



## DUNNINGTON C.E. PRIMARY SCHOOL

Pear Tree Lane

Dunnington

York YO19 5QG

Tel 01904 552910

[dunnington.primary@york.gov.uk](mailto:dunnington.primary@york.gov.uk)

[www.dunningtonprimary.co.uk](http://www.dunningtonprimary.co.uk)

*Headteacher: Caroline Hancy*

[head.dunningtonprimary@york.gov.uk](mailto:head.dunningtonprimary@york.gov.uk)

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### **New Systematic Synthetic Phonics Programme - Little Wandle**

Dear Parents/Carers,

We are writing to let you know about a new and exciting 'Systematic Synthetic Phonics' (SSP) programme that we will be implementing as a result of the DfE's new guidance around Early Reading and Phonics. This scheme is called 'Little Wandle- Letters and Sounds' and all children in Reception and Year 1 will be taught using the new programme with immediate effect. Children further up the school who still need some phonics support will also be taught using the programme.

We have chosen to use Little Wandle for a number of reasons: it provides excellent training for all staff to ensure consistency across all year groups; every aspect of phonics and reading is included using a detailed, thorough and systematic approach; there are engaging resources without distracting from the learning; it has a comprehensive system for identifying and supporting children requiring extra help and finally, there is lots of support for parents. If you would like to have a look in more detail, there is a parents section on the website which contains useful information and videos about phonics, reading and how we teach. This can be accessed at: [www.littlewandlelettersandsounds.org.uk/resources/for-parents/](http://www.littlewandlelettersandsounds.org.uk/resources/for-parents/)

In terms of teaching, a lot of things will remain the same and the children are already used to having daily phonics sessions. We will follow a specific order of teaching sounds and there will be lots of opportunity for repeated practice in both learning GPCs (Grapheme Phoneme Correspondences) and also blending, which is vital for the children learning to read.

From the start of Reception, phonemes (sounds) are taught in order to allow the children to start to read words as soon as possible. Little Wandle has a picture mnemonic to help children remember the phoneme/grapheme and we will use sound buttons on words so that we can sound-talk the word and blend to read. Just as before, children will be taught digraphs (2 letters, 1 sound) and also trigraphs (3 letters, 1 sound). Initially early digraphs will focus on consonant digraphs, such as 'ck'. As the children learn, and then revisit, the phase 3 graphemes, which include vowel digraphs, they will also learn a catchphrase to match the sounds. These become even more important when we start learning alternative spellings for the same grapheme (e.g. **ur** - 'curl the fur' or **er** - 'a bigger digger'). As they learn different spellings they 'grow the code' and learn to use grapheme charts to help them choose the right spelling. These will be used later in the year in both Reception and Year 1 and beyond.

The biggest change for our teaching is the way in which we teach tricky words. The new scheme teaches the children to apply their phonics knowledge to tricky words and explains which part of the word is tricky. (e.g. **is** - the 'i' is phonetic but the 's' makes a 'z' sound - this is what makes it tricky.)



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Once children have a secure knowledge of a number of GPCs and are confidently blending, they will be ready for reading books. Prior to this they may have wordless books which develop great language skills and teach children the layout of books and how to handle books. This has already started in Reception and all children should be used to the wordless books.

Certainly, the biggest and most exciting change from following Little Wandle, is the way in which we will conduct our reading practice sessions. The children will have 2-3 group reading sessions a week with a teacher or TA, reading books which have been matched, as a result of assessments, to their **secure** phonics knowledge. Each reading session in school will focus on different things:

1. Decoding - The children will look through the tricky words and any new vocabulary and have an opportunity to read the book to decode the words.
2. Prosody - In this session they read the book again but the focus is on building expression and intonation.
3. Comprehension - In this final session the children will learn to answer questions about the text. They will be asked to prove it and explain it and use examples from the text to help back up their answers.

In each session, the children will all read the book aloud and the adult will circulate and listen to all of them. This means they get lots of opportunities to practise and build fluency. The book will then be available to you at home at the end of the week, via an e-library. More details about the e-library will follow. The way we cover the books in class and match the groups to assessments, means that by the time the book gets home to you, the children should be 95% fluent at reading and you get the fun task of hearing them read and celebrating their success! This means it should be extremely easy for your child to read aloud. Please do not worry that a book is too easy – your child needs to develop fluency and confidence in reading. Re-reading a book that they have had before helps to develop fluency – this is the goal.

In addition to the phonics reading scheme book available in the e-library, children will also bring home a ‘sharing book’ from our class libraries each week. We know that for children to become lifelong readers, it is essential that they read for pleasure. Children may not be able to read their ‘sharing book’ independently, but these books offer a wealth of opportunities for talking about the pictures, developing their vocabulary and enjoying the story or information text, which is so valuable. Simply enjoy the book together and help them to foster a love of reading.

Finally, the scheme also has built in ‘keep up sessions’ to help children that have found something difficult. If your child comes home with a sticker on their arm with a sound or a tricky word on, then please ask them about it a few times that evening and help to reinforce their learning from that day.

We know that this is a lot of information to take in; however, essentially we just ask that you: look at the Little Wandle videos and guidance for parents (see link above); support your children in learning the alphabetic code; let your child ‘show off’ their reading to you, celebrating and praising them; and share books with your children for pleasure.

We are very excited about the new scheme and the beautiful new books and resources. Please bear with us as we are learning and adapting as we implement these changes. However, if you have any questions at all about Little Wandle, then please do ask.

Kind Regards,

Tracey Elliott  
EYFS Phase Leader



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