

Phonics Curriculum Intent, Implementation and Impact

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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 (ELS), 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, Year 1 and currently Year 2 to teach all the sounds in the English language.

INTENT

The aims of our phonics curriculum at The British School:

We aim for all pupils to rapidly acquire the skills to become fluent, independent readers and writers, through our delivery of ELS, along with an early learning environment rich in talk and stories, where pupils experience the joy of books and language,

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 and reading. Children of all ethnic or cultural groups, races, genders, sexual orientations and abilities, have equal access to the phonics and reading 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 and reading 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 lessons, pupils with SEND will be supported in a number of ways (adaptive teaching). Strategies may include:

- Targeted support from an adult.
- High-quality modelling.
- Scaffolding.
- Varied questioning.
- Peer support.
- The use of resources.
- The provision of different or additional resources.
- The provision of coloured paper and overlays (dyslexia)

Where further support is required, the ELS intervention programme is used to ensure that any learning gaps are quickly filled - this consists of short, concise 1:1 sessions, which 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**
<i>Nursery/Pre-School</i> Seven aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental sounds • Instrumental sounds • Body percussion • Rhythm and rhyme • Alliteration • Voice sounds • Oral blending 	<i>Reception/Primary 1 Autumn 1</i> <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 	<i>Reception/Primary 1 Autumn 2, Spring 1 and Spring 2</i> <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
<i>Reception/Primary 1 Summer 1</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral blending • No new GPCs • No new HRS words • Word structures – cvcc, ccvc, ccvc, cccvc, cccvcc • Suffixes • Revision of Phase 2 and Phase 3 	<i>Reception/Primary 1 Summer 2</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to Phase 5 for reading • 20 new GPCs • 16 new HRS words <i>Year 1/Primary 2 Autumn 1 and 2</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revision of previously taught Phase 5 GPCs • 2 new GPCs • 9 new HRS words <i>Year 1/Primary 2 Spring 1 and 2</i> <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 	<i>Year 1/Primary 2 Summer, Year 2/Primary 3 and Key Stage 2</i> <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, consistency and repetition, 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 and ELS is all about 'giving' the children the key knowledge, not testing them.

Key teaching features include;

- Me, then you.
- Provide practice and review opportunities.
- Modelling.
- Active teaching and learning.
- Spelling and reading strategies.

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:

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, particularly in relation to the Phonics Screening Check.
- Action planning to identify subject priorities and how to address these.
- Undertaking and administering CPD, as necessary.
- Ensuring whole-staff training is up-to-date.
- Promoting collaborative working within the school.
- Encouraging parental involvement.
- Purchasing, maintaining and organising teaching resources.

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 assessments 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, the books that they read match their phonic knowledge. The books given are carefully matched to every aspect of the programme. These books are intended to be used during the weekly review lesson. Review books are used within the lesson, to practise the sounds taught that week.

We then send home books matched to the child's phonic knowledge and learning - these books must be read **three times** during the course of the week. Re-reading ensures that children develop fluency and reading skills.

Adaptive teaching:

ELS builds 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 and immediate verbal feedback are prioritised in all classes. We also encourage the use of self and peer marking where appropriate. During marking sessions, the focus is on discussion and providing pupils with the opportunity to explain their reasoning, as well as to identify and correct misconceptions.

Children use workbooks provided by ELS to record phonics learning. In EYFS, whiteboards are sometimes used for additional practice and in Y1/2 an additional phonics book is used for children to write and practice more words and sentences. Teachers use pink and green marking, as outlined in the school's marking policy. Pink is used to identify where children have been successful; green marking is used to move learning forwards and may include the following strategies:

- Self-correcting.
- Consolidation.
- Extension.
- Deepening understanding.
- Asking for an explanation.
- Reminders.
- Encouraging reflection.

All children are encouraged to respond to their marking in purple - teachers provide 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.
- TIV - teacher-led intervention delivered.
- TAIV - teaching assistant-led intervention delivered.

Assessment and monitoring:

At The British School we use both formal and informal assessment, to assess the progress and attainment of all pupils in phonics. Assessment of the pupils reading skills is key to ensuring that all children make rapid progress through the phonics programme, and that they 'keep up' rather than 'catch up'. ELS is designed to remove the likelihood of gaps in pupils' knowledge occurring, to avoid pupils falling behind and to ensure rapid progress where pupils are transferring their decoding and encoding skills to reading and writing.

Assessment occurs in the fifth week of each ELS six-week cycle, to target and close any gaps that may be present in either sound knowledge or reading skills. Assessments are completed by the class teacher on a 1:1 basis. ELS includes specific revision points throughout the programme. Each point focuses on specific skills to support pupils' rapid movement through the programme. We use Phonics Tracker to track these assessments.

In addition to this, the lowest 20% of pupils are also assessed in week 2 of each ELS cycle, using a diagnostic assessment. This accurately highlights any gaps in sound recognition and prevents gaps from widening. We use our own spreadsheet to track these assessments.

We recognise that assessment lies at the heart of promoting learning and raising levels of attainment. Ongoing assessment should occur throughout the entire lesson, enabling both the teacher and teaching assistant to adapt their teaching and/or the lesson design to meet the needs of individuals, groups or the class as a whole.

Assessment strategies may include retrieval tasks, questioning, discussion, practical and written work, feedback in both oral and written format, information gathered during assessment weeks and statutory tests. This information is used to assess pupils and plan what will be taught next. Gaps in learning are identified and this informs future

planning. Insight is used for the collection and monitoring of pupil data. The subject leader monitors this closely across the whole school, as well as focusing on specific groups of pupils.

An outline of the assessment procedures within our school:

- The Phonics Screening Check in June of Y1. This is repeated for Y2 children who have not passed.
- Teacher judgements in reading six times per year. Pupils are assessed as either working below (WB), working towards (WT), secure (S) or greater depth (GD) - added to Insight.
- Reading age and comprehension age test three times per year - added to Insight.
- For lowest 20% pupils - reading age and comprehension age test, plus practise PSC nine times per year - added to Lowest 20% tracking sheet.
- ELS assessments during week 5 of each teaching cycle - added to Phonics Tracker.
- Y1 pupils complete a practise Phonics Screening Check every term - added to Insight.
- Summative (ongoing) assessment takes place throughout lessons and across a unit of work.
- Marking and feedback is used effectively - teachers use live marking and immediate verbal feedback wherever possible. Feedback can be verbal or written.
- ELS phonics interventions (see below) are used.
- Teachers use all of the above to inform their planning, by identifying gaps in learning, as well as groups and individuals who may require specific support.

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.

Interventions - ELS:

We use ELS interventions to effectively target gaps in learning for pupils from Reception to Year 3. Teachers use their professional judgement to identify pupils who will benefit from having an intervention. Teachers will need to decide which intervention to use based on the pupils' area for development; oral blending, GPC recognition or blending for reading. For GPC recognition, pupils' starting points are identified using a baseline diagnostic assessment to highlight unknown GPCs and the intervention begins from this point. At the end of the intervention, the assessment is repeated and progress can be clearly measured. ELS interventions run daily during the afternoon and are led by two teaching assistants, who have received training and support from the phonics subject leader.

In addition to ELS, same-day interventions and/or pre-teaching may be used to address pupils' misconceptions.

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.
- Sound mats.

Additional resources to support pupils during lessons must be easily accessible and clearly labelled.

Cross-curricular opportunities:

Reading is by its very nature a wholly cross-curricular subject and we pride ourselves on providing our pupils with opportunities to develop their reading across the whole curriculum. Our aim is not only all of our children to learn to read, but to read to learn and love to read!

IMPACT

Our vision is for all children to leave The British School as confident and competent readers, who have met or exceeded age-related expectations and who are therefore able to use and apply their skills and knowledge in a variety of contexts. We also aim for all pupils to pass the Phonics Screening Check at the end of Year 1. We endeavour to instil a love of reading in all children.

Monitoring:

Monitoring our phonics curriculum - and the impact it has - are of key importance. Monitoring pupils' progress begins with the class teacher. Teachers monitor progress against a daily the sound being taught. This information is used to inform planning and to adapt subsequent lesson design. It is also used to inform a teacher's judgements. Teachers must quickly identify those not making progress and put strategies in place to address this.

Phonics data gathered by class teachers is added to Phonics Tracker and/or Insight - this includes all assessments, as well as practise Phonics Screening Checks. The subject leader continuously analyses whole-school data and ensures that any areas for concern are addressed.

Pupil Progress meetings take place three times per year with the HT. In these meetings, various groups of children are identified, including:

- Those not making progress.
- Those working below age-related expectations.
- Those working at greater depth.

Teachers are also expected to provide a prediction of the percentage of children who will reach age-related expectations by the end of the academic year.

The SLT and maths subject leader consistently monitor the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics using the following strategies:

- Monitoring data.
- Drop ins.
- Book Looks.
- Learning Walks.
- Pupil Voice.
- Staff and pupil questionnaires.
- Targeted CPD.
- Outcomes from CPD.
- Informal discussion with staff.

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

Having already improved our Phonics Screening Check score from 70% to 83% within one year of implementing ELS, we are striving to reach a target of consistently achieving a score of 90%+ from summer 2025 onwards.

Next review: February 2026