ELS Essential Letters and Sounds

developed by Knowledge Schools Trust

Getting all children to read well, quickly.

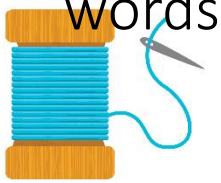
OXFORD

What has changed with Phonics?

We have recently changed phonics programme to

Essential Letters and Sounds.

The progression in ELS looks different to our previous programme, this means we will be teaching more sounds than before and in a different order. The children will learn many more sounds and this will allow them to decode (read) more words and will have an impact on their writing/spelling too.



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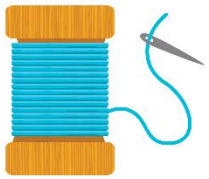
What is Phonics?

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).



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What is Phonics?

Phoneme: the smallest single identifiable sound in a word.

For example, in the word 'cat' there are three phonemes c/a/t.

Grapheme: the written representation of a sound.

Digraph: two letters making one sound. For example, /sh/ in the word 'shop'.

Trigraph: three letters making one sound. For example, /igh/ in the word 'night'.

Split digraph: two vowel letters split but are split by one or more consonants. For example, /a-e/ in the word 'cake'.

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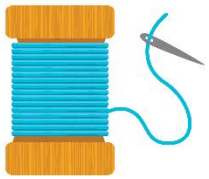
What is ELS?

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.



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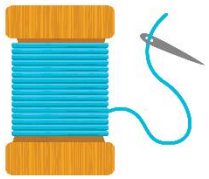
How do we teach phonics?

- ELS uses a simple, consistent approach to teaching phonics.
- 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.
- In every single ELS lesson, your child will make the direct application to reading.



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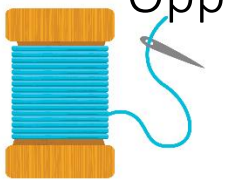
How do we teach phonics?

- Daily Phonics sessions- these start from the beginning of Reception
- Phonics throughout the day to review new sounds & graphemes taught
- Lots of opportunities for oral blending- c/oa/t
- Main focus is on word recognition. However, new vocabulary is also given and explained in every lesson.
- Opportunities for writing- new grapheme, words and sentences.



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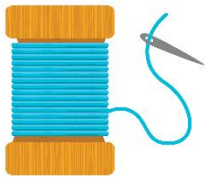
ELS Progression

Phase 1*	Phase 2	Phase 3**
Nursery/Pre-School Seven aspects: • Environmental sounds • Instrumental sounds • Body percussion • Rhythm and rhyme • Alliteration • Voice sounds • Oral blending	*Reception Autumn 1* • Oral blending • Sounding out and blending with 23 new grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) • 12 new harder to read and spell (HRS) words	*Reception Autumn 2, Spring 1 and Spring 2* • Oral blending • Sounding out and blending with 29 new GPCs • 32 new HRS words • Revision of Phase 2



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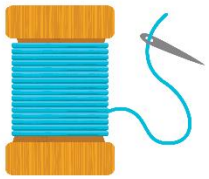
ELS Progression

Phase 4**	Phase 5 including alternatives and lesser-known GPCs	Beyond Phase 5
Reception Summer 1 • Oral blending • No new GPCs • No new HRS words • Word structures – cvcc, ccvc, ccvcc, cccvc, cccvcc • Suffixes • Revision of Phase 2 and Phase 3	*Reception Summer 2* • Introduction to Phase 5 for reading • 20 new GPCs • 16 new HRS words *Year 1 Autumn 1 and 2* • Revision of previously taught Phase 5 GPCs • 2 new GPCs • 9 new HRS words *Year 1 Spring 1 and 2* • Alternative spellings for previously taught sounds • 49 new GPCs • 4 new HRS words • Oral blending • Revision of Phase 2, Phase 3 and Phase 4	*Year 1 Summer, Year 2 and Key Stage 2* • 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



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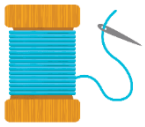
What does evidence/ best practice say?

Children should:

- When learning to read, only read fully decodable texts independently (texts that contain only sounds they have learnt in Phonics)
- Not have to rely on any other strategies other than Phonics whilst still learning to fully decode
- Experience success whilst reading- the books should not be overly difficult
- Re-read texts many times, 4 is best practice, to focus on these skills: decoding, fluency, expression
- Re-read books at home and in school



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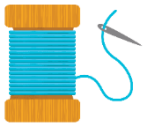
Changes to home reading books

- Children will learn more ‘code’ allowing them to access a greater range of books
- Children will have the opportunity to re-read books they have studied in school
- Children will be taking home lots of newly purchased texts which completely match their phonics level

In the short term:

- Some children, mainly Year 1, will be given eBooks for a few weeks
- Some children may find some of the books easier than books they were previously reading.



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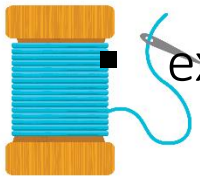
Supporting your child with reading at home

- Children 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



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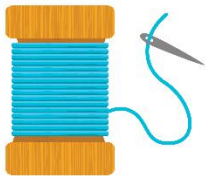
Pronouncing pure sounds

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.



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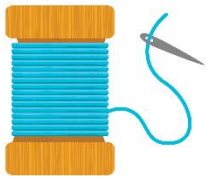
Supporting your child with writing at home

We use this spelling sequence in school to aid with writing.

You can use the spelling sequence with your child at home to support them with their writing.



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