



Neville's Cross Primary School & Nursery

Phonics Policy

Date of policy: January 2023

Review date: January 2025

Neville's Cross is an inclusive family where all are nurtured to become creative, confident and resilient learners supported to reach their unique potential. Our children develop skills to become active and respectful members of our school, community and society and during their time at Neville's Cross, make memories to cherish.

Phonics and Early Reading Intent

The systematic teaching of phonics has a high priority throughout EYFS, Key Stage 1 and beyond. At Neville's Cross, we value reading as a vital life skill, and are dedicated to enabling all of our pupils to become lifelong readers. We acknowledge that children need to be systematically taught both the knowledge of the alphabetic code (GPC recognition) and the key skills in segmenting and blending to be equipped to decode efficiently. We highly value and encourage all of our pupils to read for enjoyment and recognise that this starts with the foundations of acquiring letter sounds, segmenting and blending skills. Successful phonics teaching sits within a language-rich curriculum, where the joy of reading and literature is celebrated, vocabulary is actively taught and contextualised so that our children develop effective comprehension skills alongside their decoding skills, enabling them to be proficient and motivated readers and learners.

This phonics policy has been designed as a working document, which reflects the ethos and practice within the school in relation to the teaching of phonics. It has been written with due regard to the requirements of the English National Curriculum (2014), recommendations outlined in 'The Reading Framework: teaching the foundations of literacy' (DfE, July 2021) and with fidelity to our adopted SSP, 'Essential Letters and Sounds' (ELS). The policy will be monitored and evaluated according to changes within these documents as and when they arise.

Aims:

At Neville's Cross Primary School, we value the importance of phonological decoding as a crucial strategy to develop early reading skills, however recognise that successful readers draw upon a number of strategies to decode efficiently and read with meaning. A systematic approach to teaching the alphabet code, blending and segmenting combined with rich language development, oral comprehension and the promotion of reading for pleasure ensures that our children can apply these skills to tackle unfamiliar texts and to express themselves in written form, becoming more independent readers and writers.

- To provide pupils with a clear understanding of how the alphabetic code for reading and spelling.
- To enable our pupils to become fluent and confident readers with a strong phonological awareness.
- To develop pupil's sight vocabulary to aid fluent reading.
- To provide opportunities for repetition and consolidation so that spelling and reading become automatic.

Our Approach

Teaching and learning

At Neville's Cross, we have full fidelity to our chosen SSP, 'Essential Letters and Sounds' (ELS) as its aim aligns with our vision for our children: 'ELS was created to ensure every child can read well, quickly,' (Knowledge Schools Trust, 2021).

The principles of ELS are based upon:

- the delivery of whole-class, high-quality first teaching with well-structured daily lesson plans
- the use of consistent terminology by teachers, children and parents

- the use of consistent resources that support effective teaching
- repetition and reinforcement of learning
- regular and manageable assessment to ensure that all children 'keep up' rather than 'catch up'
- the 'E' model.

The 'E' model underpins all teaching and learning in ELS.

E model components	Description
Embed	The theory and pedagogy behind ELS
Enact	Delivering ELS lessons with fidelity
Enable	Ensuring all children 'keep up' rather than 'catch up'
Execute	Leading ELS in school
Evaluate	Assessing children's progress
Evolve	Optional bespoke training

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.

Developing Phonological Awareness

Throughout the Foundation Stage, early phonological awareness is promoted and developed through every day activities and routines such as listening games, shared reading, singing and interactive planning sessions. Children are encouraged to identify familiar letters in their name and hear the sounds they are making, identify familiar words, to listen for sounds and to remember sounds. Currently, the ELS programme does not have discrete plans for Phase 1 phonics. Therefore, as a school we continue to develop the seven aspects of phonological awareness as outlined in the 'Letters and Sounds (2009) document through our own long-term planning. See Progression below.

In Nursery, a planned Phonics activity happens daily, focusing upon one of the seven aspects on a fortnightly cycle. These aspects are revisited throughout the year. However, throughout the day in a variety of interactions, staff look for opportunities to encourage our children to experiment with sounds, identify the sounds in their name and at snack time play with rhyme and alliteration. Songs and rhymes are sung throughout the day.

In Reception and Key Stage 1 phonics is timetabled to be taught daily in planned sessions of approximately 30 minutes, following the ELS programme. Children are explicitly taught new GPC knowledge and how to segment and blend words and apply their new knowledge and skills to read decodable texts. In addition, they are taught how to read and spell by sight Harder to Read and Spell (HRS) words.

Every ELS lesson has been designed to ensure that the minimum cognitive load is placed on the learner. The repetitive structure of the lessons allows children to predict what is coming next, what they need to do, and how to achieve success. This ensures that no teaching time is wasted. Our ELS lessons are taught as whole-class phonics sessions.

Explicit teacher modelling, repetition and practice are key to every part of every ELS lesson. The programme adopts a philosophy of 'Give, give, give' and offering support to every child until they can become independent.

The 'Give, give, give' approach focuses on teaching rather than testing and can be seen through:

- 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.

Below are some key teaching features which will be consistently seen in our ELS phonics lessons.

Key Teaching Features	
Me, Then You	The teacher models and the children repeat it exactly.
Provide opportunities	Practice and repetition is key. A consistent pace is maintained. Children have many opportunities to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hear the sound or word - Say the sound or word - See the sound or word - Read the word - Write the word - Use new vocabulary
Provide modelling	Every single aspect of the lesson is modelled for children. As teachers, our main purpose is not to test the children but to teach them.
Active teaching and learning	ELS lessons are active – children are engaged at all times, whether joining in with a 'drum roll' to introduce the new sound, using 'robot arms' or 'tracking the teacher' as we move around the room.

Within the ELS programme, there is a clear weekly lesson structure for teaching new phonemes and graphemes.

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review • Teach new sound • Practise • Use the Apply sound-specific sheet • Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review • Teach new sound • Practise • Use the Apply sound-specific sheet • Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review • Teach new sound • Practise • Use the Apply sound-specific extract sheet • Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review • Teach new sound • Practise • Use the Apply sound-specific extract sheet • Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review newly taught sounds for the week, previously taught graphemes, and harder to read and spell (HRS) words • Practise – reading and writing words • Apply – reading decodable books and writing phrases and sentences

The programme includes regular review weeks which allow pupils to consolidate their learning and focus on applying it.

Weekly lesson structure for review weeks and Phase 4 teaching

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review• Teach and practise• Apply	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review• Teach and practise• Apply	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review• Teach and practise• Apply	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review• Teach and practise• Apply	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review• Teach and practise• Apply

The fifth week of each term is assessment week. These weeks follow the same structure and lesson plans as the review weeks. The review weeks are there to support children in consolidating their understanding of all prior learning. The 'ELS term-by-term progression' chart shows where these occur. This can be found on our school website.

Each phonics lesson will follow the same predictable and consistent structure:

1. Revisit/Recap
2. Share learning and teach
3. Practise
4. Apply
5. Assess (Review)

Clear lesson plans for each type of lesson are included in the ELS Teacher Handbook and are explicitly trained to staff during whole-school training. Staff can access training at any time on the ELS website through our training subscription to ensure they teach lessons with consistency and fidelity to the programme.

Progression

Please see below for the overview of Phonics teaching as outlined in the ELS programme.

Essential Letters and Sounds Overview Phases 1 – 5

<u>Phase 1</u>	<u>Phase 2</u>	<u>Phase 3</u>
<u>Nursery</u> Seven aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Environmental sounds• Instrumental sounds• Body percussion• Rhythm and rhyme• Alliteration• Voice sounds• Oral blending	<u>Reception Autumn 1</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oral blending• Sounding out and blending with 23 new grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs)• 12 new harder to read and spell (HRS) words	<u>Reception Autumn 2, Spring 1 and Spring 2</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oral blending• Sounding out and blending with 29 new GPCs• 32 new HRS words• Revision of Phase 2
<u>Phase 4</u>	<u>Phase 5</u>	<u>Beyond Phase 5</u>
<u>Reception Summer 1</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oral blending• No new GPCs• No new HRS words• Word structures – cvcc, ccvc, ccvcc, cccvc, cccvcc• Suffixes• Revision of Phase 2 and Phase 3	<u>Reception Summer 2</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction to Phase 5 for reading• 20 new GPCs• 16 new HRS words <u>Year 1 Autumn 1 and Autumn 2</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Revision of previously taught Phase 5 GPCs• 2 new GPCs• 9 new HRS words <u>Year 1 Spring 1 and Spring 2</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alternative spellings for previously taught sounds• 49 new GPCs• 4 new HRS words• Oral blending• Revision of Phase 2, Phase 3 and Phase 4	<u>Year 1 Summer 2 and beyond</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• With ELS, phonics teaching does not stop at the end of Year 1, but continues as children move through the school, with links being made between their GPC knowledge and spelling• Revision of all previously taught GPCs for reading and spelling• Wider reading, spelling and writing curriculum

For further details, please refer to our website where a term-by-term progression document and a weekly progression document outline the specific GPCs and HRS words which are taught.

Nursery:

Children in Nursery follow Phase 1 of Letters and Sounds. This focuses on developing children's listening skills and involves listening to and identifying; environmental sounds, animal sounds, body percussion, instrumental sounds, rhyming, alliteration and oral segmentation.

Reception:

We begin phonics teaching from the very beginning of Reception, following the pace and progression as outlined in the ELS programme. Children begin with Phase 2 sounds in Autumn 1:

Set 1: s, a, t, p

Set 2: i, n, m, d

Set 3: g, o, c, k

Set 4: ck, e, u, r

Set 5: h, b, f, ff, l, ll, ss

They are also taught to read some 'Harder to Read and Spell words' – words which are not phonetically decodable or include GPCs that the children have not yet been taught, e.g. she, my etc.

Beginning in Autumn 2 and across the Spring term, children then reach Phase 3 and are taught to recognise vowel and consonant digraphs (two letters that make one sound) –

Set 6: j, v, w, x Set 7: y, z, zz, qu

Consonant digraphs: ch, sh, th, ng

Vowel digraphs: ai, ee, igh, oa, oo, ar, or, ur, ow, oi, ear, air, ure, er.

By this point in their learning, children have been taught one GPC which represents each of the 44 phonemes in the English language. They should be confident to apply this GPC recognition to blend and segment words containing up to 3 sounds (CVC words).

From the very beginning of Reception, pupils are explicitly taught and practise blending and segmenting in every phonics lesson.

Blending and robot arms

Robot arms are used to support the teaching of blending skills. 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.

Segmenting for spelling sequence

A consistent spelling sequence incorporating actions is used to support the teaching of segmenting.

- Say the word
- Stretch the word
- Segment the word
- Blend the word
- Count the sounds within the word
- Say the whole word



This sequence can be used for any word where the children have been taught the GPCs within the word.

- In the Summer term of Reception, children then reach Phase 4. This is a consolidation phase and no new sounds are taught. Children have the opportunity to review their GPC knowledge from Phases 2 and 3 and apply this to reading words with the following structures, cvcc, ccvc, ccvcc, cccvc, cccvcc (e.g. milk, crab, stamp, screech etc) and to reading words with suffixes, (-ed, -ing, -er and -est).
- By the end of Reception, our expectation is that all children should be secure in Phase 3 and Phase 4. In Summer 2, they begin to learn some of the new graphemes from Phase 5.

Year One

In Year One, the children will revisit aspects of Phase 4 and are then taught phases 5 and 6. This is when children are introduced to split diagraphs a-e, e-e, i-e, o-e, u-e. So words such as game, these, like, bone, tune.

Children are also taught alternative spellings such as 'e' can be in bed but ee in see, e in he, ey as in monkey, ie as in Bobbie, ea as in sea. This is important as they will need to select the correct grapheme to represent phonemes when spelling. Children in Year One will also be taught the spelling rules and conventions appropriate to their age; including past tense, adding suffixes, strategies for spelling longer words and words with irregularities.

By the end of Year One, we aim that all children should be proficient in applying their phonic knowledge and skills to read age-appropriate books accurately and for meaning. Any child who needs to consolidate their skills will continue with the ELS programme into Year 2 or beyond as appropriate.

Resources

The ELS programme provides consistent resources to support the teaching of phonics across school. Flashcards, friezes and sound charts from the ELS programme are used across school. Staff share mnemonics and picture cards with parents to support their child at home. Parents are signposted to ELS resources, including pronunciation videos for articulating the phonemes correctly on our school website.

The ELS handbook outlines specific lesson plans which staff should follow according to the teaching day for ELS and for review days. Each lesson is accompanied by an IWB resource which includes the new learning and specific content children must be taught in the lesson.

Apply activities are resourced through the ELS workbooks which we purchase from Oxford University Press. For review days, children record their work in their English Skills books, writing the words and dictated sentence outlined in the lesson content.

Decodable books

It is vital that whilst our children are learning to read, they read books that match their phonic knowledge. At Neville's Cross Primary, we have purchased a range of Oxford University Press decodable readers which fully align to our chosen SSP, Essential Letters and Sounds. These books have been carefully matched to every aspect of the programme and have been organised according to the ELS teaching week in baskets in the Key Stage 1 corridor. These books are intended to be used during the Review lesson on Day 5 of each week and as home readers. In the Review lesson on Day 5, children read the decodable text which includes the new GPCs they have been taught that week (or are consolidating) with a peer. They are encouraged to re-read each sentence three times to build fluency and expression. The children then take this book home. Children keep the books for one week and are encouraged to re-read them at least four times in this period. Re-reading ensures that our children develop their reading skills and fluency. This, in turn, supports their learning in school; as children become more fluent at reading, they are able to focus on their new learning.

Assessment

Each half-term, usually in week 5, children's phonic knowledge and skills are assessed using the half-termly assessments from the ELS programme. Children are assessed in both their GPC recognition, HRS recognition and their application into reading real and pseudo words. These assessments are completed online using the ELS portal which then collates the assessments to provide a detailed and comprehensive picture of the child's knowledge. This is analysed by both class teacher and the Phonics lead to identify specific gaps that the child or class need to work on. These gaps are then revisited through subsequent review sessions within phonics lessons or within bespoke 1:1 intervention led by a group of trained teaching assistants. For further information on interventions see below.

Towards the end of Year One, in line with national requirements, all children will take part in the National Phonics Screening Check in June. Children are required to read 40 words, comprising 20 real and 20 pseudo (alien) words. The government will later release a threshold to identify a passmark for meeting the standard of the check. In previous years this has been 32 out of 40. Results of the Phonics Screening Check are reported to both parents and the Local Authority. If a child does not meet the standard of the check in Year 1, they will be required to retake it in Year 2 and will receive additional phonics support and interventions to close their gaps in knowledge.

Interventions

ELS is designed on the principle that children should 'keep up' rather than 'catch up'. As such, timely intervention is crucial to enabling all of our children to learn to read well and quickly. In lessons, our teachers continually assess children's knowledge and skills through their participation within the whole-class activities. Immediate intervention is delivered within the lesson, usually during the apply activity, for those pupils who need further support from the teacher to secure the new content from the lesson.

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. Specific plans are included within the programme to ensure that these interventions are delivered consistently and with fidelity. These 1:1 interventions are intended to be short and concise and last no longer than five minutes. 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. These interventions are delivered by trained teaching assistants and are bespoke to the gaps that individual children have drawing upon half-termly assessments and teacher assessment from that day. While our interventions seek to address gaps any children have, at Neville's Cross we pay particular focus to our bottom 20% of pupils, or those who are slowest in learning to read. These pupils benefit from regular intervention and additional reading practice across the school week.

Home Learning

Parents and carers are invited to Phonics workshops in the Autumn Term to share our approach to the teaching of reading, including the use of actions, ditties and mnemonics. Aspects of lessons are modelled to parents and carers and they are given strategies to support their child with home learning in phonics and reading.

Sound books are sent home regularly which include the pictures and GPC for the sound or HRS word that the children have been learning. We encourage parents to help their child practise saying and writing the sound or word. Additional blending and segmenting activities are uploaded regularly to Tapestry (Reception) and Seesaw (Year 1).

Daily reading and re-reading of their decodable book is encouraged and we highly value the contribution parents make in supporting their child's development in early reading. We ask that parents record comments regularly so that staff know how children are accessing their books at home.

Equality and SEND

All of our children have equal access to phonics lessons and to the resources available. Children who need specific phonics interventions are identified early and the impact of interventions is carefully monitored. Teachers work closely with the school SENCO if any speech and language intervention would be beneficial. For those pupils who are new to learning English (EAL) adjusted timetables or programmes are put into place in consultation with the Knowledge Schools Trust.

The Role of the Phonics Leader

- To monitor the standards in phonics.
- To monitor the quality of teaching of phonics.
- To plan strategically to improve the provision and standards of phonics.
- To lead in the implementation of new developments/strategies.
- To ensure staff have the opportunity for CPD to develop their skills.
 - To provide coaching and support, modelling high-quality phonics teaching.
- To ensure resources including the use of support staff are deployed effectively in phonic lessons.

Professional Development

To ensure that we follow our adopted SSP with consistency and fidelity, all staff in school have received training in ELS phonics. For those staff working in Early Years, Key Stage 1 and for those delivering Phonics intervention, further training is provided. Staff can continue to access the training materials for delivering all aspects of ELS, including interventions through our subscription to the training portal on www.essentiallettersandsounds.org.uk where they can watch exemplification videos.

Regular refresher training is provided by the Phonics lead and Continuing Professional Development opportunities are provided for staff to ensure that they have a high level of knowledge and understanding in phonics and that they can apply their skills to effectively teach this to the children. Following on from any phonics learning walks or observations, targeted CPD for teachers and teaching assistants, are provided to ensure knowledge/skills gaps are closed.

Staff meetings/updates/new resources/teaching strategies are provided as necessary.

Monitoring and review

The Phonics Lead and Strategic English Lead monitor the effectiveness of this policy, reporting to the Governors on the effectiveness of the policy and, if necessary, makes recommendations for further improvements.

This policy will be formally reviewed by the Governors every two years. In the event of new guidance being made available/identification of more effective strategies, this review date will be moved forward.