

St Thomas Primary School

Phonics Policy

INTENT

At St Thomas Primary School, Phonics is taught so that it is accessible to all: every child knows more, remembers more and understands more. Phonics is a key skill that supports the development of early reading and writing as outlined in the Statutory framework for the Early Year's Foundation Stage and the English programmes of study in the National Curriculum. At St Thomas, we combine quality phonics teaching with an exposure to a range of texts through our reading spine as well as the promotion of reading for pleasure to provide our pupils with the skills they need to have a successful start to their lives as readers and writers.

At St Thomas Primary School our aim is:

- To establish consistent teaching, progression and continuity in the teaching and learning of systematic, synthetic phonics throughout EYFS and KS1.
- To provide a language rich environment that encourages and develops oracy and literacy skills, starting in Nursery continuing throughout the school.
- To ensure that systematic synthetic phonics, following the Essential Letters and Sounds Programme, is taught to children to enable pupils to: -
 - Recognise, say and write all phonemes within each phase 2-5 of the programme.
 - Use their phonic knowledge to blend and segment phonetically decodable words.
 - Use their phonic knowledge to read Harder to Read and spell words.
 - Read with fluency for both pleasure and to retrieve information.
 - To apply their phonic knowledge to write clearly, accurately and coherently.

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the Essential Letters and Sounds (ELS) Programme:

The Essential Letters and Sounds programme advocates that phonics is:

- A quality first teaching whole class approach where children keep up, not catch up.
- All staff are trained using the ELS training- **EMBED, ENACT, ENABLE**
- Taught everyday for up to 35 minutes
- Well structured lessons
- The use of consistent terminology
- The use of consistent resources
- Repetition and reinforcement of learning within each lesson and the same routine structure.
- ½ termly assessments using the ELS assessments and trackers.
- Targeted interventions within the lesson supported by the teacher to close the gaps efficiently and effectively.
- Supported 1:1 intervention for those that need it the most after the lesson

- Not testing children but teaching- give, give, give!

A consistent approach to the 'Essential Letters and Sounds' programme is imperative. Everyone in the school follows the same programme, using the same terms and tracks progress in the same way to ensure pupils do not fall through any gaps. Consistency is key so that children are given a clear approach from all staff and year groups so that children retain learning and working memory is not overloaded.

Teaching Sequence of ELS:

The programme follows a lesson structure of:

Review, teach, practice, apply, review

Each week the daily lessons are as follows:

Day 1 and 2- Review, teach new sound, practise, use apply sound- specific sheets and review.

Day 3 and 4- Review, teach new sound, practise, use the apply sound- specific extract sheet and review.

Day 5- On this day each week you review the newly taught sounds for the week, previously taught graphemes and harder to read and spell words. Practise reading and writing words. There is no new learning. The apply section is to read decodable books and write captions and sentences.

Review weeks and Phase 4 teaching

The five days of these weeks is to support children in consolidating their understanding of all prior learning. The lesson structure follows the process of:

Review, teach, practise and apply.

The fifth week of each half term is assessment week. These weeks follow the same structure and lessons plans as the review weeks.

Expectation of Progress

Nursery

Phase 1 begins in nursery, this is to raise children's awareness of general sounds within the environment around them. There are 7 aspects to explore: environmental sounds, instrumental sounds, body percussion, rhythm and rhyme, alliteration, voice sounds and oral blending. This can be explored through music, singing, listening to stories, exploring patterns and rhythms and listening to music. A rich selection of texts and poems that are read multiple times help to build awareness. In the spring term orally segmenting and blending then begins and in the summer term single letter sounds are introduced each week. We use Letters and Sounds 2007 to facilitate this.

Reception

Phase 2- Autumn 1: There are 23 GPC and 12 Harder to read and spell words. [Use Activity Book 1](#)

Phase 3- Autumn 2 into Spring 1 and 2: There are 29 GPC and 32 Harder to read and spell words. Phase 2 is also revised during this time. [Use Activity Book 2.](#) Phase 3 of ELS covers more than just the Phase 3 graphemes, we introduce some challenge from Phase 4 (in the form of adjacent consonants) alongside the Phase 3 teaching to extend children's sounding out and blending skills.

Phase 4- Summer 1: Phase 4 has been designed to give the children the opportunity to revise all they have learnt in phases 2 and 3. There are no new GPCS or harder to read and spell words.

Phase 5- Summer 2: This is gently introduced this term. There are 20 new GPC and 16 Harder to Read and spell words. [Use Activity Book 3](#)

Year 1

Phase 5- Autumn 1 and 2: Here there is added complexity to the text structures they are using and reading in the lessons. Here they start with a revision of previously taught phase 5 GPC. There 2 new GPCs and 9 new harder to read and spell words. We use the practise phonics screening checker during assessment weeks from Autumn 1. [Use Activity Book 4.](#)

Alternative Pronunciations for Previously Taught Sounds- Spring 1 and 2. These phase 5 sounds are taught to compliment the previously taught sounds. Rarely used GPCs are also taught. There are 49 new GPCs, 4 new HRS words. Revision of Phase 2, Phase 3 and Phase 4. [Use Activity Book 4.](#) The Phonics Screening Check should be completed each half term from Year 1 Autumn 1 Week 5, in addition to the Half-termly Assessment.

Summer 1 and 2: Revision of all previously taught GPCs for reading and spelling and teach further rarely used GPCS.

Phonics Screening Check:

In the summer term, all children in year 1 will undertake the National Phonics Screening Check. This assesses the children on their ability to segment and blend a range of 40 real and pseudo words. Pseudo words are a selection of phonetically decodable nonsense words. The words in this assessment will gauge the understanding of the children's understanding of the phonemes learned and give the school the knowledge of where the gaps are. If the children are not secure in recognising, segmenting and blending these words and therefore do not pass the assessment, they will be offered further support as they enter Year 2 and will be able to repeat the assessment in the summer of year 2. This assessment also allows us to put in specific and personal support for those children who require additional support.

Year 2

Most children will begin Year 2 with a secure knowledge of phase 5. In the Autumn a recap of phase 5 happens before swiftly moving into phase 6 through SPAG in English lessons. In phase 6 the main aim is for children to become more fluent readers and more accurate spellers. Children will be able

to read many familiar words automatically. When they come across unfamiliar words they will in many cases be able to decode them quickly and quietly using their well-developed sounding and blending skills. With more complex unfamiliar words they will often be able to decode them by sounding them out. They will then begin on the 7 stage format for reading in line with Key Stage 2.

In Year 2, children working below age-related expectations will be supported in small groups to work on phonics using the Essential Letters and Sounds scheme. Re-screening will take place in the summer term and all Non-SEND children are expected to pass the check at the second attempt.

KS2:

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. Any children who do not pass the phonics screening check in Year 2 will have targeted ELS teaching through small group teaching.

Interventions

Children who need additional support and targeted immediately by the class teacher within the lesson. Where further support is required there are three interventions that can be used to ensure any gaps are quickly filled. Enable sessions are delivered 1:1 after the lesson for no more than 5 minutes.

1. **Oral blending:** This intervention supports children struggling with oral blending and those with any auditory processing difficulties. It allows children who require additional practice of this skill to have short bursts of oral blending to consolidate their understanding and support their auditory discrimination. This additional one-to-one practice also supports vocabulary learning, communication, listening and speaking skills, and interaction with others
2. **Grapheme- Phoneme Correspondence Recognition:** This intervention involves deliberate over-learning, re-teaching and repeated exposure. It will support children with English as an additional language, those new to ELS, those with additional needs and those with auditory processing weaknesses or a fluency block. The intervention is targeted to the day's teaching and can also be used after the Half-termly Assessment to address any gaps that may be apparent.
3. **Blending for Reading:** This intervention supports a child who requires additional practice for blending. There is a strong focus on word-building, listening to the sounds within a word and identifying these. Again, this intervention particularly supports the needs of children with auditory processing weaknesses, those new to English and those who are struggling to apply their understanding of digraphs, trigraphs and quadgraphs as their phonic knowledge builds and their awareness of alternative spellings and pronunciations increases.

Assessment:

Formative assessment will be occurring in daily phonics sessions and children should be given appropriate challenge at the correct phonics level. Each half term we use the ELS assessments and tracker tools for consistency to track where the children are. Half termly assessments takes place on the 5th week of each half term, allowing week 6 to tackle misconceptions from the class or individuals. Following this the first week of each half term starts with a review week as we value and recognise how important it is to revisit and revise previous learning before moving into new learning. Review weeks happen at certain points throughout the year to allow for consolidation and practise.

Diagnostic Assessment

A diagnostic assessment is used for new starters, children who have previously been taught a different phonics programme or for any children who still have gaps in their phonic knowledge further up the school. The assessment is split into four parts: reviewing GPC knowledge, reading words that contain GPCs, oral blending, segmenting and reading harder to read and spell words. This then allows any gaps in children's knowledge to be identified and addressed with the correct intervention.

Reading Books:

Reading books are provided by the Essential Letters and Sounds Scheme and published by Oxford University Press. All children following the ELS scheme take home a decodable book every Friday linked to the sounds learnt for that week or previously taught sounds during review weeks. They also have the opportunity to visit the library weekly and take home a book of their choice. The decodable books are returned on a Thursday the following week ready to be changed. Parents are asked to read this book four times over this time to enable their child to develop their fluency, accuracy and build up their author graphic memory.

Decodable Books :

Children practise early reading with fully decodable books that:

- are matched to phonic knowledge and which do not require use of alternative strategies.
- are matched to the phonics phases.
- are decodable at the child's current level and not mixed with non-decodable books for independent reading.
- include a small number of 'HRS' words which have been taught.
- are continued in the progressive sequence of 'Essential letters and sounds' phases until a child can confidently decode words involving most common grapheme representations of all phonemes.

Parents:

All parents are invited to a Phonics Workshop in the first week of September. This is a practical workshop where parents are introduced to our phonics scheme and taught the basics. They are taught how to support their child at home with phonics and how best to support their reading journey. Children have reading bookmarks to enable parents to exchange information about their

children's reading progress. Parents are regularly kept informed of their child's phonics progress through termly parents evenings. Essential Letters and Sounds also includes training videos for parents, including videos on the pronunciation of the sounds. These are available on our school website

IMPACT

Through the teaching of ELS, our aim is for children to become fluent readers by the end of Key Stage One. This way, children can focus on developing their fluency and comprehension as they move through the school. Attainment in phonics is measured by the Phonics Screening Test at the end of Year 1 and children who do not pass will be re-screened in Year 2. If a child enters Key Stage Two and they still have not passed the phonics screening check, they will continue their phonics lessons through targeted interventions. We intend the impact of our phonics teaching will ensure our pupils are academically prepared for life beyond primary school and throughout their educational journey.