

Beavers Primary School

Our approach to teaching Phonics



A guide for all staff & parents

2023-24

Phonics at Beavers uses the synthetic phonics method, which means that phonemes are taught first and the children are taught to blend these phonemes together to say words. Our programme follows a systematic approach, meaning that phonemes are introduced in a specific sequence. Children are taught to read letters or groups of letters by saying the sound(s) they represent. Children can then start to read words by blending (synthesising) the sound together to make a word. Children are taught to apply the skill of segmenting (breaking up) words into phonemes to spell and that blending and segmenting is a reversible process. We do this through a 20 minute teaching session per day in Reception and extended daily sessions in Years One and Two, which are streamed, alongside integrating phonics in cross curricular activities throughout the day.

We work through six phases from Reception to Year Two. Phonics instruction continues in Year Three and beyond for children who have been identified as needing additional phonics teaching.

The programme consists of six phases to be delivered from Nursery to Year 2:

Phase One- This begins in the very early years (preschool) and never stops! The activities develop children's speaking and listening skills, phonological awareness, rhyming and oral blending (merging sounds together) and segmenting (sounding out). We try to foster children's curiosity in print and letter shapes.

Phase Two - This begins in the first few weeks in Reception. The purpose of Phase Two is to move from oral blending and segmenting to blending and segmenting with graphemes (written phonemes). The children will learn 19 letters and should be able to read and write words with three sounds e.g cat, tip, rock.

Phase Three- Continues in Reception. The children will learn 25 more sounds including digraphs (two letters that make one sound e.g sh) and trigraphs (three letters that make one sound e.g air). The children will continue to practise how to blend and segment along with learning to read and write two syllable words. The children also begin to learn the letter names. Children should have learnt all 44 phonemes and graphemes by the end of Autumn term in Reception.

Phase Four- Continues in Reception to the end of the Reception year. The purpose of Phase Four is to practise children's knowledge of sounds and to read and spell words with adjacent consonants that contain four sounds e.g. skip, boost, float. Children should be Phase Five ready by the time they leave Reception.

Phase Five- This begins in the first few weeks of Year One. Children will learn alternative ways of spelling the sounds e.g 'oi' in coin and 'oy' in boy. Children will practise spelling a range of two and three syllable words phonetically. Children should be Phase Six ready by the time they leave Year One.

Teaching Reading

Decoding (D) x Language Comprehension (LC) = Reading Comprehension (RC)

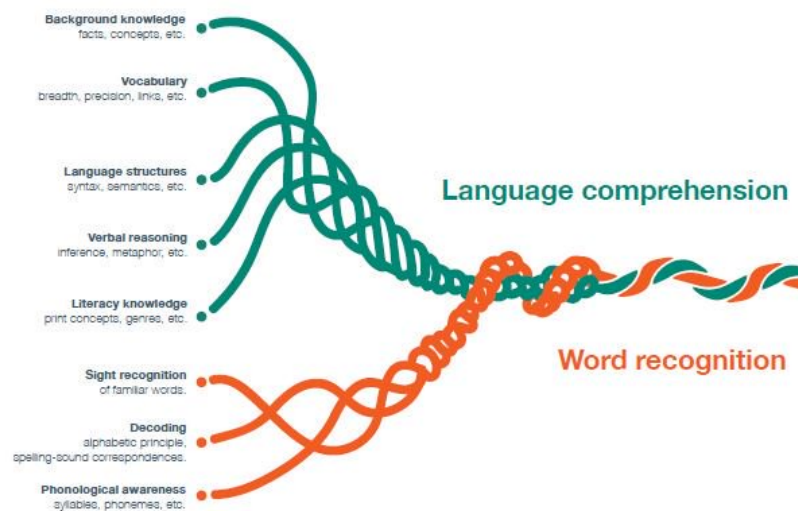
'The Simple View of Reading formula' Gough & Tunmer 1986

Synthetic Phonics has been proven to be effective in teaching decoding to read as long as the programme is followed with rigour and fidelity.

'The use of a systematic synthetic phonics programme was shown to give children a flying start with their reading, writing and spelling, it was effective for catch-up, it reduced special educational needs across the schools and it enabled higher numbers of children to transfer to their secondary schools well equipped to access the curriculum. Children were reading more fluently which encouraged a love of books.'

'The Effects of a Systematic Synthetic Phonics Programme on Reading, Writing and Spelling' Marlynn Grant, 2014

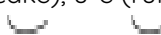

Phonics is a big part of a bigger picture. It is a necessary tool in learning to read and is interwoven with other aspects of literacy as can be demonstrated by Scarborough's reading rope (see below). Language comprehension teaching takes place in English lessons and through the use of 'core' texts in Reception and KS1. We provide a literacy rich curriculum and promote a love of reading. Please see the school Reading guidance for further information.



Scarborough's reading rope (2001)

Terminology


It is crucial that staff use consistent terminology with children so that children do not become confused and their working memory is at optimum use.

Term	Definition	Term used with children
Pure sounds	The correct pronunciation of phonemes so that children can more easily blend to read words.	Pure sounds
Phoneme	The smallest unit of sound in a word.	Sound or phoneme
Grapheme	A written letter or group of letters representing one sound e.g. t, ck, igh	<i>'See the graphemes and say the sounds.'</i>
Digraph	A combination of two letters representing one sound, as in 'ai' and 'ph'.	Digraph
Consonant digraph	Two consonants which make one sound e.g. sh, ch, th	Consonant digraph (From Year One)
Vowel digraph	A digraph in which at least one of the letters is a vowel e.g. oa, ar	Vowel digraph (Year 1)
Split vowel digraph	A digraph that is split by a consonant. Usually a long vowel sound e.g. 'a-e' (cake), u-e (rule). 	Split digraph Marked with a curve under the split digraph
Trigraph	Three letters which together make one sound e.g. igh	Trigraph
Blending	The process of using phonics for reading. Children identify and synthesise the phonemes in order to make a word. E.g. s-n-a-p, blended together, reads snap.	Blending <i>Say- ' look at it, sound it & blend it.'</i>
Segmenting	Separating words into their constituent phonemes to spell.	Segmenting
Cued Articulation	It is a set of hand cues for teaching the individual sounds in a word. The hand movements are logical - each hand movement represents one sound and the cue gives clues as to how and where the sound is produced.	
Adjacent consonant	Two or three letters making two or three sounds. E.g. The first three letters of 'strap' are adjacent consonants. Previously known as the consonant cluster.	Adjacent consonant
Multisyllabic word	A word with more than one syllable. Syllables are easy to recognise when words are spoken, but hard to distinguish in printed words until you know how to say them. The best way for children to learn to recognise syllables is to count (or clap) them when reciting known rhymes, songs, and so on.	
Pseudoword	Tool to assess phonetic decoding - shows that the word hasn't been memorised or learnt by sight.	Alien words Nonsense words
Common Exception words	Words in which the English spelling code works in an unusual or uncommon way e.g. the, you, was.	Tricky words or Common Exception words
CVC, CCVCC	The abbreviations used for consonant- vowel consonant and consonant- consonant-vowel - consonant- consonant words, used to describe the order of sounds.	n/a - seen in teacher planning.
Mnemonic	The animal, person or object we use to help the children remember the taught GPC e.g. c as in cat.	Action

Consistent approach

Fidelity to our phonics programme is imperative. Everyone in the school follows the same programme, using the same terms and tracks progress in the same way to ensure pupils do not fall through any gaps. Consistency is key so that children are given a clear approach from all staff and year groups so that children retain learning and working memory is not overloaded.

The following methods should be used:

Concept	Method
Lesson structure	Staff follow the four part lesson sequence: <i>revisit, teach, practise, apply.</i> If teachers need support materials these can be found at phonics play or in the 'Letters & Sounds' folder on the S drive.
Introducing a new sound	Children encouraged to listen and repeat several times. Children are shown the letter with an action to accompany the new sound and also listen to a song.
Modelling hand cues (Cued Articulation - https://www.jameswolfe.greenwich.sch.uk/phonics-through-cued-articulation/)	Hand movement to teach the individual sound .
When blending words	look at it, sound it and blend it.
When segmenting words	Phonics fingers
Sound buttons	Buttons for single sounds and longer buttons for digraphs and trigraphs. cat boat frame 
Pure sounds	All staff must pronounce the letters in the correct way e.g. 'mmm' not 'muh'. This makes it easier for children to blend words to read. For a demonstration see: https://www.jameswolfe.greenwich.sch.uk/phonics-through-cued-articulation/
Frequency and duration	Each class in Reception and Key Stage One will have a 30 minute phonics lesson per day.
Tricky words	Include teaching of these in the 'practise and apply' section of the phonics lesson.

Tricky words

Sight recognition of non-decodable common exception words (tricky words) is taught explicitly as part of the phonics programme. Parents are also encouraged to help their children learn these and we provide activities to use at home to support this. Once children have learnt to read the most common 'tricky' words by heart they receive a certificate in assembly.

Children begin to learn tricky words in Reception. These are sent home in sets of five words at a time to learn. There are 14 sets in total. If children have not learnt to read these words by the time they leave Reception they will continue to learn these in Year 1. It is expected that the children will have learnt to read all the tricky words by the end of Year 1. When children have learnt to read all the words by heart they are encouraged to learn to spell the words by heart.

Some tricky words have mnemonics- consistent through school.

e.g. could/would/should- oh you lucky duck

what- has a hat

when- has a hen

said- silly ants in dresses

because- big elephants can actually understand small elephants

they- they had eggs yesterday

with- worms ignore terrible hedgehogs

was- worms are slimy

who- worms have oranges

Assessment

Formative assessment should be occurring in daily phonics sessions and children should be given appropriate challenge at the correct phonics level. Children are not set in groups and challenge should be flexible. Children who are falling behind should be quickly identified and strategies put in place to ensure they catch up.

Summative assessment using the Phonics assessment, phase 2-5 (found here - Google Drive: Curriculum Zone\Literacy Zone\Phonics\Phonics Assessment) should be used termly and this should be used to inform planning and raise any concerns with Heads of year.

Phonics screening practise tests should occur at the end of the Autumn term in Year 1 and again at the end of Spring 2. The results of these will be discussed at Pupil progress meetings. Phonics screening practise test for the first 20 words should also be completed at the end of Reception.

Assessments should be given to the next teacher when a child moves year groups.

Handwriting

Correct orientation of letters should be taught each time a new grapheme is introduced. Correct letter formation should be encouraged when children are undertaking writing activities as part of the phonics lesson. Additional handwriting exercises should also take place.

Decodable Books

Children practise early reading with fully decodable books that:

- are matched to phonic knowledge and which do not require use of alternative strategies.
- are closely matched to the child's phonic level.
- are decodable at the child's current level and not mixed with non decodable books for independent reading.
- include a small number of 'tricky words' which have been taught.
- are continued in the progressive sequence of phases until a child can confidently decode words involving most common grapheme representations of all phonemes.

Once a child can read with fluency they will be put on the 'Accelerated Reader' scheme. This usually begins in Year 3 and continues until Year 6.

Supporting Resources

Further support with this, please check your child's Google Classroom, their teacher will be uploading weekly homework for your child to practise their phonics skills.

We also have videos available on our website which demonstrates how to do the actions for the learn GPC, including cued articulation.

If you would like further support and information please see Lucy Thompson, phonics leader.