



Hedgehog Parent
workshop
16th September
2025





What are we going to cover today?

- What is Phonics?
- What is Essential Letters and Sounds?
- How we teach phonics
- Getting children ready to read
- Supporting your child with reading at home
- Pronouncing pure sounds
- Using the letter formations



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)



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'.



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.

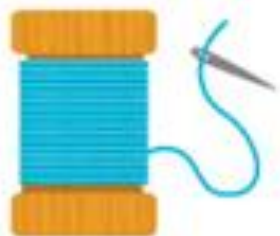
Children experience the joy of books and language whilst rapidly acquiring the skills they need to become fluent independent readers and writers.



How do we teach phonics?

- We use 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.

Phase 1*	Phase 2	Phase 3**
<p><i>Nursery/Pre-School</i></p> <p>Seven aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental sounds • Instrumental sounds • Body percussion • Rhythm and rhyme • Alliteration • Voice sounds • Oral blending 	<p><i>Reception Autumn 1</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral blending • Sounding out and blending with 23 new grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) • 12 new harder to read and spell (HRS) words 	<p><i>Reception Autumn 2, Spring 1 and Spring 2</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral blending • Sounding out and blending with 29 new GPCs • 32 new HRS words • Revision of Phase 2



ELS Progression



Phase 4**	Phase 5 including alternatives and lesser-known GPCs	Beyond Phase 5
<p><i>Reception Summer 1</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral blending • No new GPCs • No new HRS words • Word structures – cvcc, ccvc, ccvcc, cccvc, cccvcc • Suffixes • Revision of Phase 2 and Phase 3 	<p><i>Reception Summer 2</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to Phase 5 for reading • 20 new GPCs • 16 new HRS words <p><i>Year 1 Autumn 1 and 2</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revision of previously taught Phase 5 GPCs • 2 new GPCs • 9 new HRS words <p><i>Year 1 Spring 1 and 2</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative spellings for previously taught sounds • 49 new GPCs • 4 new HRS words • Oral blending • Revision of Phase 2, Phase 3 and Phase 4 	<p><i>Year 1 Summer, Year 2 and Key Stage 2</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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





Supporting your child with reading

- Only 1 in 3 children are read a bedtime story night
- Reading a bedtime story every night to your child improves their outcomes.
- 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 at least 3 times across the week working on these skills: decode, fluency, expression.



Supporting your child with reading

- We want children to create a strong orthographic map. This means that they learn sounds spelt by the letters or groups of letters in each word. To read fluently, or well, we need a strong orthographic map.
- To consistently recognise that the *ea* in bread spells /e/ we need to read it at least 4 times. This means we need to read the word many times to build fluency for reading.



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 the ELS website - a letter about today's session will be sent out on Arbor with a link. In these videos you can hear the correct pronunciation of the sounds



Letter Formation

- We want children to learn how to form letters fluently using a tripod grip and having the correct starting and end points.

Rehearsal of this is the key

- Magic Pencil
- Mark making
- Cutting and sticking
- Using variety of tools to mark make
- Core strength and posture



Letter Formation

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t

u v w x y z

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t

u v w x y z

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz



ELS Essential
Letters and
Sounds

Thank you

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