

ELS Essential Letters and Sounds

developed by Knowledge Schools Trust

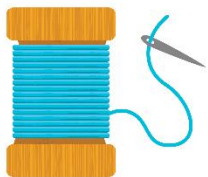
Getting all children to
read well, quickly.



What is ELS?

Essential Letters and Sounds (ELS) is our chosen DfE phonics programme at Romanby School.

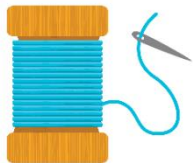
Our aim in teaching phonics is for children to experience the joy of books and language whilst also learning the skills they need to become fluent independent readers and writers.



What is Phonics?

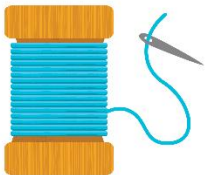
Phonics is a proven method of teaching young children how to read and pronounce words by learning how to recognise the sounds that letters make and how to blend them together to read whole words.

There are 44 main sounds in the English Language. Each sound is represented by a grapheme (the written representation of a sound). As a school, we strive for every child to learn all of these sounds and their representations by the end of Year 1.



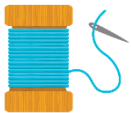
How do we teach phonics?

- We use a simple, consistent approach to teaching phonics.
- We have mnemonics and rhymes to support learning and the formation of letters – please see our school Facebook phonics videos.
- We teach phonics every single day from the very first days of Reception.



How do we teach phonics?

- We teach phonics to the whole Reception cohort for 40 minutes every day. We review all sounds, graphemes & HRS words taught and introduce new sounds and HRS words. The children then do a small group 'Apply' activity with an adult (5 minutes) where they practise what they have learnt.
- When we teach phonics, we use a 'my turn, your turn' approach to ensure that everything is modelled to the children correctly.

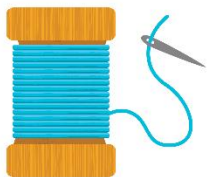
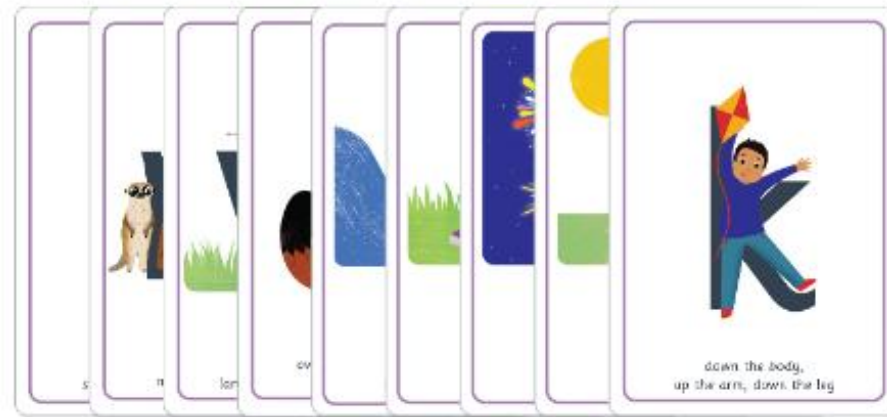


A typical lesson...

Review

Are you ready for a challenge?

Let's see how quickly we can say the sounds represented by the graphemes.



A typical lesson...

Review

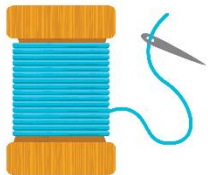
 I am going to sound talk some words.

Can you repeat the sounds, blend them together and say the word?



Notes

jet
cub
pop
had
hot
hug
hat
hunt



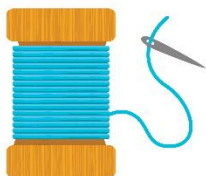
A typical phonics lesson...

Teach

Here is another word that is harder to read and spell.

into

Can you use the word 'into' in a sentence?



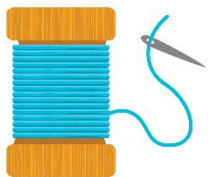
A typical phonics lesson...

Teach

Drum roll please ...



Today's new sound is ...



Pronouncing pure sounds

We must use pure sounds when we are pronouncing the sounds and supporting children in reading words.

c a t

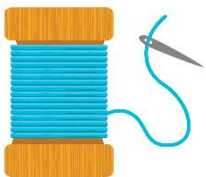
not

cuh a tuh

If we mispronounce these sounds we will make reading harder for our children.

Here is a video where you can hear the correct pronunciation of the sounds.

<https://youtu.be/UCI2mu7URBc>



A typical phonics lesson...

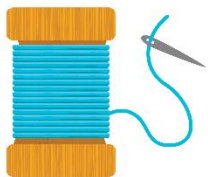
Teach

These words all have the /h/ sound in.

h



h ... h ... heron
h ... h ... hat
h ... h ... hot



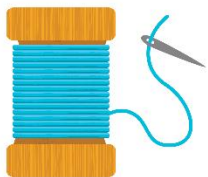
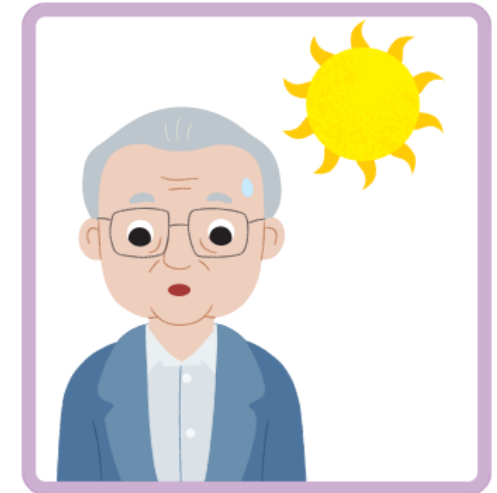
A typical phonics lesson...

Practise

 Let's read some words with the sound /h/ in.



hot



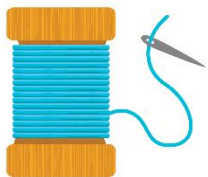
A typical phonics lesson...

Apply

 Let's read some sentences.



I **h**um as I **h**op.



A typical phonics lesson...

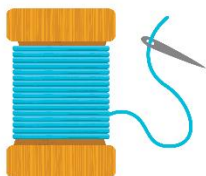
Teach

Let's learn how to write <h>.

h

Handwriting practice lines for the letter 'h'. Each line set consists of a solid top line, a dashed middle line, and a solid bottom line. There are five such sets of lines provided for practice.

Now it's your turn!



The phonics lingo!

Phoneme: the smallest single identifiable sound in a word.
For example, in the word 'cat' there are three phonemes c/a/t.

Grapheme: the written representation of a sound.

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'.

Split digraph: two vowel letters split but are split by one or more consonants. For example, /a-e/ in the word 'cake' (you don't need to worry about this until Y1!)

Blending: reading the 'pure' sounds quickly in sequence then putting them together to read and hear the whole word.

Sound buttons: We put 'dots' under a single letter sound and a 'line' under digraphs to help us read words.

HRS words: Harder to Read and Spell words are words that don't phonetically sound out. We learn them by sight as whole words.

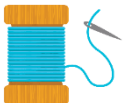
Segmenting: Breaking a word down into sounds for the purpose of spelling and writing it.

Phoneme fingers: We use our fingers to break down (segment) the number of sounds in words in order to spell them.

Robot Arms: We use 'robot arms' to help us to blend the sounds in words together in order to hear the whole word.

Supporting your child with reading at home

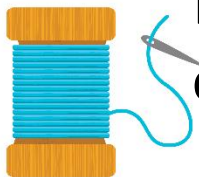
- Only 1 in 3 children are read a bedtime story at night.
- Reading a bedtime story every night to your child improves their outcomes – children who achieve the ELG for Literacy are 11 times more likely to achieve the expected outcomes for the end of Y6 – reading underpins EVERYTHING!
- If your child views themselves as a ‘good reader’ when they leave Primary School they are more likely to earn a higher salary in their 40s.



Supporting your child with reading at home

- Children will read from books that are entirely decodable within their individual phonics knowledge.
- Your child should be able to read their book confidently.
- When reading, they should decode each sound in each word individually, then blend to read the whole word. They should then re-read the sentence with fluency and expression.
- We ask that they practise reading their book 3 times across the week at home, working on these skills:

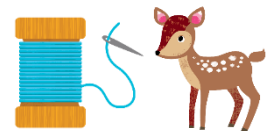
decoding
fluency
expression



Supporting your child with reading at home

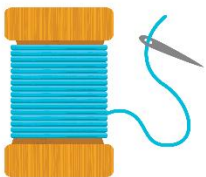
We want children to create a strong orthographic map. This means that they can recognise the sounds spelt by the letters or groups of letters that make up a word. This is why it is so important the children practise the letters and sounds they have been taught in school regularly at home. We ask that they practise the sounds in their little orange books for 5 minutes every day.

Alongside this, we ask that the children read through their HRS words in their packs every day, this should take just 2-3 minutes.



Supporting your child with letter formation:

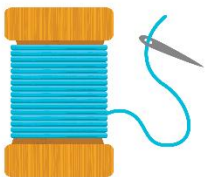
Every child is unique. As teachers, we are fully aware of where your child is developmentally. Please be rest assured, that in school, we are working towards your child's individual needs. When practising letter formation, it is always best to do this on a large scale initially. Whilst always following the mnemonics for letter formation, 'magic finger' in e.g. flour, shaving foam, glitter etc. is always a good starting point. 'Fat' felt-tip pens on large paper would follow this, and then finally we would be working towards pencil on paper.



Pencil grip and fine motor skills

It is important for your child to develop a comfortable pencil grip in their own time. There is no need to force your child to hold their pencil in a certain way – their grip should naturally develop and progress as their muscles and posture strengthen and develop.

In order to develop a good pencil grip, your child may need to work on strengthening the muscles in their shoulders, wrists and fingers alongside their hand-eye co-ordination. Fine motor skills depend hugely on gross motor skills.

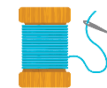


Gross and fine motor skills

In school and at home we can help children develop fine motor skills by providing an environment, experiences and activities that encourage a joined-up approach to physical development. Outdoor learning and physical activity will help your child to develop their gross motor skills.

To help children practice their fine motor skills we provide experiences such as baking, gardening, play dough, threading, joining, cutting with scissors and large and small construction – anything that uses tools and small movements with accuracy and precision is great!

The fine manipulative control skills developed in these activities will begin to provide the foundations for holding a pencil for drawing, mark-making and writing when children are developmentally ready.



These are the five main stages of pencil grip

Palmar Grip

The pencil is held in the whole fist. Usually develops between the ages of one and two.



The elbow, wrist and fingers stay in a fixed position. Movement comes from the shoulder.

Digital Pronate Grip

All fingers are holding the pencil and the palm is facing downwards. Usually develops between the ages of two and four.



The elbow and the wrist stay in a fixed position. Movement comes from the shoulder.

Splayed Four-Finger Grip

Looks similar to how adults would hold a dart, with four fingers opposite the thumb. Usually develops between the ages of two and four.



The hand is in the air, not resting on the table. Movement comes from the elbow and later the wrist. Fingertips and shoulders remain in a fixed position.

Static Tripod and Quadropod Grip

Pencil is held with the first three or four fingers. Usually develops between the ages of three and five.



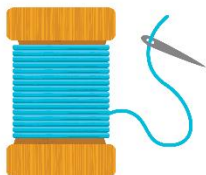
Movement comes from the wrist. Fingertips, elbow and shoulder remain in a fixed position.

Dynamic Tripod Grip

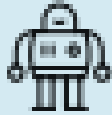
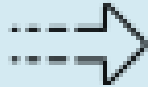
The pencil is held lightly between the thumb and index finger and middle finger. The ring and little finger curl gently into the palm of the hand. Usually develops before the age of seven.



The hand rests on the table. Movement comes from the fingertips. The wrist, elbow and shoulder remain in a fixed position.



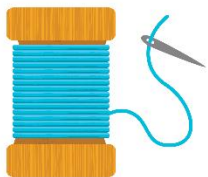
Supporting your child with writing at home



We use this sequence with the children at school to support them with their segmenting and writing of CVC words.

Using a 'say it, segment it, make it, write it' sequence helps.

Let's try this with the word: dog



Not hearing the 'blend'?

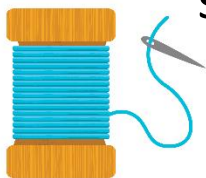
Please don't panic if your child is unable to hear the blend of a word or segment a word for spelling ... it will come! Blending and segmenting hugely relies on where your child is at developmentally and you simply cannot force it. There are lots of things that you can do to help though:

Play 'I-spy' - recognising initial sounds is the first step.

'Robot arms' CVC words – e.g. 'It is time for b/e/d'.

Rhyming words – read familiar rhyming stories...leave out words at the end of phrases and ask your child to verbally 'fill them in' (Julia Donaldson books are great for this!)

Play initial sound games – put a selection of household items out and ask your child to find anything beginning with the sound, e.g. 's'.



Lots of modelling: use the 'my turn, your turn' approach using magnetic letters or post-it notes.



Questions

