



Phonics and Early Reading Policy



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Intent

Phonics (reading and spelling)

At Menston Primary School, we believe that all our children can become fluent readers and writers. This is why we teach reading through *Essential Letters and Sounds (ELS)*, which is a systematic and synthetic phonics programme. We start teaching phonics in Reception and follow the [*Essential Letters and Sounds progression*](#) which ensures children build on their growing knowledge of the alphabetic code, mastering phonics to read and spell as they move through school.

As a result, all our children are able to tackle unfamiliar words as they read. At Menston Primary School, we ensure that phonics is not confined to discrete lessons but is modelled and applied through shared reading and writing across the curriculum and in a range of meaningful contexts. Alongside this, we place a strong emphasis on oracy, language, and vocabulary development. We know that speaking, listening, and the confident use of language are essential foundations for reading and writing in every subject. By embedding phonics, oracy and rich language experiences throughout the school day, we support our children to become fluent, enthusiastic, and resilient readers.

Comprehension

At Menston Primary School, we value reading as a crucial life skill. By the time children leave us, they read confidently for meaning and regularly enjoy reading for pleasure. Our readers are equipped with the tools to tackle unfamiliar vocabulary. We encourage our children to see themselves as readers for both pleasure and purpose.

Because we believe teaching every child to read is vital, all staff champion reading, writing, phonics and handwriting across the school. English Leads are skilled in the teaching of phonics and early reading and work closely with staff to monitor and support the teaching of reading. Through their guidance, all staff teach with consistency and fidelity to the Essential Letters and Sounds programme, ensuring the very best start for every child.

Implementation

We deliver daily phonics lessons of 30 minutes. In Reception, we begin with shorter 10-minute lessons, gradually increasing to the full session. We also include daily oral blending games and keep-up support to consolidate learning. Each week, we carry out a Review lesson to revisit the week's learning, helping children build fluency with graphemes, words and tricky words. Teaching in Reception begins in Week 2 of the Autumn term, ensuring a strong start for all children.

Phonics Progression and Expectations (ELS)

In Reception, children are taught to read and spell words using Phase 2 and 3 GPCs and to read words with adjacent consonants (Phase 4) with fluency and accuracy. In Year 1, children review Phases 3 and 4 and progress to reading and spelling using Phase 5 GPCs, again aiming for fluency and accuracy.

Additional Features and Support

Daily Keep-Up sessions are provided for children who need extra consolidation. These lessons mirror class phonics structure but are scaffolded to smaller steps, enabling children to secure their phonic knowledge. We use comprehensive weekly planning and resources from Essential Letters and Sounds to maintain consistency and high quality in every lesson.

As children master Phase 5 and are fluent in decoding, we transition them to texts where fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary development become the focus, while still reinforcing phonics where needed.

Phonics is integrated beyond the phonics lesson - we model the use of the alphabetic code in shared reading and writing across the curriculum, reinforcing phoneme-grapheme correspondence, blending, and segmenting in meaningful contexts.

Daily Keep-up lessons ensure every child learns to read

- Any child who needs additional practice has keep-up support. These sessions match the structure of class teaching, and use the same procedures, resources and mantras but in smaller steps with more repetition, so that every child secures their learning.
- We timetable phonics interventions for any child in Year 2 or 3 who is not fully fluent at reading or has not passed the Phonics Screening Check. These children need to catch up, so the gap between themselves and their peers does not widen. We use the ELS assessments and phonics tracker to identify and record any gaps in their phonic knowledge and teach to these using the Keep-up resources.
- If any child in Year 3 to 6 has gaps in their phonic knowledge when reading or writing, we plan phonics 'catch-up' lessons to address specific reading/writing gaps. We use ELS Rapid Progress to enhance skills and also Readerful Rise books to further develop decoding skills.

Teaching reading- practice sessions

We teach children to read through guided reading sessions twice a week.

These:

- are taught by an adult to small groups of approximately six children.
 - use books matched to the children's secure phonic knowledge using the ELS assessments and book matching grids
- Each reading practice session has a clear focus, so that the demands of the session do not overload the children's working memory. The reading practice sessions have been designed to focus on three key reading skills:
 - decoding
 - prosody: teaching children to read with understanding and expression
 - comprehension: teaching children to understand the text.
- In Reception, children who are not yet ready for word books begin their reading journey in reading practice sessions using wordless books, developing language, storytelling skills, and book-handling behaviours before progressing to decodable texts.
- In Year 2 and 3, we continue to teach reading in this way for any children who still need to practise reading with decodable books.

Home Reading

- Each child takes home two decodable reading practice books every week, carefully matched to their phonetic level, so that reading success can be shared with their family.
- A reading-for-pleasure library book also goes home once a week, giving parents the opportunity to share stories and read to their children.
- In Reception, a phonic workshop is delivered to parents to engage families. It provides guidance on phonics, the benefits of sharing books, how children learn to blend and other aspects of our reading provision.

Additional Reading Support

- We have reading volunteers in school that complete 1-1 reading with pupils to support decoding and/or fluency.
- Children who need extra support have additional reading sessions with staff members more frequently, often one-to-one, to consolidate skills and build confidence.

Reading for Pleasure

At Menston Primary School, we value reading for pleasure highly and work intentionally to grow our Reading for Pleasure pedagogy.

- We read to children every day, selecting books carefully to ensure they experience a wide range of stories. This includes books that reflect the children at Menston Primary and our local community, as well as books that provide windows into other worlds and cultures.
- Every classroom has an inviting book corner, curated to encourage a love of reading. Staff talk about and share these books to inspire children to explore a wide range of texts.
- In Reception, children have access to the reading corner during free-flow time. Books are continually refreshed to link to topics, core texts and children's interests.
- Children from Reception onwards have a home reading record, where parents/carers can share comments with school adults. Staff may write in these records to maintain consistent communication between home and school.
- As children progress through the school, each class has a reading floor book. Pupils take these home and record book reviews that can be shared with peers.
- The school library is available for classes, booked via the school system, and provides further opportunities to engage with a wide range of texts.

Enriching Reading Experiences

- Children have regular opportunities to participate in Reading for Pleasure events including book fairs, author visits, workshops and national literacy initiatives. Visitors such as authors celebrate reading and inspire children to share a love of books.
- Every child at Menston Primary School is a member of the local library. Visits are timetabled half termly and are enjoyed by all.
- Whole-school reading initiatives include World Book Day celebrations and buddy-class reading, where older children support younger readers, inspiring them and fostering a school-wide culture of reading for enjoyment.

By embedding these practices across the curriculum and school life, we ensure children develop both the skills and the will to read, nurturing confident, lifelong readers.

Impact

Assessment

Assessment is used to monitor progress and identify any child who needs additional support as soon as possible.

Assessment for Learning

- Used daily within class to identify children needing Keep-up support.
- Used weekly in the Review lesson to assess gaps, address them immediately, and secure fluency of GPCs, words and spellings.

Summative Assessment

- Conducted every five weeks to track progress using the phonics tracker, identify gaps in learning, plan Keep-up support and ensure children receive additional help where needed.
- Carried out by the English Leads and scrutinised through the Essential Letters and Sounds phonics assessment tracker to narrow attainment gaps between groups of children and provide targeted support for children and teachers.

Statutory Assessment

- Children in Year 1 sit the Phonics Screening Check. Any child not passing the check re-sits it in Year 2.

Ongoing Assessment for Catch-Up

- Children in Years 2 to 6 are assessed through formative teacher assessment, ensuring any gaps are identified and addressed promptly. Children who did not pass the phonics check in KS1, complete the new phonics check each year in KS2 to assess progress.