

Phonics at Sparkenhoe

ALS Phonics: Letters and Sounds

At Sparkenhoe we follow the ALS Phonics Programme which is validated by the Department for Education. Teachers and

ALS Phonics is based on the principles of the 'Letters and Sounds' Programme. The 'five phase' phonics teaching programme focuses on high quality phonics teaching. Teachers assess which phase the children should be working on, and appropriate teaching is planned for.

In Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 daily phonics lessons are taught. Whole class phonics lessons introduce a new sound daily. A further revision session later on in the day is planned to consolidate the children's learning. It is during this revision session that the class teacher supports the children who have been identified with gaps in their phonics.

In KS2, trained TAs deliver phonics intervention classes to support children who did not pass the KS1 phonics screening assessment and children who are new to the school with English as an additional language who are assessed as needing phonics intervention.

ALS Phonics Rationale (Source - ALS Website)

The rationale behind ALS Phonics: Letters and Sounds is steeped in quality first teaching, where teachers have high expectations of the children's attainment and of their own professional delivery of the programme. The programme aims to develop confidence and competences in teaching and learning skills linked to phonics and early reading and writing. This is achieved through a structured and comprehensive approach to systematic synthetic teaching of phonics: the order in which the sounds are taught; how progress is assessed, measured and analysed, how gaps in learning are identified and addressed. Children are in turn furnished with the ability to decode and encode text to unlock the skills needed to become capable readers able to engage and enjoy books.

Importance of Reading

Phonics is the key to paving the way to becoming a proficient reader but is only one, if not the most crucial piece of the reading jigsaw. Promoting high quality teaching within a language-rich environment is also very important. The teaching of secure phonics and learning is at the heart of the reading development strategy but we also ensure there are opportunities to apply these reading skills across the whole curriculum, accessing a wide range of reading materials that promote the love of reading.

Awareness, skills and knowledge are embedded through repetition and structured teaching sequence, which will become familiar to the children in classes. These are then consolidated by applying learning to reading and writing tasks, developing breadth and depth in understanding before progressing to the next phase.

During each phase, teachers assess for learning of children with their class:

- To inform their daily planning.
- To track and monitor.
- To ascertain any gaps in learning.
- To help understand where phonemes/graphemes need reinforcement or revision.
- To ensure timely intervention is put in place for any children struggling to meet expectations.
- To measure when a class is ready to move on to the next phase.

The Phases

Phase One

Phase 1 lies mainly within the areas of communication and language and literacy within the Early Years Foundation Stage. It is the base for all subsequent phonic learning. Children will develop listening skills and phonological awareness in mainly adult-led activities, which will be consolidated and reinforced within the language-rich environment and child-initiated learning. Phase 1 is underpinned by helping children to tune into sounds and discriminate between speech sounds. They will learn to alliterate the initial sound of words and blend and segment words orally.

Phase Two

Phase 2 phonics teaches the children the phoneme-grapheme correspondence of the first 19 letters. Using these letters, children will learn to blend and segment and will learn to read vc and cvc words.
e.g. a-t; c-a-t.

At Phase 2, children will develop the skill of writing words or making words with magnetic letters/tiles with these initial graphemes.

After each block is taught, the teacher will assess all children and identify any phonemes / graphemes that need to be revised.

Phase Three

Phase 3 introduces 25 new graphemes, including some long vowels. These graphemes consist of consonant digraphs (ch, sh, ng), vowel digraphs (ai, ee, oa) and vowel trigraphs (igh, air, ear). Children learn to blend these graphemes for reading in one-syllable and two-syllable words. During Phase 3, children practise writing and making words with consonant digraphs, vowel digraphs and vowel trigraphs. Children will also learn to read and write captions and sentences with these letters.

A rhyming element has also been incorporated to ensure that all children can recognise and generate rhyming words by the end of Foundation 2.

Phase Four

Phase 4 is to consolidate children's knowledge of phonemes and graphemes in the reading and writing of words of increasing length and complexity containing short vowels, long vowels and adjacent consonants. No new graphemes are introduced at this stage. Children will practise previously learnt graphemes and learn to blend and segment words with increasing automaticity. As children become more proficient in their blending and segmenting of polysyllabic words, their confidence and independence as a reader will grow too. At Phase 4, children continue to learn to read and write sentences using one or more high-frequency words, words of varying length and complexity and words containing adjacent consonants.

Phase Five

Phase 5 is where children broaden their knowledge of graphemes and phonemes to apply in their reading and writing. They will learn new graphemes for graphemes they already know and will learn alternative pronunciation for some graphemes they have learnt previously.

During Phase 5, children will learn to read words with alternative pronunciation of graphemes and words with two and three syllables. Children will learn to choose the appropriate grapheme when writing words and learn to write two-syllable words, three-syllable words and polysyllabic words.

Blending for Reading

To learn to read and spell children must be able to smoothly blend sounds together. Blending sounds fluidly helps to improve fluency when reading. Blending is more difficult to do with longer words so learning how to blend accurately at an early age is imperative. We use our fingers to support this.

High Frequency Words

We also teach children to read and write the High Frequency words. These are words that recur frequently in much of the written materials young children read and need to write. We teach the high frequency words to collate with the order in which we teach phonics. Many words are decodable and we encourage the children to attempt reading these words using their decoding skills. Some words are not decodable and children are encouraged to read these 'at a glance'. The first 100 High Frequency words are organised into sets 1 – 15. Children take these words home to learn alongside each sound or phase of sounds being taught in phonics.

The next 200 words are organised into sets 15 – 19.