



Introduction to Phonics and Essential Letters & Sounds at Percy Hedley School



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Plan for today's session:

What is Phonics?

Commonly used terminology

Essential Letters and Sounds

What does ELS look like at PHS?

Supporting ELS at home



Disclaimer!

- Lots of terminology related to reading
- Everyone has their own experience of learning to read, which may or may not affect their experience of supporting others

*"Not how they did
it when I was at
school...."*

*"why does it have to
be so complicated??"*

The English Language is complex - 44 sounds, 26 letters, multiple ways to spell many of the sounds



1

Pre-
Phonics

2

Individual
Phonics
Plan

3

Essential
Letters and
Sounds
(ELS)

4

Post- ELS

5

P16
Functional
Skills



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P16
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What is Phonics?

Systematic

Synthetic

Phonics

Follows a set progression of which letters/sounds are taught in which order. Resources and approaches are consistent throughout

Synthetic phonics is a method of teaching where words are broken up into the smallest units of sound. Children learn to make connections between the letters of written texts and the sounds.

E.g. 'Cat' as three sounds

The way we teach reading and spelling



When reading.....

I look at letters on a page. I know which sounds go with each letter I can see.

cat



I might say these sounds outloud or I might think each sound in my head

'c' 'a' 't'



I put the sounds together to make a word

'cat'



I can read cat!



When writing.....

I think of the word I
want to write



I can count the
sounds in the
word, there are 3.

'd' 'o' 'g'



I can write a letter
that goes with (or
represents) each
sound



I can write dog!

dog



What is Phonics?

- Simple examples but not always so straightforward!
- By teaching these skills, along with:
 - An understanding of the relationships between letters and sounds
 - An understanding that sounds can have different spelling patterns
 - An understanding of what to do when you come across unfamiliar words or when words don't follow the rules you've learnt....



You are teaching the
'code' of the English
Language



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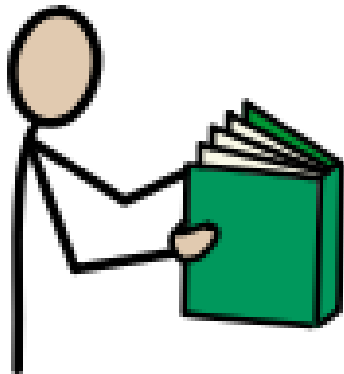
Once students have
cracked the code they
have access to reading
& writing!



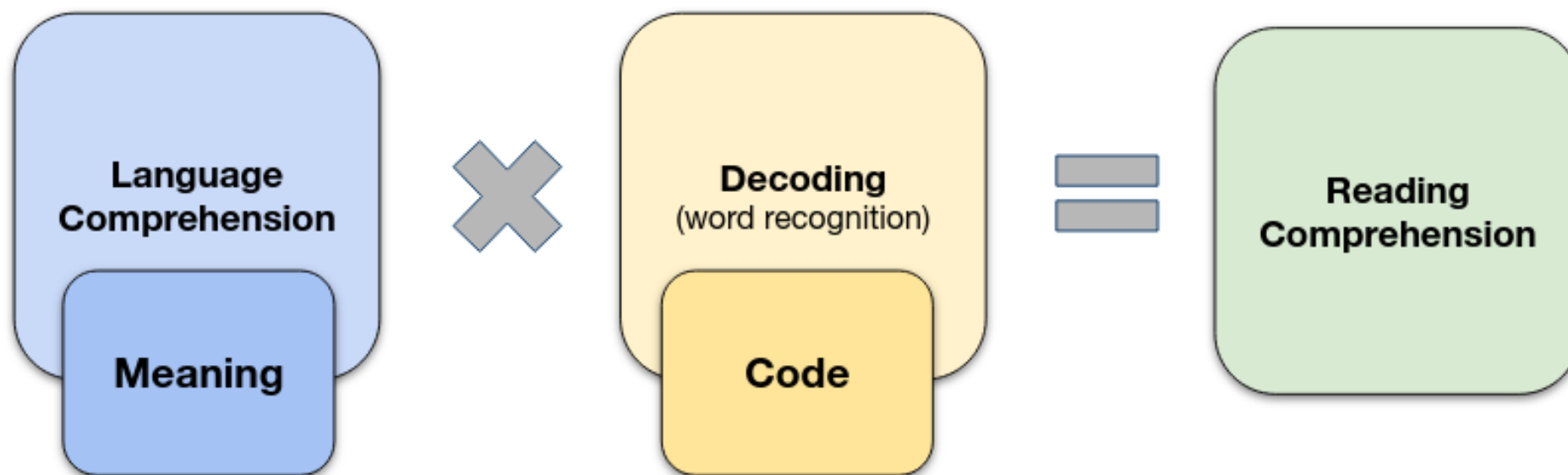
Aiming for this to become an **automatic** process - when you're a capable reader you don't *think* about reading, you just do it!
(kind of like driving a car)



We want our students to read **fluently**, with **expression** - only then can they **love reading independently!**



Phonics as one part of an inclusive reading curriculum



Simple View of Reading
Gough & Tunmer 1986





Terminology – what does it all mean?

Phoneme: a sound! The smallest single identifiable sound in a word. E.g. there are three phonemes in cat.

Grapheme: Letter(s) the written representation of a sound.

Segment – breaking a word down into its sounds



Blend – putting sounds together to make a word



Grapheme Phoneme Correspondence (GPC) – relationship between letters and sounds

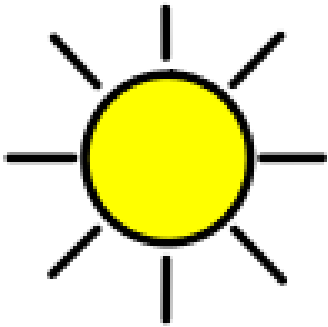
Harder to Read and Spell Word (HRSW)
Words that are taught by sight as they don't follow the 'phonic code'

Pure Sound – saying only one sound, not adding 'uh', e.g. 'mmm' rather than 'muh', 'sss' rather than 'suh'.

Decode – to read

Encode – to spell





sun

3	Phonemes
3	Graphemes
3	Letters

8

eight

2	Phonemes
2	Graphemes
5	Letters



boat

3	Phonemes
3	Graphemes
4	Letters



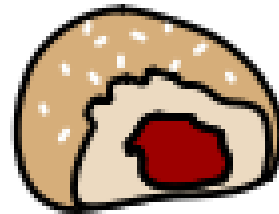
hedgehog

6	Phonemes
6	Graphemes
8	Letters

3

three

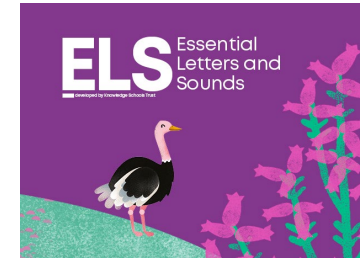
3	Phonemes
3	Graphemes
5	Letters



doughnut

5	Phonemes
5	Graphemes
8	Letters

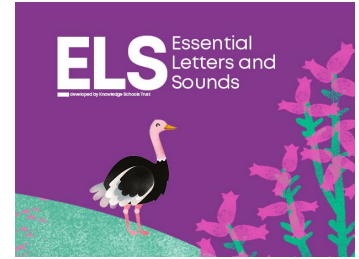




What is Essential Letters and Sounds?

- Our chosen **Structured Synthetic Phonics (SSP)** Programme
- Mainstream programme being adapted to meet the needs of our students whilst maintaining **fidelity to the programme.**
- In use in over 800 schools, Percy Hedley is part of a National Working Party for use of ELS in SEN provision
- Teaches letters and sounds (**GPCs**) and Harder to Read and Spell Words (**HRSW**) in a set progression, with increasing complexity, ordered into **Phases.**





What is Essential Letters and Sounds?

- Uses whiteboard presentations primarily, with flashcards and workbooks so students apply their learning straight away.
- Flashcards include a mnemonic/ phrase which either help students write the letter or remember the spelling pattern.



s

n

ch

ee



swerve around the snake



down the bird and over her nest



chew the chunky chips



bee on my knee



Decodable books - students apply their learning straight away in confidence building texts

Routine - students know what to expect

Repetition - Lots of opportunity to repeat learning

Key Features of ELS that work for PHS

Blending Hands & 'me then you' - visual cues to reduce language

Modelling - less pressure for students

Sound talking - multisensory learning



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Terminology part 2 - what does it all mean?

Digraph: two letters making one sound. For example, /sh/ in the word 'shop'.

Trigraph: three letters making one sound. For example, /igh/ in the word 'night'.

Quadgraph: four letters making one sound. For example, /eigh/ in eight

Split digraph: two vowel letters split but are split by one or more consonants. For example, /a-e/ in the word 'cake'.



Different ways of spelling words – referred to as spelling patterns

Spelling the 'ay' sound



ai

*Wait for the
train*



Taught in
Phase 3
(digraph)

ay

Play all day



Taught in
Phase 5
(digraph)

a_e

*Cake by the
lake*



Taught in
Phase 5
(split
digraph)



a

*apricot on your
apron*



Taught in
Phase 5 Alt

ey

*They chose grey
paint*



Taught in
Phase 5 Alt
(digraph)

eigh

*My neighbour has
a sleigh*



Taught in
Phase 5 Alt
(quadgraph)

ea

A great break



Taught in
Phase 5 Alt 
(digraph)

Who accesses ELS?



- **Reading Framework (DfE Gov document)** states that students should continue to have access to phonics teaching if they have a reading age of less than 8 years old - regardless of their chronological age.
- Students follow ELS at PHS for **as long as is appropriate** for them to do so.
- Motivation, engagement and the student's views are taken into consideration, alongside their profile of learning and abilities.
- Our students don't follow 'typical' patterns - we have some students on ELS who have good sight reading skills, but have no strategies when they come across a word they don't know so ELS still very relevant.
- Students may be following ELS but are also learning to use **assistive technology to support reading and independence** e.g. reader pens/ dictation software.



How do we ensure ELS is suitable for our students?

- Sessions happen daily in small groups/ individual as required.
- Each week is repeated (week A/B) to give extra opportunities to recap learning and to allow time to target areas of difficulty if needed.
- Small groups of similar abilities rather than whole class approach mean input is tailored to the students
- Daily records are kept of the students' progress
- Assessments take place every half term, with ongoing assessments by staff delivering. Assessments reviewed by literacy team.



How do we ensure ELS is suitable for our students?

If a student needs a more bespoke approach, an '**Adaptation Record**' is written. This may include:

- Student needs to go at a faster pace (weekly as in mainstream school)
- Student needs additional processing time and so may take 3-4 weeks to complete each week, adaptation may be in place to adapt expectations based on fatigue/ presentation.
- Student finds the laptop/ whiteboard too distracting, so paper-based tasks are used
- Student may have unclear speech or may use a VOCA as their main communication method, and so a bespoke plan is written to address the skills in each part of the ELS session, using appropriate and accessible activities.
- Older student finds decodable books unappealing and 'babyish', so bespoke decodable phrases/ texts are written.

Interventions may also take place, where a particular skill or area of difficulty is focused on for a brief time before returning to ELS progression.



How can I support ELS at home?



- Reading **decodable books** at home – repetition is key (and tricky for many of our students!)
- Request a **Home activity pack** from your class team or the Literacy team for resources and further activities
- Use '**pure sounds**' – parents videos
<https://essentiallettersandsounds.org/parents/>
- Practice **oral blending** games (saying each sound individually and student working out what the word is)
- Encourage a **Love of Reading** – top priority! We want them to be motivated and enjoy reading materials



Any questions?



Thank you for your time and taking an interest in ELS at Percy Hedley School.

If you have any questions, comments or feedback please do not hesitate to get in touch with your class team or Becky Finn on r.finn@percyhedley.org.uk

