



Phonics and Early Reading Policy



THE Partnership Phonics Programme

Policy information	School detail
Policy owner	Mili Begum
Approved by	Judy Knappett
Approval date	14th September 2026
Review date	July 2028
Version	September 2026 master template - Strong Foundations aligned
Applies to	EYFS, Key Stage 1 and older pupils who remain at the early stages of learning to read

Aligned to the DfE Reading Framework, Strong Foundations in the First Years of School, the National Curriculum for English and the Ofsted state-funded school inspection toolkit for use from September 2026.

Contents

1. Purpose and statutory context
2. Intent: what we want pupils to achieve
3. Core principles and non-negotiables
4. Teaching THE Partnership Phonics Programme
5. Reading practice and decodable books
6. Language comprehension, vocabulary and reading for pleasure
7. Developing fluency
8. Assessment and keeping up from the start
9. Inclusion: SEND, disadvantage and English as an additional language
10. Leadership, training and quality assurance
11. Partnership with parents and carers
12. Impact, monitoring and policy review

Appendix A: school-specific information to complete

Appendix B: key national and programme references

1. Purpose and statutory context

Reading is fundamental to pupils' success across the curriculum and to their future participation in education and society. This policy sets out how the **Weavers Federation** teaches phonics and early reading through THE Partnership Phonics Programme and how we ensure that pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read become accurate, increasingly automatic and fluent readers.

The National Curriculum for English identifies two dimensions of reading: word reading and comprehension. Different forms of teaching are needed for each. In the earliest stages, systematic synthetic phonics is the route to accurate word reading, while pupils' language comprehension is developed through rich spoken language, reading aloud, discussion, vocabulary and knowledge-building experiences.

THE Partnership Phonics Programme is included on the Department for Education's current list of validated systematic synthetic phonics programmes. The programme is designed for daily teaching from early in Reception and follows a clearly defined, incremental progression.

This policy also reflects the Ofsted state-funded school inspection toolkit for use from September 2026. In particular, leaders ensure that pupils at the early stages of learning to read are

- taught through systematic synthetic phonics;
- staff have the expertise they need;
- foundational gaps are identified and addressed;
- and pupils develop secure accuracy and fluency in word reading.

It also draws explicitly on Ofsted's Strong Foundations in the First Years of School (2024). We use its central principles to strengthen early reading:

- identify the foundational knowledge pupils need;
- teach it explicitly and in a coherent sequence;
- provide enough high-quality practice for knowledge and skills to become fluent;
- assess precisely what has and has not been secured;
- and adapt teaching promptly when pupils need more or different practice.

These principles inform our curriculum and pedagogy; they are not treated as an inspection checklist.

Relationship with THE Partnership Reading Tool

This policy should be read alongside the Partnership Reading Tool for EY–KS2 (Version 1, March 2026) and the THE Partnership Reading Progression EY–KS2.

The Reading Tool translates the wider reading curriculum into year-group guidance across word reading and language comprehension, while this policy sets the whole-school principles and non-negotiables for phonics and early reading.

The Reading Tool organises word reading through phonological awareness, print knowledge, decoding, full word recognition and fluency, and language comprehension through vocabulary, grammar and syntax, text structure, comprehension monitoring and inference (in line with EEF Reading House).

Schools should use these strands to support progression without fragmenting comprehension into isolated skills.

Where the Reading Tool uses book-band or colour terminology, this is interpreted as an organisational or indicative reference only. For any pupil who is still learning to decode through THE Partnership Phonics Programme, the decisive factor in selecting a reading-practice book is the precise match to the GPCs and tricky/common exception words already taught.

2. Intent: what we want pupils to achieve

At the **Weavers Federation**, we are ambitious for every pupil to become a reader. We want pupils to:

- develop secure knowledge of the alphabetic code and use phonics as the primary route to decode unfamiliar words;
- blend accurately and increasingly automatically so that word reading becomes effortless;
- read with increasing fluency, confidence and appropriate expression;
- develop the vocabulary, background knowledge and language comprehension needed to understand what they hear and read;
- experience a wide range of high-quality stories, poems, rhymes and non-fiction, including texts beyond the level they can read independently;
- develop positive reading habits, curiosity and a lasting enjoyment of books;
- be identified quickly if they are at risk of falling behind and receive precise, additional practice that enables them to keep up.

We recognise that phonics is a means to an end. The goal is accurate and automatic word recognition that frees pupils' attention to focus on meaning, knowledge and enjoyment.

As pupils become increasingly fluent, these foundations enable the wider THE Partnership reading aim: pupils think deeply about, discuss and construct coherent mental models of rich and challenging texts.

3. Core principles and non-negotiables

Non-negotiable	What this means in practice
Fidelity	We follow THE Partnership Phonics Programme progression, lesson routines, terminology, assessment and matched resources. Supplementary materials must not introduce GPCs or word-reading strategies that conflict with the programme.
Daily teaching	Formal SSP teaching begins early in Reception and is taught daily. It continues for as long as pupils need it.
Phonics first	Pupils are taught to use phonic knowledge and blending as the route to decode unfamiliar words. They are not taught to guess words from pictures, context or first letters.
Matched practice	While pupils are learning to decode, the books they read themselves are closely matched to the GPCs and tricky words they have been taught.
Re-reading	Pupils re-read matched texts so accuracy develops into automaticity, fluency and confidence.
Keep up	Pupils at risk of falling behind are identified quickly and receive additional daily practice that is consistent with the main programme.
Language and books	Phonics is taught alongside a language-rich curriculum: daily reading aloud, talk, vocabulary, stories, rhymes, poetry and non-fiction.
Expert staff	Adults who teach phonics and additional practice are trained to use the programme consistently, including accurate pronunciation and agreed routines.
Foundational knowledge	We are precise about what pupils need to know and be able to do. Teaching, practice and assessment focus on securing that knowledge rather than completing activities or moving on before learning is secure.
Practice to fluency	Coverage is not the same as learning. Pupils receive sufficient cumulative retrieval and application so taught knowledge becomes accurate, automatic and durable.
Equitable participation	Adults ensure every pupil participates in teaching, practice and book talk. Pupils with lower starting points, SEND, weaker communication and language, or other barriers are deliberately given the additional interaction and practice they need; learning is not left to choice or chance.

- Teaching approaches are chosen to match the knowledge being learned.
- Direct teaching, modelling and cumulative practice are used where precision matters.
- Purposeful talk, shared reading and well-planned play extend language, knowledge and understanding.
- Familiar routines, small steps and focused attention help reduce unnecessary cognitive load so pupils can concentrate on the content being learned.

Across Reception and Key Stage 1, our operating cycle is:

identify the important knowledge → teach it clearly → provide enough practice → check what has been learned → revisit or adapt teaching where needed → move on when the foundation is secure.

This protects pupils from being asked to undertake complex reading or written-comprehension tasks before the necessary word-reading and language foundations are in place.

Strong Foundations operating principle
4. Teaching THE Partnership Phonics Programme

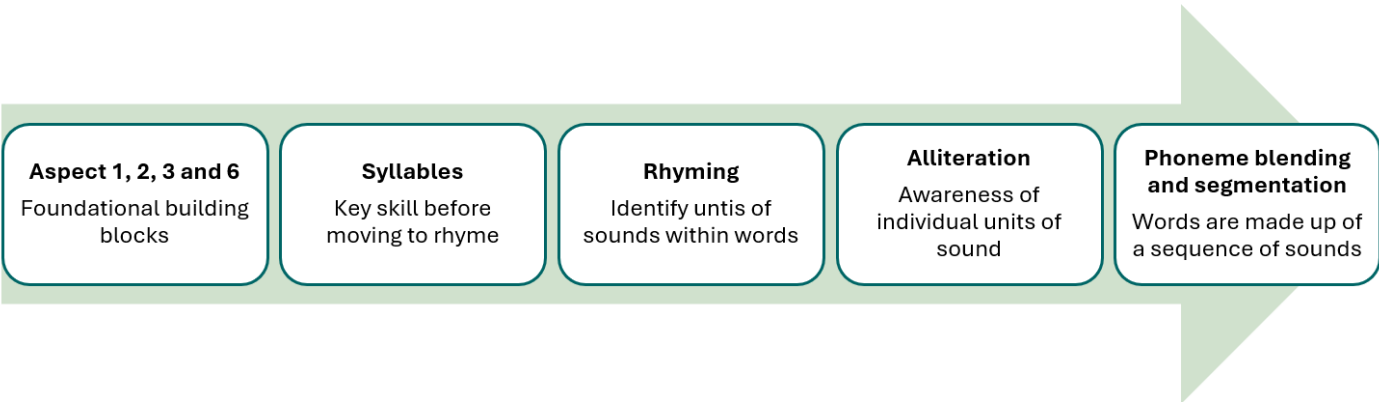
Nursery and the foundations for reading

In Nursery, children develop the foundations that support later phonics learning through a rich communication and language curriculum.

Provision includes high-quality talk, songs, rhymes, stories, environmental and instrumental sounds, phonological awareness, oral blending and segmenting, vocabulary, print awareness and enjoyment of books. Adults deliberately teach and rehearse these foundations; essential learning is not left solely to children choosing activities in continuous provision.

Nursery provision does not operate as a gatekeeping “Phase 1” that children must complete before formal phonics can begin. Formal teaching of the programme’s GPC progression begins early in Reception in line with current THE Partnership guidance. Where schools use Phase 1 materials in Nursery, these are used as part of broad language and phonological- and phonemic-awareness provision, not as a substitute for rich talk and reading aloud.

THE Partnership Phonics Programme provides planning and resources for phase 1 following the learning path below:



In line with the THE Partnership Reading Tool, Nursery provision also develops print knowledge and book handling, extends vocabulary and grammar through sustained back-and-forth talk, and ensures children encounter stories, rhymes and songs every day. Adults make sure that every child, particularly those with lower starting points or communication and language needs, takes part in frequent high-quality conversations and receives the interaction needed to build language.

Reception

Children begin formal daily SSP teaching early in Reception.

Teachers follow the current THE Partnership progression and teach cumulatively so pupils revisit and apply previously taught knowledge. New content is introduced in manageable steps and practised sufficiently for pupils to remember and use it. Familiar lesson routines support attention and reduce unnecessary cognitive load. Pupils do not simply encounter or cover GPCs: teachers check whether knowledge is secure and provide further teaching and practice where it is not.

By the end of Reception, pupils should be using their phonics knowledge to read accurately and with increasing fluency. Teachers ensure that transition information to Year 1 identifies what has been securely learned and any gaps requiring immediate attention.

Schools use the Reception section of the THE Partnership Reading Tool alongside the phonics progression to develop oral blending and segmenting, print knowledge, increasingly automatic word recognition, re-reading for fluency, dialogic talk, vocabulary and comprehension of texts read aloud.

The Reading Tool does not replace the programme sequence or determine the introduction of GPCs.

Year 1

Daily phonics continues in Year 1 following THE Partnership progression, with systematic teaching, review and application in reading and spelling. Pupils continue to read and re-read decodable books matched to their secure phonic knowledge and the common exception/tricky words they have been taught.

All eligible pupils take the statutory Year 1 Phonics Screening Check. The check is an important national assessment of decoding, but it is not the end-point of the reading curriculum. Teaching and practice continue until accurate decoding is sufficiently automatic to support fluent reading.

The Year 1 section of the THE Partnership Reading Tool complements this work by setting out progression in print knowledge, decoding, full word recognition, fluency, talk and language comprehension. Pupils continue to hear, share and discuss high-quality texts beyond their independent reading level while securing automatic application of the taught alphabetic code.

Year 2 and older pupils who still need phonics

Pupils who have not secured the necessary phonic knowledge and blending skills continue to receive rigorous, systematic phonics teaching. Assessment identifies the precise gaps so teaching starts at the highest appropriate point in the programme rather than automatically restarting from the beginning. Additional teaching is frequent, focused and designed to accelerate progress.

Older pupils who still need phonics continue to take part in age-appropriate reading, discussion and curriculum learning. Their access to rich language, knowledge and literature is not restricted to the level of text they can decode independently.

In Year 2, the THE Partnership Reading Tool should be used to support the transition from effortful decoding to fluent independent reading. Pupils continue to apply phonics until automatic decoding is

embedded; those who are secure broaden their independent reading, vocabulary and comprehension, while pupils with remaining gaps continue to receive precise SSP-aligned teaching and matched decodable practice.

Lesson structure

Every planned THE Partnership phonics lesson follows the programme's five-part structure:

- Revise** - retrieve and secure previously taught GPCs and words.
- Hear** - introduce or revisit the focus sound and connect spoken sound to print.
- Read** - practise reading the focus GPC and words containing it, including cumulative review.
- Write** - apply phoneme-grapheme knowledge accurately in spelling and transcription.
- Apply** - use the taught knowledge in phrases, sentences and connected reading/writing.

Assessment is built into daily teaching and the programme's formative and summative assessment points; it is used to adapt teaching and plan additional practice.

5. Reading practice and decodable books

Reading practice gives pupils sufficient opportunity to apply the phonic knowledge they have been taught. For pupils who are learning to decode:

- books are closely matched to the school's current THE Partnership GPC and tricky-word progression;
- pupils are expected to use phonics and blending to work out unfamiliar words;
- adults do not encourage guessing from pictures, context, sentence shape or initial letters as an alternative word-reading strategy;
- pupils re-read familiar matched texts to develop accuracy, automaticity, pace and confidence;
- adults provide immediate, supportive correction when a pupil cannot decode a word, then return the pupil to the word so the correct reading is practised;
- book-band or colour labels, including those referenced in the THE Partnership Reading Tool, may be used for organisation or broad progression guidance, but never override the requirement for a precise phonic match while a pupil is learning to decode.

Two complementary kinds of book

A decodable reading-practice book is selected so the pupil can practise the phonics they have been taught. A sharing or reading-for-pleasure book may contain language well beyond the pupil's independent decoding level and is for an adult to read aloud, share and discuss with the child. Both are important, but they serve different purposes.

Once pupils can decode regular words and common exception words accurately and automatically, their independent reading range broadens. The transition away from phonically controlled texts is based on evidence of secure word reading and fluency, not simply age, book-band colour or completion of the Phonics Screening Check.

6. Language comprehension, vocabulary and reading for pleasure

Word reading and language comprehension develop together but require different teaching. Pupils who cannot yet read a sophisticated text independently can still understand and enjoy it when it is read to them.

Every day, pupils in the early stages of learning to read should experience adults reading high-quality texts aloud. Across EYFS and Key Stage 1, teachers use fiction, non-fiction, poetry, rhyme and song to develop vocabulary, knowledge of the world, familiarity with written language and enjoyment of books.

Discussion is purposeful and text-specific. Teachers model and prompt pupils to clarify meaning, connect ideas, summarise, predict, infer and notice how vocabulary, sentences and text structures contribute to meaning. For pupils at the early stages of learning to read, rich oral discussion and shared reading take priority over written comprehension tasks that depend on decoding or transcription knowledge the pupil has not yet secured.

Teachers deliberately explain and revisit important vocabulary, including words pupils are unlikely to encounter in everyday speech. Pupils are given frequent opportunities to articulate ideas, listen to others, ask questions and justify their thinking about what has been read.

The THE Partnership Reading Tool provides the detailed progression for dialogic talk, vocabulary, grammar and syntax, text structure, comprehension monitoring and inference. Teachers use this progression flexibly in response to the text being studied; it is not intended as a sequence of isolated comprehension exercises.

7. Developing fluency

Fluent reading depends on secure decoding. Our teaching develops fluency through three connected features: accuracy, automaticity and, once word reading is sufficiently secure, appropriate prosody (phrasing, expression and attention to punctuation).

We build fluency through regular re-reading of decodable books, teacher modelling, echo and choral reading where appropriate, paired reading and repeated oral reading of carefully chosen texts. Practice is designed to make word recognition increasingly effortless rather than to encourage speed at the expense of accuracy or meaning.

The THE Partnership Reading Tool develops fluency through accuracy, automaticity and prosody, supported by phrasing, echo reading and repeated oral reading. It also provides indicative words-correct-per-minute (WCPM) ranges from Year 2 onwards. Schools may use these ranges as diagnostic reference points alongside accuracy, phrasing, prosody and understanding; they are not statutory standards or pass/fail targets, and reading speed must never be pursued at the expense of accurate, meaningful reading.

8. Assessment and keeping up from the start

Assessment is purposeful and closely connected to teaching. It answers three practical questions: What does this pupil know securely? What is not yet secure? What teaching or additional practice

happens next? It does not replace daily observation of pupils reading and responding in lessons, and it is not used merely to generate broad attainment labels.

What we assess

- knowledge and rapid recall of taught GPCs;
- accurate oral blending and word reading;
- reading of taught tricky/common exception words;
- accuracy and increasing automaticity when reading connected text;
- spelling/encoding of taught correspondences where this informs phonics teaching;
- fluency once decoding is secure enough for rate, phrasing and expression to be meaningful.
- Where appropriate, schools may use the indicative WCPM ranges in the THE Partnership Reading Tool as one part of the fluency picture, alongside direct observation of accuracy, automaticity, phrasing, prosody and comprehension.

Keeping up from the start

Children who are at risk of falling behind are identified as early as possible. In Reception, this includes identification within the first three weeks of starting, followed by continuing assessment. Starting points are used to adjust the amount and kind of teaching and practice pupils receive. We do not assume that pupils with lower starting points will catch up later; they are given the additional high-quality teaching, interaction and practice needed to secure the same essential foundations.

Additional practice:

- is closely aligned to the content, routines and language of the main THE Partnership lesson;
- is short, frequent and focused on specific gaps rather than broad, generic intervention;
- provides repeated opportunities for successful retrieval, blending and application;
- is reviewed frequently so pupils leave intervention as soon as the identified knowledge is secure;
- considers possible barriers such as SEND, speech and language needs, attendance, mobility or limited prior teaching without lowering expectations for learning to read.

Phonics Screening Check

Year 1 pupils take the statutory Phonics Screening Check. Pupils who do not meet the expected standard receive continued, systematic phonics teaching and take the statutory recheck in Year 2. Screening outcomes inform teaching but do not narrow the curriculum. Optional or end-of-key-stage-style assessment tasks are not allowed to displace the teaching and practice pupils need in decoding, fluency, vocabulary and language comprehension.

9. Inclusion: SEND, disadvantage and English as an additional language

We have high expectations for all pupils. Pupils with SEND, disadvantaged pupils, pupils who are new to English and pupils facing other barriers are entitled to expert teaching of the same essential reading foundations, with the quantity and form of teaching adjusted to need. Adults actively protect equitable access to interaction and practice: pupils who are quieter, less confident or have lower starting points are not permitted to receive less teaching simply because they participate less readily.

Reasonable adjustments are made where required so pupils can access teaching successfully, for example through pace, repetition, presentation, seating, sensory or communication support. Adaptations should remove barriers without diluting the core principles of systematic phonics or replacing cumulative practice with less effective guessing strategies.

For pupils learning English as an additional language, staff value and build on existing language knowledge, explicitly develop English vocabulary and oral language, and ensure pupils learn to read through systematic synthetic phonics as soon as possible. A pupil's limited English vocabulary should not be confused with an inability to learn the alphabetic code.

Where a pupil makes unusually slow progress despite high-quality teaching and additional practice, leaders consider whether further assessment or specialist advice is needed while continuing to teach the reading knowledge and skills the pupil has not yet secured.

10. Leadership, training and quality assurance

The headteacher and senior leaders

- make reading a whole-school priority and protect sufficient time for daily phonics and reading practice;
- ensure the Reception and Key Stage 1 curriculum is clear about the foundational reading and language knowledge every pupil must secure, and that practice time is sufficient for fluency rather than mere coverage;
- ensure staffing, timetabling and resources support consistent programme implementation;
- ensure pupils who need additional support receive it promptly and that its impact is checked;
- ensure transition between Reception, Year 1, Year 2 and Key Stage 2 maintains continuity for pupils who still need phonics.
- check that whole-school approaches to comprehension, assessment or written response do not require pupils to do too much too soon or displace the teaching of foundational knowledge;

The phonics/reading lead

- maintains expert knowledge of THE Partnership Phonics Programme and current national guidance;
- maintains coherent use of THE Partnership Phonics Programme, the THE Partnership Reading Tool and the THE Partnership Reading Progression, so that early word-reading expectations and the wider reading curriculum reinforce one another;
- inducts new staff and provides regular training, modelling, coaching and feedback;
- checks fidelity to the programme, including sequence, lesson routines, pronunciation, decodable-book match and additional practice;
- checks that pupils with lower starting points receive at least as much purposeful adult interaction, explicit teaching and successful practice as their peers, and that intervention changes when assessment shows it is not working;
- reviews assessment information and supports teachers to identify pupils who are at risk of falling behind;
- monitors the impact of teaching through routine school processes such as lesson visits, pupil reading, book/resource checks and professional dialogue;
- ensures any purchased or teacher-created resources are compatible with the school's chosen SSP progression.

Teachers and support staff

- follow agreed routines consistently and use the programme's terminology;
- articulate phonemes accurately and avoid adding an intrusive schwa;

- make pupils successful through brisk practice, clear modelling, immediate feedback and high participation;
- know which GPCs and words pupils have been taught and select reading materials accordingly;
- communicate concerns about progress promptly and deliver additional practice as trained.

Quality assurance is designed to improve pupils' reading and staff expertise. Leaders consider whether the intended foundational knowledge is being taught, practised and remembered - not simply whether planned activities took place. The school does not create additional paperwork solely for inspection; leaders use evidence that forms part of normal curriculum and assessment work.

11. Partnership with parents and carers

Parents and carers are important partners in helping pupils become readers. [School] explains how phonics is taught and how families can support reading without introducing conflicting strategies.

- Families are shown or directed to guidance on the pronunciation of phonemes and the language used in THE Partnership lessons.
- Parents understand the difference between a decodable reading-practice book and a sharing/reading-for-pleasure book.
- Home reading expectations are manageable and emphasise regular successful practice, re-reading and conversation about books.
- Where home support is limited, school provides additional opportunities for pupils to read to an adult and to hear adults read aloud.
- Parents are informed when a pupil needs additional support and are given practical, programme-consistent ways to help.

12. Impact, monitoring and policy review

The impact of this policy is seen when pupils increasingly read accurately, automatically, fluently and with enjoyment; gaps are identified and close quickly; and pupils can access increasingly demanding texts across the curriculum.

Leaders evaluate impact using a balanced range of evidence, which may include:

- programme assessment and pupils' secure knowledge of taught GPCs;
- first-hand listening to pupils read;
- progress of pupils receiving additional practice;
- quality and consistency of phonics teaching;
- match between pupils' phonic knowledge and reading-practice books;
- Year 1 Phonics Screening Check outcomes and Year 2 recheck outcomes;
- evidence of increasing fluency and widening independent reading;
- whether pupils with lower starting points and other barriers are receiving sufficient teaching, interaction and practice for gaps to close rather than widen;
- participation in reading aloud, discussion and reading for pleasure.

This policy is reviewed at least annually and whenever there is a significant change to THE Partnership Phonics Programme, statutory curriculum requirements or national guidance. School-specific operational details should be updated without weakening the core principles of SSP fidelity, matched practice and rapid support for pupils who are falling behind.

Appendix A: school-specific information to complete

School-specific field	Detail
Named phonics/reading lead	Mili Begum AHT
Decodable book collections used	Pearsons Bug Club Phonics Books
Home reading arrangements	Children are allocated Bug clubs books matched to their phonics levels to read at home. They also have the opportunity to select and take home books that interest them to share at home.
Assessment points and recording system	In line with current programme materials. AfL is used in every session. End of Phase assessment is completed after each phase is taught.
Additional daily practice arrangements	Children apply their phonics skills in their guided reading, writing sessions and across the curriculum. In addition to the phonics lessons, children are able to apply phonics skills in separate transcription sessions.
Parent/carers induction and resources	EYFS/KS1 parents' workshop on Phonics/Early Reading delivered in Autumn 1.
Staff training and induction cycle	Staff new to phonics receive THEP Phonics training 2 cycles-September or January
Policy approval and review dates	September 26 Review July 2028
THE Partnership Reading Tool / Reading Progression	THE Partnership Reading Tool March 2026
EYFS/KS1 comprehension and assessment approaches	Written comprehension or assessment-style tasks are not used for pupils whose reading/transcription foundations are not secure. Instead, teachers assess children by listening to them read books matched to their phonics reading levels and use carefully planned questions to check their understanding of the book.

Appendix B: key national and programme references

Source	Document
Department for Education	The Reading Framework: teaching the foundations of literacy (July 2023; current published version).

Source	Document
Department for Education	National curriculum in England: English programmes of study - key stages 1 and 2.
Department for Education	Choosing a phonics teaching programme - validated SSP programmes (updated February 2026).
Ofsted	State-funded school inspection toolkit, for use from 7 September 2026.
Ofsted	Education inspection toolkits: supporting evidence base, version 2 (June 2026).
THE Partnership	THE Partnership Phonics Programme - current programme information, progression, resources and support.
THE Partnership	Reading Tool for EY–KS2, Version 1 (March 2026), used alongside the THE Partnership Reading Progression EY–KS2.
Ofsted	Strong Foundations in the First Years of School (October 2024).