

Appendix 2

Phonics

As a whole school, we are committed to using the Sounds Write (linguistic phonics) approach to assist the children from Y3-Y6 to learn to read, write and spell independently with accuracy, understanding and confidence. The Sounds Write approach ensures that:

1. Children develop key concepts about the way English is written.
2. Children practise the skills essential for reading and spelling accurately.
3. Children learn the sounds and the spellings of English.

Why Sounds Write?

We have carefully selected our phonics programme to meet the needs of our most vulnerable pupils by taking a phonographic approach, which means that we start with what all pupils acquire naturally and right from the start: the sounds of their own language. We teach that letters or combinations of letters called graphemes are the agreed ways in which we represent these sounds. A key part of our programme is the reduction of the cognitive loads, which can lead to particular groups of pupils not making rapid progress. Sounds write is also delivered using a multi-sensory approach so that all children can access the programme alongside various levels of differentiation which are factored into lesson plans, tasks and activities.

Our focus is on long term learning by practising the skills, embedding the 'code' and enhancing conceptual understanding. These aspects will be encountered again and again throughout the carefully designed cumulative programme.

The code is taught sequentially via:

- The initial alphabet code
- The extended code
- Polysyllabic words

There are four key concepts that we teach to all pupils. These are:

- Letters are symbols (spellings) that represent sounds
- A sound may be spelled by one, two three or four letters:
(dog, street, night, dough)
- The same sound can be spelled in more than one way:
(rain break gate stay) one sound – different spellings
- Many spellings can represent more than one sound:
(head seat break) one spelling – different sounds

There are three key skills that we teach to all pupils:

- Blending: the ability to push sounds together to build words.
- Segmenting: the ability to pull apart the individual sounds in words.
- Phoneme manipulation: the ability to insert sounds into and delete sounds out of words. This skill is necessary to test out alternatives for spellings that represent more than one sound.

Once children are proficient in phonics, the focus shifts from learning to read to reading to learn for both pleasure and information.

Implementation of Phonics lessons

In our school, daily phonics lessons are explicitly taught following the DfE validated phonics programme 'Sounds Write'. Sessions follow the Sounds Write Scheme of Work and subsequent lesson plans. Additional interventions in phonics instruction takes place each week for pupils who require additional practice across Year 3-6.

What a lesson might look like

A phonics lesson may include the following tasks and activities:

- Word building
- Symbol search
- Sound swap
- Reading and spelling words
- One sound; different spellings (word puzzles, reading and writing)
- Sound review
- Seek the sound
- Same spelling – different sounds
- Building Polysyllabic words – sound level/syllable level
- Reading Polysyllabic words -sound level/syllable level
- Analysing polysyllabic words
- Dictation

Concepts

Through the Sounds Write programme, children will understand that:

Concept 1

Letters do not 'make' sounds – they represent them. As teachers and learning support assistants, we should be careful that, when we are teaching children to read, we use appropriate phrases to reinforce this e.g. 'what sound do you say for this?' (Pointing to letter or letters) not 'what sound does this letter make?'

Concept 2

A sound can be spelled with 1,2,3 or 4 letters.

The English language contains single letter spellings. For example, in the word 'cat' c-a-t. These are relatively simple to read and spell. However, many sounds are spelled with two or more letters e.g. oa in boat, ou in out and igh in high. These present more of a problem for a non-skilled reader and will need to be pointed out by the teacher and practised by the child.

It is important to understand that letters don't make sounds; they represent or spell them.

Concept 3

The same sound is often written with different spellings (same sound, different spellings).

In English, every sound that we say can be represented by at least 2 different spellings. In many cases, the number of different spellings of the same sound is much larger – perhaps 8 or 9. The sound 's' for example is written in different ways in these words:

Sat, city, voice, mess, house, listen, scent.

There are 44 speech sounds and around 175 different ways to spell those sounds, using a combination of the 26 alphabetic letters.

New readers must learn that there are more ways than one to represent the same sound so that they learn to look very carefully in order to spell well.

Concept 4

In English, the same spelling can spell different sounds

For example, <o> spells the sound /o/ in dog, /oe/ in go and /oo/ in do. Readers need to be able to swap sounds (phoneme manipulation) to read the word accurately if another possible sound for that spelling has been tried first.

Skills

Blending

Because words are composed of sounds, in order to read we need to be able to blend sounds together and at the end 'hear' a meaningful word. Daily practise in the Sounds-Write lessons will develop good blending.

Segmenting

Because the English written language is a sound > spelling code it is important that children are taught to segment the sounds in words so they can read and spell with ease. Through segmenting children have the opportunity to notice the ways in which the individual sounds are spelled.

Phoneme Manipulation

Skilled readers are able to add, change or omit sounds in words and understand how this manipulation of sounds makes new words. This skill of phoneme manipulation is essential so that a new reader can swap sounds around to deal with same spelling-different sound.

Code Knowledge

For skilled fluent reading, it is vital that children have a thorough knowledge of the spelling code of the 44 sounds of English. The code is taught through multi-sensory activities and lessons in which the children are building whole words sound by sound, reading words and writing words. Initially, we work with words where the spellings are 1:1 (sound:letter). Later, we move to 2-letter spellings and we teach the spelling alternatives for the sounds. Progressively, we extend the number of sounds taught and also the number of spellings covered. Children need to be taught explicitly and extensively how the sounds of English are written. This teaching and learning should be repeatedly revised and reinforced during daily reading and spelling activities.

The Sounds Write programme is based on extensive research which has isolated and examined the processes involved in learning to read and spell. Each component of the programme is carefully designed so that the developing reader/writer can be guided by explicit instruction at every critical point.

Through whole class instruction, extension activities and small-group practice, all children in our school will be equipped with the necessary concepts, skills and knowledge to become independent in reading, writing and spelling.

As with all tasks, some children will learn quicker and some will need extra practice and teaching. Each child's progress will be commensurate with their level of ability.