



Phonics Policy

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SHS Phonics Policy			
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At Southampton Hospital School (SHS) we are extremely proud of our approach towards curriculum design and implementation, an approach that leads to substantial and meaningful gains in pupils' knowledge and skills. At the heart of our phonics teaching lies ambition for all pupils to become fluent readers with a passion for reading, and to allow pupils to access wider reading throughout life and appreciate the enjoyment and knowledge that it brings.

The teaching of phonics forms a key element of the EYFS and KS1 curricula. At times there may be older pupils who also require targeted phonics teaching. All phonics teaching at SHS is highly personalised to the needs and interests of individual pupils in order to support them to make accelerated progress with their phonic knowledge. Our overall aim is to equip them with the knowledge and skills they need to decode print, to read and spell many words and become confident and fluent readers and writers. In our setting, phonics teaching usually takes place on a 1:1 basis, or occasionally in pairs or small groups, where identified needs are the same. This enables the teaching to be tightly focused on next steps in learning. Learning always takes place within the context of each pupil, recognising the impact that their medical needs, mental well-being and cognitive function may have on their learning. Where pupils have a SEND need, the teacher and SENDCO will work together to ensure that appropriate strategies are used to support all learning, including phonics learning.

SHS has pupils from a wide range of schools and recognises that different schools use a variety of SSP programmes, and therefore the experiences of pupils will vary. Therefore, our approach to the teaching of phonics is based on establishing prior knowledge through communication with the pupil's home school and initial assessment, identifying the next steps in their learning, and teaching a series of well-planned lessons to address the agreed next steps.

In discussion with the home school, information is gathered regarding which SSP is being used, which GPCs have been taught, and which are the next GPCs in the pupil's sequence of learning. Consideration will also be given to the phonological skills of the pupil, in particular their ability to blend sounds together (orally and in word reading) and segment. A decision will then be made, in conjunction with the home school where possible, as to the key focus for the pupil and next steps in learning. Where information is not available from a home school, teachers will use professional judgement to decide on the next steps. Unless otherwise stipulated by a pupil's home school, the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised order of phonemes will be followed. A phonics plan will then be constructed for the pupil to outline the systematic sequence of learning, following our metacognitive approach to teaching and learning, ensuring opportunities to revisit and activate prior knowledge, be taught new GPCs, practise, apply and reflect upon learning and strategies used. These are very much working documents and will be adapted as required, based on the ongoing assessment of the pupil's learning. Phonics lessons, as detailed in these plans, will take the structure of a Little Wandle phonics lesson but will ensure that your child's own SSP core learning is inserted. The teaching element may include teaching new GPCs using pure sounds, letter formation in printing style, 'tricky' words, blending and segmenting. Sound buttons can be used to support reading, whereby sounds are represented using a dot for a phoneme, a dash for a digraph/trigraph, and a descending loop for a split vowel digraph. Learning activities will include a multi-sensory approach as appropriate, which may include actions, magnetic letters, jelly letters, songs, and outdoor learning. At times, computer resources are used to supplement the main teaching. Tricky words are similarly taught with daily targeted practice using a range of strategies. It is recognised that pupils may have learnt a set of actions or rhymes to, to support the phonics learning and knowledge. If this is the case, teachers will continue to use these to reinforce and embed learning. Pupils will have the opportunity to spell using known GPCs through dictation of sounds, words and sentences. Sentences may include tricky words that have been learnt. When pupils are secure in phonics knowledge and skills in the final stage of their SSP they are then progressed to continue embedding their knowledge into spelling, working within the National Curriculum. This will be tested in their own schools through the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1.

There is no expectation that all work is recorded, as much of it will be practical or on whiteboards. However, evidence of ongoing assessment and teaching on the phonics planning grids and in the final report upon discharge is expected.

When teaching upper- and lowercase letter formation, pupils are taught to print, using clear start and end points and learning about the relative size and placement of letters with regard to ascenders and descenders. Children may be taught to join the letters in digraphs if this is something specified by their home school. All resources used with the children will be in print, including digital and handwritten resources.

Beyond the phonics lessons pupils will apply their phonics learning to reading books and texts which are well matched to their knowledge. The texts and books children are asked to read independently are composed almost entirely of words made up of grapheme-phoneme correspondences that a child has learnt up to that point, in addition to a few known common exception words. Southampton Hospital School has a range of decodable reading materials, including Oxford Reading Tree Traditional Tales, Dandelion Early Readers, Project X, Read Write Inc books and Little Wandle books. When writing, pupils will be encouraged to use their known sounds to spell phonetically and use key vocabulary mats of tricky words or keywords linked to their writing stimulus (such as characters' names). Phonics is also weaved into the continuous provision times for EYFS, whereby the resources, words, and activities that are displayed and available will link to the phonic knowledge of the pupil.

There is a range of vocabulary that different SSPs use to teach phonics. The terms below are those which are used to teach phonics at Southampton Hospital School. This language is used between staff and with parents, in the home school and with the pupils.

Phoneme	The smallest unit of sound.
Grapheme	The way a phoneme is written down.
Grapheme Phoneme Correspondence (GPC)	Knowledge of the relationship between sounds and the letters which represent those sounds.
Vowel sound	Speech sounds made with an open vocal tract (no tongue or teeth in the way) are usually represented by a,e,i,o,u or y or a combination of letters to make a long vowel sound which includes at least one vowel grapheme.
Consonant sound	All other speech sounds which are made by partially obstructing the vocal breath. Represented by other graphemes in the alphabet, such as b,c,d,f etc.
Digraph	Two letters which form one sound e.g. th A single sound represented by two letters.
Trigraph	Three letters which form one sound e.g. igh A single sound represented by three letters.
Split vowel digraph	A digraph that is split by a consonant. Usually a long vowel sound e.g. 'a-e' (cake), u-e (rule).
Blend / Blending	Identify the individual phonemes in a word and blend these together from left to right all through the word, in order to read the word and say it aloud. Pupils may use strategies such as sound buttons, pound and sound technique to add their identification and blending of phonemes.
Segment / Segmenting	Identify the phonemes in a spoken word and say these. Then write these in order, in order to spell words phonetically.
Printing	Handwriting style without lead ins. The letters are not joined.
Decoding	Applying knowledge of GPCs to identify sounds in a written word in the correct order and say these together to read the word
Common Exception words Tricky words	Common exception (or 'tricky') words are those that include grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) that are an exception to those children have been taught. They include correspondences that are unusual and those that will be taught later in the programme (such as 'said' and 'me') We believe that using the term 'tricky' is inherently easier for children to understand, and therefore this term is used with the children.
Lower case	abcdefghijklmnop...

Capital letters / Upper case	ABCDEFGH.....
Ascender	Ascenders are the parts of a letterform that extend above the x-height. (e.g. in t, l, k,)
Descender	Descenders are the parts of a letterform that extend below the baseline. (e.g. in pqgy)
Nonsense Words/ 'Alien words'	Words that are created by blending phonemes together but that are not real words as they have no ascribed meaning in a dictionary. Asking children to read these words supports phonetic decoding as it shows they have not memorised the word
Real words	Words that have an ascribed meaning in a dictionary
Syllables	The sections of a word shown using a / to separate syllables. This is a unit of pronunciation having one vowel sound, with or without surrounding consonants. The beats in words. Children can be shown how to count syllables in order to help blending and segmenting of polysyllabic words.
Monosyllabic words	Words of one syllable
Polysyllabic words	Words of multiple syllables
Voiced sounds	A sound that is produced when the vocal cords vibrate e.g. b, g, z...
Unvoiced sounds	A sound that is produced without the vocal cords vibrating e.g. p, s, t...

Teaching can be adapted for online delivery, as is sometimes the case for our Outreach pupils and other pupils who may be taught remotely on the wards. Online delivery will follow the same personalisation of learning, aims and sequences outlined above. Activities may need to be adapted to suit the resources the pupil has with them, where appropriate resource packs can be provided to the pupil to assist them with online learning. Teaching follows the same format of revisit, teach, practise, apply and assess. However, phonics sessions may be shorter to retain concentration online, and text will be increased in size to ensure children's progress is not hampered by the small size of things on varying -sized screens.

Teaching during Outreach lessons may also be very physically active or very focused on a child's personal interests in order to re-engage them in learning. For instance, phonemes may be displayed on cards alongside their favourite things such as animals or trains. Phonics sessions may also include lots of sensory activities and may be taught in short bursts of a few minutes scattered across a teaching session to ensure as much engagement in learning as possible. When home schools make referrals for Outreach provision, they are also asked to provide Outreach teachers with information about their phonics scheme, reading scheme, handwriting style and key gaps in children's learning. Outreach teachers will then seek advice from the school or SHS colleagues to ensure that they can deliver their phonics teaching as closely to the home school's as possible to support a smooth transition back into school.

When pupils leave SHS their phonics knowledge will be reviewed and recorded and will form part of the written report to the home school and parents detailing the pupil's progress.

SHS ensures that all staff leading or delivering phonics have relevant and timely professional development. Training for all staff takes place, at least annually, to ensure consistency in provision between areas of the hospital site and outreach teaching. The processes of initial information gathering, phonics planning, teaching methods, and ongoing assessment are clear, as well as the common language which is used to teach phonics at SHS. The EYFS leader is available to guide staff with further phonics training if needed in order to ensure that all children are fully supported to progress. Training takes the form of meetings, presentations and guidance videos available to staff. The EYFS leader monitors the planning and delivery of phonics teaching through professional dialogue with staff, examining planning and evidence of work. The EYFS leader works closely together with the Strategic Lead for Early Years and Early Reading and attends relevant HAMWIC training to ensure SHS keeps up to date with local and national developments.