Phonics Policy

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1. Rationale

1.1.1 At Dudley Infant Academy, we believe that all our children can become fluent readers and writers and that the teaching of phonics plays a pivotal role in this. We therefore teach reading through the ***Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised Phonics Scheme***, which is a systematic and synthetic phonics programme. We start teaching phonics in Reception 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.

2. Aims

i) To sustain high quality teaching of phonics so that all staff are experts in teaching systematic, synthetic phonics and understand their role in developing children as readers.
ii) To transfer phonic skills across the curriculum.
iii) Purposeful monitoring takes place across the academy to ensure that there is a rigorous and sequential approach to the teaching of phonics.
iv) Reading books connect closely to the phonics knowledge pupils are taught when they are learning to read.

3. The Curriculum

3.1.1 Words are made up from small units of sound called phonemes. Phonics teaches children to be able to listen carefully and identify the phonemes that make up each word. This helps children to learn to read words and to spell words.

3.1.2 In some languages learning phonics is easy because each phoneme has just one grapheme to represent it. However, the English language is more complicated than this. This is largely because England has been invaded so many times throughout its history. Each set of invaders brought new words and new sounds with them. As a result, English only has around

44 phonemes but there are around 120 graphemes or ways of writing down those 44 phonemes. Obviously, we only have 26 letters in the alphabet so some graphemes are made up from more than one letter.

3.1.3 ch th oo ay (these are all digraphs - graphemes with two letters) There are other graphemes that are trigraphs (made up of 3 letters) and even a few made from 4 letters.

3.1.4 Another challenge is that some graphemes can represent more than one phoneme. For example ch makes very different sounds in these three words: chip, school, chef.

3.1.5 At Dudley Infant Academy the 'Little Wandle, Revised Letters and Sounds' programme is taught throughout EYFS, Year 1 and Year 2.

3.1.6 Little Wandle Letters and Sounds is a phonics scheme validated by the Department for Education. It aims to build children's speaking and listening skills in their own right as well as to prepare children for learning to read by developing their phonic knowledge and skills. The programme is organised into structured phases building on acquired phonics knowledge and skills learnt at each phase.

4. Organisation and Planning

4.1 Daily phonics lessons in EYFS and Key Stage 1

4.1.1 Phonics is taught daily across EYFS and Key Stage 1. Sessions are delivered in a variety of ways to include whole class, small group and individual teaching tailored to the children's needs.

4.1.2 We teach phonics for up to 30 minutes a day. In EYFS, we build from 10-minute lessons, with additional daily oral blending games, to the full-length lesson as quickly as possible. At the end of the week, we review the week's teaching to help children become fluent readers.

4.1.3 Children make a strong start in EYFS. Teaching begins in the Autumn term. We follow the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised expectations of progress:

i) Children in Reception are taught to read and spell words using Phase 2 and 3 GPCs, and words with adjacent consonants (Phase 4) with fluency and accuracy.
ii) Children in Year 1 review Phase 3 and 4 and are taught to read and spell words using Phase 5 GPCs with fluency and accuracy.
iii) Children in Year 2 review Phase 4 and 5 and are taught to read and spell words using Phase 5 GPCs with fluency and accuracy.

4.2 Daily Keep-up lessons ensure every child learns to read

4.2.1 Any child who needs additional practice has daily keep-up support, taught by a trained adult. Keep-up lessons 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.

4.2.2 We timetable additional phonics lessons for any child in Year 2 who is not fully fluent at reading or has not passed the Year 1 phonics screening check. These children urgently need to catch up, so the gap between themselves and their peers does not widen. We use the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised assessments to identify the gaps in their phonic knowledge and teach to these using the Keep-up resources – at pace.

4.2.3 One important aspect of phonics is the teaching of pseudo (nonsense) words. It is vital to incorporate pseudo words as they enable the children to use their phonics just through decoding skills and ensure that they are reading for the Year 1 phonics screening. Pseudo words are taught as an integral part of Little Wandle phonic sessions.

4.2.4 As well as daily phonic teaching, there are opportunities for children to apply their phonic knowledge and skills across the curriculum; especially in shared and guided reading. Every opportunity is taken to ensure the children use their phonics knowledge in every aspect of their learning.

5. Assessment and Reporting

5.1 Assessment is used to monitor progress and to identify any child needing additional support as soon as they need it.

5.2 Assessment for learning is used:

i) Daily within class to identify children needing Keep-up support
ii) Weekly in the Review lesson to assess gaps, address these immediately and secure fluency of GPCs, words and spellings.

5.3 Summative assessment is used:

i.) 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.
ii.) By senior leaders 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.

5.4 The Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised placement assessment is used:

i.) With any child new to the school to quickly identify any gaps in their phonic knowledge and plan provide appropriate extra teaching.

6. Year 1 Phonics Screening

6.1.1 The phonics screening check is a statutory assessment for all children in Year 1 (first introduced in 2012). It is designed to confirm whether individual children have learnt phonic decoding to an appropriate standard.

6.1.2 Children who do not achieve the appropriate threshold at the end of Year 1 will receive support from the school to improve their phonic decoding skills. These children then retake the phonics screening check towards the end of Year 2.

6.1.3 The phonics screening check comprises a list of 40 words that children read one-to-one with a teacher. The list is a combination of both real and pseudo words. As pseudo words are new to all children, they do not favour children with a good vocabulary knowledge or large visual memory of words which is why it is imperative that they feature in the day to day phonics teaching.

6.1.4 The pseudo words will be shown to children alongside pictures of imaginary creatures to show the child that it is a pseudo word and not a word which they will already know.

6.1.5Teachers will report to parents whether or not their child met the required standard to ensure they are aware of their child's progress in developing phonics skills.

7. Appendix A - Glossary of Terms

7.1.1 **Adjacent consonants:** Two or more consonants that come together in a word without any intervening vowel or vowels (for example, 'd-r' in 'drop', 's-t-r' in 'strap'). Adjacent consonants do not constitute a discrete unit of sound and are read by blending the individual consonant phonemes involved.

7.1.2 **Alien words:** A child-friendly term for 'pseudo-words'.

7.1.3 **Alphabetic code:** The relationship between the sounds that can be identified in speech (phonemes) and the letters used to represent them in writing (graphemes).

7.1.4 **Alternative pronunciation:** A different way of pronouncing a grapheme. For example, the letters 'ow' can represent the sounds /ow/ as in 'crown' and /oa/ as in 'snow'.

7.1.5 **Alternative spelling:** A different way of spelling a phoneme. For example, the sound /w/ can be represented in writing by 'w' as in 'wave' and 'wh' as in 'what'.

7.1.6 **Blend:** To combine individual phonemes into a whole word, working all the way through from left to right. Once the GPCs involved have been learned, blending is the key process involved in reading words effectively. It is a skill that needs extensive practice. Practice in oral blending is very helpful, both before and during the process of learning to read. It is important to understand that blending sounds into a word is not simply a matter of saying them more quickly, nor of mixing them together like paint. Phonemes need to be joined into one continuous stream of sound to make a spoken word. Extensive practice, following teacher modelling, is the key.

7.1.7 **Catchphrase:** A type of mnemonic in the form of a memorable (often funny) phrase. Catchphrases are
generally used in this programme to help children remember some of the later GPCs learned, where a picture alone might not give enough of a 'hook'.

7.1.8 **Chunk it up:** To break up a longer word and read it one part (chunk) at a time, to avoid being overwhelmed and to ease the process of blending.

7.1.9 **Compound word:** A word made by joining two individual words together, for example, 'houseboat' is
'house' + 'boat'.

7.1.10 **Digraph:** A grapheme using two letters to represent one phoneme. With children, we frequently reinforce it with the mantra 'two letters, one sound'. At the appropriate stage, it is useful for children to learn
to use the term and to understand what it means.

7.1.11 **Fluency:** The ability to read accurately with speed and expression. Fluent readers read words automatically without needing to decode. It is at this point that we see them able to focus on comprehension
and make sense of what is being read.

7.1.12 **Formation phrase:** A memorable phrase used to support the children in forming the letter correctly
using directional vocabulary, such as 'down', 'up', 'across' and 'over'.



Under the snake's chin, slide down and round its tail.

7.1.13 **GPC:** This stands for grapheme–phoneme correspondence, the sound–letter relationship between
each element of the alphabetic code. Written English is quite complex and does not have one-to-one grapheme–phoneme correspondence. The same phoneme can be represented by different graphemes in different words, and the same grapheme can represent different phonemes in different words. To ensure learning is systematic, and to avoid cognitive overload, this programme generally teaches one fairly common grapheme representation of each phoneme first. Alternative spellings of the same phoneme, and alternative pronunciation of the same grapheme are usually taught later, mostly in Phase 5.

7.1.14 **Grapheme:** A letter or group of letters used to represent a particular phoneme when writing. With
children, we sometimes call this 'a sound written down', although, as with 'phoneme', it is helpful for children

to learn to use the correct term from the beginning. The way graphemes are used to represent phonemes in
our written language is known as the ‘alphabetic code’.

7.1.15 Grow the code: To systematically and incrementally teach additional GPCs so that the range of words
children can read continually extends.

7.1.16 Homograph: Homographs are words that have the same spelling but different meanings, for example,
‘pen’ (writing implement) and ‘pen’ (animal enclosure).

7.1.17 Homophone: Homophones are words that have the same pronunciation but different spellings or
meanings, for example, ‘prey’ and ‘pray’.

7.1.18 Mnemonic: Any simple device used to assist memory. In this programme, it is a combination of an
engaging picture with a letter and is used as a ‘hook’ to help children remember a particular GPC when they first learn it.

7.1.19Multi-syllable word: A word with more than one syllable. Syllables are easy to recognise when words
are spoken, but hard to distinguish in printed words until you know how to say them. The best way for children to learn to recognise syllables is to count (or clap) them when reciting known rhymes, songs, and
so on.

7.1.20 Oral blending: A technique for the early practice of blending. The teacher articulates each phoneme
in a word separately, in order, and children respond by saying the whole word aloud. Alternatively, they can
be asked to blend the word silently and show they have done so by responding with some action, for example, touching their head, after the teacher has pronounced the separate phonemes in the word ‘head’. Such
practice is valuable both before and during the early stages of learning to read. (Also known as ‘sound-talk’.)

7.1.21 Orthographic store: Children learn to read by first sounding and blending words, and then reading
them ‘straight off’, without overt sounding and blending. Once this has been practised sufficiently, recognition
of these words becomes automatic and they are held as an orthographic store in a highly specialised area of
the brain that expert neurologist Stanislas Dehaene calls ‘the brain’s letterbox’. This orthographic store, and
the instantaneous recall it enables, is the basis of fluent reading. It is important to remember that the

orthographic store is most effectively built up through extensive practice of the sounding–blending–reading process, which establishes the necessary neural pathways, not through trying to memorise countless whole words.

7.1.22 **Overt blending aloud:** Sound-talking aloud every phoneme in turn before blending them together to form the word.

7.1.23 **Phoneme:** The smallest unit of sound that can be identified in words. We sometimes simply call this a 'sound', although it is helpful for children to use the term 'phoneme' from the beginning of the Little Wandle scheme.

7.1.24 **Phonetically plausible:** Comprising grapheme–phoneme correspondences that can be found in English words, even if they are not correct spellings of the (or any) actual word, for example, 'thor' instead of 'thaw'.

7.1.25 **Phonics screening check:** A statutory national assessment in England, conducted internally by schools towards the end of Year 1. Its sole purpose is to determine whether a child can phonically decode single words to an annually predetermined national standard.

7.1.26 **Phonics:** The method by which we teach children to read by recognising the connections between the sounds of spoken words (phonemes) and the letters that are used to write them down (graphemes).

7.1.27 **Point and sweep:** A technique for reinforcing the process of sounding and blending involving the teacher pointing to each phoneme in a word, in sequence from left to right, and then sweeping a finger below the word, again from left to right, to indicate the blending. It can be used with the teacher and/or children vocalising each stage, or as a reinforcement to silent sounding and blending as children become more confident.

7.1.28 **Prefix:** A recognisable unit of language added to the beginning of a word to change its meaning. For example, 'rewrite' is 'write' with 're–' added at the beginning, so 're–' is the prefix. Examples of other common prefixes are 'un–', 'dis–', 'sub–'. Prefixes usually carry a particular meaning, whatever word they are applied to.

7.1.29 **Prosody:** The rhythmic and intonational aspect of speech that manifests as expressive reading. It comprises timing, phrasing and intonation, and helps to convey meaning and add 'life' to reading.

7.1.30 **Pseudo-words:** Simple, phonetically plausible 'words' that don't actually occur in the English language; used (as in the Phonics screening check) to assess whether a child can correctly read a word they
haven't seen before, using phonic decoding; use should be confined to assessment.

7.1.31 **Reading:** The process of looking at written symbols and getting meaning from them – making meaning
from print.

7.1.32 **Revisit and review:** The first part of the lesson where the core purpose is to activate prior knowledge
– bringing prior learning to the forefront of the children's minds and promoting the transference of working
memory into long-term memory.

7.1.33 **Segment:** To identify each of the individual phonemes in a word, working all the way through from
left to right. This is an important first stage of writing (spelling) a word but needs to be practised orally first.
Counting the phonemes is often helpful in reinforcing this process.

7.1.34 **Sound button:** A graphic device to help children recognise the separate phonemes in a printed word.
Sound buttons can be used as a support in the early stages of learning. For each word, a dot is placed under
any single-letter grapheme and a short horizontal line under the group of letters that form a digraph or trigraph, as shown below.



7.1.35 **Sound talk:** See 'Oral blending', above.

7.1.36 **Speedy sounds:** The rapid recall of previously taught GPCs.

7.1.37 **Speedy words:** Fluent reading of previously read words containing known GPCs that are read without
blending.

7.1.38 **Split vowel digraph:** A digraph representing a vowel sound where its two letters are split by an intervening consonant (for example, 'a_e' in 'take'). Despite having a consonant in between them, the two
letters involved (here 'a' and 'e') still count as one digraph, making one sound. The vowel sound is pronounced

at the position of the first of the two letters of the digraph (that is, in the middle of ‘take’). At early learning
stages, a split digraph is often highlighted with a short line joining the two halves of the digraph above the
intervening consonant, as shown below.



7.1.39 Suffix: A recognisable unit of language added to the end of a word to change its form, such as the
tense of a verb. For example, ‘playing’ is ‘play’ + ‘–ing’, so ‘–ing’ is the suffix. Examples of other common
suffixes are ‘–er’, ‘–ed’, ‘–est’.

7.1.40 Tricky words: High-frequency words that, although decodable in themselves, cannot be decoded by
children using the GPCs they have been taught up to that point. Not all high-frequency words are ‘tricky
words’. Many tricky words cease to be tricky in the later stages of our programme, as more GPCs are learned.

7.1.41 Trigraph: A grapheme using three letters to represent one phoneme. With children, we frequently
reinforce it with the mantra ‘three letters, one sound’. At the appropriate stage, it is useful for children to
learn to use the term and to understand what it means.

7.1.42 Vocabulary: All of the words that a person knows and uses within their language.

7.1.43 Vowel sound: Although we have five vowel letters in English, each one can be pronounced in different
ways and there are, therefore, far more than five vowel phonemes (vowel sounds). Each one has a short
vowel form, with a fairly staccato pronunciation; these are the vowel sounds heard, for example, in ‘hat’,
‘bed’, ‘big’, ‘hot’ and ‘tub’. Each also has a more elongated pronunciation, the long vowel form heard, for
example, in ‘play’, ‘seed’, ‘high’, ‘blow’ and ‘tube’. There are, additionally, more complex vowel forms, for
example, those heard in ‘bear’ and ‘farm’. Graphemes for short vowel phonemes are the easiest to learn and
are taught first. Most GPCs for long vowels involve digraphs or trigraphs and are taught later, generally in
Phase 5.

7.1.44 **Whisper blending:** An intermediary stage that can help children bridge the gap between sounding and
blending aloud and doing the process silently ‘in their head’