**Learning to read**

Whatever systematic scheme you follow, as a general rule, the minimum number of sounds that a pupil should be introduced to in P1, according to Sue Palmer, is as follows:

1. Main sounds for each of the 26 alphabet letters, with ‘qu’ treated as standing for /qw/ from the start.
2. sh ch th
3. a-e, e-e, i-e, o-e, u-e
4. ow oy ar

Teachers may choose to make use of a published scheme, but it is important not to let the scheme dictate what happens exclusively in a classroom.

“young learners may arrive at the same outcome by various routes.”

*Assessment, teacher education & the emergence of professional expertise (Ellis & Smith 2017)*

It is vital that, as far as possible, the delivery of phonics is engaging and makes use of the key elements of the foundations of literacy to enable all children to benefit at the level that is most appropriate to them.

These ideas look at the following stages of a lesson:

* Revision of previous learning
* Core
* Plenary / development

(NB these 3 stages do not have to run immediately one after another, but can be dipped into through the day, depending on time spent, bearing in mind a recommendation of 10 – 20 minutes. There is considerable overlap in the suggested activities below)

* Reading in context
* Other activities through the day (reinforcing reading, writing & foundations of literacy)

**Revision of previous learning stage**

Revision of previous graphemes & CVC combinations / key sight words. Suggested ideas:

* Actions
* Flashcards
* Songs or rhymes – previously learned or created by small groups
* Explanations to shoulder partners

Over the course of a fortnight all of these elements may be included. Some may be used daily.

* Reading of words from board to reinforce grapheme.
* Creation of words using magnetic letters
* Bingo / snap with sight words
* Word hunt in pairs for sight words
* Sounds flashcards are placed around the playground and children run to the sound that a word starts with
* Use toy magnifying glasses to scan for sight words/sounds in texts/environment
* Use IWB Fruit Machine to show sounds or sight words for children to read/match/play bingo
* Changing names – children put the sound of the week as the initial letter of their name e.g. what would your ‘s’ name be Ryan? “Syan”

NB Key sight word revision can be incorporated into other activities during the day – e.g. during role play in the shop corner: “You used ‘and’ to join that sentence when you were speaking to Ryan, well done. Can you find ‘and’ somewhere around the classroom?”

**Core stage**

Introduction of new sound and corresponding grapheme & creation of CVC / more complex words. Suggested ideas:

* Using an action to help them remember the sound
* Using a puppet
* Volunteers find the sound in a written word
* Examples of words containing that sound
* Writing letters in the air
* Using rhymes to remember the sound
* Tapping out sounds as they say them

**Plenary / development stage**

Opportunities are given for the children to reinforce their learning. Ideas include:

* Using shaving foam to make the letters / words
* Using sand, wet and dry
* Using monster slime, glitter, cornflour paste etc
* Magnetic / felt / wooden letters
* Making letters from pipe cleaners / tin foil / playdough
* Elkonin cards
* Lucky dip – children dip into a bag of letters to find the appropriate sound. This can be organised like pass the parcel
* Children have lower case / upper case letters – they have to find their partner
* YouTube clips such as Geraldine the Giraffe
* Letters on a washing line – children make words
* Individual whiteboards (if child has sufficient fine motor control)
* Matching pictures with words
* Games using the letter / words
* Hidden pebbles in the sand tray with the letters written on them
* Ping pong balls – have ping pong balls and golf tees in foam. Children pick a ball, say the sound and line it up on the tees to blend it.
* Each child is given a letter / sound and has to find another child / children to make up a word

Elkonin sound boxes can support blending and spelling:





**Planning phonics lessons**

It is important that some activities are matched to developmental stage, but it is also important that all children get the opportunity to work with all other children as they will teach and support each other. Therefore activities may be independent, paired, small groups organised according to a variety of factors or whole class if appropriate.

One way to structure your approach to phonics might be:

10 minutes whole class

20 minutes with the class split into 3 groups, working round 3 stations as follows:

* a group task
* individual tasks
* a teacher led task – differentiated according to need. You could drive phonics on for the most able, while doing more work on phonological awareness with others.

Another idea might be as follows:

**3-4 minutes: Phonics disco**

A PowerPoint of all sounds learned so far with a catchy tune playing in the background. Children do a move and say the sound to the beat of the disco as the sounds come up on the board.

**5 minutes: New sound**

Children look at the sounds on the board. The sound is associated with movement / song / object as appropriate to class.

**5 minutes: Lucky dip**

Wooden letters are placed in a bag and children lucky dip for a sound. When they pull it out they say the sound and trace the shape. When the taught sound if pulled out, everyone calls out the sound and traces the shape in the air.

**5 minutes: Words with the sound**

Class watch Geraldine the Giraffe video clip as she hunts around the house and finds things with the taught sound. Children play ‘beat the teacher’ to see if they can remember all the things Geraldine found. Teacher demonstrates blending the sounds to write the words on the board.

**Further development during the day:**

Children work round 4 workstations, divided into 4 groups by the teacher. Workstations include:

* Sand trays with letters hidden – children use letters to create words
* Sounds washing line – children work together to hang as many words as they can
* Chalkboards – children trace over the chalked letters with paintbrushes, making them disappear
* Reading together – teacher reads to a group and they find the sound taught that day

Tricky Words

Ideas for approaches other than flashcards:

**BMT**

The clapping sequence within Better Movers & Thinkers can be used to help with these

**Use the room**

Have the words stuck up around the room. Children go to the word you say. Or whisper a word to each child – they stand next to it and then say it out to the rest of the class in turn.

**Edible words**

Use dough and ask children to make the word from dough. Once they’ve been eaten you can see if the children can remember who ate which word and find the words on the wall.

**Tricky Troll Bridge**

Spread out some high frequency words like a path and children stand on each word and read it to cross the bridge to get to the troll / cuddly toy.

**Writing words**

When children are ready to write, tricky words can be taught as whole words so children can practise the shape of the whole word using joined up writing and it becomes automatised.

**A note on phonics**

Within this document the following definitions are used:

*Phonics*: A teaching approach focusing on the relationship between sounds (phonemes) and letters which represent them (graphemes)

*Synthetic phonics*: An approach whose defining characteristics are sounding out and blending

*Analytic phonics*: An approach which infers sound-symbol relationships from sets of words which share a letter and a sound

*Systematic phonics*: the teaching of the sound-letter relationship in an explicit, organised and sequenced fashion, not on an ‘as needed’ basis.

There has been much research on the teaching of phonics and on which approach to use. Overall, current evidence suggests that a systematic approach within a broad literacy curriculum has a greater positive impact on reading progress than whole language or whole word approaches used in isolation.

Our approach is therefore founded on a systematic approach to phonics, which includes key synthetic elements, e.g. blending is emphasised from the start and the pace is fast. **However, what is important is that teachers have access to a range of strategies that they teach as appropriate to the needs of the children.**

“it is unwise to advance an exclusive method of teaching the alphabetic principle… such a prescriptive stance denies the complexity of teaching and learning and … the marginalization or exclusion of other methods ignores the psychological and linguistic evidence about phonological and phonemic sensitivity in beginning readers.”

*Kathy Hall: How children learn to read and How Phonics Helps (from Ellis) p, 9*

**Fundamental to everything is an awareness that learning to read should be an engaging process. Even if we have in place successful systems which produce good results, unless we engage children with reading and writing in the early stages of their development, there will be a negative long-term impact on motivation and later measures of progress. So, while a word such as ‘systematic’ is helpful in terms of its definition, it is not meant to imply an approach rooted in formality and inflexibility. Teaching which is *flexible and responsive to the needs of the individual* should be at the heart of any approach and all guidance within this document should be read within this context.**