



Phonics and reading at Carlton Digby School

At Carlton Digby School, we are passionate about fostering a love of reading and developing the skills pupils need to become effective and independent readers and writers. Our phonics and reading curriculum is tailored to meet the needs of all our pupils, ensuring every child can progress at their own pace.

Phonics

We use Twinkl Phonics, a DfE-validated Systematic Synthetic Phonics programme, to support the teaching of early reading. Twinkl Phonics follows a consistent structure in every session, allowing pupils to review prior learning, master new skills, and embed knowledge into their long-term memory.

The programme is delivered through the engaging stories and adventures of Kit, Sam, and the Twinkl Phonics family. These stories build the essential skills pupils need to develop as readers and writers. Sessions also include physically active phonics activities, designed to keep children engaged, enthused, and focused on their learning. These activities include quick “get up and go” tasks during whole class teaching and standalone games to reinforce learning.

For pupils not yet ready to progress to Level 2 phonics, we focus on developing their early communication, interaction, and pre-requisite skills required to become future readers. These foundational skills are essential for their future reading journey.

At Carlton Digby, we believe that every child is a reader. For some, this means reading fluently and independently; for others, it may mean recognising print in their environment or simply enjoying stories, rhymes, and poems. Phonics teaching is adapted to meet each pupil's needs, with level 1 activities embedded throughout the curriculum and level 2 and beyond taught discreetly.

Our pupils benefit from a literacy-rich environment where they are immersed in sounds, letters, and opportunities to practise oral blending. Phonics teaching is evident across a wide range of activities, promoting phonological awareness and auditory discrimination in meaningful and enjoyable ways.

Reading

Reading is a key priority at Carlton Digby School, and we ensure pupils have access to reading materials that align with their phonics knowledge. We use the Rhino Readers scheme, which complements Twinkl Phonics, to provide books that are well-matched to each pupil's reading ability.

For pupils who progress beyond phonics, fluency assessments help determine their readiness to access banded books from our library. Pupils read with an adult at least once a week through one-to-one or guided reading sessions.

All Rhino Readers books are available as e-books, offering additional opportunities for pupils to engage with texts through technology. This feature is particularly motivating for reluctant readers, enabling them to enjoy stories in an interactive format.

To further encourage a love of reading, we dedicate daily “reading for pleasure” time across the school. Where appropriate, pupils may also access additional interventions such as Precision Teaching, a whole-word approach to reading, or one-to-one literacy support. Guided reading sessions are offered to some pupils to develop comprehension, inference, and group discussion skills.

Reading for Function and Life Beyond Carlton Digby

We recognise the importance of reading for functional and practical purposes. Throughout their time at Carlton Digby, pupils learn to understand signs, symbols, and words that support their independence in everyday life, such as navigating public transport, shopping, and accessing the community.

For pupils on our Semi formal 2 and Preparation for adult hood semi formal curriculums, we offer the AIMS Functional Skills English qualification from Year 10. This programme focuses on essential skills such as reading, writing, and speaking through practical, real-life examples. It equips pupils with the English skills they need for work and daily life, supporting their aspirations and future independence.

Reading at Home

We encourage families to share and enjoy reading at home in a relaxed and engaging way. Where appropriate, pupils are provided with reading books and diaries to take home. We aim to inspire a love of stories and texts in all forms, promoting motivation and positive experiences with reading beyond the school environment