



Phonics and Reading at Chestnut Lane Frequently Asked Questions

Please find below a list of FAQs following the launch of our new approach to phonics and reading this year. If you cannot find the answer to your question below or after watching the Phonics and Reading Parent Information Presentations on our website, then please feel free to speak to your child's class teacher at a mutually convenient time. Thank you.

Q Are children's reading books changed every day?

A Children can change their 'Phase' or 'Beyond Phonics' reading book **daily**, providing they have read it at home and there is a signed comment in their log.

Children will change their 'Shared Reader' book **weekly**, after they have explored it in a small group comprehension session with a teacher.

Children can change their school library books **weekly**, providing they return their previous library book.

Q How are reading books organised to ensure children are making good progress and being challenged?

In line with DfE guidance, 'Phase' books carefully match what children are learning in phonics lessons. Children should be able to confidently read the words in these books. Phase Books increase in complexity as children's phonic knowledge grows.

When children have completed Phase 5 of the Chestnut Lane Phonics Programme, they will bring home 'Beyond Phonics' books, to develop their independence, fluency and enjoyment as readers. These are organised by colour.

Shared Reading books, which focus on the development of comprehension and vocabulary skills and encourage reading for pleasure, are organised by colour. These books also increase in complexity as children's fluency and comprehension skills develop.

Please see the [Chestnut Lane Reading Books Guidance](#) document on our website for more detailed information about progression and challenge.

Q How long will children be bringing home a particular type of Phase Book or Shared Reader colour for?

A Teacher assessment informs the level of 'Phase' and 'Shared Reader' books that your child brings home. We continually monitor and assess children's individual progress in phonics and reading. Children often develop their phonics and comprehension skills at different rates and therefore will progress through the book levels at different rates.

The 'Phase' and 'Shared Reader' books reflect where your child is working in class and may not be the same level.

All 'Phase' and 'Shared Reader' books are clearly labelled on the front cover, so it will be clear when your child has changed level/colour, as the result of ongoing teacher assessment.

Q How often are the children assessed for reading?

A Children's reading skills are **continually assessed** by teachers on an informal daily basis. Teachers will be monitoring children's ability to read and understand texts across the curriculum, modelling what 'good readers' do and promoting a love of reading at every opportunity.

Individual phonics assessments take place regularly. These determine the 'Phase' or 'Beyond Phonics' reading book that your child brings home so that it matches their learning stage and is fully decodable.

Individual comprehension assessments take place every half term. These determine the 'Shared Reading' group that your child participates in and the corresponding book that they will bring home weekly.

Q Please can you explain the Reading Framework and Phonics Programme?

A Here is a full copy of [The Department for Education's Reading Framework](#)

Further information about the many ways we develop reading skills at Chestnut Lane can be found in our virtual [Reading Presentation](#)

A clear explanation of our Phonics Programme, including how we meet all DfE Core Criteria can be found in our virtual Phonics Presentation with a written overview in our [Parent Guide](#)

Phonics Presentation: <https://vimeo.com/chestnutlaneschool/phonics> password: **Chestnut**

Reading Presentation: <https://vimeo.com/chestnutlaneschool/reading> password: **Chestnut**

Q How do you get children to engage in reading?

A At Chestnut Lane School, reading opportunities are woven across our curriculum and into children's daily routines. We capitalise on all opportunities to celebrate reading, including visits from authors, illustrators and exciting World Book Day celebrations.

Important ways that we ensure children fully engage in reading are:

- Daily interactive phonics sessions where children participate in fun activities which develop their word reading skills.
- Weekly 'Shared Reading' small group sessions using our child-friendly 'Reading Toolbox' approach to develop comprehension skills.
- Daily whole class story times to encourage reading for pleasure, as teachers enthusiastically share favourite books and model fluent, expressive reading.
- Carefully chosen [Core Texts](#) for each year group and corresponding learning activities.
- Having welcoming, accessible book corners in all classrooms. We hope you will come and explore these with your child at Friday 'Read-in' sessions for parents.
- Weekly library visits where children can independently choose a book which appeals to them to take home and enjoy.

More details about the points above can be found in in our virtual [Phonics Presentation](#) and our virtual [Reading Presentation](#)

Q How will children improve their vocabulary?

A Teachers plan carefully crafted speaking and listening opportunities across the curriculum, including use of talk partners and dedicate learning time to generate and extend children's vocabulary, especially around a new topic.

In Shared Reading sessions, we have a specific clarifying 'tool' in our '[Reading Toolbox](#)' to enable children to explore the meaning of new words they encounter in their reading. This tool also enables teachers to introduce the idea of 'synonyms' and 'opposites' in a fun way, to further broaden children's vocabulary.

In phonics sessions, words are always fully decodable to ensure children experience success with word reading, but the meanings of unfamiliar words are always discussed.

Children who move 'Beyond Phonics' (completion of Phase 5) and have secure word reading and spelling skills, focus on 'morphology': the structure of words, how they are formed and their relationship with other words.

Q How do you ensure that you challenge confident readers?

A We are proud of our personalised approach to learning at Chestnut Lane, as we aim to support and challenge all children at the level that is right for them.

Children are taught word reading skills daily in small groups across the year group, working at the Phase that is right for them.

Once children's ability to apply phonic knowledge to accurately read words is secure (completion of Phase 5) the focus shifts to ensuring that children are able to apply this knowledge to accurate spelling words and to exploring 'morphology', including root words, prefixes and suffixes, which further supports children's vocabulary development.

Children's comprehension skills are developed in small group Shared Reading sessions with a teacher. Our 'Reading Toolbox' approach is designed so that confident readers can take the lead in these group sessions, often asking as well as answering questions to deepen their learning. They may also have roles allocated such as being in charge of 'clarifying' new vocabulary or 'summarising' a passage.

Q How do you ensure that you support children who find reading challenging?

A We are proud of our personalised approach to learning at Chestnut Lane, as we aim to support and challenge all children at the level that is right for them.

Children are taught word reading skills daily in small groups across the year group, working at the Phase that is right for them. If children need further support, they may take part in additional phonics activities, so they have more opportunities to practise and secure their knowledge of letters and sounds.

If children's word reading skills are significantly behind their comprehension skills, we use 'Booster' decodable reading books in school to give them additional word reading practice.

Children's comprehension skills are developed in small group Shared Reading sessions with a teacher. Our '[Reading Toolbox](#)' approach is designed so that less confident readers can observe how teachers 'make meaning' from a text. Although the Shared Reader book will change weekly, using the same 'tools' each session enables children to practise and apply comprehension skills in a structured, familiar format every time.

Q What about teaching children to read words by sight? You cannot use phonics to read all words.

A Systematic Synthetic Phonics is the prime approach to teaching word reading skills. However, there are words in the English language which do not follow phonics rules and we call these 'Tricky Words'.

We teach different 'Tricky Words' at each phonics Phase to ensure gradual progression. Lists of these can be found in our [Parent Guide](#) and there are also individual 'Tricky Word' mats for each phonics Phase on our website.

One session a week out of our daily phonics sessions is dedicated to teaching children fun ways of learning to read and spell 'Tricky Words'. As children progress through the Phases, words that were once tricky may become decodable due to their ever increasing phonic knowledge.