



## Muschamp Primary School Phonics Policy 2023

“ Systematic, explicit instruction is the most effective type of phonics instruction, especially for students who are at risk for academic failure. ”

— Jeanne Chall

At Muschamp Primary School we strive to ensure that all children become happy, successful and fluent readers by the end of Year 2. We believe this is achievable through a combination of strong, high quality, discrete phonics teaching combined with a whole language approach that is firmly rooted within a Reading for Pleasure (R4P) culture, aiming to promote a lifelong love of literature.

The Rose Report (2006) emphasised high quality phonics as an important part of the word decoding skills required by children to develop higher level whole language and comprehension skills.

This approach is in alignment with our belief that we first learn to read and then read to learn.

In addition to this, Bold Beginnings (2017) stated that “All primary schools should: make sure that the teaching of reading, including systematic synthetic phonics, is the core purpose of the Reception Year.” This is also fundamental to our approach to the teaching and learning of phonics.

“Evidence shows that teaching phonics is the best way to teach children to read, e.g.

the EEF considers phonics to be one of the most secure and best-evidenced areas of pedagogy, recommending all schools use a systematic approach to teaching it”(The Reading Framework - Teaching the foundations of literacy - July 2021)

This policy is aimed at reinforcing a consistent and high-quality approach to the teaching of phonics across the Early Years Foundation Stage, (EYFS) Key Phase One (KP1) and on into Key Phase Two (KP2).

For further information, see also [General English Policy](#).

### **Aims:**

- To teach children aural discrimination, phonemic awareness and rhyme to aid reading, writing and spelling development.
- To encourage the use of segmenting and blending so that decoding skills provide a sound foundation for reading, writing and spelling.
- To ensure the teaching of phonics is consistent with our chosen scheme - Essential Letters and Sounds.
- To enable children to use phonic awareness across the curriculum.
- To ensure that children know the 44 phonemes within the English language.
- To teach children to recognise the graphemes within words and associate them with the appropriate phoneme when reading.
- To provide children with strategies to identify and decode common exception words.

### **Objectives:**

- ☐ To provide consistent, high quality phonics teaching that ensures all children have a strong foundation upon which to tackle the complex processes of reading and writing.
- ☐ To ensure that the teaching of synthetic phonics is systematic and progressive throughout the EYFS, KP1 and KP2 for those children needing interventions to support phonetic knowledge and understanding.
- ☐ To ensure that children have sound phonetic knowledge, understanding and skills so that they can decode words confidently and engage with higher order reading and writing skills.

## **Curriculum, Teaching and Learning and Assessment Guidance:**

At Muschamp Primary School we follow the Essential Letters and Sounds Programme. As stated in the new early reading guidance “programmes use programme-specific systems and terminology such as actions, mnemonics, prompts, key words and routines to teach knowledge and skills. It is important not to confuse children by mixing material from different programmes or across different classrooms – hence the phrase ‘fidelity to the programme’.” (The Reading Framework - Teaching the foundations of literacy - July 2021)

Essential Letters and Sounds (ELS) is our chosen Phonics programme. The aim of ELS is to get all children to read well, quickly. It teaches children to read by identifying the phonemes (the smallest unit of sound) and graphemes (the written version of the sound) within words and using these to read words. Essential Letters and Sounds is a systematic synthetic phonics programme and was validated by the Department for Education in June 2021. All members of staff are trained to teach ELS to ensure that we have an expert team of reading teachers led by our Reading/Phonics Lead.

To ensure all children learn to read well, quickly, children learn Phonics from the very start of Reception. It is explicitly taught every day during a dedicated slot on the timetable. Throughout the day, children use their growing Phonic knowledge to support them in other areas of the curriculum and have many opportunities to practise reading decodable texts precisely matched to the phonic knowledge. This includes reading 1:1 with a member of staff, with a partner during paired reading and during whole class reading sessions. We know that reading is a fundamental life skill and ensure that all children leave our school able to read well.

ELS is a whole class teaching model. This means that every single pupil has the same opportunities when learning to read. Learning to read well, early, is a priority for every child. Children who may find it harder to learn how to read are given extra support from their teacher every day. We ensure that all children learn to read well and keep up rather than have to catch-up. Daily Phonics lessons continue in Year 1 and further through the school to ensure all children become confident, fluent readers.

We follow the ELS progression and sequence. This allows our children to practise their existing phonic knowledge whilst building their understanding of the ‘code’ of our language. As a result, children can tackle any unfamiliar words that they might discover. We teach children more rarely used GPCs through the ELS progression. This means that they can decode and read more words with increased fluency.

ELS is supported by a wide range of completely decodable texts. These cover both fiction and nonfiction and are exciting and engaging for all our pupils. We match the home reading texts to each child’s current phonic knowledge to ensure that they consolidate their most recent teaching and learning at home. Children experience the joy of books and language whilst rapidly acquiring the skills they need to become fluent independent readers and writers.

ELS teaches relevant, useful and ambitious vocabulary to support children’s journey to becoming fluent and independent readers. At our school we begin by teaching the single letter sounds before moving to digraphs (two letters spelling one sound), trigraphs (three letters spelling one sound) and quadgraphs (four letters spelling one sound).

We teach children to:

- Decode by identifying each sound within a word and blending them together to read fluently
- Encode by segmenting each sound to write words accurately.

The structure of ELS lessons allows children to know what is coming next, what they need to do, and how to achieve success. This makes it easier for children to learn the GPCs we are teaching (the alphabetic code) and how to apply this when reading.

ELS is designed on the principle that children should 'keep up' rather than 'catch up'. Interventions are delivered within the lesson by the teacher and any child who is struggling with the new knowledge can be immediately targeted with appropriate support. Where further support is required, 1:1 intervention is used where needed. These interventions are short, specific and effective. ELS is designed to make use of all the teaching time during the phonics lesson – through targeted support where required, reducing the need for external interventions - meaning that there is minimal disruption to curriculum teaching time.

Where further phonic support is required in Key Stage 2, this is timetabled daily to ensure that any child rapidly catches up. Children are assessed in week 5 of each half term to ensure that any specific gaps can be targeted immediately. We reinforce the link between reading and writing in every ELS lesson through the independent application of the children's understanding. We also ensure that all our teachers reference the learning from ELS lessons when writing as part of the wider curriculum.

All Year One children take the Phonics Screening Check, a statutory assessment required by legislation. Those who do not meet the pass mark will be given support and an intervention programme in Year Two, to provide them with sufficient knowledge and understanding to re-take the Phonics Screening Check and obtain a pass mark.

Those children who do not obtain the required level set by the Phonics Screening Check will continue to receive targeted phonics teaching in Year 3 and this is tracked closely with individual action plans and assessment.

From Year 3 to Year 6, phonics is assessed regularly with the use of The Rocket, children identified as needing further support with phonics in KP2 are provided with phonics and/or spelling intervention programmes. Throughout KP2 phonics is continued to be revised, taught and linked with spelling patterns. The Word Wasp and The Hornet Literacy Primer are available for intervention groups in KP2. These resources are designed for children with difficulties in processing phonics and helps supports older children understand the structure and rules of language.

Planning for phonics in Reception and Year 1 is provided through the ELS programme.

Ofsted reported that that 'the best of the products available to teachers for teaching systematic synthetic phonics were so well structured as to take much of the burden out of planning'.(The Reading Framework - Teaching the foundations of literacy - July 2021)

In other years it is done separately from English but with the understanding that good phonics teaching should link to the literacy needs of the children within an English lessons and across the curriculum. The ELS approach continues and the resources continue to be used.

## **Organisation:**

**For further information, see [Whole School Phonics Overview Document](#).**

Children in Nursery are taught foundations for phonics through a differentiated approach within the setting on a daily basis. All aspects of Phase 1 are taught throughout the year and are taught in discrete phonics sessions daily but also within the continuous provision activities. The focus is on the phase one skills throughout Nursery.

## **Classroom Environment.**

In each class is a phase appropriate Phonics Display, concentrating on both sounds and key words that the children are currently learning. Phonics mats should be available in every lesson to support children's early writing across the curriculum.

In EYFS, the displays reflect the letters and sounds that the children have been taught using the ELS materials. "Letter cards, friezes and posters showing GPCs should match the phonic programme the school has chosen" (The Reading Framework - Teaching the foundations of literacy - July 2021)

Each class will have a poster and alphabet frieze to refer to. Working walls are updated daily. Children are able to consolidate their phonics knowledge within continuous provision but are not taught in this way. The outdoor learning environment provides multiple opportunities to consolidate learning and we aim to provide both indoor and outdoor environments that are rich with print.

## **Reading.**

Systematic synthetic phonics plays a key role in a rich and varied reading programme. The school has and continues to invest in good quality books which support children to apply their phonic knowledge and skills, as well as develop their reading comprehension.

We aim to ensure reading books closely match the phonetic ability of our children, to allow them to consolidate and apply their phonics knowledge.

Reading books are organised in line with the ELS and Oxford Owl Oxford Reading Buddy scheme and children are matched to books that will include graphemes and tricky words that have been taught. This makes it easy for teachers, parents and children to choose a text that was matched to the child's growing phonic knowledge and that does not encourage a child to guess at words if they included GPCs they had not yet been taught.

**For further information, see [Reading Policy](#).**

## **Home Learning.**

Parental involvement is key in the acquisition of Phonics.

*We share our resources with parents and give guidance to continue the learning journey at home.*

Parents are invited to attend phonics workshops, which includes digital phonic links they can access as well as homework sheets.

As children progress into Year 2 and into KP2, they are given differentiated weekly spelling words to learn. Phonics mats and other resources are always available to our families for their children in any year group. We endeavour to closely match our home reading books to the phonics ability of our children.

**For further information, see Home Learning Policy.**

### **Assessment.**

In the EYFS and KP1 we assess pupil progress on our Phonics assessment sheets for each phase and plot the children on a Phonics tracker grid each half term. Towards the Phonics Screening Check, Year 1 pupils will be given practice papers to identify specific skills or any gaps in learning.

Phonics ability is continually assessed throughout KP2 at regular points during each academic year, this is tracked and any children found to be in need of additional support is given planned interventions.

**For further information, see Assessment Policy.**

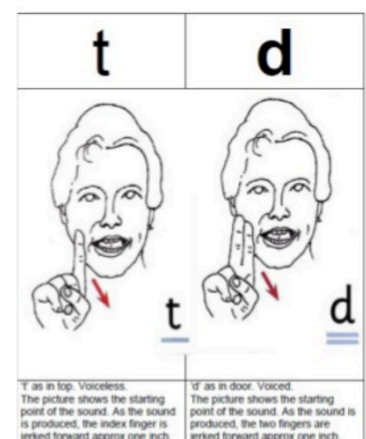
### **Staff training and development.**

This is continuous, being reviewed regularly and training is provided. All staff have been trained in the ELS approach. All staff are asked to assess their own knowledge and understanding frequently and helped to improve their practice as necessary.

### **Guidance from Speech and Language therapists at Muschamp Primary School.**

The term 'speech, language and communication needs' (SLCN) is used to describe a wide range of issues that make it difficult for children to communicate with others. Children with SLCN have a high risk of literacy difficulties. There can be huge variations in the ways in which children can struggle with literacy – from not understanding words or concepts to not being able to blend sounds, discern the differences between similar sounds or link speech sounds to letter names. Phonics teaching is an important element of learning literacy and shouldn't be discounted because a child has SEN. However, there are several different approaches/ strategies to support phonics teaching and the wider development of reading for children with SLCN:

- Whole word and phonics learning within a language rich environment.
- Explicitly teach the 'language' of phonics, e.g. first/last/next (with visual symbols to support understanding) so the child can concentrate on listening to sounds rather than on what the words being used mean.
- Visual representation of the sounds of speech - 'Cued Articulation'.  
This is a set of hand cues for teaching the individual sounds in a word. Each hand movement represents one sound and the cue gives clues as to how and where the sound is produced. It works as a positive, visual aid to learning phonics and teaching phonological awareness. Using cued articulation will raise the sound awareness skills of all children in the classroom, not just those with SLCN.
- Visual symbols to represent sounds.
- Opportunities for over learning, revising and repetition of class based phonic work.
- Multisensory approaches and hands on manipulation of sounds, e.g. the physical movement of wooden letters/ tracing over letters with shaving foam



- Cumulative blending – say the first sound, then the first and second sound, and then all the sounds: s...sa...sat. Blending sounds without gaps between them sounds more like the target word than disjointed evenly spaced sounding out.
- Phonological awareness programmes focusing on recognising syllables in words, discriminating between sounds, recognising initial sounds and rhymes, segmenting and blending.
- Children may need alternative ways of indicating that they are understanding phonemes or reading accurately, e.g. by pointing at sounds/ pictures that match the individual words or phrases.

Some children may not be ready for literacy learning and first need to develop the building blocks for language and literacy, such as attention and listening, understanding what’s said, and an ability to use words in sentences. Children need oral comprehension before they can develop an understanding of written words.

**Phonics in the Language Base.**

The children who are part of our Language Base and have an EHCP attend small groups for English and within these groups phonics sessions are run. Due to the diverse needs of our children and their abilities we cater the phonics lessons to suit their levels. Children will be assessed regularly and grouped accordingly, they will then be delivered the phonics phase that is most suitable to them. This may mean that a child in year 6 is receiving work on phase 1 or 2 if it is felt appropriate. Most children within the Language Base are working 18 months -2 years behind their chronological age.

Many of our children have a language delay and therefore this affects both their expressive and receptive language as well as attention difficulties and auditory processing difficulties. The children rely on regular repetition of work and therefore the sounds are moved through very slowly and revised regularly. Many of the children in the Language Base struggle with their memory and therefore need the phonics to be delivered in a variety of ways before they are ready to move on. All lessons begin with a recap of the sounds already learnt to ensure the children are still able to retrieve this knowledge and use it accordingly. It is essential that we work in close partnership with the children’s speech therapists to adapt the lessons correctly, for example some of our children can blend the sounds but their speech difficulties make interpretation quite difficult and without the knowledge of these children’s difficulties and the correct planning they could be assessed wrongly.

Its implementation is seen as the responsibility of all staff.

Its use and effectiveness will be supported and monitored by the Phonics team and English lead, on behalf of the Head

Written by Sarah Brooks

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