



What is Phonics?

Phonics is a way of teaching children how to read and write. It helps children hear, identify and use different sounds that distinguish one word from another in the English language. Teaching children to blend the sounds of letters together helps them decode unfamiliar or unknown words by sounding them out.

It is important for early readers to learn letter-sound relationships because English uses letters in the alphabet to represent sounds. Phonics teaches this information to help children learn how to read. Children learn the sounds that each letter makes, and how a change in the order of letters changes a word's meaning.

At Ann Edwards Primary School we use Essential Letters and Sounds to teach phonics.

What is Essential Letters and Sounds?

At Ann Edwards Primary School, we aim to develop confident, fluent and passionate readers and writers from an early stage. We use 'Essential Letters and Sounds' which is a complete systematic synthetic phonics programme (SSP). ELS teaches children to read using a systematic synthetic phonics approach. It is designed to be used as part of an early learning environment that is rich in talk and story, where children experience the joy of books and language whilst rapidly acquiring the skills to become fluent independent readers and writers.

ELS teaches children to:

- decode by identifying each sound within a word and blending them together to read fluently
- encode by segmenting each sound to write words accurately.

We know that for children at the end of Key Stage 1 to achieve the age-related expectations, they need to read fluently at 90 words per minute. As children move into Key Stage 2, it is vitally important that even those who have made the slowest progress are able to read age-appropriate texts independently and with fluency.

For children to engage with the wider curriculum, they need to be able to read well, making inferences and drawing on background knowledge to support their developing understanding of a text when they read. To do this, they need to be able to draw not only on their phonic knowledge but also on their wider reading and comprehension skills, each of which must be taught.

The first step in this complex process is the link between spoken and written sounds. ELS, daily phonics teaching must begin from the first days of Reception. Through the rigorous ELS teaching



programme, children will build an immediate understanding of the relationship between the sounds they can hear and say (phonemes) and the written sounds (graphemes).

NURSERY

Phase 1

Children develop their listening skills through focussing on environmental sounds - e.g. they make a woosh noise for a rocket. They recognise animal sounds and different sounds that they can make with their voices, playing games such as bingo. They start to recognise musical sounds and sounds that you can make on your body. They begin to experience patterns rhythm and rhyme and an understanding of alliteration. Also, children start to experience the process of orally blending sounds to make words - e.g. C-A-T makes cat.

RECEPTION

Phase 2

Starts with single sounds for each letter of the alphabet. Children learn the letter names and the sound that they make to be able to blend sounds for reading and segment sounds for spelling. They will learn how to blend and segment these sounds into words, thinking about how many sounds are in the word. Then, children move on to digraphs (2 letters that make 1 sound) such as ck, ll, ff, ss etc. In addition, children will learn how to read harder to read and spell words (HRSW) such as I, the, no, put, of, is, to go, into, pull as, his.

Phase 3

Children progress to more complex digraphs, vowel digraphs and trigraphs (3 letters that make 1 sound). Again, they learn how to blend and segment sounds into words and start to recognise words that have two syllables. Children will move onto reading more harder to read and spell words, which are: he, she, buses, we, me, be, push, was, her, my, you. They will also practise reading and writing sentences and captions involving these HRSW and words with the focus sound.

Phase 3-4

In this phase more challenge is introduced from Phase 4 in the form of adjacent consonants alongside the Phase 3 teaching to extend children's sounding out and blending skills. Children learn more harder to read and spell words: they, all, are, ball, tall, when, what, said, so, have, were, out, like, some, come, there, little, one, do, children, love. This phase is taught for a full term to help children consolidate their learning.

Phase 4

The main focus of the phase is to practise blending words with two or three adjacent consonants.

These adjacent consonant sounds can both be heard when you say the word which makes them different from a digraph. These are words such as - flat, last, crab etc.

Some children can find this tricky. Sometimes, they can miss sounds out (particularly when spelling) because they do not hear the sound such as the 'n' in bend.

Phase 5 Intro

Children learn alternative ways of making sounds that they learnt in phase 3 - e.g. the 'ai' sound in r-ai-n, children will learn another way of making a long 'a' sound, such as 'ay' as in p-l-ay. Children will also learn split digraphs a-e (game), e-e (scene), i-e (kite), o-e (bone) and u-e (cube). More harder to read and spell words are also taught: oh, their, people, Mr, Mrs, your, ask, should, would, could, asked, house, mouse, water, want, very.

YEAR 1

Phase 5 Intro

Children will recap this phase from Reception in the Autumn term. In addition to the more harder to read and spell words are also taught in this phase in Reception, they will also learn: please, once, any, many, again, who, whole, where, two.

Phase 5b

This is where it starts to get a little bit trickier. This part of the phase introduces children to how some sounds can make an alternative sound - such as 'ch' (like chat) can make a 'c' sound as in (school) or a 'sh' sound as in (chef). Children are taught to use the initial sound that they know and ask themselves if the word makes sense? Then, they use the alternative pronunciation and blend the word to make sense. This can be quite a jump for some children to make as they have to realise that English isn't quite as straight forward as it once seemed. The ;ast few harder to read and spell words are taught: here, sugar, friend, because.

Phase 5c

Another tricky area of phonics is alternative spellings of sounds. This area introduces children to different ways of spelling and enables them to read more difficult vocabulary. Children will learn how to read polysyllabic words (more than one syllable) and these will include alternative pronunciations of sounds. Through the whole of phase 5, children will continue to learn and practice how to read and spell the harder to read and spell words.

PHONICS SCREENING CHECK

The phonics screening check is a quick and easy check of your child's phonics knowledge. It helps your school confirm whether your child has made the expected progress.

The children in Year 1 will take their test in the Summer term and any children in Year 2 who did not pass theirs in Year 1, will take theirs again om Year 2.

How does the check work?

- Your child will sit with a teacher he or she knows and be asked to read 40 words aloud.
- Your child may have read some of the words before, while others will be completely new.
- The check normally takes just a few minutes to complete and there is no time limit. If

your child is struggling, the teacher will stop the check. The check is carefully designed not to be stressful for your child.

After the check

The school will tell you about your child's progress in phonics and how he or she has done in the screening check in the last half-term of Year 1. If your child has found the check difficult, your child would have support put in place to help him or her improve. You might like to ask how you can support your child to take the next step in reading. All children are individuals and develop at different rates. The screening check ensures that teachers understand which children need extra help with phonic decoding.

If you have any questions, please ask your child's teacher or Miss Ward 😊