



Phonics Policy

Approved at School level

Reviewed October 2022

Next review due October 2024

Phonics Policy

Introduction

At HEPS we aim to provide high quality phonic sessions (Letters and Sounds) to ensure that all children have the best opportunities for them to become competent and confident readers and writers. We aim to secure skills of word recognition and decoding which will enable children at our school to read and write with fluency and joy.

Planning and organisation

We follow the Letters and Sounds principles and practice of high quality phonics. Each teacher should have their own copy of the booklet. We use Phonics Play as a basis for planning however we use formative assessment and pupil progress to determine the length of time we spend on each phase.

There are six phases within Letters and Sounds which run from Nursery to Year two. There is time scale guidance in the Letters and Sounds document; however at HEPS the time we spend on each phase depends on the formative assessments made on pupils' progress. As a rough guide, phases 2, 3 and 4 are taught at Reception and phase 5 in year 1.

Targeted daily sessions of 20 minutes take place within EYFS and KS1; nevertheless phonics runs throughout everything we do. Phase 1 can be seen in all elements of learning, through music, rhyme and pattern of language, while reference to phonics is made throughout the day.

Pupils are regularly assessed to ensure that they are being challenged and gaps in learning are being addressed. Phonics tracker is used as a tool to assess and track our pupils' progress, and to inform our planning. Ongoing assessment using the tracker is made regularly, but at least once a half term.

Structure of a lesson

There are 5 elements to a Letters and Sounds session: **review**, **teach**, **practise**, **apply** and **assess**.

A **review** is often a speed game from Phonics Play or a flashcard activity to recap phonemes and graphemes previously taught; this section is fast paced and allows children to recap their prior learning quickly.

In the **teach** section, pupils will be taught a new element to phonics. This may be through reading or letter formation. It may include any songs and actions from The Jolly Phonics Scheme.

In the **practise** section, pupils practise their reading and writing skills. Children are taught to segment and blend using their phonic fingers. All classes must use the term 'phonics fingers' and all pupils are encouraged to use them, including the most able.

This section should give children the opportunity to **apply** their skills independently through reading or writing a range of words, phrases or sentences.

Assessments are made informally throughout the lesson and through formal assessments on Phonics Tracker.

Differentiation

A Teaching Assistant will always work with a group or individual throughout every element of the phonics session. They do not sit and watch the Teacher: they are an active teacher themselves. Every element of the phonics lesson is differentiated and pupils can be split according to their attainment. However, every child has access to learning the new sounds being taught. Differentiation can come through Teaching Assistant support, small group or one to one work; differentiation by amount of output expected; or through activity. No pupil should be left behind.

If a pupil does not make expected progress in the phonics lesson, intervention sessions must be planned to ensure they have opportunity to catch up. These sessions typically take place in an afternoon with a Teaching Assistant or the Teacher. The SENCO and Phonics Subject Leader support the Teacher to ensure pupils with low attainment are receiving appropriate help.

Reading

We use fully decodable phonics readers in EYFS and year 1. We use Bug Club Phonics and Big Cat phonics for Letters and Sounds. Pupils are given reading books that match the phonemes they have been taught in phonics lessons.

Spellings

Spellings are an important aspect of Letters and Sounds. Before children are given spellings they must be able to orally segment using their phonic fingers in order to be able to access writing words.

Tricky words should be taught within each phase and recapped regularly during the review aspect of a lesson. Common exception words (tricky words) should also be taught during English lessons. Vocabulary, phoneme and tricky word mats are available for pupils to use in each lesson; they are expected to have their mats out next to their books during any writing task. Displays are also available in the classroom for them to use. Sounds of the Week should be clearly displayed with examples. Rewards are given when pupils use the sound in their writing. This draws attention through application.

The spelling planning is detailed on the English Overviews. We use Westover Green resources for support with lessons; however there are many excellent resources to use on Twinkl, Bitesize etc.

Letter formation

Pupils are taught to write using the correct pencil grip so the formation of each grapheme is accurate. This can be done through gross and fine motor skills practice starting in EYFS and through regular handwriting activities.

Assessment

Informal assessment should be ongoing throughout each phase and in every lesson. Our online Phonics Tracker is used as a tool to assess and track our pupils' progress, and assessments are made on a regular basis, at least once a half term. There are options to test individual pupils on: phonemes taught at each phase; blending and segmenting; reading of common exception words and letter names. There are also previous years' Phonics Screening checks. All these can be used to inform our planning. Formal assessment can be completed at any time during the phase.

Phonics Screening Check

In June, children in Year 1 take a national phonics screening test to confirm they have learnt phonic decoding to the expected standard. All pupils should be at the expected standard by the beginning of May.

After phase 5 has been taught in year 1, pupils are tested online on Phonics Tracker and carefully monitored in the lead up to the test. Gaps in phonic knowledge are filled either as a whole class, as small groups, or one to one. Pupils are shown how to read the words in the test: they must segment first using phonic fingers, before blending. This must be habitual by the time they take the test. Home learning can be given to support pupils practise at home.

Children should be introduced to 'alien words' from EYFS to allow them to get used to reading them. Alien words are sometimes taught alongside real words to allow children to apply their sounds and develop an understanding of word meanings. Activities such as alien shopping lists and Phonics Play games can be used to develop children's understanding of real words and alien words.

Teacher training and subject knowledge

Staff training is given to every teacher and Teaching Assistant, throughout the year groups. Somerset Literacy Network are our provider for up-to-date subject knowledge and training.

Summary

At HEPS our high-quality phonic sessions ensure that all children have the best opportunities provided to them in order for them to become competent and confident readers and writers. We aim to secure skills of word recognition and decoding which will enable children at our school to read and write with fluency.

We regularly monitor activities, lessons and assessments and review our resources. This diligent approach ensures our children have the best start possible to the joys of reading.