

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School Voluntary Academy Reading Policy



Headteacher: Mrs. C Hargreaves

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Governor: Mrs. J. Southern

Date: September 2026

Review:

Date: September 2027

INTENT

At St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, we believe that reading is the foundation of all learning and a gateway to lifelong opportunities. We are committed to developing confident, fluent and enthusiastic readers who can access the full curriculum and develop a genuine love of books and literature. Reading is prioritised from the moment children enter Nursery and remains at the heart of our curriculum throughout their time at St Joseph's.

We recognise that reading consists of two key elements: word reading and language comprehension. Our curriculum is therefore designed to provide children with the skills to decode efficiently while also developing their vocabulary, understanding and enjoyment of texts. Through a carefully planned approach to early reading, systematic phonics teaching, high-quality shared reading experiences and a culture that promotes reading for pleasure, we strive to ensure that every child becomes a successful reader regardless of their starting point, background or additional needs.

Our reading curriculum is ambitious and inclusive. We aim for all pupils to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding required to meet or exceed National Curriculum expectations. Through exposure to a diverse range of high-quality texts, children develop cultural capital, empathy, curiosity and an appreciation of language. We want all pupils to leave St Joseph's as fluent readers, critical thinkers and lifelong lovers of reading.

IMPLEMENTATION

Early Years and Phonics

Reading begins in Nursery where children's communication, language and listening skills are carefully developed through a language-rich environment. Children engage in listening games, rhymes, stories, songs, environmental sound activities and sound discrimination games. These experiences develop children's attention, vocabulary and phonological awareness, providing the essential foundations for future phonics learning.

From the first week of Reception, children participate in daily phonics lessons through the Read Write Inc. programme.

Read Write Inc. is a systematic synthetic phonics programme that teaches children to recognise sounds, blend sounds to read words and segment words for spelling. Lessons are carefully structured, fast paced and highly interactive, enabling children to make rapid progress from their individual starting points.

Ongoing assessment ensures that children are grouped appropriately and receive teaching that closely matches their stage of development. Books are fully matched to children's phonic knowledge so that they can practise and consolidate new learning successfully. Children who require additional support receive timely intervention to ensure they keep up rather than catch up. Where required, phonics support continues into Key Stage Two through targeted intervention.

Shared Reading

Alongside the teaching of phonics, children are immersed in high-quality literature throughout the school. Shared reading forms a key part of our approach to developing comprehension, vocabulary and fluency. From Year 2 to Year 6, shared reading is delivered through Literacy Counts' Ready Steady Read Together programme. This provides a carefully sequenced curriculum built around high-quality, vocabulary-rich texts. Through explicit teacher modelling of fluency, expression, intonation and prosody, children learn how skilled readers construct meaning from text. Lessons provide regular opportunities for retrieval, prediction, inference, clarification, summarising and discussion, ensuring progression across all National Curriculum reading domains. Shared reading also promotes oracy and critical thinking, enabling pupils to articulate their ideas and justify responses using evidence from the text.

Wider Reading

At St Joseph's, we believe that reading for pleasure is fundamental to reading success. We work hard to develop a culture in which books are valued, celebrated and enjoyed by all. Every classroom contains an inviting and engaging book area that reflects children's interests and provides access to a broad range of quality fiction, non-fiction and poetry. Books are carefully selected to promote diversity, broaden experiences and foster a love of reading.

Children have regular opportunities to visit and use our small, but well-stocked school library, where they can explore books independently and develop personal reading preferences. Reading is further promoted through whole-school events and initiatives including World Book Day celebrations and reading challenges throughout the year. Teachers share high-quality texts with their classes and encourage discussion and book recommendations, helping to build a vibrant reading community across the school.

Assessment

Assessment is used throughout the reading curriculum to inform teaching and identify pupils who may require additional support. Teachers make ongoing formative assessments through observation, questioning and discussion. Within Ready Steady Read Together, low-stakes assessments support the monitoring of comprehension development. Formal reading assessments, phonics assessments (which are half termly) and Testbase assessments (Termly), provide further information about pupil attainment and progress. Outcomes are analysed by teachers and leaders and used to inform future teaching, interventions and school improvement priorities.

Inclusion

At St Joseph's, we are committed to ensuring that every child becomes a successful reader, regardless of their starting point, background or individual needs. High-quality adaptive teaching is embedded throughout our reading curriculum, with teachers carefully scaffolding learning through strategies such as pre-teaching vocabulary, visual supports, structured discussion and explicit modelling. Reading environments are language-rich and accessible, enabling all pupils to engage successfully with texts and develop confidence as readers.

Pupils with SEND, English as an Additional Language and those at risk of falling behind receive support tailored to their individual needs. This may include additional phonics teaching, targeted interventions, personalised targets and reasonable adjustments identified through SEND support plans or EHCPs. Assessment is used to identify barriers quickly so that support can be provided at the earliest opportunity, while pupils who demonstrate strong reading skills are challenged through exposure to increasingly ambitious texts and higher-order questioning.

IMPACT

Through our reading curriculum, children develop the knowledge and skills necessary to become fluent, confident and independent readers. Pupils make strong progress from their starting points and are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Children demonstrate secure decoding skills through the consistent teaching of phonics and increasingly apply these skills with automaticity and confidence. They develop strong comprehension skills and are able to discuss, analyse and evaluate a wide range of texts using appropriate vocabulary. Through exposure to ambitious literature, pupils broaden their understanding of the world and develop rich vocabularies that support learning across the curriculum.

The impact of our reading culture can be seen in children's enthusiasm for books and their willingness to discuss what they have read. Pupils read regularly, value reading as an enjoyable activity and understand its importance for future success.

Outcomes in phonics and reading demonstrate strong attainment and progress over time. Assessment information, pupil voice, lesson observations and monitoring activities confirm that reading remains a strength of the curriculum and that pupils are developing into capable, confident and lifelong readers.