Reading is a top priority at our school. As Roald Dahl said: ‘I have a passion for teaching kids to become readers, to become comfortable with a book, not daunted. Books shouldn’t be daunting, they should be funny, exciting and wonderful; and learning to be a reader gives a terrific advantage.’ We are passionate about our responsibility to not only develop our pupils as fluent, confident and proficient readers but to open their minds to the magic and joy of reading. It is our mission to ensure that every child leaves Buckden Primary Academy as a reader and that no child ‘slips through the reading net’.

In EYFS and Year 1, we teach phonics through FFT Success for All Phonics, a complete systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) programme that has been validated by the Department for Education and is designed to give children a love of books and reading. We believe all children who receive good teaching of phonics will learn the skills they need to tackle new words. They can then go on to read any kind of text fluently and confidently, and to read for enjoyment.

In Reception, the programme engages children through fast-paced, daily lessons, focusing on a single phoneme per day during the first term. During the lessons, the children not only learn the graphemes and phonemes, but they learn to blend and segment words and practise letter formation within a writing group. From the second term, the lessons focus on one digraph each week. The programme also teaches the common words children will come across when reading. This format continues as the children progress into Year 1.

FFT Success for All Phonics is an inclusive, synthetic, whole class phonics, reading and writing programme that is based on Letters and Sounds. Shared Reading sessions, in which children read a shared text within a smaller group, are used to encourage children to talk about stories, develop a rich understanding of text and build up their reading fluency.

In addition to the weekly lessons learning one of the 44 phonemes, there are also consolidation and revision weeks in which previous learning is reviewed and there are half-termly assessments to allow teachers to monitor the progress of each child’s learning. Phonics lessons are taught every day for 40 minutes. Further sessions are planned where necessary to give children extra practise and consolidation.

Reading at home is widely promoted and encouraged throughout our school. Stories are read daily to children by staff with enthusiasm, confidence and enjoyment. Books are sent home with the tags “I read, we read, you read”. The “I read” books are the Shared Reading books being discussed in class that week. They are decodable books linked to each stage of the children’s phonics knowledge, which the children should be able to read at home. The “We read” books are mostly decodable for the child, but they may need some help from their grown up with some new words. Children also choose an additional book, the “You read” book, that is appropriate but will need to be read by their family at home. All of these books work together to help develop an enjoyment of reading. The Shared Reading books are changed weekly, the other books can be changed by parents at collection or drop off, using the containers outside the Reception outdoor play area. The expectation is that children will read at home with an adult a minimum of three times per week and that the adults will log reading on the Boom Reader app.