

# **English at Thorpedene**

## **Phonics**

At Thorpedene, we use the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds revised phonics programme to teach early reading and phonics. This structured approach helps children make the crucial connection between spoken sounds (phonemes) and their written representations (graphemes). Once children have mastered the skill of blending these sounds, they begin to develop fluency in reading.

The phonics programme teaches sounds in a specific order, supported by guided reading sessions and carefully selected books. Resources are also available for use at home to reinforce learning. Phonics is taught daily, with guided reading sessions further supporting each child's progress. Additionally, children have access to a full library of books via an online system.

To help parents and carers understand how phonics is delivered, we hold workshops in the autumn term. These sessions provide practical tips for supporting your child's reading journey at home.

All children in Year 1 will take the statutory Phonics Screening Check in the summer term. Any children who do not pass the assessment will have the opportunity to retake it in Year 2.

## **Reading**

At Thorpedene, we are committed to fostering a love of reading while helping our children develop essential literacy skills. Our approach follows a structured three-week block, beginning with one week dedicated to reading texts linked to a specific genre or topic, followed by two weeks focused on developing writing skills.

We explicitly teach reading skills outlined in the National Curriculum, using the VIPERS framework, created by Rob Smith (The Literacy Shed). This approach ensures our pupils build and refine key skills such as vocabulary, inference, prediction, explanation, retrieval, and summarisation.

Teachers select age-appropriate texts from a range of genres and topics, carefully chosen to engage and extend our children's interests. These texts might include extracts from books, newspaper articles, film clips, or even pictures – all aimed at enhancing comprehension. Our class books, often linked to current topics, are also woven into reading weeks to further enrich learning.

During whole class reading sessions, Teachers model the tone, pace, and expression, setting the standard for how we approach each piece of writing, ensuring students not only understand the text but enjoy it.

### **Weekly Whole Class Reading Structure**

At Thorpedene Primary School, we follow a consistent weekly structure to ensure our children develop strong reading comprehension skills, with a particular focus on vocabulary and understanding. Here's how we organise our reading sessions:

Monday: Whole Class Reading (WCR) with the class text. Children read aloud while the teacher guides them through vocabulary analysis and retrieval questions related to that specific extract.

Tuesday & Wednesday: We explore non-fiction texts related to the class focus or current affairs, such as science or history. Vocabulary is checked in context, followed by comprehension work. These texts are carefully selected to align with the week's theme. For instance, a Tuesday reading might explore Mount Vesuvius, followed by an extract from *Escape to Pompeii* on Wednesday. We also incorporate visual analysis, such as pictures, to enhance vocabulary use.

Thursday & Friday: We return to the class text, delving deeper into comprehension and vocabulary. The focus remains on reinforcing the skills for the week.

### **Vocabulary Focus**

Every reading lesson begins with an exploration of key vocabulary. Understanding unfamiliar words is vital to grasping the text in greater depth. Teachers guide children in reading around new words, selecting specific vocabulary for students to define, use, and collect synonyms. These words are often added to our working wall. Students may also work in pairs to research a word and share their definitions with the class, with dictionaries available to support their learning.

Texts are read for up to 10 minutes during these sessions, allowing ample time for discussion and vocabulary exploration.

### **Reading Techniques and Lesson Structure**

At Thorpedene Primary School, we use a variety of reading techniques to engage our children and develop their fluency, expression, and comprehension skills. Teachers model reading before giving students the opportunity to read aloud using the following strategies:

**Echo Reading:** The teacher reads a line aloud with expression and correct pacing. Pupils then repeat the exact line, mimicking the teacher's delivery.

**Chorus Reading:** After reading a paragraph, the teacher gives a signal (such as clapping twice) for the whole class to continue reading together from that point onward.

**One Student Reads:** After the teacher reads a paragraph, a chosen pupil reads aloud. This provides an opportunity for feedback on their expression and fluency.

Following these reading activities, children complete a short retrieval quiz to assess their understanding.

### **Core Lesson Activities**

The main part of the lesson is focused on deeper comprehension and discussion, introduced through a range of tasks:

**Time to Talk:** Group, class, or partner discussions prompted by thought-provoking questions.

**Individual Thinking:** Children are given questions to consider independently. They may note-take or write full responses, which are later shared with the class.

**Flying Solo:** Children complete tasks independently, with the option to mark their work together as a class or at a later time.

### **Writing at Thorpedene**

At Thorpedene, our writing curriculum is structured around a two-week cycle within each unit block, following a reading week. The first week is an Immersion Week, followed by a more focused Writing Week.

Immersion Week allows children to explore a text or stimulus through various creative mediums, such as the arts, drama, or group work. This week encourages students to engage deeply with the text and develop specific writing skills through 'short writes'—for example, focusing on character descriptions or key elements of the text type.

During this time, children also explore the text types in detail to understand what their final piece of writing should look like. Grammar and spelling are explicitly taught, laying a strong foundation for the following writing week.

Writing Week is where students develop their writing in stages. The writing process is broken down into manageable chunks, with clear success criteria. Children build their writing stamina and work towards producing a longer, polished piece.

### **Week 1: Immersion Week**

This immersive approach might include activities such as:

- **Drama:** Children act out parts of the story, take on the role of a character, engage in hot-seating, or participate in conscience alley to delve into characters' thoughts and actions.
- **Art:** Pupils draw characters or settings based on descriptions, which they then use as a basis for their own written descriptions.
- **Group Work:** Students work together on large sheets of sugar paper to brainstorm vocabulary, plan ideas, or use thesauruses to enrich their language choices.
- **Planning Ideas:** Children collaborate with learning partners or in groups to generate and structure their writing plans.
- **Short Writing Tasks:** Using prompts such as pictures, videos, or extracts, children write short, focused pieces to practise specific writing skills.

Throughout these sessions, there is a dedicated focus on SPaG (Spelling, Punctuation, and Grammar) as well as the key features of the text type being studied.

### **Goals of Immersion Week**

The immersion week at Thorpedene Primary School is designed to prepare children for their long writing task by engaging them creatively and laying a strong foundation for their writing. The goals of immersion week include:

- Creatively exploring the stimulus using drama, music, and art
- Exploring the features of a specific text type (if relevant)
- Generating high-quality vocabulary through discussion and exploration of the stimulus
- Creating short pieces of writing (e.g. character or setting descriptions) to support the final long-write
- Dedicating at least one lesson to explicitly teach a SPaG (Spelling, Punctuation, and Grammar) focus that will form part of the success criteria for the long-write
- Planning for the long-write

### **Example Immersion Week Planning – Fiction (Narrative)**

**Monday:** Introduce the text. Children read and perform the text through story acting or story mapping.

**Tuesday:** Focus on a specific character. Create a ‘role on the wall’ to explore and describe the character’s thoughts and feelings.

**Wednesday:** Shared writing of a character description. Children then write their own descriptions, using the role on the wall to guide vocabulary choices. The focus is on using varied descriptive techniques.

**Thursday:** Explore the setting of the text. Children create artwork or a soundscape to generate vocabulary for describing the setting.

**Friday:** Use story acting to innovate the narrative by including the children’s own ideas. Model this process, and then have children plan their own stories following the structure they’ve explored during the week.

### **Example Immersion Week Planning – Non-Fiction (News Report)**

**Monday:** Introduce the concept of being a ‘journalist’ (mantle of the expert). Create excitement around the topic, perhaps by setting up a ‘crime scene’ or distributing ‘press packs’ for children to gather information. Encourage children to think of questions they’d like to research.

**Tuesday:** In role as journalists, children write witness statements based on the information they gathered, focusing on the 5 W's (who, what, where, when, why) and descriptive vocabulary.

**Wednesday:** Use AfL (Assessment for Learning) to check understanding of non-fiction text types. Introduce the key features of a news report and have children annotate examples.

**Thursday:** Children create TV news report jingles using instruments, then act out their own TV news reports, focusing on including key details.

**Friday:** The drama and short-writes created during the week are used to plan the final news report for their long-write.

### **Writing Week (Week 2)**

In the second week, students focus on completing their full writing piece, with the goal of producing a paragraph each day (less for KS1).

**Daily SPaG Focus:** Each day begins with a short, interactive activity to recap the week's SPaG focus.

**Discussion Activity:** A question is posed to the class to encourage recall of prior learning.

**Success Criteria Reminders:** Success criteria are reviewed daily, displayed in books or on the wall as a toolbox for the children to use.

**Shared Writing:** Teachers guide the class through shared writing exercises, where students contribute their own ideas to build a collective piece.

**Independent Writing:** Children then use the shared write and SPaG focus to craft their own paragraph.

### **Editing**

Editing is an important part of the writing process at Thorpedene. We explicitly teach students how to edit their work, ensuring they develop key proofreading skills. Each day includes time for peer or self-marking, where children review their own or a classmate's work.

