Our Phonics Rationale

At St. Alban's Catholic Primary School, we are passionate about ensuring all children become confident and enthusiastic readers and writers. We aim to create a love of reading, writing, and spelling through consistent, high quality teaching of Phonics. We strongly believe that the use of systematic synthetic phonics is the best way to teach children to read and write. We have a designated person to lead phonics and all staff are trained as phonics experts. As such the teaching of phonics is rigorous and delivered by trained staff who ensure children get lots of practice and keep up with the expected pace of phonics learning.

Being able to read and write is the most important skill children will learn during their early schooling and has far-reaching implications for lifelong confidence and well-being. The independent review of early reading (*Independent Review of the Teaching of Early Reading March 2006)* confirmed that 'high quality phonic work' should be the prime means for teaching children how to read and spell words. The review also highlighted the importance of developing from the earliest stages, children's speaking and listening skills, ensuring that children are ready to get off to a good start in phonic work by the age of five. Such work should be set within a broad and rich language curriculum.

The use of phonics is one of the many skills needed to be able to be a competent reader and independent writer. We aim to teach high quality phonics to ensure the children have the best start possible in reading and writing. The learning of phonics is the beginning of children's body of knowledge, skills and understanding that are an essential part of learning to read and write. In order to read and understand texts children must learn to recognise and decode the words on the page. Good quality phonics teaching allows children to be secure in the skills of word recognition, decoding and spelling which allows children to read and write with confidence and fluency. This will result in children being able to read for pleasure and will allow them to move on to developing higher order comprehension skills. At St. Alban's Catholic Primary School we have a high number of EAL children and so place a high focus on creating a language rich environment to support our children's language and literacy development.

We ensure that these phonics skills are taught systematically and involve a variety of resources to engage and inspire and which set high expectations for children's achievement and attainment in reading and writing.

The Structure of our Phonics Curriculum

Our Phonics curriculum follows the **MONSTER PHONICS** scheme. This systematic synthetic phonics programme is DfE approved and has been developed to ensure that phonics teaching is multisensory, fun, and engaging. It is a 'whole class' scheme which builds a clear progression of phonetic skills and knowledge which are reinforced across all year groups.

Monster Phonics

Monster Phonics uses a unique colour-coded grapheme system to promote understanding, and enables children to become more confident, independent learners. It makes learning to read and spell through phonics easier, by categorising the 44 sounds into 10 categories and each of these 10 categories are represented by a Monster. Each coloured grapheme is paired with a monster character that makes the same sound to give audio-visual prompts that help children 'see' each sound within a word and pronounce it correctly. The child learns through the assignment of colour and the linkage of the sound. Daily lesson plans and a comprehensive range of resources, in the scheme, supports our practitioners in delivering with consistency across each year group and in promoting a clear progression of phonic teaching and learning throughout school. To support teachers and reduce workload the scheme provides a wide range of resources including videos, games, songs, and activities. Colour-coded flashcards, word charts and PowerPoints make the teaching of the phoneme-grapheme correspondence, common exception and high-frequency words far easier. These resources are used to ensure the structure is constantly seen, heard, and experienced by each child. This consistency is critical in ensuring that a complicated

language is learnt in the most simplistic way.

It is extremely important that reading books closely match pupils' phonics knowledge. Monster Phonics provides us with a structured sequential programme of decodable reading books that carefully match the letter–sound correspondences the children have learned. This means that children build confidence and fluency from the very beginning of learning to read. These reading books are aligned to the National Curriculum and meet all the Ofsted requirements. They are easy and exciting to read for children, with read-along sections for parents of younger children that help bring the story to life.





Our Whole School Phonics Approach

In line with our commitment to excellence in Phonics, each class in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 teach phonics as a discrete lesson every day and includes phonics as part of teaching and learning throughout other curriculum lessons. The structure of each lesson and the journey of Phonics across the week enables all aspects of the blending and segmenting of phonemes/graphemes to be taught alongside the teaching of high frequency and common exception words. Lessons are uniquely planned and tailored to meet the needs of all our learners. They follow the cycle of 'Review, Teach, Practise, Apply' to ensure that children are consolidating phonic knowledge and skills over time and that they can apply them in context. Consequently, wherever possible, links between phonic knowledge and understanding are made in both Reading and Writing. These lessons proceed at pace and incorporate a wide range of practical and interactive learning opportunities provided by the Monster Phonics programme. These learning opportunities are carefully chosen to ensure that children develop their skills in aural discrimination and phonemic and rhyme awareness, blending and segmenting as well as grapheme-phoneme correspondence.

In Reception the children learn the letters and sounds (graphemes and phonemes) and the skills of blending and segmenting with letters. Children focus on learning the 19 most common single letter sounds and are then introduced to the remaining alphabet sounds and the more difficult and/or less commonly used phonemes; digraphs and trigraphs, sounds which are made up of two (digraphs) and three letters (trigraphs). When the children are secure in their knowledge of these graphemes/phonemes the aim is to consolidate their knowledge of graphemes in reading and spelling words containing adjacent consonants and polysyllabic words. Children should now be blending confidently to work out new words and able to read words straight off, rather than having to sound them out.

In **Year 1** the children will broaden their knowledge of graphemes and phonemes for use in reading and spelling. They will learn new graphemes and alternative pronunciations for the graphemes they already know. Continuing to build on independence is a key element in Year 1 and as a year group emphasis is placed on encouraging children to become quicker at recognising graphemes of more than one letter in words and at blending the phonemes they represent. When spelling words, they will learn to choose the appropriate graphemes to represent phonemes and begin to build word-specific knowledge of the spellings

of words. These skills help develop reading and spelling fluency and accuracy. Throughout their Phonics lessons emphasis is placed on developing the children's blending and segmenting skills to support reading and spelling. High frequency words and common exception words are taught alongside to develop reading fluency and spelling accuracy.

In **Year 2** the focus is on developing a fluent, confident approach to reading, spelling, and writing. Children will be reading longer and less familiar texts independently and with increasing fluency. The shift from learning to read to reading to learn takes place and children read for information and for pleasure.

Reception and Key Stage 1 use a range of decodable reading books, alongside the Monster Phonics books to support children's reading development. These are closely matched to each child's ability from a baseline assessment in each class and subsequent assessments.

For a more detailed overview of the content taught throughout the year refer to the Yearly Overview Plans

The National Curriculum

In following the MONSTER PHONICS scheme, we are delivering the full depth and breadth of the National Curriculum and the Early Years Framework. We are able to teach using systematic synthetic phonics instruction to develop the crucial decoding skills needed for early reading and writing development.

Staff Development & Training

Training has been disseminated to all teaching staff concerning subject knowledge development, pedagogy and teaching strategies. All teachers will be receiving regular training sessions from the Monster Phonics Programme and the Phonics Lead has regular training sessions with the Monster Phonics team to maintain a consistent approach to teaching phonics in both lesson structure and fidelity to the scheme.

Parental Support

To support parents, we run Phonics Workshops annually and have an open-door policy to enable parents to have an open dialogue regarding home support with either class teachers or our Phonics Lead. Teachers share week's graphemes and words on Class Dojo.

Monitoring & Reviewing

Our phonics teaching approaches, and pedagogy are regularly reviewed and monitored through professional discussions and listening carefully to our children through pupil voice and parental feedback.

Internal and external moderation and interschool collaborations also contribute to how we develop and move forward with our phonics teaching and learning. These enable us to look at the impact of our teaching and learning approaches and share good practice and support other schools where appropriate.

Pupil progress meeting and learning walk reviews and feedback are used consistently to identify areas for support and measure the impact of training and resources.