

Introducing Sound!Start Phonics for Letters and Sounds

A complete SSP programme that equips teachers to teach phonics and early reading with enthusiasm, clarity, and consistency so that all children learn to read and spell quickly and with confidence.

The Sound!Start Phonics approach has been used in schools in the Midlands area for a number of years and has recently been developed into a complete SSP (Systematic, Synthetic Phonics) programme. It has been thoroughly self-assessed against the DfE's Essential Core Criteria for SSP programmes and was submitted for validation in March 2022.

Sound!Start Phonics outlines a systematic progression for teaching phonics for reading and spelling. It is aligned to the progression of Letters and Sounds (2007) maintaining the familiar sequence of teaching the basic code before moving onto the complex code as follows:

Basic Code (taught in Reception)

- * single letter sounds
- * common double consonants
- * consonant digraphs
- * vowel digraphs and trigraphs

Complex Code (taught in Year One)

- * additional common graphemes
- * alternative pronunciations of known graphemes
- * less common graphemes

This progression is updated in line with the expectations of the National Curriculum (2014) and the Early Learning Goals (2021) and includes some additional content such as reading and spelling words with common suffixes and reading a wider range of graphemes linked to the NC spelling appendices for Y2. The programme materials support effective implementation of the recommendations for teaching and leading Phonics and Early Reading outlined in The Reading Framework (2021).

The Sound!Start Phonics programme provides everything needed to deliver high quality phonics teaching within mainstream primary schools and other educational settings. It enables teachers to teach with enthusiasm, clarity, and consistency and supports all children learn to read and spell quickly and with confidence. A fifteen-week handwriting programme is included within the materials and we recommend that this is taught alongside the daily phonics lessons from the beginning of the Reception year.

The programme outlines a whole-class approach to teaching phonics for reading and spelling which has been carefully developed to promote high levels of pupil-teacher interaction.

All learners are fully included and involved in the daily lessons and the teaching follows a specific reading and spelling cycle which ensures lessons are not over-loaded with content. In addition, the programme follows a mastery approach which allows the children to systematically revisit taught knowledge and skills to secure and embed their learning. This provides sufficient repetition and practice for all children to keep up with the ambitious pace of the programme and reduces the need for catch-up interventions.

The fundamental aim of the programme is to focus the children's attention on what we want them to know and remember. The teaching methods do not include supplementary stories, songs or visual images and direct face-to-face teaching is prioritised using resources from the Sound!Start Phonics classroom resource range. These resources are carefully designed to promote effective teaching and learning based on accurate subject knowledge. They follow a unique colour-coded approach which breaks the content of each "phase" into smaller steps. Use of these resources within class teaching and intervention is essential to ensure consistency and reduce teacher workload.

Detailed weekly planning provides a clear reading or spelling objective for each lesson in Reception and Year One (180 lessons in total) as well as specific content (i.e. words and sentences) for teaching and practice. Further content is provided through printable paper-based Practise and Apply tasks for each lesson at both age-related and enrichment levels, and additional "Focus Practice" materials which can be used in school and at home.

A comprehensive Teacher Handbook provides clear information about the key principles of effective phonics practice and provision, the rationale of the programme, and effective use of the programme materials. It includes detailed step-by-step Practice Guidance to support consistent delivery of a small number of "Core Teaching Activities" which are used repetitively throughout the programme. This Guidance is further supported by an online suite of "Embedding Effective Practice" film clips which can be accessed to support lesson delivery and as part of more formal practice / coaching sessions.

Accurate ongoing assessment is a key feature of the programme. "Observe and Respond" prompts are provided throughout the planning and practice materials and this is underpinned by a highly effective summative assessment system. A clear assessment schedule ensures effective use of the specific assessment materials provided for reading and spelling within each "phase" and a well-designed "Attainment Tracker" tool enables teachers and leaders to collate and analyse data quickly and easily. Step-by-step guidance for responding to the results is provided including a range of specific intervention activities that enable children at risk of falling behind to quickly catch-up with the expectations of the programme.

The Programme Contents

The Sound!Start Phonics programme includes:

- * Detailed weekly planning for Reception and Year One with guidance for organising lessons to ensure all children are actively involved and successful within and beyond the daily lesson.
- * Clear and consistent strategies for teaching GPC knowledge, Tricky Words, and the skills of blending for reading and segmentation for spelling which are suitable for learners of any age.
- * Step-by-step guidance for delivering the Core Teaching Activities supported by a bank of “Embedding Effective Practice” (EEP) film clips.
- * A wealth of practice materials at word and sentence level including a printable “Practise and Apply” task for every lesson, additional “focus practice” materials, and homework activities for the early stages of the programme.
- * Guidance for teaching “Good Handwriting Habits” and correct letter formation alongside phonics instruction from the beginning of the programme, plus a range of support materials and resources including specific letter formation patterns linked to the basic letter formation families.
- * A specific teaching sequence for early reading practice (Guided Reading Lessons) with clear guidance for supporting children to apply their growing phonic knowledge and skills at text level and for “matching” books to ensure challenge and success.
- * Printed assessment booklets for each phase of the programme.
These follow a similar design to the PSC materials and are reusable year-on-year.
- * Easy-to-use “Attainment Tracker” software which supports gap analysis, plus specific intervention activities following a streamlined catch-up / keep-up model.
- * Materials to promote parental engagement including an initial “Get Ready for Reading” workshop / information meeting.
- * Guidance for effective leadership of Phonics and Early Reading including a model for building staff expertise through regular coaching and practice opportunities using the CPD materials provided.

Additional Materials

Effective delivery of the programme is supported by:

- * A complete range of classroom resources including flashcards, word cards, grapheme / spelling charts, and a wall frieze / poster.
These resources follow the programme’s colour-coded design and do not include any additional detail or images which may pose a distraction for some learners.
- * A carefully collated collection of fully decodable books matched to each stage of the programme
As the programme follows the original Letters and Sounds progression, schools are likely to have some of these titles already on their shelves. Sound!Start Phonics work in partnership with [Peters](#) who can support schools with auditing their existing stock, purchasing additional titles, and organising their sets of books as required.
- * High-quality initial training and ongoing support for schools as they implement and embed the programme to ensure success for all

Training Offer

Sound!Start Phonics *for Letters and Sounds* offers high quality initial training and a complete programme of ongoing CPD to support schools as they implement and embed the programme. The training places a high emphasis on increasing staff subject knowledge and building expertise and every session – whether delivered face-to-face or online - incorporates practical tasks and focused discussion to ensure it is purposeful, memorable, and enjoyable for all involved.

Current training options include “live” full-day* and half-day INSET sessions and twilight training which can be delivered face-to-face or online. From September 2022 schools can also access pre-recorded training organised into fourteen modules which can be used flexibly within INSET sessions and Professional Development Meetings according to the needs of each school.

* Schools purchasing a full day of initial training for delivery during Summer 2022 will automatically receive one year of FREE access to the pre-recorded training modules from September 2022.

Package Options

A range of subscription packages are available with discounts available for smaller schools and multiple school purchases.

Further details

Prior to submission for validation Sound!Start Phonics *for Letters and Sounds* has been piloted in a small number of schools with very positive results. Here is some of the feedback we have received:

The programme sets out clear systematic expectations which are being met by the children in Reception and Year One. It provides consistent resources which are well-matched and simple with no additional distractions ensuring the focus remains on phonics. Assessment is not onerous for teachers and is useful for future learning and intervention. The staff have received excellent CPD which is reflected in the consistent approach evident throughout the class teaching and additional practice sessions.

Independent School Improvement Advisor

The programme has raised our teaching of phonics to a precise direct-teaching approach with every aspect covered consistently and accurately. Opportunities for children to revisit knowledge and skills are integral to the programme. All children are expected to succeed and there is provision for those who need more practice along the way. The structure of Guided Reading lessons has been transformational for staff and therefore pupils. The sessions are delivered precisely, and the children feel super-confident during lessons. We have received praise from parents that they can't believe their child is reading so well, so quickly.

Head Teacher, Hanley St Luke's Primary School

The pilot project is ongoing throughout 2021-2023 and will continue to inform the ongoing development of the programme.