



## Phonics Policy

## Introduction

Phonics is an important life skill that children use to learn how to read. Reading is in all aspects of life and so it is important that children are given the best start and opportunities to develop this important life skill. At Keresforth Primary school we use the systematic synthetic phonics scheme called 'Essential Letters and Sounds' (ELS).

## Intent

At Keresforth Primary School, we aim for all children to read well, quickly. We want to foster a love for reading so that children can read to learn and read for enjoyment.

## Aims and objectives

We want all children to learn to read using a systematic synthetic phonics approach. All children will be immersed in an environment that is rich in talk and story, where children experience the joy of books and language whilst rapidly acquiring the skills to become fluent independent readers and writers.

## Phonics implementation

### FS1

When children start their reading journey in nursery it is important that they are immersed in a language rich environment. They have Phonics lessons daily that focus on the seven aspects of phase 1; Environmental sounds, instrumental sounds, body percussion, rhythm and rhyme, alliteration, voice sounds and oral blending. The children are also immersed in a language, vocabulary and song rich environment.

### FS2:

Children in Reception access discrete Phonics teaching every day and apply that teaching as a whole class, in small groups and during continuous provision. Teachers follow the long-term plan for ELS. Additionally, if children require further support to achieve the outcomes of the lesson and keep up with the pace of the programme, they access either immediate intervention within the lesson, or one of the three ELS interventions that are delivered on a one-to-one basis: oral blending, GPC recognition and blending for reading.

By the end of Reception, our aim is for all children to be secure in Phase 4 Phonics and to be accessing an introduction to Phase 5 teaching from the beginning of summer term. We start phonics in the very first days of Reception at Phase 2, continuing Phase 1 throughout and consolidating this through continuous provision.

To support children's decoding and support building a love of reading, they take home two books per week – one phonically decodable book matched closely to their phonics knowledge and one reading for pleasure book to share with their families. Parents are kept well-informed of their children's progress and are regularly invited into school for workshops and other activities. Within the curriculum, staff share a wide range of carefully chosen texts with children, modelling a love of reading, reading behaviours and making links to decoding and understanding. Each class also have daily opportunities planned in for either singing, story time or poetry sessions.

### Year 1

In Year 1 teachers follow our long-term plan for *ELS*. Children access discrete Phonics teaching every day and apply that teaching as a whole class throughout the curriculum. Additionally, if children require further support to achieve the outcomes of the lesson and keep up with the pace of the programme, they access either immediate intervention within the lesson, or one of the three *ELS* interventions that are delivered on a one-to-one basis or in small groups: oral blending, GPC recognition and blending for reading. They may also receive additional one-to-one reading sessions daily or weekly with a focus on decoding and fluency.

By the end of Spring 2 in Year 1, our aim is for all children to be secure in Phase 5 Phonics. We begin the year by consolidating Phonics phases, closing gaps if needed. We continue Phase 5 until the end of spring term, recognising the need for children to be fully secure in this before Year 2. In summer term, we review all previously taught GPCs for reading and spelling and teach further rarely-used GPCs.

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### Year 2 and beyond

If children require further support to achieve the outcomes of the lesson and keep up with the pace of the programme, or if they are not yet secure in Phase 3, 4 or 5 Phonics, they access either immediate intervention within the lesson, or one of the three *ELS* interventions that are delivered on a one-to-one basis: oral blending, GPC recognition and blending for reading. They may also receive additional one-to-one reading sessions daily or weekly with a focus on decoding and fluency. Once children are secure in phase 5 and are reading 90% of a decodable book fluently, they are able to progress onto other books.

### Impact and assessment

It is important that children's progress is assessed thoroughly, so that any gaps can quickly be identified. Assessment of the children's reading skills is key to ensuring that all children make rapid progress through the programme, and that they keep up rather than catch up. Teachers use the assessment cycle alongside daily in-class assessments to ensure they know where every child is in their early reading journey. *ELS* is designed to remove the likelihood of 'gaps' in children's knowledge occurring, to avoid children falling behind and to ensure rapid progress where children are transferring their decoding and encoding skills to reading and writing.

Baseline assessment takes place during children's first week in Reception. After that, assessment takes place on the fifth week of each term following the *ELS* long-term plan (may differ to catch up amendments to LTP).

These *ELS* half termly assessments allow all members of staff to identify any sound and grapheme gaps, or any difficulties with blending and decoding. By undertaking assessment in the fifth week teachers are able to action a direct intervention before any upcoming school holidays. *ELS* includes specific revision points throughout the programme. Each of these revision points focus on specific skills to support children's rapid movement through the programme, the consolidation of their understanding and the re-activation of knowledge.

Once a term, an *ELS* Diagnostic Assessment is completed to enable teachers to identify a gap in children's knowledge or understanding, or to assess new starters, to ensure that the appropriate

support is provided to them to make rapid progress and consolidate their skills and understanding. There are four parts to the assessment:

- Identifying code knowledge through sound/spelling recognition
- Identifying code knowledge within words
- Identify segmenting and blending skills
- Recognition of harder to read and spell words

In addition to the assessments above, an ELS Phonics Screening Check assessment is completed each half term from Year 1 Autumn 1 Week 5.

Following assessment, teachers analyse the data to ensure that children are being given adequate opportunity to review and practise those GPCs which they are least confident with. This data is used to inform the next steps for each child and decide which interventions, if any, are needed. The table below shows the content covered in each assessment along with an 'on track' percentage at each assessment point for GPCs.

Where additional review of a GPC is required, this takes place both within the ELS lesson and outside of the lesson so that children have sufficient opportunities to see the GPC and consolidate knowledge if they are struggling to recall.

At the end of Year 1, pupils will take the statutory Phonics Screening Check. Its purpose is to assess whether children can read accurately a selection of words that include common GPCs: the first step in learning to read. It does not aim to assess reading comprehension or whether a child can read familiar words speedily

or decode unfamiliar ones easily. The children who do not meet the expected standard are screened again in Year 2.

### Inclusion

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, usually during the Apply activity. We know that children – especially those with educational difficulties – learn better in a mixed ability environment where their learning is scaffolded not only by the teacher and support staff but also by their peers. In this most fundamental area of learning – learning how to read – this support is even more vital, not only to their success but also to the outcomes of the programme as a whole.

Over-learning, alongside a range of Apply activities, helps children who acquire phonic knowledge more slowly to succeed. In ELS pilot schools, all children learned to read at a similar fast pace, because children with additional support needs were rapidly targeted throughout the lesson, and any remaining gaps in their knowledge were closed the same day.

Studies show that the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics supports all children's developing skills when learning to read, and that phonemic awareness (the ability to discern and copy sounds in words) is key to progress.

Children's phonemic awareness supports them when learning how to read, and our rigorous and robust teaching methods ensure that all children build phonemic awareness.

If children require further support to achieve the outcomes of the lesson and keep up with the pace of the programme, ELS has three interventions that are to be delivered on a one-to-one basis: oral blending, GPC recognition and blending for reading.

These are intended to be short and concise and last no longer than five minutes. They can be delivered in isolation, or different interventions can be used together to support children each day.

This helps ensure that children do not spend excessive time outside of the classroom or in group intervention sessions where they are removed from the rest of the curriculum.  
At Keresforth Primary school we also adapt and create bespoke lessons for children that require a different approach to learning how to read.

### Oracy

Oracy is evident in all Phonics lessons within Keresforth Primary School. The lessons are rich with planned opportunities for peer discussions. There is an emphasis on using 'me then you' to model the correct use of sounds and language.