

## Phonics at Aston Rowant

### What is phonics and how is it taught?

Phonics is a way of teaching children how to read by helping them understand the relationship between sounds (phonemes) and the letters or groups of letters (graphemes) that represent them. Children are taught to recognise these sounds, blend them together to read words, and segment them to spell. Phonics is taught in a clear, systematic way so that children build their knowledge step by step, enabling them to read unfamiliar words with confidence rather than guessing.

### Our intent and chosen programme

Our intent is that every child becomes a fluent, confident reader through a DfE-validated Systematic Synthetic Phonics (SSP) programme, taught with fidelity and consistency. We use Rocket Phonics, a validated programme that follows a carefully sequenced progression aligned to Letters and Sounds. Rocket Phonics provides a complete approach to early reading, including structured lessons, clear assessment, and fully decodable books, ensuring all children have the foundations they need to succeed.

### How phonics is implemented in our school

Our implementation follows Rocket Phonics' cumulative sequence: children are taught two new grapheme–phoneme correspondences (GPCs) each week, alongside daily review, explicit blending and segmenting, and regular opportunities to practise reading and spelling. Children read fully decodable books that are carefully matched to the sounds they have already been taught. We operate a keep up, not catch up model, providing same-day intervention for any child who needs additional support. Our keep up, not catch up model works because phonics is cumulative. Daily review, explicit blending and segmenting, and same-day support prevent gaps from forming in children's understanding of the alphabetic code. Children experience success early, misconceptions are addressed immediately, and pupils remain on the same curriculum journey as their peers. Leaders monitor fidelity, book-match and impact through lesson visits, book audits and assessment, including the Year 1 Phonics Screening Check. The impact is that pupils read accurately and increasingly fluently, with those at risk identified early and supported promptly.

## Phonics in Key Stage 2

### Why might some Key Stage 2 children still need phonics?

By Key Stage 2, most children can read fluently. However, some pupils may still find reading difficult because they are not yet secure in decoding words accurately. This may be due to gaps in earlier learning, disrupted schooling, or additional learning needs. For these children, continuing to teach phonics is essential, as it gives them the tools they need to read unfamiliar words confidently and independently.

### How phonics supports older readers

Phonics teaches children how the alphabetic code works — how letters and groups of letters represent sounds in words. In Key Stage 2, phonics is used to help pupils become more accurate and fluent readers, particularly when they encounter longer or unfamiliar words. Rather than

relying on guessing or memorising whole words, children are supported to break words down, blend sounds together, and make sense of what they read.

### **How phonics is taught in Key Stage 2**

Children in Key Stage 2 who need phonics receive targeted, time-limited support using the same high-quality Systematic Synthetic Phonics approach taught in earlier years. Teaching follows a clear, cumulative sequence, with regular review of previously learned sounds and explicit teaching of blending and segmenting. Pupils read age-appropriate decodable books that look like normal reading books, so they can practise their skills with confidence and dignity. Support is carefully matched to each child's needs and reviewed regularly so that progress is rapid and purposeful.

### **Our 'keep up, not catch up' approach**

We use a keep up, not catch up approach because learning to read is cumulative — each new skill builds on the last. By addressing gaps as soon as they are identified, we prevent difficulties from becoming barriers to learning across the curriculum. Children experience success early, build confidence, and remain on the same reading journey as their peers. Our aim is that all pupils leave Key Stage 2 able to read accurately, fluently and with enjoyment, ready to access the full secondary curriculum. This approach is strongly aligned with the DfE Reading Framework and Ofsted's guidance on early reading, ensuring that all children are given the best possible start to their reading journey.