

Phonics Rationale

Context

At Hook Infant School we put phonics and reading at the heart of all our learning. We have been using Letters and Sounds (2007) as the basis for our curriculum for many years and have worked hard to refine our provision over this time, leading to the outstanding phonics results we have seen in recent years; over 90% of each cohort have passed the Year 1 phonics check since 2019. At our most recent OFSTED inspection (2015) our 'above average' results were put down to the 'successful impact of staff training for teaching phonics' and inspectors noted that 'phonics is taught very systematically across the school' (OFSTED, 2015).

Our sole target from the inspection was:

'[To] improve the quality of phonics teaching by ensuring that teachers and teaching assistants give pupils enough time to pronounce the component sounds in words.'

Consequently, our phonics provision has been reviewed, adapted and refined, with phonics being a focus of our School Development Plan in subsequent years. We sought advice from our LLP and adapted further, introduced additional training for LSAs, audited planning to ensure it lined up with the, then new, curriculum and ensured pronunciation was given enough time in lessons through planning revisions. All of this has led us to an improved sequence of learning and ever improving phonics results.

Our SSP teaching programme

Following the DfE's announcement in March 2021 that it would not be updating Letters and Sounds and that it did not consider it to be a fully systematic, synthetic phonics teaching programme, we have challenged and further refined our existing provision to ensure it is 'rigorous, systematic and used with fidelity'¹. As we have had great success with teaching phonics in recent years, we have decided to continue basing our provision on Letters and Sounds (2007) for the time being, but have further reviewed and developed our teaching sequence to ensure that children's learning is fully systematic and synthetic.

Our early reading scheme was updated in February 2020 to ensure children's books were phonetically decodable and would align with the children's phonics teaching. We predominantly use scheme books from Oxford University Press for our earliest readers, with some use of Collins Big Cat, Bug Club and Rising Stars. We find that this mix of schemes gives a better range of fiction and non-fiction books across our scheme. Books have been arranged by phases. They are also largely progressive, with more challenging schemes appearing later in each band. Teachers are responsible for ensuring that children's books match their phonics teaching and regular reminders are given in English staff meetings about the importance of this.

Consistency of teaching resources has been a focus of ours since 2018, following advice from our LLP. In response we developed the following system which has worked well, both for individual year groups' needs and also for children's transition throughout the school. Use of these resources was a

¹ The Education Hub 2021, *The Removal of Letters and Sounds 2007 from the Department's list of validated phonics programmes – teachers' questions answered*, DfE, viewed 14th October 2021, <<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2021/05/17/the-removal-of-letters-and-sounds-2007-from-the-departments-list-of-validated-phonics-programmes-teachers-questions-answered/>>

major focus of our recent phonics audit, ensuring that only those we deem absolutely necessary are included and used consistently by all staff.

EYFS

- When children first join the school, they are introduced to phase 2 sounds through the use of Jolly Phonics pictures and songs. Many of our feeder preschools teach using these same resources and many children are already familiar with them. This leads to a much faster transition into phonics at school. Our Early Years team also finds that use of the song and gross motor actions is a much more suitable learning style for this particular age group, and leads to better recall of these early sounds.
- Whilst the pictures and songs of Jolly Phonics are also used in Spring term for the teaching of phase 3, the pictures and resources used in KS1 are at this point introduced alongside.
- Jolly phonics pictures are displayed around the classroom. Where these are from phase 3, the KS1 picture is also displayed alongside.
- Sound mats are dual sided with Jolly Phonics and KS1 pictures so that children have exposure to both and can choose the one they are most confident using.
- Letter formation in phase 2 is taught alongside teaching of each sound. For this Year R use Read Write Inc resources that also include a rhyme. This multi-sensory approach is much more appropriate for the age group, helps to embed the formation better and aids children's recall later on. The precise form of these letters is identical to the penpals resources used in KS1.

KS1

- In KS1 pictures and resources from Twinkl are used solely and consistently across all classes, in teaching, displays and table resources for children.
- Pictures are introduced alongside the sound, and the sound mat used by children is used to revise sounds as a class.
- Phase 2, 3 and 5 sound mats are available in all classes, and in Year 2 a GPC chart using these same pictures is introduced. We have developed this chart ourselves to allow for phase 5 alternative sounds that do not appear on the original sound mats. It also includes spelling patterns that are taught in the Year 2 spelling curriculum.
- Letters formation in KS1 is taught through penpals. Although children have discrete handwriting sessions alongside, in phonics, when a new sound is taught, children are encouraged to practise their letter formation whilst revising/learning and writing the sound. We find that penpals maintains a multi-sensory approach but is more tailored to the children's KS1 learning.

2022-2023

It is our intention to review our phonics provision again before the next academic year, following the release of the final list of validated schemes in March. Investing in a specific scheme in the long term is something we will keep under review until this point.