

Phonics at Sprowston Infant School

“A high-quality education in English will teach pupils to speak and write fluently so that they can communicate their ideas and emotions to others and through their reading and listening, others can communicate with them.” National Curriculum for English 2014.

We recognise that mastery in phonics is fundamental to children being able to access a broad range of fiction and non-fiction texts, across the curriculum. We aim to achieve this by teaching phonics systematically with a relentless drive to address the needs of all learners.

Planning

The school follows the systematic approach laid out in Letters and Sounds (DfE 2007) which prescribes a clear progression of phonemes and increasingly complicated reading and spelling. We have adapted this slightly to meet the requirements of the new National Curriculum. Our long term plan sets out the progression in phonics for each half term. Class teachers plan weekly to ensure progression and effective, high quality teaching.

Teaching and Learning

In Year Reception and Year 1 lessons follow the structure of ‘Revisit/review – Teach – Practise - Apply’ to ensure that children are consolidating phonic knowledge and skills over time and that they are able to apply them in context. Wherever possible, links between phonics knowledge and understanding are made to learning in both Reading and Writing. These lessons proceed at pace and incorporate a wide range of practical and interactive activities to engage the children. Activities are carefully chosen to ensure that children develop their skills in aural discrimination and phonemic and rhyme awareness, blending and segmenting, as well as grapheme-phoneme correspondence. We use ‘Jolly Phonics’ pictures and actions in Year R, to help children remember new sounds. The correct enunciation of sounds is key and enables children to blend sounds more efficiently. We use ‘robot arms’ for blending and segmenting. We use sound buttons to identify the graphemes in words. We also say ditties to help children learn to form letters correctly. Children are taught phonemes/digraphs/trigraphs, high frequency words and/or tricky words and these are consolidated through reading and writing.

In Year 2, children access a balance of phonics and spelling with a daily 20-minute session, following the Year 2 National Curriculum. The spelling requirements are mapped out across the year and we use No Nonsense Spelling to support this. The children revise the reading of graphemes and common exception words already taught, they also practise new graphemes. Children are introduced to a new grapheme over 4 days, initially practicing reading it in words, which is followed with lessons on spelling words and then applying to writing sentences. Day 5 revises alternative graphemes for the same phoneme and looks at the ‘Best Guess’ for spelling.

Groupings

We teach phonics as a whole class; as a rule, we do not remove children who are behind in phonics from the phonics lesson, as we do not want them to miss more phonics and get further behind. Children who need extra phonics may have support from a teaching assistant during the lesson and will have additional phonic intervention work and/or speech and language support outside the phonics lesson. The only exceptions to this could be a very small number of children who are working significantly below the expectations for their age. For example, at the moment there are several children in Y2 who are a long way behind in phonics and have not passed the Y1 phonics check. They are taught in a very small group by an experienced TA during the whole class phonics lesson.

Resources

All teachers have a range of resources to use which are appropriate for the level at which the children are working. They include practical resources such as flash cards but also ICT resources such as Phonics Play, Spelling Play and Discovery Education. Teachers should use a range of resources to engage pupils and enable the most effective learning.

Intervention

Children who need extra support to develop their phonic knowledge across Key Stage 1 are identified and targeted for intervention. There are a range of intervention strategies which the school uses and the most appropriate one is selected once a child's needs have been assessed. Rapid Phonics is our main scheme for catch-up.

Assessment

Assessment for Learning: We continually assess our pupils and record their progress. Information for assessment is gathered in various ways: by talking to children, asking questions, observing their work, setting specific tasks. Teachers use this assessment information to plan further work and set new targets.

Assessment of Learning: The attainment and progress of children in phonics is assessed every half term and through Reading and Writing assessments. Teachers use these to identify gaps and plan lessons to plug gaps in knowledge. At the end of Year 1, children participate in the phonics screening check, which assesses their knowledge of grapheme-phoneme correspondence and their skills in blending. Children who do not succeed in the phonics screening check are highlighted for further intervention and targeted support before completing the screening check again at the end of Year 2.

Home learning/parent support

Parents come in to observe phonics lessons in YR and Y1 so they can see how it is taught. Parent meetings are held that explain how we teach phonics and what the curriculum progression is. In YR, a video of the next week's phonemes are sent home to parents on Tapestry each week, which shows the correct actions and enunciation. Parents attend reading cafes each half-term. At these they enjoy spending time with children enjoying books and working together; teachers model reading techniques and vocabulary during the session. During the first term in Reception, every Friday afternoon, parents come in to read with their children in class. This builds a shared love of reading and the habit of reading together, it also allows teachers to give input to parents on reading. The first books given are books that are fully phonetically decodable and linked to the phonics phase the child is on so their learning is practised and reinforced at home. Children are able to take an additional book home from the library, which exposes them to phonics beyond their phase to share and read for pleasure. Our reading books are organised into coloured Book Bands.