



Reading Planet Rocket Phonics

Case Study from Wellspring Academy Trust



“Reading Planet Rocket Phonics has it all.”
Sam Bailey,
Executive Principal



risingstars-uk.com/RocketPhonics

The Wellspring Academy Trust and Rocket Phonics



WELLSPRING

We Make A Difference

In this case study, five primary schools from the Wellspring Academy Trust tell us about the impact of Reading Planet Rocket Phonics. Executive Principal Sam Bailey explains why they chose the programme, how they implemented it and the results so far...

“In my role as Executive Principal overseeing five primary academies in Yorkshire and the Humber, I believe getting every child reading is the single most important thing that we do in primary schools: therefore, there is nothing I view as more important than getting our provision in phonics and early reading right.

A number of factors collided in summer 2021 leading to our decision to take a brave step away from our very familiar phonics programme to embark upon a new journey: the stark impact of the pandemic on our youngest learners, both in attainment and attitudes to learning; the challenge we had in meeting the insatiable Ofsted appetite for phonetically decodable books through our existing programme; and the need to breathe life back into our core belief system that it IS possible for every child to succeed (something which I think the previous two years had led us to doubt....)

Although we approached the big switch with some trepidation, I can honestly say it was a doddle. Reading Planet Rocket Phonics has it all – comprehensive online training which is accessible for all staff; detailed session by session teacher guidance; beautiful high-quality resources to match every point in the programme; Pupil Practice Booklets which enable pupils across the attainment spectrum to access whole-class learning together; excellent assessment materials which staff have found massively enabling; and a very rich range of digital Big Books and carefully matched Target Practice Readers which the children (and staff!) absolutely love.

This programme has put reading back at the centre of phonics and the impact of this is already evident just six months into the school year. Given our data at this point, **I am confident that our Phonics Screening Test results will be the**

highest they have ever been across the partnership, and I am even more excited about the impact on reading results in the coming year or two. And not because it’s all about data – but because that means that **the 2,000 children I oversee in my role will be reading and writing confidently, competently and joyfully.**

We can’t speak highly enough of Rocket Phonics – Abigail Steel is an absolute genius and the team at Rising Stars have thought of absolutely everything. **I cannot see another programme on the market which currently outsmarts this one.**”

Sam Bailey,
Executive Principal



“This programme has put reading back at the centre of phonics.”

Meet the schools

Oakwell Rise Primary Academy, Barnsley

“A decision to switch our phonics provision was taken in Summer 2021. This is never an easy decision but, as we had been using our previous programme successfully for five years, it was even more daunting – for staff and leaders.”

Victoria Primary Academy, Leeds

“We are a two-form entry primary school situated in an area of deprivation in East Leeds. In summer 2021, following two years of disrupted learning, we were facing our biggest challenge yet with significant under achievement for all pupils throughout EYFS and Year One.”

Ebor Gardens Primary Academy, Leeds

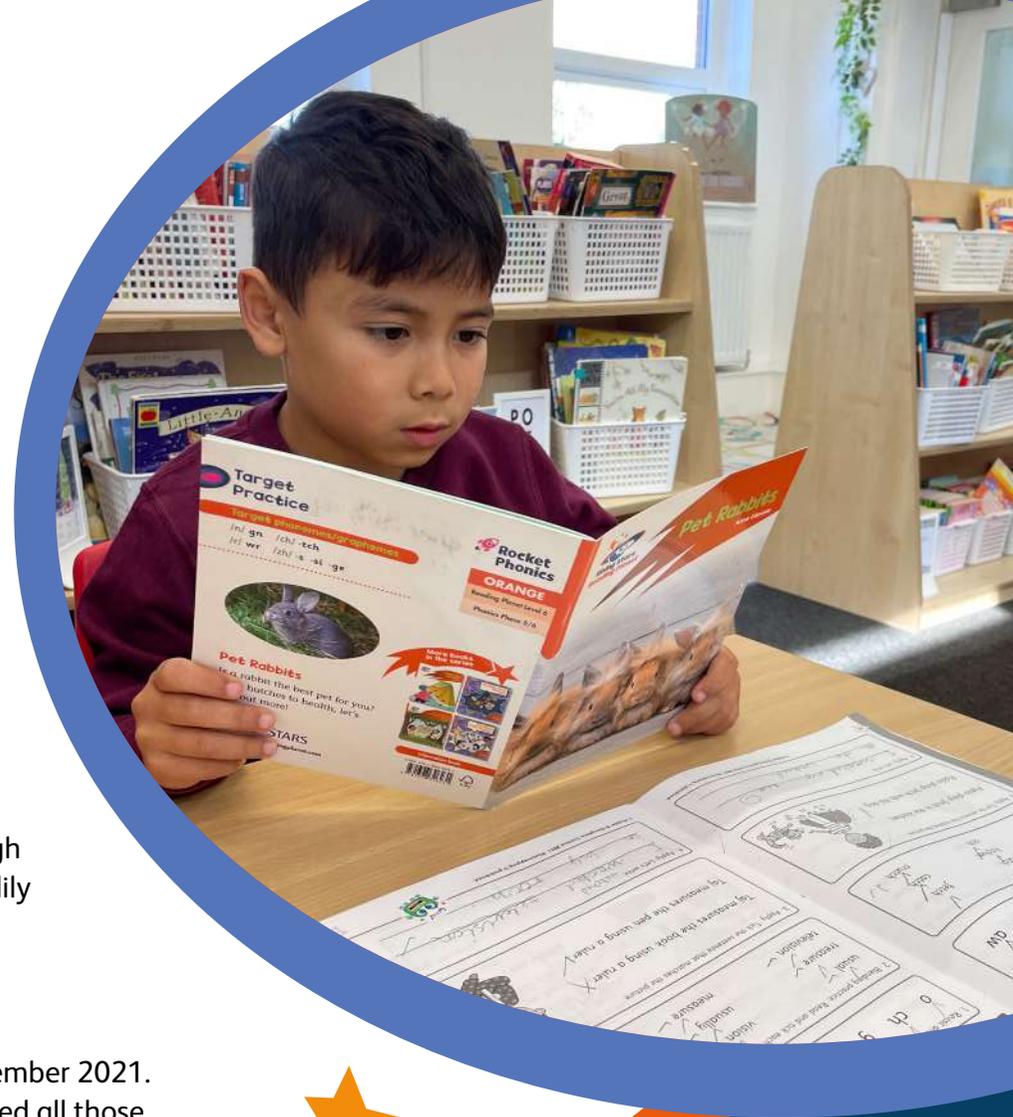
“Ebor Gardens is a large inner-city primary in an economically deprived area of Leeds. Over 80% of our children speak English as an additional language, and we also have high levels of pupil mobility. Our approach to phonics and reading therefore needs to be readily accessible and highly effective to enable children as quickly as possible.”

Oakhill Primary Academy, Barnsley

“We began using Rocket Phonics in Foundation Stage, Year One and Year Two from September 2021. To embed the programme, we set the stage during an inset day in September. We ensured all those involved in the teaching of Rocket Phonics had watched the (brilliant!) training videos.”

The Forest Academy, Barnsley

“After previously using another systematic synthetic phonics programme for almost a decade, we wanted a fresh approach which would enthuse and challenge us once again, and one which would also address some of the gaps we had noticed in our previous approach.”



Oakwell Rise Primary Academy

“Any reservations we had about implementing a new phonics scheme were quickly allayed once we began looking in detail at the programme and satisfied ourselves that the team developing this programme have literally thought of everything. We were ready to launch in

September, just in time for a successful Ofsted visit where our phonics provision was fully explored just three weeks after we started the programme!

As the programme facilitates a clear focus on the knowledge and fundamental skills of reading at a steady pace, the children have gained a strong understanding much more quickly than we have seen in the past. This has enabled a love of reading and ability to transfer skills across the curriculum. **Due to the additional focus around spelling common exception words and regular practice of dictation, we have also seen an impact in the children’s writing abilities.** Children take pride in their workbooks and enjoy their phonics and whole-class book session. The online materials are an asset to the programme embedding learning for all pupils.

Experienced staff and those with little experience have been successful teachers of reading from the start due to a well thought out CPD package. Leaders feel confident in quality assuring the sessions with the constant support

of Rising Stars. As ongoing CPD, staff are accessing smaller units of training such as ‘Phonics with SEND pupils’ and ‘What phonics should look like in Year Two’ led by Abigail Steel Training. This has been invaluable for the team in deepening their understanding. Leaders have felt confident in running parental workshops sharing the teaching sequence of Rocket Phonics. Fundamentally the key to the workshops enabled parents to help their children at home embed phonics and read ‘matched texts’ from the scheme. **The uptake and confidence of practising reading with parents has improved dramatically in such a short period of time, and the impact on our catch-up agenda has been profound.”**

Jessica Jenkins, Head of School

“Children take pride in their workbooks and enjoy their phonics and whole-class book session.”



Victoria Primary Academy

“We needed a highly structured, highly effective programme which our children would find fun and just challenging enough. We therefore took the decision to introduce Rocket Phonics in September 2021... And we have never looked back.

Any initial reservations about the high expectations of the scheme pitched against the very low starting points of our pupils quickly dissipated; **pupils demonstrated an appetite for the sessions and a very high rate of retention and stamina which built very quickly due to the higher levels of enjoyment and enthusiasm for learning.** Halfway through the year, our pupils are achieving significantly more than they have achieved previously by the end of the academic year.

The pupils love the entire programme and are fully engaged throughout. However their favourite parts are the interactive Big Books and the Target Practice Readers. They love the Big Books because the story is engaging, accessible and really brings the new phonics knowledge to life. The Target Practice Readers have been unbelievably popular amongst our pupils, because they love

the success they feel when they are able to read the book in its entirety. The way the books are mapped out to be 100% decodable and become accessible at key stages of the programme has meant that even our lowest attaining pupils are not left behind. **Parents also love that their children are bringing books home which they are able to fully decode.** We have received lots of positive feedback from parents, particularly those with older siblings, who are shocked by how much their child is able to read already.

We are now in the best position we have ever been with regards to phonics and reading and we are excited to see the impact of the programme within our end of year data and into future academic years. **Most importantly, we have transformed the attitude towards phonics amongst our adults in school (who now believe children ‘can’ do it!) and our children (who now believe phonics is fun!).** Thank you, Rising Stars: you’ve achieved a miracle!”

Amy Brook, Assistant Principal and Phonics & Reading Lead



“Halfway through the year, our pupils are achieving significantly more than they have achieved previously by the end of the academic year!”

Ebor Gardens Primary Academy

“There are many reasons why we chose Reading Planet Rocket Phonics as our approach to phonics and early reading, but the quality of the reading resources at the heart of the programme was the determining factor for us. **We found the books engaging, beautifully illustrated, and a good representation of the multicultural composition of our school. The books are completely decodable with a steady introduction of High Frequency Words and are perfect for our early readers.** The Big Books are beautiful and engaging and have also been a fantastic vehicle for enhancing vocabulary. We love that the story lasts for a term, so it allows the children to invest in the story and really get to know a character and start to predict what will happen. We have seen children giggle, cheer and gasp as they listen carefully to the adventures of the characters, as well as calling out the words that contain the focus sounds. **The reading materials are clearly instilling a love of reading in the pupils as they regularly ask if we can read past books or continue on to find out what happens to their favourite character.**

Overall, the entire programme is incredibly accessible for the staff team. A combination of online and physical

resources covers every angle and requires very little preparation from the adults. The response to the scheme from every teacher at the school has been excitement. They're amazed at the children's progress, their knowledge of the code, their independence and their enthusiasm for phonics generally. Both EYFS and Year One groups are being taught at a level beyond our previous benchmarks and because we have been able to do this at a steady pace it means that our children are retaining and embedding what they've been taught. **We are on track to secure the highest pass rate in the Phonics Screening Test at the end of Year One than in all the previous years!**

Abigail Steel has changed the way our school approaches phonics. In the past if we had a child who was unable to blend, they would repeat the phase until that magic moment when the penny dropped. Now the learning objective for that child would be to recognise and say the sound and as a next step we would be working on their blending. We celebrate the child's ability to know the sound. **One particular Year One child, who was new to our school in September (and had never actually**

attended school before), recently said 'I love sounds, I'm really good at them'. This feeling of success is a feature of the programme and a key part of its magic, for children and adults alike. Thank you, Abigail Steel!”

Annie Dobbie, Year One Class Teacher and Phonics Lead

“This feeling of success is a feature of the programme and a key part of its magic.”



Oakhill Primary Academy

“To ensure consistency and high levels of confidence from the start, we agreed the routines and practices we would see during each lesson. All staff were prepared and equipped with the appropriate resources and staff were supported in getting into the swing of it all, right from the start.

This **phonics programme has given the children lots of opportunities to read books which are fully accessible, and we have noticed pupil confidence and independence has markedly increased as a result.** We are currently using the online Big Books, Target Practice Readers and Pupil Practice Booklets as part of our everyday classroom practice and the children absolutely love it!

Teachers like the online resources and the Pupil Practice Booklets, which are well developed and allow progress to be seen. Pupils are enjoying working from the Booklets and take real pride in them.

They also like the online Big Books and hunting for words in the Target Practice Readers. **Parents like the matched texts and the fact that their children are independent readers from a young age.** They also liked the fact that the routine for phonics was embedded, and their children could tell them about a phonics lesson.

Teachers and leaders have noticed a huge shift in the amount of rapid progress children are making in phonics. Daily assessment during phonics has allowed teachers to close any gaps in learning, and the whole ‘keep up, not catch up’ methodology has really worked for us. **Reading and spelling have improved dramatically as well as an increase in the phonics screen practice scores throughout Year One.**

The Pupil Practice Booklets have supported children with their writing, too, with children who are more confident to write independently using a range of punctuation. In our first year with Rocket Phonics – we couldn’t be happier, and we can’t wait to watch our EYFS children’s journey through Key Stage One with this very strong foundation on which to build!”

Jenny Watham,
Assistant Head and English Lead

“Teachers and leaders have noticed a huge shift in the amount of rapid progress children are making in phonics.”



The Forest Academy



“In terms of making the switch – I am pleased to say it was all relatively straightforward. All members of the team accessed the online training sessions which have been invaluable. **Staff have also joined the Facebook group, which again is an informal forum for asking any questions about the programme, as they have arisen.** At all points throughout the journey, there has been support on hand and any queries have been dealt with very quickly.



The structure of the sessions is excellent and allows for coverage of phonics, reading, handwriting, dictation, and sentence writing. The children have learnt the routine quickly and can recall the code and alternative graphemes. The pupil workbooks promote a good level of independence and have been a huge hit with the children, who are showing more respect and pride in their work. They like to look back at previous work and **the sheets are achievable for all children, providing stretch and challenge for more proficient readers whilst also providing good scaffolding for those who benefit from additional support.**

The matched texts are amazing and allow and enable our children to read fluently from the start. The quality of the texts, the illustrations and vocabulary that the children experience within the books is of the highest quality and is very sophisticated in its approach. **The Big Books are fantastic, and the children are always excited about this part of the session and ask for a sneaky peek of the next page.** The children can recall previous events, demonstrating their understanding and development

of comprehension skills. This in turn has resulted in our children seeing themselves as readers and being proud of what they are achieving.

We have also seen a huge difference this year in the children’s ability to read and write High Frequency Words as a result of the specific part of the programme designed to enable precisely that. Therefore, children’s reading fluency and spelling accuracy is further enhanced. More children are reading fluently and are ‘keeping up’ and not ‘catching up’ with their peers. Parents have noted the progress their children have made with reading this year and has been a point of much encouragement and celebration.”

Lindsey Wheater, Assistant Head and Phonics Lead

Jodie Westwood and Bryony Wilson, FS2 Teachers

“The structure of the sessions is excellent and allows for coverage of phonics, reading, handwriting, dictation, and sentence writing”

About Reading Planet Rocket Phonics



Reading Planet Rocket Phonics is a DfE validated story-based Systematic Synthetic Phonics programme based on the progression of the original Letters and Sounds. It's available now for Reception and Year 1 (P1–P2) with Next Steps for Year 2 (P3) new for 2022.

Our mission is to ensure every child can keep up rather than catch up. Rocket Phonics uses a straightforward approach to create transformative results:

- ★ Steady pace and progression so that knowledge and skills are embedded from the start
- ★ Whole-class mastery style teaching to ensure no child is left behind
- ★ Consistent daily practice of reading and writing to gradually build children's confidence
- ★ Teaching through original illustrated stories to develop phonics skills and a love of reading
- ★ Flexible yet structured teaching materials that can be adapted to suit the needs of every class



Written by educational consultant and phonics expert, Abigail Steel.



“With the programme, you will teach two letter-sounds a week steadily and continuously. Each letter-sound is taught over two days, with the first day focusing on blending for reading and the second day focusing on segmenting for spelling. This approach enables more practice of each core phonics skill without rushing to the next letter-sound.

Rocket Phonics is incredibly easy to use. There are no elaborate routines to get your head around or to suffocate your teaching. If you're new to teaching phonics or want full support, every single lesson is planned and scripted for you. If you're more experienced and confident, the weekly plan overviews will suit you better.”

Make an enquiry today 9

Reception–Year 1 (PI–P2)

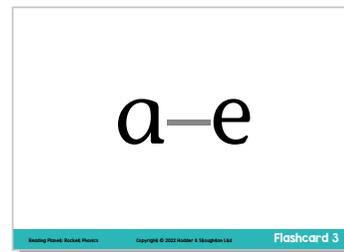
Equip children for success in the Phonics Screening Check and meet or exceed National Curriculum Expectations for reading with a complete Systematic Synthetic Phonics programme.

- ★ Introduce two new letter-sounds per week to fully embed phonics knowledge and skills
- ★ Deliver separate blending and segmenting sessions for in-depth practice of these vital skills
- ★ Teach letter-sounds, explore vocabulary, and develop comprehension using online Teaching Big Books
- ★ Gradually build children’s confidence through daily practice of reading and writing
- ★ Implement whole-class, group guided or independent reading for targeted phonics practice



Good to know...

- ✓ Aligned to Letters and Sounds 2007 Phases 1–5
- ✓ Fully-decodable and aligned colour-banded reading books
- ✓ Covers spelling and handwriting
- ✓ Ready-to-use flashcards: no cutting required!
- ✓ Half-termly, mini and baseline assessments



Rocket Phonics Sounds Mat 1	s	a	t	i	p
sun	apple	tap	insect	pan	
net	octopus	cat	mouse	goat	
kite	duck	elephant	umbrella	rabbit	
bat	frog	cliff	ladder	shell	
jug	van	web	fox	yellow	
				z	
				zebra	



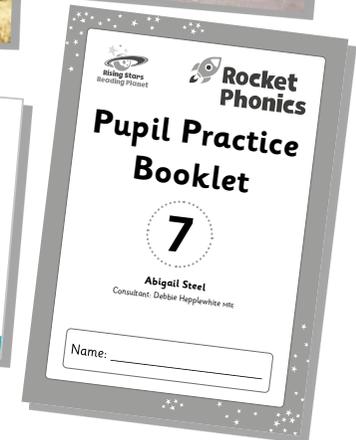
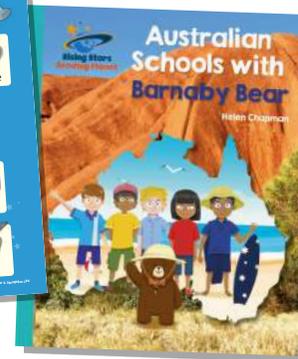
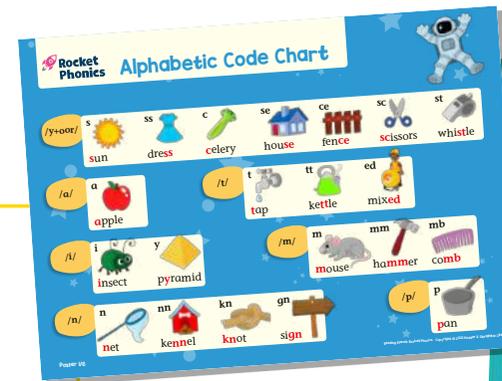
NEW Next Steps for Year 2 (P3)

Take children forward by consolidating phonics and developing key literacy skills in Year 2 (P3).

- ★ Build in National Curriculum requirements for Year 2 to ensure children meet and exceed age-related expectations
- ★ Use the established teaching and learning cycle (Review, Teach, Practise, Apply and Assess) to maintain consistency between year groups
- ★ Introduce and gradually develop cursive handwriting to support children in becoming confident writers
- ★ Equip children with essential literacy skills for the wider curriculum and the transition to Key Stage 2 (P4–P7) with a focus on phonics for spelling and writing
- ★ Use exciting fiction and non-fiction reading books to widen vocabulary and nurture a love of reading

Good to know...

- ✓ Aligned to Letters and Sounds 2007 Phase 6
- ✓ Covers National Curriculum spelling requirements
- ✓ Aligned colour-banded reading books
- ✓ Flashcards in interactive online format
- ✓ Half-termly, mini and baseline assessments



We're here to help!

We understand that choosing a phonics programme is a big decision. So, our team is here to support you every step of the way.

Information and bespoke orders

Our team of local Sales Consultants are available virtually and in-person.

[Get in touch](#)

Join the community

Share ideas, talk to other schools and get questions answered via our [Teachers' Facebook Group](#).

You can also expect the odd freebie...!

CPD training

Our flexible in-person and online CPD training is led by Abigail Steel and a team of experienced trainers.

[Learn more](#)



Meet the author

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Free videos

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