



Together, we learn and grow



Tuesday 16th September 2025

Dear All,

Thank you to those that could join us this morning for our Essential Letters and Sounds (ELS) parent workshop, it was great to have so many of you join us.

ELS is our chosen Phonics programme for Hedgehogs. The aim of ELS is 'Getting all children to read well, quickly'. It teaches children to read by identifying the phonemes (the smallest unit of sound) and graphemes (the written version of the sound) within words and using these to read words.

Children begin learning Phonics at the very beginning of Reception and it is explicitly taught every day during a dedicated slot on the timetable. Children are given the knowledge and the skills to then apply this independently. Throughout the day, children will use their growing Phonics knowledge to support them in other areas of the curriculum and will have many opportunities to practise their reading. This includes reading 1:1 with a member of staff, with a partner during paired reading and as a class.

The structure of ELS lessons allows children to know what is coming next, what they need to do, and how to achieve success. This makes it easier for children to learn the GPCs we are teaching (the alphabetic code) and how to apply this when reading. ELS is designed on the principle that children should 'keep up' rather than 'catch up'. Since interventions are delivered within the lesson by the teacher, any child who is struggling with the new knowledge can be immediately targeted with appropriate support. Where further support is required, 1:1 interventions are used. These interventions are short, specific and effective.

How you can support with reading at Home:

Hedgehogs will be assigned with a reading book change day and on this day each week they will read with an adult in school and then receive a ELS decodable book and a reading for pleasure book. The reading for pleasure book is for you to enjoy and your child will have picked this independently to share with you.

With their ELS book, Children will only read books that are entirely decodable, this means that they should be able to read these books as they already know the code contained within the book. Please support your child with this. We want children to practise reading their book at least 3 times across the week working on these skills:

- Decode - sounding out and blending to read the word.
- Fluency - reading words with less obvious decoding.
- Expression - using intonation and expression to bring the text to life!

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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.

The Oxford Owl ELS has an excellent parent section to help support you when reading with your child at home. Including videos on Pure Sounds.

<https://home.oxfordowl.co.uk/reading/reading-schemes-oxford-levels/essential-letters-and-sounds/>

If you have any questions about phonics please ask me or Miss Weatherspoon.

Thank you for your continued support

Warm regards,

Ellen Williams
Head of School

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