

Phonics

We follow a DfE validated systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) programme called Essential Letters and Sounds (ELS).



Getting all children to read well, quickly.

What is phonics?

Synthetic phonics is a way of teaching children to read. It teaches children how sounds are represented by written letters. Children are taught to read words by blending these sounds together to make words. For example, they will be taught that the letters 'm-a-t' blend together to make 'mat'.

A synthetic phonics programme, such as ELS, provides a structure for teaching these sounds in a certain order to build up children's learning gradually. It is used daily during Reception and Year 1 to teach all the sounds in the English language.

How is ELS taught in school?

With ELS, there is a daily phonics lesson where children are taught a new sound, or where they review sounds learned earlier in the week. This is shown to the class on the whiteboard.

Children learn the letters that represent the sounds. They are then asked to read words and sentences with the new sounds in. Children will also practise writing the letters that represent the sounds.

Additional support

ELS is delivered using a whole-class approach. This ensures that all children benefit from the full curriculum. Children who encounter difficulties are supported by the teacher throughout the lesson, and where further support is required, ELS has three interventions to ensure that any learning gaps are quickly filled. These are intended to be short and concise. This helps ensure that children do not spend excessive time outside of the classroom or in group intervention sessions where they are removed from the rest of the curriculum.

Assessment

It is important that children's progress is assessed thoroughly, so that any gaps can quickly be identified.

Assessment of the children's reading skills is key to ensuring that all children make rapid progress through the programme, and that they keep up rather than catch up.

We assess children's phonic knowledge in the fifth week of each half term, to allow all members of staff to target and close any gaps that may be present in either sound knowledge or reading skills. By undertaking assessment in the fifth week we are able to action a direct intervention before any upcoming school holidays.

Decodable readers

It is vital that whilst children are learning to read, they read books that match their phonic knowledge. The Oxford University Press decodable readers support Essential Letters and Sounds and have been carefully matched to every aspect of the programme. We use these books in school and as take-home readers.

How can I help at home?

Practising the sounds

You can help your child practise the sounds they have been learning at school using their sound books. Download the charts from the [Oxford Owl for Home](#) website so you can see the list of sounds in the order they'll be taught: [Essential Letters and Sounds - Oxford Owl](#) You can show these to your child along with the picture to help them remember. You can also ask your child's teacher for any additional resources such as flashcards or sound mats.

Reading decodable books

Your child will bring home reading books with words that use the sounds they have been learning in school. You may hear these reading books called 'decodable books'. Use the prompts inside the front and back covers to enjoy the book together and help your child practise reading.

By reading and re-reading texts both in school and at home we offer children the opportunity to develop a cohesive orthographic map of the words within our language. This in turn helps to build their reading fluency. The more you can read at home with your child, the better. We ask that children read the decodable reader they bring home at least three times during the week.

You can find more information about ELS, including the order the sounds are taught in, on the Oxford Owl website: [Essential Letters and Sounds - Oxford Owl](#)

ELS Overview – Phase 1 to Phase 5

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3*
<p><i>Nursery/Pre-School</i> <i>ELS Foundation Stage</i></p> <p>Seven aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental sounds • Instrumental sounds • Body percussion • Rhythm and rhyme • Alliteration • Voice sounds • Oral blending 	<p><i>Reception/Primary 1 Autumn 1</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral blending • Sounding out and blending with 23 new grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) • 12 new harder to read and spell (HRS) words 	<p><i>Reception/Primary 1 Autumn 2, Spring 1 and Spring 2</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral blending • Sounding out and blending with 29 new GPCs • 32 new HRS words • Revision of Phase 2
Phase 4*	Phase 5 including alternatives and lesser-known GPCs	Beyond Phase 5
<p><i>Reception/Primary 1 Summer 1</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral blending • No new GPCs • No new HRS words • Word structures – cvcc, ccvc, ccvcc, cccvc, cccvcc • Suffixes • Revision of Phase 2 and Phase 3 	<p><i>Reception/Primary 1 Summer 2</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to Phase 5 for reading • 20 new GPCs • 16 new HRS words <p><i>Year 1/Primary 2 Autumn 1 and 2</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revision of previously taught Phase 5 GPCs • 2 new GPCs • 9 new HRS words <p><i>Year 1/Primary 2 Spring 1 and 2</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative spellings for previously taught sounds • 49 new GPCs • 4 new HRS words • Oral blending • Revision of Phase 2, Phase 3 and Phase 4 	<p><i>Year 1/Primary 2 Summer, Year 2/Primary 3 and Key Stage 2</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With ELS, phonics teaching does not stop at the end of Year 1, but continues as children move through the school, with links being made between their GPC knowledge and spelling • Revision of all previously taught GPCs for reading and spelling • Wider reading, spelling and writing curriculum