids map each element of new learning to each day, week and term for the duration of the programme.
- Lesson templates, Prompt cards and 'How to' videos ensure teachers all have a consistent approach and structure for each lesson.
- The Reading Leader and SLT use the Audit and Prompt cards to regularly monitor and observe teaching; they use the summative data to identify children who need additional support and gaps in learning.

Embedding reading for pleasure

'Reading for pleasure is the single most important indicator of a child's success.' (OECD 2002)

'The will influences the skill and vice versa.' (OECD 2010)

We value reading for pleasure highly and work hard as a school to grow our Reading for Pleasure pedagogy.

- We read to children every day. We choose these books carefully as we want children to experience a wide range of books, including books that reflect the children at Hammer Lane Academy and our local community as well as books that open windows into other countries and cultures.
- We share books with home and encourage sharing reading activities via our Tapestry app.
- Children may visit the local library every term.
- We use the Everybody Read! resources to grow our teachers' knowledge of current books, the most recent research and to grow our own Reading for Pleasure practice.

Impact



Assessment

Assessment is used to monitor progress and track children's progress to ensure that there are no gaps in learning. Assessment is used to adapt our teaching for the needs of our children.

- Assessment for learning is used:
 - ☐ daily within class to track and assess progress,
 - ☐ weekly in the Review lesson to assess gaps, address these immediately and secure fluency of GPCs, words and spellings.
- Summative assessment is used:
 - ☐ every six weeks to assess progress, to identify gaps in learning that need to be addressed, to identify any children needing additional support and to plan the Keep-up support that they need.
 - ☐ by SLT and scrutinised through the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised assessment tracker, to narrow attainment gaps between different groups of children and so that any additional support for teachers can be put into place.
- Fluency assessments measure children's accuracy and reading speed in short one-minute assessments. They are used:
 - ☐ when children are reading the Phase 5 set 3, 4 and 5 books
 - ☐ to assess when children are ready to exit their programme. This is dependent on the number of words they can read per minute dependent on their particular stage. At these levels, children should have sufficient fluency to tackle any book at their identified level.
- A placement assessment is used:
 - ☐ with any child new to the school to quickly identify any gaps in their phonic knowledge and plan and provide appropriate teaching.

Statutory assessment

- Children in Year 1 typically sit the Phonics Screening check. Any child not passing the check re- sits it in Year 2. At Hammer Lane Academy we will work with parents and may disapply children from these statutory assessments if we feel this is in their best interests. Grow. Achieve. Shine - These are much more than words or a motto. At Hammer Lane School we enable all children to grow as independent learners, achieve more than they ever believe they could and shine as unique individuals. Preparing our pupils for life in an ever-changing world, developing curious, well-rounded individuals who are determined to succeed.

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