

Phonics Teaching

Phonics is taught in discrete daily sessions of 15-20 minutes throughout YR, Y1 and Y2.

The school uses the **Letters and Sounds** phonics teaching programme. (The programme has been further tailored to the statutory guidelines for spelling as laid out in the new National Curriculum; however, this applies to a very few teaching points which have moved down from Y2 to Y1, and some from YR which are revisited in Y1.)

SPAG (Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar) is taught throughout school according to the new National Curriculum Guidelines.

Letters and Sounds is designed to help teach children how the alphabet works for reading and spelling by:

- Fostering children's speaking and listening skills as valuable in their own right and as preparatory to learning phonic knowledge and skills
- Teaching high quality phonic work at an appropriate point in the child's schooling
- For most children, this will be by the age of **five** with the intention of equipping them with the phonic knowledge and skills they need to become fluent readers by the age of **seven**
- A six-phase structure with boundaries between the phases which should not be regarded as fixed
- Guided by reliable assessments of children's developing knowledge and skills, teachers can judge the rate at which their children are able to progress through the phases and adapt the pace accordingly

Letters and Sounds

Phase 1 Activities:

- General sound discrimination - environmental sounds
- General sound discrimination - instrumental sounds
- General sound discrimination - body percussion
- Rhythm and rhyme
- Alliteration
- Voice sounds
- Oral blending and segmenting

Phase 2

In Phase Two, the children:

- Learn to pronounce the sounds themselves in response to letters, before blending them
- Start reading simple **VC** and **CVC** words
- **VC** words - contain a vowel and a consonant e.g. a-n
- **CVC** words contain a consonant, a vowel and a consonant e.g. t-a-p
- Segment whole spoken words into phonemes
- Select letters to represent those phonemes, either writing the letters, if they have the necessary physical coordination, or using solid (e.g. magnetic) letters to encode (spell out) words
- Decoding for reading and encoding for spelling are taught as reversible processes

Phase 3

- Completes the teaching of the alphabet
- Children move on to sounds represented by more than one letter
- The children will then have learned one representation for each of at least 42 of the 44 phonemes generally recognised as those of British Received Pronunciation (RP)
- Just one spelling is given for each because this is all that is required in Phase Three

Phase 4

- Children learn to read and spell words containing adjacent consonants e.g. j-u-m-p and s-t-o-p
- This phase can be taught in conjunction with Phase 3
- No new grapheme-phoneme correspondences are taught in this phase

Activities:

- Practising grapheme-phoneme recognition for reading and recall for spelling
- Teaching blending for reading CVCC and CCVC words
- Teaching segmenting for spelling CVCC and CCVC words
- Practising reading and spelling words with adjacent consonants
- Practising segmentation for spelling
- Teaching and practising high frequency words
- Practising reading and spelling 2-syllable words
- Practising reading and writing sentences

Phase 5 includes:

- More graphemes for the 40+ phonemes taught in Phases Two and Three
- More ways of pronouncing graphemes introduced in Phases Two and Three

Phase 6 includes:

- Word-specific spellings- i.e. when phonemes can be spelt in more than one way, children learn which words take which spellings (e.g. see/sea, bed/head/said, cloud/clown)

What is taught in a systematic phonics session?

Phonics comprises the knowledge of the alphabetic code and the skills of blending for reading and segmentation for spelling:

- Some sessions include learning new grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs):
 - A **phoneme** is the smallest unit of sound in a word
 - A **grapheme** is the letter or sequence of letters representing a phoneme
- Every session includes practice of GPC recognition or recall
- In the early stages all sessions include oral blending and segmentation:
 - **Blending** means recognising (sounding out) the individual letter sounds, or phonemes, in a written word, e.g. c-u-p and merging or synthesising them in the order in which they are written to pronounce the whole word cup
 - **Segmenting** means hearing and saying the individual sounds in a spoken word e.g. h-i-m , choosing a grapheme to represent each phoneme and writing down/manipulating letters for each sound to form the word him (the reverse of **blending**)
- As soon as five or six GPCs are taught, sessions also include blending for reading and segmentation for spelling
- In the later stages, reading and spelling are included in each session (HFW, tricky words, captions and sentences)

High Frequency Words vs Tricky Words

- High-frequency words were often regarded in the past as needing to be taught as 'sight words'
- Research has shown, however, that word recognition is most efficient when it is underpinned by grapheme-phoneme knowledge
- What counts as 'decodable' depends on the grapheme-phoneme correspondences that have been taught up to any given point
- In *Letters and Sounds*, a quarter of the 100 words occurring most frequently in children's books are decodable at Phase Two
- Even the core of high frequency words which are not transparently decodable using known grapheme-phoneme correspondences usually contain at least one GPC that is familiar
- Rather than approach these words as though they were unique entities, we would start from what is known and register the 'tricky bit' in the word. (This is more often than not a GPC that the children have yet to be taught within their phonics sessions)

Example

High Frequency Words in Phase 2

Decodable words

a an as at if in is it of off on can

dad had back and get big him his not got up mum but put (north)

Tricky words

the to I no go into

Exception Words and Spellings

- In KS1, the new National Curriculum gives an overview of spelling patterns to be taught, along with non-statutory example words and **exception words** which can be taught or others) according to the phonics/spelling programmes being used.
- In both Y1 and Y2, weekly spelling tests are used to consolidate ongoing phonics/spelling work and also include key example + **exception words**.
- In KS2, spelling work is taken directly from the new National Curriculum spelling lists for each year group.

Enjoying and sharing books

- Experience shows that children benefit hugely by exposure to books from an early age
- From the beginning of YR, lots of opportunities are provided for children to engage with books that fire their imagination and interest.
- Children are encouraged to choose and peruse books freely as well as sharing them when read by an adult.
- Enjoying and sharing books leads to children seeing them as a source of pleasure and interest and motivates them to value reading.

Y1 Phonics Screening

- Takes place in June. It is statutory.
- Screening is 'light touch' assessment focussing on children's decoding through phonic skills.
- It is administered by the class teacher through class release time or a teacher known to the child in a quiet room.
- It should take about 10 minutes but there is no time limit and the child can have a break if they need.
- The test comprises about 40 items - words and non-words (pseudo words)

What the screening check includes

Section 1 (Phases 2-4):

- Grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) usually introduced first to pupils learning to decode using phonics
- Simple word structures

Section 2 (Phase 5):

- GPCs usually introduced later and graphemes that correspond to more than one phoneme
- More complex structures, including 2-syllable words

- Not every sound can be covered in the single test
- All pseudo words in the screening check are accompanied by a picture of an imaginary creature to provide a context for the pupil to ensure that they are not trying to match the pseudo word to a word in their vocabulary.
- Information on their own child's results against the threshold is made available to parents both verbally and in the Y1 end of year reports (in line with DFE testing and reporting arrangements)