Approaches to Reading

Category: Policy and Guidance

Key Elements

This document sets out Whitefield School's policy on teaching reading. It provides an overview of the subject to guide teachers in their planning. More detailed guidance is available in Schemes of Work for each part of the school.

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Senior Leadership Team

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1. Introduction

Reading for the children and young people at Whitefield relates to enjoying and gaining information from all forms of symbolic representation – pictures, photos, symbols, diagrams and print – either independently or with a reading partner. Before and alongside accessing written information they also access oral stories, rhymes, songs and information in speech and sign.

Whitefield's mission statement is

'enjoyment, achievement and wellbeing for all'

Reading contributes to all three aspects of the mission statement. Adults support children and young people to enjoy books, stories and rhymes, pictures and written information and to make progress from their own starting points in learning the strategies to take meaning from pictures, print and symbols. This underpins progress in other areas of learning and supports life skills. Literacy enhances wellbeing by providing a means to relax, supporting the positive use of leisure time and preparing children and young people for greater independence in their adult lives.

2. Curriculum pathways

2.1. Reaching Out

Children and young people following the sensory curriculum benefit from a rich communication environment including stories, songs and rhymes

Listening to stories, sharing books/ stories and factual programmes on tablet and PCs. Self occupation and the development of interaction.

Some children and young people begin to take meaning from photographs and pictures.

Sensory stories may not be literacy in the sense implied in this document. Some sensory stories do introduce rhymes and rhythms within text; others have a different purpose as a structured way of supporting children and young people to use their senses to explore objects and textures. In any event children and young people following the Reaching Out curriculum will not have the complex language which enables them to access the plot of the story.

2.2. Stepping On

Literacy and language are inextricably linked and the work to expose children and young people to a rich language and to use language to express themselves clearly in a variety of ways underpins the development of literacy.

Before they understand that print is 'speech written down' pupils learn to record events in other symbolic ways, for example through colouring or drawing pictures of real objects and real events, through selecting photos or drawings to record an event or through choosing symbols to put in their home school books or to label photos or drawings. They also learn to take information from drawings, photos and symbols e.g. on timetables, in catalogues and over shops and cafes in the community.

Children and young people following the stepping on pathway will continue to share books and stories individually or in class activities. They will enjoy taking information from books, videos and on PCs and tablets.

Most children and young people following this pathway will develop some ability to read print and/or symbols with understanding, in stories or non-fiction and/or as a source of information. They require an individualised approach where they are able to progress at their own pace and are supported to use a range of strategies including synthetic phonics and a whole word approach. Aspects of the approach which underpins the National Curriculum will be helpful.

Children within the Early Years classes in MBS and PTP follow the EY framework adapted for their needs and this will include the EY approach to early literacy.

2.3. Climbing Up

Children and young people following the Climbing Up pathway will access many aspects of the curriculum through reading and will use reading in developing life skills and planning for their future. Some may still be developing their understanding of phonics in a systematic way. They are supported to read for pleasure and to use written information in books, websites and notices to gain practical information and to extend their knowledge in areas of interest. They will be supported to read newspapers and news media and to use social media with care to develop social interaction and learn about the world.

Teachers will draw on the National Curriculum Programme of Study for reading at Key Stages 1 and 2 alongside the requirements for examinations and accredited courses.

As children and young people are able to access the internet independently their curriculum will include guidance on using technology safely.

2.4. Taking Off

Young people following the Taking Off curriculum are developing the skills for life after school. Some continue to access a more formal curriculum where literacy remains a key tool for learning. They will be supported to use literacy in vocational tasks such as completing forms and records and in life skills such as reading information, booking appointments and planning leisure activities. For others the use of print, pictures and symbols will support leisure and life skills.

The strategies identified below will continue to be relevant to young people in post-16 courses but the contexts in which literacy is used will reflect their stage in education.

3. Key elements in teaching reading

Learning to read is a complex activity and successful reading depends on a range of strategies. This section of the document supports teaching by summarising the different aspects of reading and the strategies that all staff need to know to support children and young people to make the greatest possible progress. The strategies employed may also be influenced by the pupil's own motivation and interests.

3.1. Language and literacy

Reading is 'talk written down' and therefore, as stated above, reading is supported by access to a rich language environment and by developing the use of language for a range of purposes – requesting, describing, asking questions, expressing thoughts, opinions and feelings and making choices. The ability to access early literacy skills grows from this experience and use of language alongside the strategies set out below.

Some children and young people will use symbols as a form of communication. This is not the same as literacy although it may ultimately support early reading and recording.

3.2. Early literacy skills

Before children and young people tackle the written word, they are introduced to the following strategies which enable them to develop their understanding of story, information and symbols. These skills may prepare them for reading or may be valuable strategies in their own right.

- listening skills
- sharing books with a partner
- handling books
- taking meaning from pictures and photographs
- taking meaning from symbols

3.2.1   Developing listening skills

Reading and especially the use of phonics depends on the ability to discriminate sound. Children and young people learn to recognise and discriminate environmental sounds, rhythm and music and to explore the sounds of spoken language through listening games, stories, songs and rhymes.

3.2.2   Sharing books with a partner

Children and young people share books with an adult or peer, noticing things in pictures, talking about the pictures and putting the story together. They listen to other people reading stories and information books. They link books to real life activities and key interests.

Children have access to high quality books both fiction and non-fiction and to stories and sources of information on line via PCs or tablets. They also work with adults to make and share books about their experiences.

Children are supported to identify and look at sources of information in the community such as menus in cafes or guides in places of interest.

3.2.3   Handling books

Children and young people are taught to care for and respect books. They are taught that books are special and have a meaning. They are taught to hold the book correctly, turn the pages carefully and start in the right place.

They are taught to hold tablets with care and to swipe accurately so that the book moves on in sequence. They learn to activate sound in appropriate applications.

Children are able to self occupy with appropriate books and to talk about them afterwards.

3.2.4 Taking meaning from pictures and photographs

Children have access to pictures and photographs in books, records of activities and information. For example, the class timetable may include pictures of places and activities or storage boxes may be labelled with photographs. Adults support them to extract the meaning, for example by looking carefully at details and by comparing pictures in a series, and to talk about what they see or act on the information provided.

3.2.5 Taking meaning from symbols

For some children symbols are a powerful tool to support the move from pictures to the written word or to act as a record in their own right. Whitefield uses Communicate in Print. Where symbols are used they are introduced systematically and used consistently in a range of activities – for example as instructions for art and craft, words to songs, steps in a process or labels for key objects and storage boxes. Symbols may be used to label pictures or replace the written word in personal books. As symbols become established, the written word is always placed under the symbol so that children and young people will eventually recognise the written word.

As children and young people have experience of books and see the written word in other contexts they may begin to recognise key words and some letters. They are helped to recognise their names and the names of familiar people and words which are important to them such as key timetable words.

3.3. Moving onto literacy in print

Teachers decide whether it is appropriate to move towards literacy in print by assessing progress in the strategies used at the 'partner' stage. They consider

- Use of language, particularly to convey information
- Understanding of spoken information and/or stories
- Listening skills, particularly sound discrimination
- The ability to take meaning from pictures or symbols
- Attention skills
- Awareness of and interest in print
- Recognition of key words

The key strategies at this stage of reading include:

- synthetic phonics
- whole word recognition
- vocabulary development
- use of context
- use of sentence structure
- opportunities to read for information and enjoyment

These key aspects will be taught together and most children and young people learning to read print will cover all these aspects to some degree. The balance of strategies is a professional decision for the teacher based on their assessment of skills up to this point. It is accepted that synthetic phonics is a highly effective strategy for children who are expected to reach age-related levels in reading; however, it is a demanding approach and children at Whitefield may need to focus on whole words alongside the use of some phonic cues. Whatever balance of strategies is chosen, reading should be taught systematically in daily lessons with opportunities to use the skills across the curriculum, within and outside the classroom.

3.3.1 Synthetic phonics

This approach is based on developing phonological awareness - the knowledge of sounds in spoken words

Words are made up from small units of sound called phonemes. Phonics teaches children and young people to identify the phonemes that make up each word. This helps them to read words and to spell words. They need to develop

- awareness of rhymes and alliteration
- awareness that words can be broken into sounds and that sounds can be put together to make words
- the ability to blend and manipulate sounds by adding, deleting or substituting
- an understanding of the relationship between spoken and written language

Adults say phonemes as shown in the following clips, taking care not to add extraneous sounds.

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWQ6MeccRCU
- https://www.lesleyclarkesyntheticphonics.co.uk/index.php/parents/125-articulation-of-phonemes

In phonics lessons children and young people are taught three main things:

- Grapheme phoneme correspondence - they are taught the phonemes in the English language and how they are written down
- Blending - they are taught to say the sounds that make up a word and to merge the sounds together until they can hear what the word is e.g. s-a-t or sh-ee-p
- Segmenting - this is the opposite of blending. They are taught to say a word and then break it up into phonemes

There are six phases in synthetic phonics, as follows

- Phase 1- **developing listening skills** (e.g. hearing sounds in the environment, playing with rhyme or alliteration). This is covered during Early Years for children at the expected levels of development.
- Phase 2 – **learning the simplest 19 phonemes** represented by single letters, recognising them in words and beginning to blend them e.g. c-a-t. Some high frequency words are also covered (e.g. the, like)
- Phase 3 – **learning and using the next 25 phonemes** which include common digraphs (e.g. sh, oo). Other high frequency words are introduced.
- Phase 4 – **consolidate** the earlier phases and learn to blend adjacent consonants (e.g. step)
- Phase 5 – **consolidate** the earlier phases and learn new graphemes for particular sounds (e.g. ay as well as ai)
- Phase 6 – children are expected to **learn rare graphemes and to develop fluency** in reading and spelling. This phase is completed during Year 2 for children reaching the expected levels of development.

Children and young people at Whitefield Schools are unlikely to address phases as whole units. Teachers plan for them to work through each phase at their own pace and break down the learning goals into achievable steps – for example, starting phase 2 by working on initial letters or concentrating on a small group of letters at a time. It may be most effective to start with initial letters of key words such as familiar names or activities rather than using the order given in published schemes.

Teachers use published resources alongside individualised materials. Books and other materials are matched to the sounds and words which a child or young person knows.

Some children and young people will benefit from working through the first two or three phases only and others may use phonics to support a whole word approach.

3.3.2   Whole word recognition

This approach involves learning words by sight – recognising the shape of the word and recalling it initially from short term and eventually long term memory. Teachers support this process through matching activities (whole words and letters to words), practice with flash cards, labelling items and pictures and through reading the words in a range of contexts.

The first words taught will be those of significance to the child or young person such as the names of familiar people or activities, moving on to high frequency words which will enable sentence building.

Once some whole words are established teachers will use a systematic approach to extend and consolidate each child's sight vocabulary.

Teachers use published resources alongside individualised resources, although in the first instance children and young people will need personalised materials containing the words they know.

Where a child or young person has some knowledge of phonics this can be used as a cue, particularly to initial sounds. Adults should be careful not to use phonics out of sequence – for example, a child who can recognise 'play' in a timetable may not use the grapheme 'pl' to decode other words unless she has reached this stage in a phonics programme.

3.3.3   Vocabulary development

Reading is rooted in language and therefore print and spoken or signed vocabulary develop alongside one another whether the child or young person is using phonics, whole word recognition or a combination of the two. Teachers make or select early reading materials using words which are well established within the child or young person's spoken vocabulary and which relate to their experience and/or interests. Initially the teacher will use functional words such as nouns, verbs and adjectives that can be presented visually. They may start with single words or very simple sentences.

Children and young people will make and/or read books about themselves and other familiar people, places and activities.

Teachers plan to use a growing vocabulary in print and speech or sign in functional contexts such as shopping lists, timetables, instructions or registers.

3.3.4   Use of context

This involves the use of clues from all the surrounding information – the picture, the layout, the story or the type of information. For example, it may be clear from the context that a word is related to food or to a familiar story or the picture may link to a particular word. This strategy also supports reading for meaning. Literacy activities are planned so that reading carries meaning, linked to pictures, objects, people or activities known to the child or young person to limit the risk of those with learning difficulties decoding and reading out words which they do not understand. As the ability to read words develops children and young people may follow the steps in a recipe, find information on a favoured topic or sequence a story.

3.3.5   Use of sentence structure

This involves using cues based on familiar grammar. The child or young person uses their knowledge of syntax to work out what type of word is appropriate. This strategy may be practised through close procedure (e.g. The girl is _____ a red skirt) or by completing sentences with the word to be practised (e.g. The girl is wearing a red _____).

Teachers control the sentences in reading material in order to help children and young people use this strategy.

3.3.6   Reading for information and enjoyment

From the beginning it is important to make reading enjoyable and functional. For example, books are shared with familiar adults, reading is used as part of a 'sensory story' where the reader also handles props, a recipe is followed, a TV guide is read or a catalogue is used.

As vocabulary develops reading can be used to provide information and so give access to the wider curriculum. For example, teachers display key words during a lesson; established vocabulary is used to record a teaching activity or written words are used to promote independence by providing instructions in an activity. Adults point out print in the environment to provide additional information e.g. the name of a shop or the stations on the Underground.

3.4. Developing reading fluency

Reading fluency is the ability to read accurately at sight, at an appropriate rate and with expression. Fluent readers recognise words quickly and gain meaning from what they read. They do not have to concentrate on decoding the words and can focus their attention on what the text means. They make connections between the words in the text and their background knowledge so that they can learn from what they read and conversely use their knowledge to explain the text.

Teachers support children and young people to read fluently by setting attainable goals and allowing time to consolidate new learning and build confidence. They provide a range of materials in print and on screen to consolidate learning at each step and select appropriate materials for children and young people to read at home. They assess what children and young people understand of the texts they read.

As children and young people gain in confidence they have opportunities to read to an audience – in class, assemblies, or school performances.

4. Meeting individual needs

Although there are clear pathways for progression, all children and young people will learn in their own way and at their own pace and so individualised planning is essential.

All members of the team need to be aware of the strategies which individuals find helpful and the milestones they have reached

Focusing on the pupil's interests in the first instance encourages early success in reading by increasing their motivation and desire to learn and by helping readers to use their wider knowledge as a strategy to find the meaning of less familiar words.

Children and young people with autism may benefit from a highly structured approach with a set time every day for literacy. They may need short breaks or regular changes of activity to help them stay focused. They may learn better through multi-sensory activities e.g. sensory stories or using reading to support activities. Picture cues or symbols may support comprehension.

Children and young people with severe learning difficulties may benefit from strategies that provide additional cues to meaning and enable them to consolidate learning. Each step will need to be addressed through many different tasks until it is thoroughly mastered.

Teachers control the amount of information both in terms of the child or young person's level of sentence comprehension and their ability to cope with an amount of information on the page.

For example, a question and answer supported by symbols may use different levels of complexity for individual children.
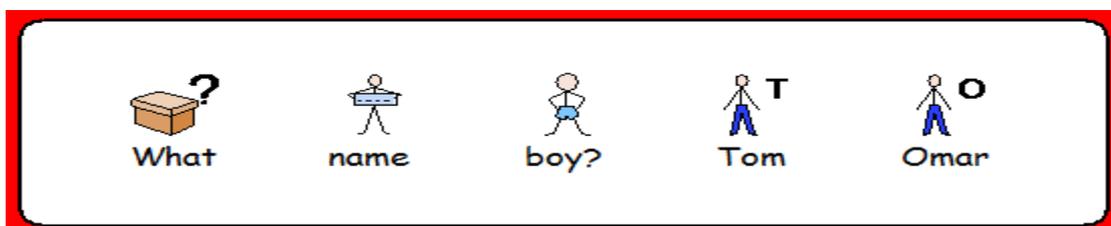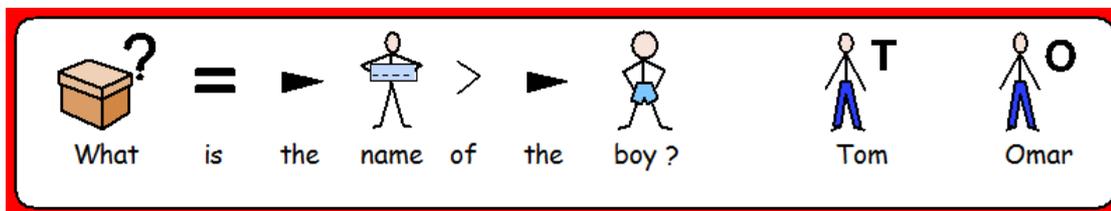
Pupils with a visual impairment or visual processing difficulties need reading materials which are visually simple with good quality print and pictures which contrast well with the background. Some need large print and others respond better to print which is smaller but very clear.

5. The learning environment

Once children and young people are beginning to read classroom displays should have captions for them to read. Teachers display key words to reinforce developing literacy skills.

All children and young people have access to good quality books which reflect the community in which they live and to interesting materials in electronic formats.

There is a variety of books including some from reading schemes. Teachers select books for individuals linked to the words and/ or sounds they can read and try to make the material age appropriate. They may choose to concentrate on non-fiction material for children and young people who have difficulty following stories or who prefer factual material.

Symbols are created using the 'Communicate In Print' software package from Widgit. Electronic resources are used to support and extend learning. This may include iPads, VOCAs and listening centres.

The 'Jolly Phonics', 'Letters and Sounds' and Ruth Miskin (Read, Write Inc) schemes are structured methods of teaching phonics which are useful for some children and young people.

Colourful Semantics materials enable pupils to build phrases and sentences about things of interest to them.

5.1. Assessing and tracking progress

Classroom teams assess progress carefully during lessons, checking all the aspects of reading outlined above and paying particular attention to the key objectives identified for each lesson. Evidence of progress is to be found in individual Progress Files. Literacy targets are identified at Person Centred Reviews; the teacher's planning provides greater detail.

Teachers are beginning to use a tracking system based on the Whitefield 'milestones' to follow progress over time in communication, language and literacy. Older achievement and progress data reflects the P-levels and National Curriculum levels. Teachers enter data twice yearly and use it to review the progress made by individuals, to identify successful strategies and to highlight any areas of concern. Middle leaders also review progress against milestones.

All children at the end of Reception are assessed against the EYFS profile.

All children at the end of Y2 and Y6 are assessed against the National Curriculum Key Stage and pre Key Stage outcomes (these are included in the school milestones for reading).

Children who are able to take the National Phonics Test in Year 1 and again in Year 2 if the score was below the pass level. Some children may also be entered for the Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 National Curriculum Tests (also known as SATs) if this is appropriate for them.

At key stage 3 and 4 and Post 16 young people may complete Entry Level English qualifications or ASDAN accredited courses.

5.2. Working alongside parents and carers

Parents play an important part in teaching literacy. Reading should be encouraged beyond the classroom in the home environment and in the community. Involving parents or carers enables new vocabulary to be generalised into many different settings and contexts and provides opportunities to reinforce and consolidate reading outside school. This is encouraged by the active involvement of parents at individual Person Centred Reviews where the child or young person's development, interests and progress is discussed both within and beyond the school.

Parents are encouraged to share books with their children, looking at the pictures, labelling and commenting for a short and regular time in their routine. They are encouraged to use materials from a wide variety of sources as well as books, e.g. packets, labels, signs, menus, tablets and mobile phones, computer apps or subtitles on TV. If children see their parents reading for information as well as pleasure they are encouraged to do the same.

Teachers send books and other materials home by arrangement with parents.

5.3. Appendix 1

Reading Milestones

4. Responds to reading-related activities and starts engaging with books, animated stories, words and letter games.
- Attends to a story, song, book alongside an adult ('shared attention').
- Attends and responds to props related to story.
- Attends to story being told/read.
- Follows the next step in a routine or game led by an adult.
- Responds to songs and rhymes (e.g. looking and listening attentively, clapping)
- Looks at photos of self and others.
- Looks at images supporting different activities.
- Explores picture/tactile books with adult support.
- Shows interest in playing with letters (e.g. magnetic letters).
- Plays with props from familiar story.

5. Responds actively to reading-related activities and focuses attention on pictures and props related to stories.
- Shows preference for some stories/songs/rhymes/poems or jingles through communicative behaviour (e.g. stands up showing excitement, wants to join adult holding book).
- Focuses attention in personalised picture books (e.g. books with photos of favourite toys, snacks, shops).
- Identifies logos in the community (e.g. Tesco, McDonalds).
- Responds to familiar timetable objects of reference/symbols/pictures (e.g. sits at table when showed 'Snack' object of reference/symbol/picture).
- Initiates reading-related activities (e.g. goes to book box).
- Recognises favourite book from its cover.
- Matches pictures to objects with adult support.
- Explores books showing basic book behaviour skills (e.g. opens book not necessarily first page).
- Gives a book to an adult to read.
- Engages with props from stories during reading sessions.

6. Understands meaning from object of reference or picture of familiar items or activities.
- Identifies favourite timetable object of reference or picture (e.g. taps on 'swimming' picture or object of reference for 'lunch time').
- Shows understanding of next activity when picture or object of reference is shown (e.g. goes to door when adult holds 'play time' symbol or object of reference).
- Taps on icon of favourite application on tablet.
- Starts exchanging objects of reference or pictures for desired idem with adult support.
- Responds to songs, stories and rhymes by joining in with vocalisations or actions (Pre-KS Standard 1).
- Looks at picture books for longer periods.
- Holds books upright and turns pages starting with the cover.
- Matches pictures to objects independently.
- Matches symbols to pictures with support.
- Puts own object of reference/picture timetable together

7. Identifies and reads single familiar words supported with symbols.
- Joins in action songs, rhymes, poems, jingles.
- Reads a few familiar words supported with symbols/signs (e.g. 'PE', 'Adventure').
- Chooses correct symbol and exchanges it for desired item (e.g. during snack time or form choosing board).
- Identifies a few letter names and/or sounds.
- Reads a few logos of favourite places in the community or of favourite toys/games.
- Knows when a story has finished.
- Answers simple questions about stories during shared reading, using one word/sign or supporting symbol.
- Copies adults saying letter sounds.
- Presents book behaviour (e.g. turning page, moving from left to right and top to bottom) without reading the text.
- Responds to sound lotto games.

8. Reads a few printed familiar words in the environment.
- Identifies own name from a contrasting one using initial letter knowledge (e.g. Bill vs Ahmed).
- Puts two symbols on PECS sentence strip (e.g. 'bread + butter' during snack or 'blue + ball' during choosing activity).
- In a familiar story/rhyme, joins in with some actions or repeats some words, rhymes and phrases when prompted (pre KS Standard 1).
- Identifies missing letter of C-V-C words using letter sound/sign (e.g. Cued Articulation), with support.
- Reads up to 20 familiar words supported with symbols.
- Reads up to 10 familiar words without symbols.
- Indicates pictures of characters and objects in a familiar book in response to 'where's X' in word, sign or symbol (pre KS standard 1).

- Distinguishes between letters and numerals.
- Starts blending phonemes in C-V-C words with adult support.
- Pretends to read by pointing with finger while acting out story.

9. Reads and increasing number of words and answers to simple questions about immediate reading.
- Sounds/signs out the majority of the simplest 19 phonemes without necessarily corresponding to the graphemes.
- Identifies all letters of the alphabet.
- Recalls simple information from others' reading (e.g. name of one character).
- Recognises when the reader omits part of a favourite story.
- Responds to simple questions after reading a few sentences from a text.
- In personalised books reads short sentences with familiar words not supported with symbols.
- Recognises print in the neighbourhood, community, and environment (e.g., stop-signs, shop signs).
- Reads some common exception words (Pre KS Standards 4) *.
- Reads up to 50 words supported with symbols.
- Reads up to 20 familiar words without symbols.

10. Recalls more detailed information about texts and answers to simple written questions.
- Sequences correctly the actions of a familiar story.
- Says sounds for 30+ graphemes.
- Talks about the plot or story line using preferred mode of communication.
- Completes a rhyme with a rhyming word (e.g. The cat sat on the <u>mat</u>).
- Copies adult's reading with expression and intonation.
- Answers simple written questions (e.g. who came for tea?)
- Completes short familiar written sentences with correct information (e.g. Today is _____).
- Provides information on simple written forms (e.g. name, surname, date).
- Reads up to 100 words supported with symbols.
- Reads up to 50 words without symbols.

11. Identifies different types of text and reads on different topics for information.
- Follows simple written instructions, with visual and adult support (e.g. a cooking recipe).
- Answers simple oral and written questions about short non-fiction texts.
- Matches a short sentence to the correct picture.
- Answers questions about a story or narrative which require simple recall (Pre KS standard 3).
- Uses some digraphs to decode unfamiliar words with support.
- Identifies fiction and non-fiction texts.
- Identifies punctuation when reading (not necessarily following it)
- Understands the concept of a sentence.
- Shows growing awareness of the different functions of forms of print such as signs, letters, newspapers, lists, messages, and menus.
- Says sounds for 40+ graphemes (Pre-KS1 Standard 4).

12. Reads or decodes phonetically unfamiliar words and relates events in narrative to own experiences.
- In a familiar story or rhyme, talks about events and links them to their own experience (pre KS standard 4)
- Reads most words containing common suffixes (Pre-KS 2 Standard 6).
- Reads accurately by blending the sounds in words up to five known graphemes (Pre-KS 2 standard 4).
- Explains what has just read.
- Understands the concept of paragraph.
- Answers more complex questions about text (e.g. where did they put…? who came late…?).
- Understands the sequence of a story (e.g., beginning, middle, and end).
- Anticipates what comes next in known stories.
- Reads more than 50 words without symbols using visual memory and phonetical knowledge to decode them.
- Uses word lists, dictionaries and the web to find meaning for unknown words.

13. Reads to obtain specific information and meaning. Is aware of literary elements and is able to make simple inference
- Reads and replies appropriately to emails, letters, messages and written forms.
- Reads accurately most words of two or more syllables (Pre KS 2 Standard 6).
- Reads to extract specific information (such as from a science book).
- Reads about and shows understanding of abstract concepts, e.g. fairness.
- In age-appropriate books, sounds out most unfamiliar words accurately, without undue hesitation (pre-KS 2 standards 6).
- Explains the difficulty if they do not understand what they read.
- Makes inferences about a book which they can read fluently (Pre-KS 2 Standard 6).
- Understands and explains humour or irony in text.
- Identifies elements like similes and metaphors.
- Explains what has happened so far in a book they are reading (Pre KS 2 standard 6).

This policy is shared
via the school website:
www.whitefield.org.uk