

The British School
Phonics Policy
Updated May 2023 by Sarah King

Introduction:

From their first term at The British School, children are immersed in a structured phonics programme. At The British School, we use Essential Letters and Sounds, which is a complete systematic synthetic phonics programme (SSP) verified and validated by the Department for Education.

Synthetic phonics is a way of teaching children to read. It teaches children how sounds are represented by written letters. Children are taught to read words by blending these sounds together to make words. For example, they will be taught that the letters 'm-a-t' blend together to make 'mat'.

A synthetic phonics programme, such as ELS, provides a structure for teaching these sounds in a certain order to build up children's learning gradually. It is used daily during Reception and Year 1 to teach all the sounds in the English language.

INTENT

The aims of our Phonics curriculum at The British School:

Through ELS and an early learning environment that is rich in talk and story, where children experience the joy of books and language, we aim for children to rapidly acquire the skills to become fluent independent readers and writers

Equality, diversity and inclusion in Phonics:

At The British School, we create an inclusive culture of achievement, high standards and high expectations. We provide equal opportunities for all pupils to learn Phonics. Children of all ethnic or cultural groups, races, genders, sexual orientations and abilities, have equal access to the Phonics curriculum. We ensure that positive images of all groups are promoted throughout the school, both in the use of language, in the provision of resources and through displays.

We ensure that all children have equal access to effective, quality-first teaching and learning, in all areas of the Phonics curriculum. Essential Letters and Sounds is delivered using a whole-class approach. This ensures that all children benefit from the full curriculum.

As a school, we ensure that we meet the diverse needs of each individual pupil, in order to ensure the active participation and progress of all pupils. Class teachers, in collaboration with the SENDCO, will ensure that any specific needs, requiring specialist resources, are addressed promptly. In Phonics, pupils with SEND will be supported in a number of ways, through adaptive teaching. Strategies may include:

- Targeted support by the class teacher and TA;
- High-quality modelling;
- Appropriate scaffolding;
- Varied questioning strategies;
- The use of peer support;
- The use of differentiated resources;
- The provision of coloured paper and overlays (dyslexia)

Children who encounter difficulties are supported by the teacher throughout the lesson, and where further support is required, ELS has three interventions to ensure that any learning gaps are quickly filled. These are intended to be short and concise. 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.

Curriculum structure:

Phase 1*	Phase 2	Phase 3**
<p><i>Nursery/Pre-School</i></p> <p>Seven aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental sounds • Instrumental sounds • Body percussion • Rhythm and rhyme • Alliteration • Voice sounds • Oral blending 	<p><i>Reception/Primary 1 Autumn 1</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral blending • Sounding out and blending with 23 new grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) • 12 new harder to read and spell (HRS) words 	<p><i>Reception/Primary 1 Autumn 2, Spring 1 and Spring 2</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral blending • Sounding out and blending with 29 new GPCs • 32 new HRS words • Revision of Phase 2
Phase 4**	Phase 5 including alternatives and lesser-known GPCs	Beyond Phase 5
<p><i>Reception/Primary 1 Summer 1</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral blending • No new GPCs • No new HRS words • Word structures – cvcc, ccvc, ccvcc, cccvc, cccvcc • Suffixes • Revision of Phase 2 and Phase 3 	<p><i>Reception/Primary 1 Summer 2</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to Phase 5 for reading • 20 new GPCs • 16 new HRS words <p><i>Year 1/Primary 2 Autumn 1 and 2</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revision of previously taught Phase 5 GPCs • 2 new GPCs • 9 new HRS words <p><i>Year 1/Primary 2 Spring 1 and 2</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative spellings for previously taught sounds • 49 new GPCs • 4 new HRS words • Oral blending • Revision of Phase 2, Phase 3 and Phase 4 	<p><i>Year 1/Primary 2 Summer, Year 2/Primary 3 and Key Stage 2</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With ELS, phonics teaching does not stop at the end of Year 1, but continues as children move through the school, with links being made between their GPC knowledge and spelling • Revision of all previously taught GPCs for reading and spelling • Wider reading, spelling and writing curriculum

*Phase 1 of Letters and Sounds (2007) can be used in Nursery/ Pre-School settings before starting ELS in Reception and can still be used throughout the school day in Reception. However, direct phonics teaching- the teaching of sounds, graphemes, word reading and vocabulary- must start from the very beginning of Reception.

**Phase 3 of ELS covers more than just the Phase 3 graphemes- we introduce some challenge from Phase 4 (in the form of adjacent consonants) alongside the Phase 3 teaching to extend children's sounding out and blending skills.

Planning and Teaching:

ELS is based on simplicity and consistency, and the programme is delivered through whole-class lessons. Throughout ELS the same teaching sequence is used- show, copy, repeat- until each child is independent. The teaching sequence is the same in all stages of each lesson, from whole-class teaching to one-to-one intervention. Children are given the opportunity to hear and say each sound, first in isolation, and then within words and sentences. When introducing a new grapheme-phoneme correspondence (GPC), a mnemonic or rhyme with an accompanying picture is used to ensure that the children understand. Children then hear the sound in the context of a word, and a picture and/or definition is given to support their understanding. Practice and repetition is key.

Key teaching features include;

- Me, then you
- Provide opportunities
- Provide modelling
- Active teaching and learning
- Spelling sequence

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework (2021)

At the British School we want to give all children the best start with their reading journey and ensure that they develop a love of reading. ELS therefore begins with whole-class, daily phonics teaching from the first week of Reception. ELS phonics lessons ensure high quality first teaching of phonics and give children many opportunities to review and build their sound and grapheme knowledge, word-reading skills and use of rich vocabulary. With a strong start in Reception, all children are given the required skills to read well and quickly.

Although ELS has a focus on phonics, the programme crucially also supports children's development in the prime areas of 'Communication and Language' and the specific area of 'Literacy' (Comprehension, Word Reading and Writing). ELS also has an emphasis on teaching new vocabulary and using this vocabulary in context.

IMPLEMENTATION

The role of the subject leader at The British School:

The current subject leader of Phonics teaches the Reception class. This enables her to have a deep understanding the fundamentals underpinning early reading and writing skills.

The role of the subject leader includes:

- Improving the quality of Phonics teaching and learning throughout the school, through an effective monitoring process.
- Supporting colleagues with planning, teaching and assessment.
- Monitoring pupil progress and attainment, alongside the HT.
- Action planning.
- Attending network meetings and informing staff about developments/resources.
- Undertaking CPD.
- Providing relevant CPD to staff.
- Promoting collaborative working within the school.
- Encouraging parental involvement.
- Purchasing, maintaining and organising teaching resources; managing the English budget.

Teaching and learning:

The principles of ELS are based upon;

- the delivery of whole-class, high- quality first teaching, with well-structured daily lesson plans.
- the use of consistent terminology by teachers, children and parents
- the use of consistent resources that support effective teaching
- repetition and reinforcement of learning
- regular and manageable assessment to ensure that all children 'keep up' rather than 'catch up'

Planning resources:

ELS lesson plans are tightly structured and do not include any unnecessary activities. Repetition is used to help the children overlearn new knowledge, and is key feature of all ELS lessons.

Each lesson consists of;

- Review
- Teach

- Practise- this also includes harder to read and spell (HRS) words, capital letters and handwriting
- Apply
- Review

It is vital that whilst children are learning to read, they read books that match their phonic knowledge. These books are carefully matched to every aspect of the programme. These books are intended to be used during the review lesson on day 5 of each week as home readers. Children will keep the book for one week and re read them at least four times in this period. Re-reading ensures that children develop their reading skills and fluency.

Adaptive teaching:

ELS build in opportunities to target children requiring additional support during the lesson. These children work with the class teacher during the 'Apply' activity, to help them consolidate their understanding. Following this targeted teaching, the children will then complete the 'Apply' activity independently.

Marking and feedback:

At The British School, we recognise the key role that marking and feedback play, in allowing children to learn from their misconceptions and take their next steps for learning. The goal of marking and feedback is always to move learning forwards.

We understand the importance and benefit of providing immediate feedback and this is prioritised throughout lessons. "Live marking" is encouraged in all classes (where a teacher marks work alongside the child). We also encourage the use of self and peer marking.

As children progress from using white boards to phonics books, teachers use pink and green marking, as outlined in the school's marking policy. Pink is used to identify where children have been successful, specifically making reference to the school's Learning Values. Green marking is used to move learning forwards and may include the following strategies:

- Self-correcting
- Consolidation
- Extension
- Deepening understanding

- Asking for an explanation
- Reminder
- Encouraging reflection

All children respond to their marking in purple - teachers are expected to provide ample time for children to do this.

The following codes are used in pupil books to indicate a level of support or feedback:

- VF - verbal feedback given.
- WCF - whole class feedback given.
- TS - teacher support received.
- TAS - teaching assistant support received.
- PS - peer support received.
- TIV - teacher-led intervention delivered.
- TAIV - teaching assistant-led intervention delivered.

Assessment and Monitoring:

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'. 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.

Assessment needs to occur in the fifth week of each half term, to target and close any gaps that may be present in either sound knowledge or reading skills. If necessary teachers will then be able to action a direct intervention before any upcoming school holidays. ELS includes specific revision points throughout the programme. Each points focus on specific skills to support children's rapid movement through the programme.

At The British School we use both formal and informal assessment, to assess the progress and attainment of all children.

We recognise that assessment for learning (AfL) lies at the heart of promoting learning and raising levels of attainment. Assessment for learning should occur throughout the entire lesson, enabling both the teacher and teaching assistant to adapt their teaching to meet the needs of individuals.

Effective questioning lies at the heart of assessment for learning and this often provides a focus for the subject leader's monitoring visits. Other assessment for learning strategies may include verbal responses, strategies such as 'thumbs up' and various methods of self- and peer-assessment.

The assessment procedures within our school encompass:

- The use of Insight to track progress and to inform planning by identifying gaps in learning.
- Children who are not making progress are targeted for support and interventions.
- ELS termly assessments. The results are analysed and input into Insight. Teachers are expected to identify gaps in learning and use this to inform future planning.
- Ongoing "assessment for learning" throughout lessons, with immediate feedback provided
- Marking of work - "live marking" where possible - with appropriate feedback given.
- Feedback can be verbal or written; appropriate codes will be indicated in books.
- The Phonics Screening check in summer term 2 for Year 1 children and for those Year 2 children that did not reach the threshold score in Year 1.

The Senior Leadership Team and Phonics subject leader consistently monitor the quality of teaching and learning in Phonics using the following strategies:

- Monitoring data.
- Drop ins.
- Book Looks.
- Learning Walks.
- Pupil Voice (often focusing on specific children, such as PP children or those identified as not making enough progress).
- Informal discussion with staff.

Parents are informed of their child's progress at parent's evenings and in a written report three times per year, as well as informally as and when required.

Displays and resources

Classes should display resources that are appropriate to their stage of ELS. These may include;

- Grapheme cards with supporting illustration, mnemonics and rhymes
- Word cards
- Spelling posters
- Grapheme tiles
- Wall frieze

New resources are purchased as required and teachers can request specific resources.

Cross-curricular opportunities:

At The British School we aim to promote cross-curricular learning wherever possible, and therefore aim for not only all of our children to learn to read but to read to learn and love to read!

IMPACT

Through Essential Letters and Sounds we hope all children will learn to read, quickly! This will be done through consistent lesson structure, resources and structure. Minimising cognitive load and increasing children's success. We also hope to improve children's vocabulary and ensure all children 'keep up'- whilst providing them with the knowledge and skills to read.

Next review: Summer 2024