

## Church of England (Aided)

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16 March 2022

Dear Class 1 and 2 Parents,

I am writing to explain how we have changed the phonics scheme we are using and one implication of this is that the reading book your child brings home this week, may feel a bit different.

### **Why change?**

The reason for the change is due to a change in government expectation; that all schools use a DfE validated phonics scheme. The previous scheme we followed (as did most Hampshire schools), 'Letters and Sounds', did not put themselves forward for this validation. We have replaced it with a scheme which builds on the previous framework, called 'Little Wandle Revised Letters and Sounds'. This scheme is highly resourced with high quality visual materials. The website has some amazing resources for staff and parents to use and we are excited about what we can do with it.

### **How will Phonics be taught now?**

From the children's point of view, nothing much in class will seem very different. They will continue to receive a daily input session which will introduce a new sound or consolidate previous teaching and repeatedly get them to practice saying and using it. Staff have been using the new resources since January as they familiarise themselves with them so nothing will appear suddenly different. The sounds (phonemes) themselves are of course still the same.

As part of the process, children will continue to say the sounds out loud accurately using 'sound talk', though with a heightened awareness of accuracy. This means saying the precise sound of each phoneme (not the names of the letters) then blending together. So, for the word 'broom' they would say "b – r – oo – m, broom" or for 'take', "t – ay – k, take".

### **Crisp, Pure Sounds**

It is critical for all phonics work that all adults (including parents) model crisp, pure sounds – this means not artificially adding an extra sound that isn't needed. For example 'n' is not pronounced 'n-uh', the 'nnn' is short and clear without a second sound 'uh'. There are lots of sounds everyone should be careful not to add an 'uh' to sounds that are just one letter such as 'r', 'c', 'v', 'h'. It is also important not to lengthen sounds too much, such as for 'ch', 'sh' and 'th', again without adding an 'uh'. This might feel quite uncomfortable as an adult but it is critical, many children misspell words because they artificially add in these extra, incorrect sounds.

The Little Wandle website has some great videos for parents to help with this. Follow this link to see a child correctly pronouncing each sound:

<https://www.littlewandlelettersandsounds.org.uk/resources/for-parents/>

### **How does phonics move into reading?**

As part of the scheme, children will be put into small groups and receive three 'Practice Reading sessions' with an adult per week. They read the same book (from the Little Wandle Scheme) across the week. The first time they read it, they will focus on decoding, reading all the graphemes (letter combinations that make sounds) and the tricky words (irregular words you can't sound out) to build up accuracy. The second session focusses on prosody which means how expression is used for the language, for intonation and to convey emotion. The third session focusses on comprehension, such as the meaning of the vocabulary, discussion about the events or the text features. Throughout, children rehearse accuracy to ensure they can read the book fluently. This is a proven approach to develop early reading skills for all.

### **How will home reading books Change?**

The biggest change relates to how we will now use home readers. Previously, parents will be used to their child bringing home books matched to coloured 'bands'. Many of the words in the book children might have struggled with and will have stopped in order to decode. The new approach (from the DfE) is to ensure children only read books they can fully read – they should be able to read 95% of the words accurately. The book they will bring home is the book from the practice reading session from the week before. This means they will already be familiar with it and accurate to this level.



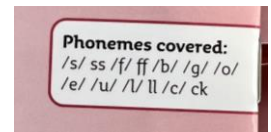
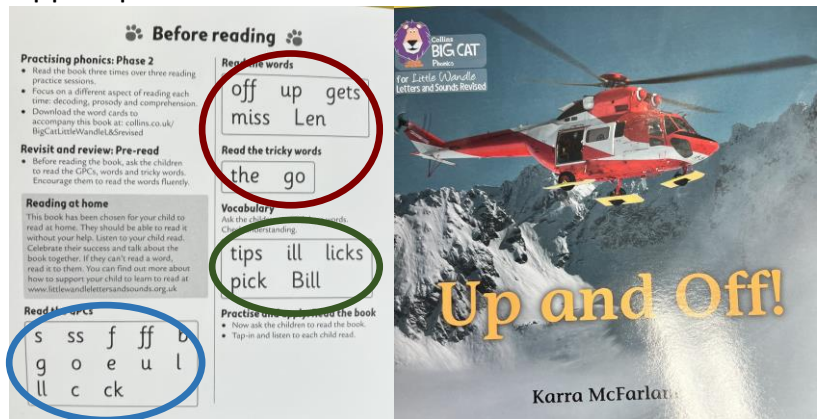
Getting them to practise reading a book they can already read is not a backward step, it is vital and it rehearses fluency, rather than frequent pauses. At the end of the following week, children should return this book and they will receive a new one. Please keep the books in your child's book bag at all times between use so they do not get lost and we can use them too.

In addition to this 'reading book', children will also choose an interest book. This might relate to something they like or are interested in and will not be matched to their ability – it may be far too difficult. However, the importance for this book is for enjoyment. It is ideal to share and enjoy together, perhaps model as an adult reading to your child, but should not be used for your child to read out loud to you from.

### **Where are the home readers from?**

The publisher 'Collins Big Cat Phonics' is aligned with the 'Little Wandle' scheme so we have purchased a completely new resource for Class 1 & 2. These books are of the highest quality, written for interest and fun with good quality graphics and illustrations. Children will really enjoy them!

The books are designed to help support parents. Inside the front cover is an overview of the **tricky words** covered in the book and the words that are **specific vocabulary** for the story or information. It also confirms the **sounds**. Get your child to say these sounds (remember crisp sounds!) and read these words before you start to remind them of the new elements, which will promote fluency. A tab on the cover on the back confirms the sounds (phonemes) covered by the book.



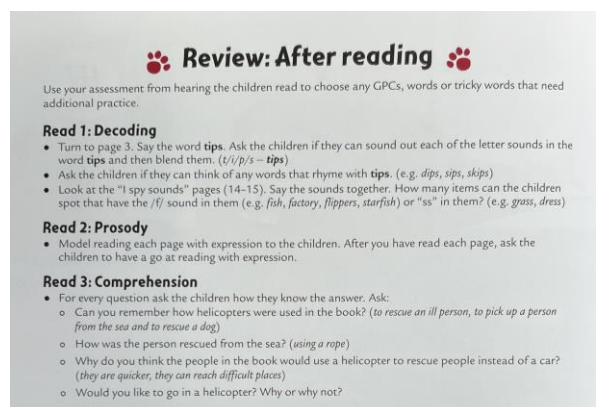
These books will also be available on-line, just as the bug club books were, so you can also dip into books the children have previously read (login details will be sent in a few weeks once everyone is used to the new materials). The children will progress to the next book as they develop in their practice reading sessions. This is also aligned with the new content being taught in daily phonics teaching. If teachers identify that some additional reinforcement of a sound is required, they may reuse a previous book in a practice reading session and therefore this book might come home again. A key principle of the scheme (and the DfE approach) is that children should not read a book at home with a sound they haven't yet been taught. This is different to our previous approach where children might have encountered unknowns.

### Might children enjoy reading more?

Since the children are learning to read fluently and reading most of the book accurately you should find they enjoy reading more. They should feel more positive as they will feel they are achieving more. This could be particularly important if your child doesn't particularly like reading with you and it feels like a battle.

### How should parents use the home readers?

Children will have the books for a week before they are changed so please return them the following week. Little and often is likely to be more beneficial than just one longer session. As the children should fluently read the book they have, you could read a couple of pages. Some parents might find that because their books have far less words, they might be able to read the whole book a few times, ideally repeating the structure from the class practice sessions – 1<sup>st</sup> time read for decoding, 2<sup>nd</sup> focusing on expression (prosody) and 3<sup>rd</sup> comprehension about the story/ information. The more times they read the book accurately the more they will remember and the more it reaffirms they are successful and positive readers. The books also have some prompts inside the rear cover of things to talk about, such as the characters and events, which you will find useful to chat about.



We will arrange some workshops for parents in the coming weeks to talk more about how we are delivering phonics and how you can best support this at home, look out for details in Friday Newsletters. In the meantime, if you would like to know more, the Little Wandle website has many useful guides and video clips.

<https://www.littlewandlelettersandsounds.org.uk/resources/for-parents/>

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "D. Woolley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped 'y' at the end.

David Woolley, Headteacher & Cat Olver, Reading Leader