

## A Complete Resource to Support Children

### Application of Phonics to Reading

The National Curriculum for English (2014) aims to ensure that all pupils:

- Read easily, fluently and with good understanding
- Develop the habit of reading widely and often, for both pleasure and information
- Acquire a wide vocabulary, an understanding of grammar and knowledge of linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language

Reading underpins children's access to the curriculum and it clearly impacts on their achievement. There is considerable research to show that children who enjoy reading and choose to read benefit not only academically, but also socially and emotionally.

To be able to read, children need to be taught an efficient strategy to decode words. That strategy is phonics. It is essential that children are actively taught and supported to use phonics as the only approach to decoding. Other strategies must be avoided.

**Phonic decoding skills must be practised until children become automatic and fluent reading is established.**

Fluent decoding is only one component of reading. Comprehension skills need to be taught to enable children to make sense of what they read, build on what they already know and give them a desire to want to read.

Reading increases children's vocabulary because they encounter words they would rarely hear or use in everyday speech. Furthermore, children who read widely and frequently also have more secure general knowledge.

Reference 'Clark C and Rumbold. K ( 2006) Reading for Pleasure National Literacy Trust

# Embed – The Theory and Pedagogy behind ELS

ELS teaches children to read using a systematic synthetic phonics approach. It is designed to be used as part of an early learning environment that is rich in talk and story, where children experience the joy of books and language whilst rapidly acquiring the skills to become fluent independent readers and writers. ELS teaches 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.

We know that for children at the end of Key Stage 1 to achieve the age-related expectations, they need to read fluently at 90 words per minute. As children move into Key Stage 2, it is vitally important that even those who have made the slowest progress are able to read age-appropriate texts independently and with fluency. For children to engage with the wider curriculum, they need to be able to read well, making inferences and drawing on background knowledge to support their developing understanding of a text when they read. To do this, they need to be able to draw not only on their phonic knowledge but also on their wider reading and comprehension skills, each of which must be taught. The first step in this complex process is the link between spoken and written sounds.

ELS whole-class, daily phonics teaching must begin from the first days of Reception. Through the rigorous ELS teaching programme, children will build an immediate understanding of the relationship between the sounds they can hear and say (phonemes) and the written sounds (graphemes).

Every ELS lesson has been designed to ensure that the minimum cognitive load is placed on the learner. The structure of the lessons allows children to predict what is coming next, what they need to do, and how to achieve success. It is important that the whole school understands how ELS works, and adheres to the ELS system, using the same terminology. This is why whole-school training in ELS is provided.

When you implement ELS effectively in your school, you will waste no phonics learning time even if staffing and/or the learning environment changes. Children will get the same high-quality first teaching every lesson, every day throughout the ELS programme.

# Enact – How to Deliver ELS Lessons

ELS is based on simplicity and consistency, and the programme is delivered through whole-class lessons. Throughout ELS, you will use the same teaching sequence – Show, copy, repeat – until each child is independent. The teaching sequence is the same in all stages of the 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), you will use a mnemonic or rhyme with an accompanying picture to ensure that children understand. Children then hear this sound in the context of a word, and a picture and/or definition is given to support their understanding. Practice and repetition are key.

## Give, give, give

- Give the GPC – share the new sound or spelling being taught.
- Give the word – put it into context.
- Give the meaning – ensure children can use the vocabulary.

# **Enable – How to Ensure All Children ‘Keep up’ Rather than ‘Catch up’**

A whole-class approach ensures that all children benefit from the full curriculum. 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.

## **Supporting all learners**

ELS is designed on the principle that children should ‘keep up’ rather than ‘catch up’. Since interventions are delivered within the lesson by the teacher, any child who is struggling with the new knowledge can be immediately targeted with appropriate support, usually during the Apply activity.

We know that children – especially those with educational difficulties – learn better in a mixed-ability environment where their learning is scaffolded not only by the teacher and support staff but also by their peers. In this most fundamental area of learning – learning how to read – this support is even more vital, not only to their success but also to the outcomes of the programme as a whole.

Over-learning, alongside a range of Apply activities, helps children who acquire phonic knowledge more slowly to succeed. In ELS pilot schools, all children learned to read at a similar fast pace, because children with additional support needs were rapidly targeted throughout the lesson, and any remaining gaps in their knowledge were closed the same day. Studies show that the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics supports all children’s developing skills when learning to read, and that phonemic awareness (the ability to discern and copy sounds in words) is key to progress. Children’s phonemic awareness supports them when learning how to read, and our rigorous and robust teaching methods ensure that all children build phonemic awareness.

If children require further support to achieve the outcomes of the lesson and keep up with the pace of the programme, ELS has three interventions that are to be delivered on a one-to-one basis: oral blending, GPC recognition and blending for reading. These are intended to be short and concise and last no longer than five minutes. They can be delivered in isolation, or different interventions can be used together to support children each day. 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.

# Supporting children with English as an additional language

Research shows us that people who are learning a second language require extensive repetition to help them embed their knowledge and transfer it into their long-term memory. To ensure that all children can access every part of the lesson, there is repetition of activities and routines throughout every lesson. This ensures that every child achieves the outcomes of the lesson, that every child is supported in doing so and that cognitive load is reduced for every learner. ELS mnemonics and rhymes have been developed and created with this in mind and provide opportunities for teaching vocabulary as well as supporting spelling and letter formation.

In every lesson, there is the opportunity to use newly acquired phonic knowledge to read. Every time the children encounter a word, caption or sentence, their new phonic knowledge is put into context.

In the Day 3 and 4 lessons, children will read increasingly longer text extracts which are highly focused on the new GPCs taught. Children should be provided with the opportunity to re-read these extracts to support their developing fluency. The decodable readers sent home will support the repetition and re-reading that takes place within school.

# Interventions to support ELS

*'Decoding fluency is achieved through accurate initial instruction followed by lots of practice.'* (Hirsch, 2003)

## Oral blending

This intervention supports children struggling with oral blending and those with any auditory processing difficulties. It allows children who require additional practice of this skill to have short bursts of oral blending to consolidate their understanding and support their auditory discrimination. During this intervention, the Reading Teacher needs to model sound-talking for the child, who then sound-talks before blending the word. This additional one-to-one practice also supports vocabulary learning, communication, listening and speaking skills, and interaction with others.

## Grapheme–phoneme correspondence (GPC) recognition

This intervention involves deliberate over-learning, re-teaching and repeated exposure. It will support children with English as an additional language, those new to ELS, those with additional needs and those with auditory processing weaknesses or a fluency block.


Before this intervention, you will need to assess the child's grapheme knowledge and be aware of any sound gaps – this should be happening as part of your assessment in every lesson. The intervention is targeted to the day's teaching and can also be used after the Half-termly Assessment to address any gaps that may be apparent.

The intervention follows a similar structure to the whole-class session: reviewing previously taught sounds using grapheme cards, teaching the sound/grapheme that needs reinforcing, and applying this skill by word-building and reading.

## Blending for reading

This intervention supports a child who requires additional practice for blending. You will need to be aware of any GPC weaknesses and ensure that these are targeted within the session. There is a strong focus on word-building, listening to the sounds within a word and identifying these. Again, this intervention particularly supports the needs of children with auditory processing weaknesses, those new to English and those who are struggling to apply their understanding of digraphs, trigraphs and quadgraphs as their phonic knowledge builds and their awareness of alternative spellings and pronunciations increases.

# Glossary

<b>Blend (vb)</b>	To draw individual sounds together to pronounce a word: for example, s-n-a-p, blended together, reads 'snap'.
<b>Blending hands</b> 	Clap your hands (silently) as you blend the sounds together to say the whole word.
<b>Consonant</b>	A speech sound in which the breath channel is at least partly obstructed and which can be combined with a vowel to form a syllable (i.e. the letters b, c, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, q, r, s, t, v, w, x, y, z).
<b>Decoding</b>	Extracting meaning from symbols. In the case of reading, the symbols are letters, which are decoded into words.
<b>Decodable text</b>	A text which is entirely decodable based on the sounds and graphemes that have been taught. A child will not encounter a 'tricky' or HRS word that they have not yet been taught, nor will they be asked to 'guess' what sound a grapheme represents. ELS includes linked decodable readers, to ensure that every child is able to decode independently and re-read the books until they achieve fluency. Children begin using decodable readers from the first days of teaching.
<b>Digraph</b>	Two letters making one sound: for example, <ch>, <th>, <sh>, <ng>.
<b>Drum roll</b>	Technique used when introducing a new grapheme/spelling. This should be a two- to three-second drum roll on the children's laps. It allows the teacher to quickly see that all children are engaged and participating.
<b>Encoding</b>	Writing involves encoding: communicating meaning by creating symbols (letters to make words) on a page.
<b>Grapheme</b>	A letter or a group of letters representing one phoneme: for example, <sh>, <ch>, <igh>, <ough> ('though').
<b>Grapheme–phoneme correspondence (GPC)</b>	The relationship between sounds and the letters which represent those sounds; also known as 'letter–sound correspondence'.

## Harder to read and spell (HRS) words

Words that children will find harder to read and spell as they will not have been taught the relevant GPCs.

## Me, then you

To ensure that children can apply their understanding independently, we must always give them the information required. First, we show how to do/say something. Then they copy us, before repeating this by themselves. We repeat these steps, reducing our modelling as children's fluency and independence increases.

## Phoneme

The smallest single identifiable sound: for example, the letters 'sh' represent just one phoneme (/sh/) but 'sp' represents two (/s/ and /p/).

## Phonemic awareness

An ability to identify and make the sounds (phonemes) within words.

## Phonics

A method of teaching beginners to read and pronounce words by learning to associate letters or letter groups with the sounds they represent.

## Phonological awareness

An awareness of the sound structure of spoken words: for example, rhyme, syllables, onset and rime, as well as phonemic awareness.

## Pseudo words

Words that do not make sense but are made up of decodable sounds.

## Reading Teacher

Any member of staff who delivers phonics teaching to children. This can be whole-class teaching, support during the Apply section of the lesson, delivering interventions or hearing children read.

## Robot arms



When sound-talking a word (orally segmenting it into the phonemes within the word), Reading Teachers and children use robot arms to physically make the link between the separating of the sounds. This assists children in hearing the separate sounds within the word and ensures that they do not form 'consonant clusters' or 'onset and rime', which are not part of the ELS programme. The word is said in 'robot talk' and then blending hands are used to blend the word.

## Segment (vb)



To split up a word into its individual phonemes in order to spell it: for example, the word 'cat' has three phonemes /c/ /a/ /t/. Children are asked to count the individual sounds in the word to help them to spell it.

**Schwa** Schwas are the unstressed vowel sounds within a word. These often sound like a short /u/: for example, ladder, elephant, again, author. Pronunciation of these words can vary, and so for some speakers a vowel may have a schwa sound, and for others the vowel may be pronounced as spelled, in which case the words are not harder to read or spell.

**Sound-talk** Oral sounding out of a word: for example, c-a-t.

**Split digraph** Two vowels that make one sound but are split by one or more consonants: for example, <a-e> as in 'make' or <i-e> as in 'inside'. There are six split digraphs in the English language: <a-e>, <e-e>, <i-e>, <o-e>, <u-e>, <y-e> (as in 'type').

**Stretch** Elongate the sounds in a word to allow you to hear each sound clearly: for example, 'caaarr'.



**Trigraph** Three letters making one sound: for example, <igh>.

**Vowel** Speech sounds in which the breath channel is not blocked and does not cause friction when making vocal sounds (i.e. the letters a, e, i, o, u).

**Vowel digraph** Two vowels that together make one sound: for example, <ai>, <ee>, <oa>.

## Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used to describe the order of letters in words:

**VC** Vowel-consonant: for example, the word 'am'.

**CVC** Consonant-vowel-consonant: for example, the word 'Sam'. (Consonants and vowels in these abbreviations can be digraphs and trigraphs too, for example the words 'ring' or 'feet'.)

**CCVC** Consonant-consonant-vowel-consonant: for example, the word 'slam'. (Consonants and vowels in these abbreviations can be digraphs and trigraphs too, for example the word 'bring' or 'fleet'.)

# How ELS Supports the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework (2021)

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, quickly.

Although ELS has a focus on phonics, the programme crucially also supports children's development in the prime area 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.

Specific area: Literacy	Prime area: Communication and Language
<p>'It is crucial for children to develop a life-long love of reading. Reading consists of two dimensions: language comprehension and word reading. Language comprehension (necessary for both reading and writing) starts from birth. It only develops when adults talk with children about the world around them and the books (stories and non-fiction) they read with them, and enjoy rhymes, poems and songs together. Skilled word reading, taught later, involves both the speedy working out of the pronunciation of unfamiliar printed words (decoding) and the speedy recognition of familiar printed words. Writing involves transcription (spelling and handwriting) and composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech, before writing).'</p> <p><i>(Early Years Foundation Stage Framework 2021)</i></p>	<p>'The development of children's spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development. Children's back-and-forth interactions from an early age form the foundations for language and cognitive development. The number and quality of the conversations they have with adults and peers throughout the day in a language-rich environment is crucial. By commenting on what children are interested in or doing, and echoing back what they say with new vocabulary added, practitioners will build children's language effectively. Reading frequently to children, and engaging them actively in stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems, and then providing them with extensive opportunities to use and embed new words in a range of contexts, will give children the opportunity to thrive. Through conversation, story-telling and role play, where children share their ideas with support and modelling from their teacher, and sensitive questioning that invites them to elaborate, children become comfortable using a rich range of vocabulary and language structures.'</p> <p><i>(Early Years Foundation Stage Framework 2021)</i></p>

## Specific area: Literacy

<p><b>Early Learning Goal: Word Reading</b></p> <p>Children at the expected level of development will:</p>	<p><b>How ELS supports this Early Learning Goal</b></p>	<p><b>How schools can embed this Early Learning Goal in other areas of the curriculum</b></p>
<p>Say a sound for each letter in the alphabet and at least ten digraphs.</p>	<p>The ELS progression ensures that by the end of Reception, children will have been taught and had exposure to one sound for each letter in the alphabet and the most common digraphs and trigraphs (37 in total).</p> <p>Refer to the ELS overview and ELS week-by-week progression to see when each sound and grapheme is taught.</p>	<p>Throughout the day, teachers should give children the opportunity to review and practise newly taught sounds. Repetition is key.</p>
<p>Read words consistent with their phonic knowledge by sound-blending.</p>	<p>The rigorous ELS progression ensures that all children continuously revisit their sound and grapheme knowledge and are taught how to blend sounds together to read words. The teacher models how to do this and the children have opportunities to practise reading words throughout the lesson and day. Each lesson has an emphasis on oral blending.</p>	<p>Throughout the day, teachers should give children the opportunity to practise word reading. This can happen in various ways, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared reading in lessons</li> <li>• Decodable books for individual reading</li> <li>• Ensuring all learning activities give children the opportunity to read across the seven areas of learning</li> <li>• Introducing key vocabulary in all lessons across the curriculum, with an emphasis on children reading the words where possible</li> <li>• Sharing non-fiction, picture books and rhymes linked to understanding the world, PSHE, literacy and other areas of learning.</li> </ul>
<p>Read aloud simple sentences and books that are consistent with their phonic knowledge, including some common exception words.</p>	<p>By the end of the first week in Reception, children will be able to read words and captions. From Week 4 of Reception, the children will begin to read simple sentences. These sentences are read as part of the Apply section of the lesson and also in the decodable readers.</p>	<p>Throughout the day, teachers should give children the opportunity to practise word reading. This can happen in various ways, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared reading in lessons</li> <li>• Decodable books for individual reading</li> <li>• Ensuring all learning activities give children the opportunity to read across the seven areas of learning</li> <li>• Introducing key vocabulary in all lessons across the curriculum, with an emphasis on children reading the words where possible</li> <li>• Sharing non-fiction, picture books and rhymes linked to</li> </ul>

<p><b>Early Learning Goal: Comprehension</b></p> <p>Children at the expected level of development will:</p>	<p><b>How ELS supports this Early Learning Goal</b></p>	<p><b>How schools can embed this Early Learning Goal in other areas of the curriculum</b></p>
<p>Use and understand recently introduced vocabulary during discussions about stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems and during role-play.</p>	<p>During all ELS lessons, children develop understanding of the words they are reading. We use the motto of 'Give, give, give' to ensure the children develop vocabulary and know how to use words in the correct context.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give the word – children decode the word.</li> <li>• Give the meaning – teachers explain the new word by showing a visual, using an action, giving a child-friendly definition or using the word in a sentence.</li> <li>• Give the word in context – throughout the day, teachers model using new vocabulary in context.</li> </ul>	<p>Alongside ELS, it is important that teachers provide opportunities for stories and books of many different types to be read aloud. These can be linked to work in other areas of the curriculum.</p>

<p><b>Early Learning Goal: Writing</b></p> <p>Children at the expected level of development will:</p>	<p><b>How ELS supports this Early Learning Goal</b></p>	<p><b>How schools can embed this Early Learning Goal in other areas of the curriculum</b></p>
<p>Write recognizable letters, most of which are correctly formed.</p>	<p>From the first week of Reception, children are taught how to write graphemes correctly. During the Teach section of the lesson, the teacher models how to form the grapheme for the new sound and children practise writing it. The mnemonics and rhymes are used to assist children with correct letter formation.</p>	<p>Throughout the day, teachers should give children the opportunity to practise letter formation.</p>
<p>Spell words by identifying sounds in them and representing the sounds with a letter or letters.</p>	<p>From the first week of Reception, children are taught how to identify the sounds in a word and how to read and write words. On Day 5 of each week during sound and grapheme teaching weeks, and throughout Review weeks, teachers model how to use sound and grapheme knowledge to write words.</p>	<p>Throughout the day, teachers should give children the opportunity to practise letter formation and write words.</p>
<p>Write simple captions and sentences that can be read by others.</p>	<p>From Autumn 2, Week 3 of Reception, children are taught how to write simple phrases and sentences. On Day 5 of each week during sound and grapheme teaching weeks, and throughout Review weeks, teachers model how to use sound and grapheme knowledge to write phrases and sentences.</p>	<p>Throughout the day, teachers should give children the opportunity to practise letter formation and write simple phrases and sentences.</p>

## Prime area: Communication and Language

<b>Early Learning Goal: Speaking</b> Children at the expected level of development will:	<b>How ELS supports this Early Learning Goal</b>	<b>How schools can embed this Early Learning Goal in other areas of the curriculum</b>
Express their ideas and feelings about their experiences using full sentences, including use of past, present and future tenses and making use of conjunctions, with modelling and support from their teacher.	During all ELS lessons, children develop understanding of the words they are reading.  Teachers model how to use newly taught vocabulary in full, grammatical sentences, and children repeat these to aid understanding of the new word in context and to develop their speaking skills.	Throughout the day, teachers should model and encourage children to use full sentences to explain their ideas and understanding of new learning across the curriculum.

## How ELS Supports the National Curriculum (2014)

National Curriculum – Year 1 Reading Children at the expected level of development will:	How ELS supports the National Curriculum in Year 1	How schools can support children outside of the ELS lesson to achieve expected development
Apply phonic knowledge and skills as the route to decode words.	<p>During all ELS lessons, children develop their phoneme-grapheme awareness and understand that the sounds we say can be written as graphemes.</p> <p>ELS teaches children to apply their phonic knowledge and skills by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identifying a newly taught grapheme, isolating it within a word, sounding out the word, blending the word</li> <li>• practising reading a grapheme in context</li> <li>• using their phonic knowledge in all their reading</li> <li>• avoiding presenting children with text that is not completely decodable.</li> </ul>	Throughout the day, teachers should give children the opportunity to practise reading the grapheme both in isolation and within words, practising regularly with those children who require additional input to consolidate their learning.
Respond speedily with the correct sound to graphemes (letters or groups of letters) for all 40+ phonemes, including, where applicable, alternative sounds for graphemes.	<p>Every ELS lesson begins with revision of previously taught GPCs and Reading Teachers ensure that children revise the most recently taught GPCs alongside any others that require revision.</p> <p>Half-termly assessments ensure that all children keep up with the pace of the programme and that any children who require additional practice have targeted interventions to enable them to identify GPCs speedily.</p>	Reading Teachers can use both whole-class teaching and supporting interventions to ensure that all children maintain the pace of the programme. Additional practice of the GPCs for the lowest attainers takes place every day.
Read accurately by blending sounds in unfamiliar words containing GPCs that have been taught.	In every ELS lesson, children are asked to apply their GPC knowledge to reading. Through whole-class teaching and the Apply activities there are ample opportunities for children to apply their phonic knowledge to reading new words. ELS is a vocabulary-rich programme which introduces new vocabulary to children frequently and ensures that they are able to use it by explaining its meaning and applying it in context. Throughout ELS, children are encountering unknown words and using their GPC knowledge to decode them.	Wherever new vocabulary is introduced across the curriculum – if appropriate – staff should extend the model of identifying the grapheme, sounding out the word and reading. By modelling this practice across the curriculum, children will see that reading and decoding is a transferable skill.
Read common exception words, noting unusual correspondences between spelling and sound.	HRS words or 'tricky' words are taught throughout ELS from the very first week of teaching. In each instance, the tricky aspect of the word is highlighted.	Wherever HRS words appear throughout the school day (especially if recently taught), teachers identify these for children to read and discuss. Children are encouraged to read these words in isolation and within words.

<p>Read other words of more than one syllable that contain taught GPCs.</p>	<p>Children read multisyllabic words as soon as their phonic knowledge allows them to. These words are both taught within the lessons and provided for teachers in the supplementary word list for each day of teaching.</p>	<p>Children can be encouraged to decode longer words with known GPCs wherever they are encountered, across the curriculum.</p>
<p>Read words with contractions (for example, I'm, I'll, we'll) and understand that the apostrophe represents the omitted letter(s).</p>	<p>Contractions are used in ELS, in the texts children read during the Apply section of the lesson, and in the matched decodable readers. Reading Teachers will highlight the use of these words and explain their meaning, noting the omitted letter(s).</p>	<p>Children can be encouraged to read words with contractions wherever they are encountered, across the curriculum.</p>
<p>Read books aloud, accurately, that are consistent with their developing phonic knowledge and that do not require them to use other strategies to work out words. Re-read these books to build up their fluency and confidence in word reading.</p>	<p>ELS is supported by Oxford University Press decodable readers, which are matched to the ELS progression. Children re-read each book several times, so that they can concentrate at first on decoding, and then re-read to develop comprehension and fluency. This method also supports children who are learning English as an additional language, ensuring that they achieve fluency.</p> <p>Throughout ELS, children read decodable texts matched to the GPCs that they have learned.</p>	

*ELS also supports all the National Curriculum statutory requirements for Reading Comprehension and Spoken Language at Year 1, and provides many opportunities for children to demonstrate their understanding of these curriculum areas.*