

Essential Letters and Sounds/ Essential Spelling and Word Knowledge

Essential Letters and Sounds (ELS) is the phonics programme used within our school. The aim of ELS is *"Getting all children to read well, quickly."*

The programme teaches children to read by recognising **phonemes** (the smallest units of sound) and **graphemes** (the written representations of those sounds) and applying this knowledge to read and write words accurately.

Phonics teaching begins at the start of Reception and is delivered daily through a dedicated lesson. Children are explicitly taught the knowledge and skills required for reading and writing and are encouraged to apply these independently throughout the school day.

As children develop their phonics knowledge, they use these skills across all areas of the curriculum and are provided with frequent opportunities to practise reading. Daily phonics teaching continues throughout Year 1 and beyond where necessary, ensuring that all children develop into confident and fluent readers.

Our Approach

We follow the ELS progression and sequence, enabling children to consolidate existing phonics knowledge while developing their understanding of the alphabetic code through **Grapheme-Phoneme Correspondences (GPCs)**.

This systematic approach equips children with the skills needed to decode unfamiliar words independently. Alongside the development of reading skills, children experience the enjoyment of books and language while building the foundations necessary to become fluent readers and writers.

ELS also introduces relevant, useful and ambitious vocabulary, supporting every child on their journey towards independent and confident reading.

What Children Learn

Children begin by learning the sounds represented by single letters before progressing to:

- **Digraphs** (two letters representing one sound), such as *sh*
- **Trigraphs** (three letters representing one sound), such as *igh*
- **Quadgraphs** (four letters representing one sound), such as *eigh*

Through ELS, children learn to:

Decode (Read)

- Identify individual sounds within words.

- Blend sounds together to read words accurately and fluently.

Encode (Write)

- Segment words into individual sounds.
- Represent each sound correctly when writing words.

Essential Spelling and Word Knowledge

Focus on Spelling: This program is specifically aimed at students in Years 3-6 and emphasizes the understanding of word formation through morphology (the study of word structure) and etymology (the study of word origins). It helps students grasp spelling rules and the origins of words, which enhances their overall word knowledge

Curriculum Alignment: Essential Spelling and Word Knowledge aligns with the National Curriculum requirements for spelling, ensuring that students are familiar with the necessary word lists and spelling conventions for their grade levels.

Teaching Approach: The program employs a whole-class approach, making it accessible and inclusive for all students. It provides structured lessons that help students understand how to spell words and why certain spelling rules apply, thereby fostering a deeper understanding of language

Teaching for Success

The structured nature of ELS lessons provides consistency and predictability, enabling children to understand what they will be learning, what is expected of them, and how to achieve success.

Teachers provide immediate support within lessons to address misconceptions as they arise. Where additional support is required, interventions are delivered. These interventions are brief, focused and highly effective in helping children make rapid progress.

Supporting Reading at Home

To support your child's reading development, we ask that:

- Children read books that are fully decodable and matched to their current phonics knowledge.
- Pure sounds are used when sounding out words, avoiding the addition of an "uh" sound at the end of phonemes.
- Children read their allocated book at least **four times each week**, focusing on:

1. Decoding

Sounding out and blending sounds to read unfamiliar words.

2. Fluency

Reading words and sentences smoothly and accurately with increasing confidence.

3. Expression

Using appropriate intonation and expression to bring meaning and enjoyment to the text.

The Importance of Pure Sounds

Using pure sounds is essential when supporting children with reading. Accurate pronunciation helps children blend sounds effectively and develop confidence as readers. Mispronunciation can make the reading process more challenging.

We encourage parents and carers to watch the recommended pronunciation videos to ensure consistency between home and school.

Working in Partnership with Parents and Carers

Further support and information for parents and carers can be found on the Oxford Owl website:

[Essential Letters and Sounds - Oxford Owl](#)

We value the support of parents and carers and believe that working together is key to helping every child become a successful, confident and enthusiastic reader.