

# **Bethany School Reading Policy**

## **November 2025**

### **Intent**

At Bethany School we aim to promote a lifelong love of reading, and develop comprehensive skills in reading so that children can access all areas of the curriculum. We recognise that God is a communicator, and one of the key ways that he communicates is through words. He also created us in His image, and one way that we see this is in our ability to communicate through language, speech, reading and writing. Therefore we recognise that reading is one of God's blessings to us and it is a privilege to be able to share this with children and foster a real love of this great gift.

In our Primary Department, we explicitly teach the components of reading instruction of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. It is our intention for these skills to lead to our children becoming increasingly confident readers who are able to read for both information and pleasure. As pupils move up into the Senior Department, we intend to continue to develop skills in comprehension and discernment in order to access all other areas of the curriculum, grow in understanding, knowledge and wisdom, and to consolidate the love of reading. Across the school we believe that it is important to offer a wide range of books, authors, genres, subject matter and formats in order to give children a broad and diverse reading experience. This is in order to both enhance our pupils' enjoyment of reading, and to build cultural capital, enabling them to empathise and learn more about people and God's world.

### **Implementation**

#### **Primary Department**

*Phonics* – We teach early reading skills through a systematic, synthetic phonics scheme that we have developed ourselves to suit the needs of our own children (see Bethany Phonics Scheme). There are daily phonics sessions from Reception to Year 2, supported by actions, handwriting, songs, the classroom environment and reading books. We use a multisensory approach to suit all learning types, using Jolly Phonics stories, songs and actions in phase 2 and 3 (using the progression that we have developed), colour coded GPCs (Grapheme Phoneme Correspondences) and CEWs (Common Exception Words). Children who need further support are identified and interventions are put in place. Children who need further phonics teaching beyond Year 2 are identified and receive the support needed.

*Reading Books* - Each child in Reception and Year 1 takes home a fully phonically decodable reading book to read which is matched to the GPCs and CEWs that they have learned at school. We use a range of reading schemes e.g. Jolly Phonics, Collins Big Cat Phonics, Read Write Inc, Oxford Reading Tree in order to increase the range and reading experience of our children, but have carefully matched these to our scheme's teaching progression. In line with our school ethos of high parental

involvement and fostering a love of reading through a wide range of books, they also take home an appropriately levelled 'sharing' book to share and enjoy with their parents at home. When children are able to read fluently without phonically decoding, they continue on a levelled reading scheme until they can access 'free readers'. Older children who need further support with reading receive 1:1 intervention, and we have phonically decodable books available which are suitable for older children. We also have a range of dedicated books for dyslexic children with coloured pages and carefully spaced text. We record reading both at school and at home using a home school diary that parents and staff write in to ensure good communication. On entry to school parents are invited to a 'reading workshop' where we share information on how we teach reading, and how they can support their child to read at home. Further reading support for parents is shared through newsletters and individual parent/teacher meetings. Our leaflet 'Reading With Your Child At Home' is attached as Appendix A. All children up to Year 3 read 1:1 regularly with an adult. Children who need further support with reading or who don't read regularly at home are identified and read with a teacher daily / weekly as appropriate.

*Reading for Pleasure* – In addition to promoting reading for pleasure through their reading books, we also place a high priority on reading more widely. Within classrooms there are well stocked reading areas with a variety of fiction and non fiction books. These contain a range of authors, genres and experiences. Classrooms also have topic reading bookstands containing books specifically linked to topics which are changed termly. 'Story time' sessions are timetabled for each class across the week (daily in the Reception class) to further promote the enjoyment of stories, where teachers model expressive reading and champion a love of books. Children are given time to choose class books and read for pleasure during the week with the reception class doing this in a paired context to ensure that all children are able to access this time effectively. The Junior class also have half termly visits to the local library.

*Guided Reading* - Children across the primary department take part in guided reading sessions appropriate to their level. In the Reception class this takes the form of both ability group sessions, paired reading and a weekly whole class session focusing on the skills of decoding and comprehension. In the Infant and Junior classes, guided reading is whole class, using a key text over a term. Extracts are looked at in detail using a range of teaching strategies and develop active reading skills of good comprehension, inference, questioning, clarifying and summarising. Throughout the primary department, in these sessions children are given the opportunity to read aloud in order to develop accuracy, fluency and expression. A wide range of texts are used to give broad and balanced coverage and increase cultural capital.

In Reception and Infant classes literacy sessions are linked to books with a variety of text types linked to our termly topics, and writing opportunities flow from these. In the Junior classes writing opportunities are drawn from the guided reading text. Texts used and writing opportunities can be found on the English Curriculum Grid.

## Senior Department

As pupils move into the Senior Department, we continue to promote a love of reading through our English Curriculum. Each term we have a focus text which is linked to our termly topic, and other texts and extracts are used alongside this to promote the skills of comparing and contrasting. Across the three year topic cycle, we have a broad range of genres, authors and historical periods in order to provide a wide reading experience and increase cultural capital. This can be seen on the English Curriculum Grid. Pupils are expected to read whole books, read in depth and for information and pleasure. In lessons there is a mixture of reading aloud and independently in order to develop skills of reading fluency, expression and understanding, and also the teacher reading in order to model expressive reading. This gives opportunities to discuss texts, enhance pupils' vocabulary, understand relationships between words, understand nuances in meaning and develop understanding of and ability to use figurative language. Pupils are taught to refer to evidence in the text to support answers, to know the purpose, audience for and context of writing, and to think critically about language and texts. Some whole class books are read to be studied in depth, and others are read for pleasure.

Pupils all have their own individual reading for pleasure book which they read quietly for the first ten minutes of English lessons.

All pupils at Key Stage 3 also have weekly drama lessons which are linked to what they have been learning in English and the termly whole school topic. This gives them the opportunity to explore themes and ideas in a different context as well as studying a variety of plays from different cultures and historical periods. This can be viewed on the Drama Curriculum Grid. Drama is also offered at GCSE.

## Whole School

We also celebrate reading through other initiatives such as World Book Day. As a school we come off timetable for the day and focus on a book together, through fun activities in mixed age groups.

Through our daily prayers sessions (collective worship), we also promote a love of the Bible, and encourage the children in their own personal reading of the bible, highlighting how it is relevant and powerful in their own lives.

## **Impact**

Pupils at Bethany School develop a love of reading, and read widely across different curriculum areas.

In Early Years 78% of children achieved the word reading element of the literacy ELG over the last 4 years, and 100% of children achieved the comprehension element.

Children are assessed throughout the phonics programme with half termly checks, and this is fed into planning and interventions.

Assessment in guided reading through YR-Y4 is informal, carried out during lessons through questioning. In Y5/6 children do summative assessments termly to assess comprehension, and there are also termly summative English assessments throughout seniors. These feed into the Pupil Profiles.

At least 90% of pupils are at least standard range across the Y1-9 in English.

GCSE results since 2018 show that in English Language 98% of students achieved 4 or above, with 46% reaching 7 or above\*. In English Literature 85% achieved a 4 or above with 22% achieving 7 or above.

*\*Nationally in 2025, 70.6% of 16 year olds achieved grade 4 or above and 19.5% achieved grade 7 or above in English language GCSE.*

<https://analytics.ofqual.gov.uk/apps/GCSE/SubjectCombinations/>

By the time they leave Bethany School, children have experienced a culture where reading is valued and championed. They have read widely across a wide range of genres, historical periods and cultural contexts. They have learned that God is a communicator, and that enjoying his gift of reading honours Him and is a means for learning more about His world.

## **Monitoring**

Curriculum coverage and cohesion is monitored by subject leaders. Moderation takes place in departmental staff meetings as a team. We are also looking to establish links with other CST schools to moderate with schools in different areas. Early Years moderation takes place through the Early Years Quality and Access Team.

Learning walks, lesson observations and book scrutinies are conducted by the senior leadership team.

Training is accessed through the English Hub at St Winfred's Sheffield when appropriate and through the Early Years Quality and Access Team. Staff are all released for a session to conduct their own learning walks during the appraisal process in order to share good practice. Internal reading training is done through staff meetings and also annual phonics training to all practitioners who deliver phonics lessons.

Policy adopted by Governors: 15.12.25

Policy review date: December 2028



# Reading with your child at home



## Reception / Year 1

At Bethany School we recognise that reading is a real gift from God. God is a communicator, and as his image bearers, he has created us to communicate through words, including the written word. In reading, writing and speaking we can honour Him, the creator of language. We know that learning to read opens the door to finding out so much more about His world, and also is a great source of joy as we can access a wealth of books and literature. Through our teaching of reading and phonics, we ultimately want to share and promote a real life long love of reading with our children.

Reading at home with your child is crucial to both building those early skills of reading, and to seeing reading as a joy. The more opportunities children have to read, the more successful they will be!

Your child brings home two types of books - phonics and sharing books, which are clearly labelled on the front cover. Both of these books are important to developing their reading skills.

#### Phonics books

Your child will have learned all of the sounds and words contained in these books in class already. We teach phonics (the sounds and how they are spelled) systematically through Reception and Year 1 in colour stages. For example, in the early stages they will learn single letters and the sounds they make, then later they will learn that groups of letters can make a sound (e.g. igh makes the long i sound as in night) and then into Year 1 where they will learn different spellings of each sound (e.g. the long a sound can be spelled with a (baby), ai (train), ay (play) and a\_e (make).

These books are carefully chosen so that they only contain sounds and words that your child already has been taught. As you help your child to read these, you can ask them to sound out words that are phonically decodable, pointing out 'graphemes' (spellings of sounds) like igh if they try to say them as separate letters. They can then 'blend' the sounds together to make the word e.g. n - igh - t becomes night.

There are several books in each pack of phonics books that we will change weekly. Please feel free to read these several times with your child. Reading a book more than once will build your child's confidence and help them to learn the spelling patterns.

We keep the phonics books in plastic wallets so that it is easier for us to change these. Please make sure that all of the phonics books are in the wallet ready for us to change them on a Tuesday morning. As the phonics books that we send each week are carefully aligned to the work that they have covered in class, please do not change these yourself.

We will also send home keyrings of the tricky words that they have learned in that colour stage so that you can practise reading these on sight with your child.

### Sharing books

In addition to phonics books, your child also brings home sharing books. These are levelled but may contain words or sounds that we have not yet learned in class, so your child will need more support with these. We feel that having supported access to a wide range of books is important, in order to expose children to a wider range of vocabulary, themes, words and stories and promote a love for reading. These are books for you to enjoy together, and you can give as much or as little support with reading them as you feel your child needs.

In the yellow reading record we will write which stage your child is choosing their sharing books from, so please feel free to change these books as often as you would like to from the baskets on the mezzanine. If you are at all unsure which basket to choose from, then just ask.

### Yellow Reading Records

The yellow reading records are a great way for you to communicate with us about how your child is doing with their reading at home, so please use this to record any comments from your daily reading. We will also record when we read with your child and a comment so that you can see how they are getting on with reading at school. Please keep this book in your child's reading folder and send it in each day as we read with groups of children daily.

### Enjoying Reading!

We hope that reading with your child at home is a really enjoyable and special time. Our aim is that they ultimately see reading as a great blessing and source of pleasure. We know that at times children may be tired and reluctant to read at home, and we would encourage you at these times to make it a relaxed experience, maybe taking it in turns to read a page, or talking through the pictures first. Make talking through the book a priority so that children who may be struggling to work out the words don't lose the bigger picture of the story. There are some suggestions for how to talk to your child about their books on the next page.

# Reading With Your Child

## Some questions to ask your child whilst reading together:

1. Look at the front cover. What could the book be about?
2. Who is the author?
3. What is an illustrator? What do they do?
4. What does that word mean? Read the words around it to help you figure it out (context).
5. How can you read an unfamiliar word? Can you sound talk and then blend?
6. Who are the main characters?
7. What do you think will happen next?
8. How do you think that character feels? Why? How would you feel in that situation?
9. Can you predict how the book will end?
10. Who is your favourite character? Why?
11. Is there a hidden message in the story? What is it?
12. Can you retell the story in your own words?
13. Do you like how the story ended? Can you think of another way the book could have ended?