International School of London

Primary School Phonics Policy

Date reviewed:
August 2025

To be reviewed:
August 2026

Mission statement

Since 1972, we have established a welcoming and inclusive community. Our diverse cultures and languages drive all our learning experiences. We nurture creativity and curiosity to stimulate deep thinking. We foster insight, compassion and resilience to enable us to play a meaningful part in a changing world.

Vision statement

We celebrate our stories, our worth and our purpose to make a difference in a shared world. At the International School of London, we believe in: Empowering students to maximize their learning opportunities and to fulfil their potential. Actively integrating cultural diversity in the curriculum. Creating inclusive, vibrant and innovative learning communities. Offering a diverse and extensive international programme that supports personal, social and professional growth.

Relevant policies:

- Assessment Policy
- Learning Support and SEND Policy
- Teaching and Learning Policy
- Online Safety Policy

1. Aims

ISL London strives to ensure that all children become successful, fluent readers and believe this is achievable through a combination of strong, high quality, and systematic phonics teaching that is supported by integrated literacy practices across the curriculum.

This policy is aimed at reinforcing a consistent, high-quality approach to the teaching of phonics across the Early Years, lower primary and into upper primary for those students who still need further support.

We aim to:

- Provide an environment that supports students to use their full linguistic repertoire, leveraging the use of their home language as they develop their English language proficiency as they develop their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills.
- Teach children aural discrimination, phonemic awareness and rhyme to aid reading, writing and spelling development.
- Encourage the use of segmenting and blending so that decoding skills provide a sound foundation for reading, writing and spelling.
- Ensure the teaching of phonics is lively, interactive and investigative.
- Enable children to use phonic awareness across the curriculum.
- Ensure that children know the 44 phonemes within the English language.
- Teach children to recognise the graphemes within words and associate them with the appropriate phoneme when reading.

- Provide children with strategies to identify and decode irregular spelled words that do not follow the typical phonics patterns.

Our objectives in providing a high-quality phonics programme is to:

- Provide consistent, high quality phonics teaching tailored to the individual needs of our students to ensure they have a strong foundation upon which to tackle the complex processes of reading and writing.
- Ensure that the teaching of phonics is systematic and progressive from early years through primary for those children needing interventions to support phonetic knowledge and understanding.
- Ensure that children have sound phonetic knowledge, understanding and skills so that they can decode words confidently and engage with higher order reading and writing skills.

2. Planning and Delivery:

AT ISL we believe that phonics teaching should be:

- **Systematic:** Students learn the relationships between the sounds (phonemes) of spoken language and the letter symbols (graphemes) of the written language.
- **Discrete:** Daily lessons teach discrete phonics skills following a research-based skill progression.
- **Interactive:** Students are provided with hands on activities to consolidate and apply their knowledge of phonemes, graphemes and sight words. Lessons include the use of songs, stories, games and real-life application of phonics skills.
- **Transferrable:** Students have authentic opportunities to transfer their phonics skills to reading and writing throughout the curriculum.
- **Engaging:** Lessons are student-centred and levelled appropriately to each child.

Planning:

The school follows the systematic approach following Little Wandle, Letters and Sounds for EC-KG scope and sequence and the University of Florida Literacy Institute (UFLI) for 1-5. The phonics planning is explicit and systematic so that students acquire each new skill and learn to apply the skill with automaticity and confidence. The UFLI phonics approach supports multilingual learners with the explicit teaching of mouth articulation connected to phonemes. The explicit lessons support confident acquisition of skills and are used for English Language learners and students with phonics needs as intervention in grade 3-5.

Staff use weekly planners for phonics which ensure progression and effective, high-quality teaching. Staff also tracks the acquisition of skills for students in a shared document so reading and writing can align as students acquire new skills.

Resources:

All phonics teachers have a range of resources to use, which are appropriate for the level at which the children are working. Teachers in EC-KG use the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds platform for resources to support student learning and home learning connections. Teachers in Grades 1-5 use the UFLI platform for lesson plans, resources, and texts to support phonics lessons. All classrooms have decodable texts that are aligned with the phonics progression, so students can practice their phonics skills in reading books. Students support their in-class phonics learning with at-home learning support that is connected to their explicit phonics skill.

Lessons:

Discrete phonics lessons take place every day for 30 minutes lessons in EC-Grade 3. Students who receive phonics lessons as an intervention in grades 3-5 have discrete phonics lessons for 30 minutes a day in a small group setting. Phonics lessons incorporate phonemic awareness, visual, auditory, and blending drills, word work and connected texts. Students are reading, writing, and spelling in each phonics lesson to acquire their new skill. Consequently, wherever possible, links between phonics knowledge and understanding are made to learning in both Reading and Writing.

Classes:

Children are taught in groups according to their phonics knowledge which is assessed by the class teacher. As children progress at different rates, and bearing in mind our transient student body, these groups may be changed regularly. Grade levels may choose to group their children across classes. Teaching assistants have received phonics training and are able to lead groups. Smaller groups may be formed in response to specific intervention (see below).

Supporting Newcomers:

Students who are new to the UK and new to acquiring English will be supported in targeted phonics groups that meet their individual language needs. Newcomer students in Grades 3-5 will participate in strategic, age-appropriate phonics intervention sessions from the UFLI phonics programme.

3. Assessment and Intervention

Assessment

Assessment is regarded as an integral part of teaching and learning and is a continuous process. It must be purposeful, allowing us to identify gaps and measure progress made to ensure we are meeting the individual needs of the pupils. It is the class teacher’s responsibility to keep track of the progress made by all children in their class, regardless of their phonics group.

• Assessment *for* Learning: We continually assess our pupils and record their progress. Information for assessment is gathered in various ways, e.g., by talking to children, asking questions, observing their work, and setting specific tasks. Teachers use this assessment information to plan further work and set new targets.

• Assessment *of* Learning: The attainment and progress of children in phonics is assessed after each skill is taught and through beginning-, middle-, and end-of-year benchmarks, and through Reading and Writing assessments.

Literacy assessments are given throughout the year across all grade levels to provide a picture of learning for all students and drive our phonics instruction.

Feedback:

Children are provided with constructive and timely feedback in lessons. Teachers provide parents with feedback on their child's progress and achievement during conferences and through our reporting system. Assessment information is also passed onto the next teacher as part of transition between year groups and phases.

All students are assessed within their first six weeks by their class teacher or ELL teacher. If a need for additional support is identified, it will then be planned for as appropriate.

Intervention:

The beginning-of-year and in-year phonics assessments are analysed with the curriculum coordinator to identify children who need extra support to embed and / or develop their phonic knowledge. A beginning-of-the year phonics assessment will be administered for students who are reading below grade level expectations to determine their phonics needs.

If a student is identified as needing phonics intervention, this will be determined on a case-by-case basis. Where possible, this support is given in class by the class teacher and teaching assistant (e.g daily sound review - 5mins). Where significant progress needs to be made, the student may be identified for additional support from the SEN or ELL department

We recognise that we have a transient community with students arriving with a range of experiences, language profiles and backgrounds so we support all students with a personalized approach to their phonics development in alignment with the UFLI and Little Wandle skill progression.

4. Home-School Connection

At ISL we believe that parental involvement plays a key role in the acquisition of new skills, including phonetic awareness. We will share our programme, its aims and how best to encourage and support students at home, through home-school communication and workshops. Each week, EC-G2 students will take home decodable books that are aligned with their phonics phase to consolidate their learning. This also applies to Grades 3-5 where students are receiving phonics intervention.

5. Staff/CPD

Class teachers and teaching assistants will be given CPD and on-going coaching in Little Wandle: Letters and Sounds and UFLI and the principles behind segmenting and blending, as needed.

All staff who facilitate and support literacy will be expected to familiarise themselves with the phonics resources and to use UFLI and Little Wandle language and practices.

At ISL London, Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play. In order to fulfil this responsibility effectively, all practitioners should make sure their approach is child-centred. This means that they should consider, at all times, what is in the best interests of the child.