



ELS Essential
Letters and
Sounds

developed by Knowledge Schools Trust

ELS Phonics/ Early Reading Workshop

Year 1: Tuesday 15th September 2026

Year 2: Wednesday 16th September 2026

Main School Hall

9:00 – 9:30 am

Workshop Aims

- What is Phonics?
- What is Essential Letters and Sounds?
- How do we teach phonics?
- Pure sounds
- Phonics in Reception (Phase 2-5)
- Phonics in Year 1 and 2
- At home- shared banded books
- Supporting children with reading at home.
- Supporting your child with writing at home.
- Phonics Beyond the Phonics Screening Test



What is Phonics?



- Phonics is a method of teaching beginners to read and pronounce words by learning to associate letters or letter groups with the sounds they represent.
- There are **44 main sounds** in the English Language. Each sound is represented by a grapheme (the written representation of a sound).
- Children are taught to read by breaking down words into separate sounds or '**phonemes**'. They are then taught how to blend these sounds together to read the whole word.
- Children will also be taught other skills, such as whole-word recognition (see 'harder to read and spell words'), book skills and a love and enjoyment of reading.

The Jargon – A Quick Guide

phoneme - Any one of the 44 sounds which make up words in the English language

grapheme – How a phoneme is written down. There can be more than one way to spell a phoneme. For example, the phoneme ‘ay’ is spelt differently in each of the words ‘way’, ‘make’, ‘fail’, ‘great’, sleigh and ‘lady’.

blending – Putting together the sounds in a word in order to read it, e.g. ‘f – r – o – g, frog’

segmenting – Breaking a word into its constituent sounds in order to spell them, e.g. ‘frog, f – r – o – g’

The Jargon – A Quick Guide

digraph – two letters which make one sound
e.g., ai in rain, th in bath, ay in day

trigraph – three letters, which make one sound
e.g., igh in night, ear in fear, air in chair

Split digraph – two letters that make one sound but are split – you may know this trick as the magic 'e'

e.g., a-e in cake. We hear in order 'c' 'a-e' 'k'. But the a-e spelling bridges across that final sound.



What is ELS?

- Essential Letters and Sounds (ELS) is our chosen phonics programme.
- It teaches children to read by identify the phonemes (smallest unit of sound) and graphemes (written version of the sound) within words and using these to read words.
- Children experience the joy of books and language whilst rapidly acquiring the skills they need to become fluent independent readers and writers.

How do we teach phonics?

- We stream for phonics; this means that we will assess your child's phonic knowledge just like we did in EYFS and then place them in a group to best support their phonic knowledge.
- This means that the children maybe with different teachers across year 1 and 2 every few weeks for phonics.
- If you have any questions regarding the teaching of phonics, please go and see your child's phonics teacher/not their class teacher in Year 1 and in Year 2, speak to your child's class teacher.
- We will assess the children's phonic knowledge every few weeks to ensure that they are retaining the phonic knowledge and then move them to different groups where necessary.
- Phonics is taught daily. We use a simple, consistent approach to teaching phonics across all phonic groups and classes and follow the ELS phonics program.
- Your child will experience the same classroom routines within each lesson which reduces cognitive load and maximises the chances of success.
- All children are supported within the lesson to use their new phonic knowledge independently.

How do we teach phonics?



- In every single ELS lesson, your child will make the direct application to reading.
- Your child's reading record/spelling books will be given by their phonics teacher according to the sounds they have learnt.
- The lesson will have lots of opportunities for oral blending- **c/oa/t**
- Harder to read and spell (*HRS*) words are introduced and explained in every lesson.
- Pupils will have opportunities for writing- new grapheme, words and sentences.
- They will be given a phonetically decodable book linked to the grapheme (sound) that they are learning that week.

We will ensure that there are:

- Focused 1:1 interventions and daily 1:1 reading opportunities for those who need it.
- Whole class reading sessions to apply phonics skills. (Year 1 and 2)
- Opportunities for phonics to be integrated into other subjects.

Weekly lesson structure for teaching new phonemes and graphemes

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Review Teach new sound Practise Use the Apply sound-specific sheet Review	Review Teach new sound Practise Use the Apply sound-specific sheet Review	Review Teach new sound Practise Use the Apply sound-specific extract sheet Review	Review Teach new sound Practise Use the Apply sound-specific extract sheet Review	Review newly taught sounds for the week, previously taught graphemes, and harder to read and spell (HRS) words Practise – reading and writing words Apply – reading decodable books and writing phrases and sentences

Pure Sounds

- We must use pure sounds when we are pronouncing the sounds and supporting children in reading words.
- If we mispronounce these sounds, we will make reading harder for our children.
- There are videos for this on our school website where you can hear the correct pronunciation of the sounds.
- [Pure Sound videos](#)

ay



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pie on your tie

a_e

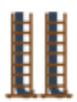


cake by the lake

Phonics in Reception

Phase 2	Phase 3**	Phase 4**	Phase 5 including alternatives and lesser-known GPCs
<i>Reception Autumn 1</i> • Oral blending • Sounding out and blending with 23 new grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) • 12 new harder to read and spell (HRS) words	<i>Reception Autumn 2, Spring 1 and Spring 2</i> • Oral blending • Sounding out and blending with 29 new GPCs • 32 new HRS words • Revision of Phase 2	<i>Reception Summer 1</i> • Oral blending • No new GPCs • No new HRS words • Word structures – cvcc, ccvc, ccvcc, cccvc, cccvcc • Suffixes • Revision of Phase 2 and Phase 3	<i>Reception Summer 2</i> • Introduction to Phase 5 for reading • 20 new GPCs • 16 new HRS words <i>Year 1 Autumn 1 and 2</i> • Revision of previously taught Phase 5 GPCs • 2 new GPCs • 9 new HRS words

Phase 2 Phonics

s	 snake around the snake	a	 around the head, down the body	t	 down her body and cross her shoulders	p	 down her body, around her face	i	 down her body, spin her hips	n	 down the bird and over her nose
m	 mound, mound, mound	d	 over his back and around the tail, up his neck and down to his feet	g	 start at his eye, around the face and down the beard	o	 around the ostrich's body	c	 curl around the camel's back	k	 down the body, up the knee, down the leg
ck	 the cuckoo stand by the tail	e	 around the head and down the trunk	u	 under and up the umbrella, down to the tip	r	 down her body, up over the arm	ss	 unfurling snakes	h	 from her head to her feet, up and over her back
b	 down the person and around the wheel	f	 over his eye, down to the tail and across the jaw	ff	 two foxes chasing	l	 down the long ladder	ll	 ladders in a line		

Phase 3 Phonics

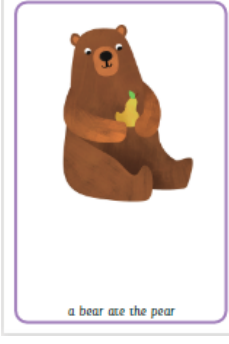
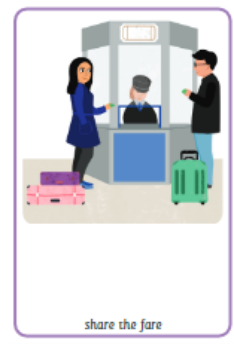
j 	v 	w 	x 	y 	z 
zz 	qu 	ch 	sh 	th 	ng 
nk 	ai 	ee 	igh 	oa 	oo 
ar 	ur 	oo 	or 	ow 	oi 
ear 	air 	ure 	er 	ow 	

Phase 5 Phonics

ay	 play all day	ou	 a proud cloud	ie	 pie on your tie	ea	 each have a treat
oy	 a boy cries 'hoey'	ir	 a quirky shirt	ue	 true, the sky's blue	aw	 jump on the lawn
wh	 whip with a whisk	ph	 photo on a phone	ew	 the crew flew	oe	 sprint past the doe

au		ey		a-e		e-e	
i-e		o-e		u-e		c	

Phonics in Year One



Phase 5 including alternatives and lesser-known GPCs	Beyond Phase 5
<i>Reception Summer 2</i> • Introduction to Phase 5 for reading • 20 new GPCs • 16 new HRS words <i>Year 1 Autumn 1 and 2</i> • Revision of previously taught Phase 5 GPCs • 2 new GPCs • 9 new HRS words <i>Year 1 Spring 1 and 2</i> • Alternative spellings for previously taught sounds • 49 new GPCs • 4 new HRS words • Oral blending • Revision of Phase 2, Phase 3 and Phase 4	<i>Year 1 Summer, Year 2 and Key Stage 2</i> • 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

What is a Phonics Screening Check?

- Every Year 1 child in the country will be taking the Phonics Screening Check during the same week in June.
- The Phonics Screening Check is a quick and easy assessment of your child's phonics knowledge.
- The aim of the check is to ensure that all children are able to read by the end of Year 2.

What will children be expected to do?

- The check is very similar to tasks the children already complete during phonics lessons.
- Your child will be sat with their teacher and will be asked to read 40 words aloud.
- Your child can use sound buttons to help them to read and blend the words
- The focus of the check is to see which sounds the children know and therefore the children will be asked to read made up 'nonsense' words.



Phonics Screening Check Test

grit

start

best

hooks

blan



steck



hild



quemp



After the check

- Children will be scored against a national standard (yet to be determined by DfE) however it is usually 32 out of 40.
- If you child's score fall below the national standard they have to re-take the Phonics Screening Check in Year 2.

Supporting children with reading at home.

- Most children at the beginning of Year 1 are only reading from books that are entirely decodable.
- We only use pure sounds when decoding words (no 'uh' after the sound)
- We want them to practise reading their book 4 times across the week working on these skills: decode, fluency, expression
- To consistently recognise that the /ea/ in bread spells /e/ we need to read it at least 4 times.
- This means we need to read the word many times to build fluency for reading.

At home- shared books

- **Year 1** children will also be bringing home a **‘sharing book/library book’**.
- This is NOT the book that children should be reading daily. This book is an additional book to enhance children's vocabulary and knowledge of story structures.
- Children may be able to read this themselves, but it is not the priority book.

Beyond the Phonics Screening Test – Year 2 and onwards.

- At this stage children will move onto **Phase 6**, where the emphasis is focused more towards spelling. Phase 6 focuses on accurate spelling and spelling rules, whilst also developing children into more fluent and expressive readers.
- Any children who did not pass their phonics screen or children who have identified gaps will have daily phonics interventions.

Who may need additional support and phonics interventions?

- Children who did not pass the phonics screening check by the end of Year 1
- SEN (Special Educational Needs) children *(not all will need this)*
- EAL (English as an Additional Language) / NTE (New to English) children

Phase 6

- The focus is on learning spelling rules for suffixes.

-s	-es	-ing	-ed
-er	-est	-y	-en
-ful	-ly	-ment	-ness

Year 2: At home - banded and reading for pleasure books

- Some children in **Year 2** children may have been assessed and are able to read a **colour banded** reading book. If there is a purple sticker on the book, it means that this is a levelled colour banded book that children can (and should) read by themselves.
- They may also be bringing home a '**sharing book**'.
- A '**sharing book**' is **NOT** the book that children should be reading daily. This book is an additional book to enhance children's vocabulary and knowledge of story structures.
- Children may be able to read this themselves, but the priority for this book is reading for pleasure. Read these books to/with your child and ask questions about the story.

Reading Progression in WPS

Phonics and Reading Progression

	Reception	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Working towards (b)	Phase 2	Phase 5a	Phase 5c	White	Lime	Brown	Sapphire
			Purple				
Working towards (w)	Phase 3/4	Phase 5b	Gold	Lime	Brown	Grey	Ruby
Working at (s)	Phase 5a	Phase 5c	White	Brown	Grey	Sapphire	Black
Working at greater depth (s+)	N/A	Purple	Lime	Grey	Sapphire	Ruby	Silver/ Free Reader

Supporting children with reading at home.

- Only 1 in 3 children are read a bedtime story at night. Reading a bedtime story every night to your child improves their outcomes.
- If your child views themselves as a 'good reader' when they leave Primary School, they are more likely to earn a higher salary in their 40s.

Science Daily (2019) - A 'million word gap' for children who aren't read to at home

Here's how many words children would have heard by the time they were 5 years old if they were:

Never read to, 4,662 words;

Read to: 1–2 times per week, 63,570 words;

Read to: 3–5 times per week, 169,520 words;

Read to: daily, 296,660 words;

and five books a day, 1,483,300 words.

The only effective route to closing this gap is for children to be taught systematically to read as soon as they start school. In this way, they do not have to rely on adults.

Children who become engaged in reading can make huge progress in their literacy and spoken development simply through their independent reading, whatever the nature of their early experiences.

Supporting your child with writing at home.



- You can use the spelling sequence with your children at home to support them with their writing.
- Let's try this with the word: *rain*
- We also practise saying our sentences before we write them to make sure we write the sentence we have planned and to ensure it makes sense!

•REMEMBER: Phonics is not the only thing needed to become a fluent reader.

- Please continue to read with your child each night and encourage them to:
- Sound out
- Re-read to check it makes sense.
- Then re-read again with EXPRESSION!
- Ask questions about the book.
- And most importantly ENJOY READING!

Questions

