

Icknield School

Reading and Phonics Policy

Article 13: I have the right to find out and share information.

Article 29: I have the right to an education, which develops my personality, respect for others' rights and the environment.

ICKNIELD SCHOOL VALUES & VISION

Icknield School is passionate about providing an inclusive education. We value all students as unique and nurture their talents. We enable students to achieve to their best ability, in a safe environment, and to grow into the finest individuals they can be.

Our inclusive practice can be defined as attitudes, approaches and strategies taken to ensure that all our pupils are included in the learning environment. We ensure that all pupils are listened to, openly valued, safe and have the confidence to participate in all activities.

Icknield School strives to remove barriers to learning, to celebrate diversity and, through this, we encourage and support a society of equality, acceptance, and mutual respect.

By valuing and respecting human diversity, Icknield School fosters a sense of community and belonging, enabling all children, teenagers, and adults, to participate in every area of life possible.

Our curriculum provides students with the opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to maximise their ability to have a positive influence and control over their future and everyday lives.

Our ambition to achieve these outcomes will be supported by working in collaboration with parents, professionals, and external agencies, making sure the academic, social, emotional, physical, medical, and care needs of every student are met.

What reading means in our setting:

For pupils with learning difficulties, reading may be interpreted as any activity that leads to the derivation of meaning from visual or tactile representation (for example, objects, symbols, or written words). They may be accessed visually, aurally, or through touch.

Pupils experience stories, songs, and rhyme from the outset at Icknield School and they learn to develop their understanding of language throughout their school life. We use a vast and varied approach to teaching our pupils to meet their ever-changing and differing needs, including: teaching our children to recognise symbols; providing sensory experiences to develop vocabulary and engagement, such as sensory trays and stories; and delivering attention autism sessions.

We expose our pupils to stories, rhymes, songs, and language and adopt a 'give, give, give' approach, in line with the ethos of Essential Letters and Sounds (ELS), which is our chosen synthetic phonics scheme.

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Intent, Implementation, and Impact

Intent: what are we trying to achieve with our communication, pre-reading, and reading curriculum?

- What do we want pupils to be able to know and do by the time they leave?
We aim for students to have, where possible, functional reading skills, develop a love of reading and books, and a developed engagement in all forms of literature.
- How does our curriculum plan set out the sequence and structure of how we will implement it?
Our learning aims are clear. Learning is differentiated to promote progression. We follow a progression set out by ELS and, for most students at Icknield, we follow an adapted, slowed-down progression.
- To what extent have we made the objectives clear? Does everybody know them?
We ensure that all adults in class are clear about the learning objectives through clear planning and the progression set by our chosen phonics scheme.

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Implementation: how do we deliver our communication, pre-reading, and reading curriculum?

- How does our current curriculum match our intention?
Our students follow individual pathways that focus on what they can do and their potential – they must move forwards.
- What cross-curricular links are there?
Communication and reading skills are embedded in all areas of the curriculum.
- How are we encouraging progression as pupils move through the school?
Through regular assessment and collaboration across classes.
- How do we differentiate our curriculum for different ability groups?
Children have individual curricula. Classes are differentiated into groups and, in some cases, streamed across the department to meet the individual needs of each child.

Impact: how well are we delivering our communication, pre-reading and reading curriculum?

- How well are children learning the content outlined in the curriculum? How do we know?
Regular learning walks and sharing of good practice by the Reading Lead, who is supported by members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).
- How do we know our curriculum is having an effect across all pupils?
Children make progress and progression is clear between classes. Pupil engagement is observed across all classes. Parents and pupils share their views during EHCP reviews. We carry our assessments using phonics tracker, so we can easily see the progress being made by our pupils.
- How well are key subject knowledge and skills consolidated before moving on? How do we know?
Regular and robust assessment is carried out and tracked, so that: children are moved on, when appropriate; repeat certain aspects, if required; or receive one-to-one intervention, if necessary.

- How do we use evidence of pupils' learning to feed into our planning and adaptation of the curriculum?

Phonics tracker is used to assess and track pupils learning, which then feeds into our ongoing planning.

How we teach reading

Essential Letters and Sounds (ELS) is our chosen phonics programme. The aim of ELS is to get all children to read well, quickly. It teaches children to read by identifying the phonemes (the smallest unit of sound) and graphemes (the written version of the sound) within words and using these to read words. ELS is a systematic synthetic phonics programme and was validated by the Department for Education in June 2021.

All members of staff are trained to teach ELS to ensure that we have an expert team of reading teachers, led by our Reading/Phonics Lead. As a staff team, we regularly meet to review our practice and to practise teaching together; this ensures that all children receive high quality-first teaching every day. Our classrooms are well-resourced to ensure that every child has the resources required to learn to read well. Classes display a phonics frieze (produced by ELS) and use grapheme cards (also produced by ELS) to ensure fidelity to the scheme across the school.

To ensure all children learn to read well, quickly, children learn phonics from the very start of their journey at Icknield School. To begin with, the focus will be on developing children's speaking and listening skills, phonological awareness, and oral blending and segmenting, before moving onto learning letter sounds, when they are ready to do so. Phonics is explicitly taught every day during a dedicated session on the timetable. Throughout the day, children use their growing phonic knowledge to support them in other areas of the curriculum and have many opportunities to practise reading decodable texts, precisely matched to their phonic knowledge. This may include reading 1:1 with a member of staff, with a partner during paired reading, and during whole-class reading sessions. We know that reading is a fundamental life skill, and it is our aim to ensure that all children leave our school able to read at a level functional for them.

ELS is a whole-class teaching model. This means that every single pupil has the same opportunities when learning to read. There may, however, be occasions where we will stream classes, individual pupils, or teach them in different groups, to meet the individual needs of our pupils. Learning to read well, early, is a priority for every child. Children who may find it harder to learn how to read are given extra support from their teacher or Learning Support Assistant (LSA) every day. We aim for all children learn to read well and keep up rather than to catch-up. Lessons are delivered each day and begin at Phase 1. Pupils are taught according to the phase that is appropriate for their stage of learning, not by age, and they move through the phases at an appropriate pace for them.

We follow the ELS progression and sequence. ELS have produced a slowed-down progression, which, in most cases, teachers will follow but will vary dependent on the class and the pupil pathway. We want all children to learn how to read well, as quickly as they can. By slowing the pace here, we have allowed additional time for the children to consolidate their learning and rehearse what they have been taught, before moving on. The apply activity is completed on the second day, allowing children to be shown the new grapheme-phoneme correspondence (GPC) many times, both in the lesson and outside of the lesson, before they are then asked to apply their understanding. The structure of ELS lessons allows children to know what is coming next, what they need to do, and how to achieve

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success. This makes it easier for children to learn the GPCs we are teaching (the alphabetic code) and how to apply this when reading. Children experience the joy of books and language, while rapidly acquiring the skills they need to become fluent, independent readers and writers. ELS teaches relevant, useful, and ambitious vocabulary to support children's journey to becoming fluent and independent readers.

At our school, we begin by teaching the single letter sounds before moving to digraphs (two letters spelling one sound), trigraphs (three letters spelling one sound), and quadgraphs (four letters spelling one sound).

We teach 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.

Pre-verbal students are exposed to whole-class phonics teaching alongside their verbal peers, with constant modelling from their teachers and LSAs. They hear blending and segmenting, and their progress and attainment will be assessed through pre-verbal assessment opportunities.

Phonics resources

To ensure consistency and fidelity to the scheme across the school all classes should use:

- Interactive whiteboard presentations for all lessons.
- Grapheme cards with supporting illustrations, mnemonics, and rhymes.
- Wall frieze displayed in the classroom.

In addition to these resources, it may be appropriate to:

- Display spelling posters.
- Use the apply sheets.
- Download resources from Oxford Owl to support reading and writing across the curriculum, in the form of harder to read and spell word cards/sheets, grapheme tiles, and spelling sequence prompts.

Pupils have access to decodable readers from Oxford University Press via the eBook library or the reading books located centrally in school.

Consistent strategies

Strategies used to support teaching and learning in phonics lessons are those promoted in ELS. Teachers may also use other simple classroom management strategies to ensure the lessons are delivered with good pace and rigour. Strategies you would see in every phonics lesson are:

Me, then you

The teacher says something, and then the children repeat it exactly.

Provide opportunities

Practice and repetition are key. There is no 'down time' in the lesson – a consistent fast pace is maintained. Children have many opportunities to:

- 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. The main purpose is not to test the children but to teach them. Give, give, give!

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 you move around the room.

Spelling sequence

Encourage children to follow the sequence:

- 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.

Planning

Teachers should refer to the ELS handbook and the foundation stage handbook when planning their phonics lessons. The handbook contains example lesson plans and sets out a progression to follow. The whiteboard presentation, alongside other ELS-produced whiteboards, should form the basis of phonics lessons. There is no expectation to plan beyond this. Teacher’s may need to adjust example lesson plans to meet the needs of specific pupils, and this can be done in a way that suits the teacher to avoid unnecessary additions to workload. The foundation stage handbook provides a bank of Phase 1 activities, which can be referred to within daily or medium-term planning.

Monitoring & Assessment

We use ‘phonics tracker’ as an assessment tool in phonics. Pupils are assessed when they have been taught a set amount of GPCs during an assessment and review week. There is an assessment for our non-verbal students, which can be used during our assessment and review weeks. The assessments will take place when the content of the five-week assessment schedule has been taught. We acknowledge that this will vary class by class, as the rate at which GPCs are introduced will vary, depending on the needs of the class. Assessments will be done using phonics tracker. When a teacher or an experienced and trained LSA has completed the assessments, the subject lead will be notified. At this point, the Reading Lead and the class teacher will look at the data. The Reading Lead will help teachers to use their assessment data to inform their planning and interventions. Gaps can

be identified and interventions put in place, if required. Teachers will feedback data from assessments to LSA's during class meeting times.

Teachers may link areas of phonics to their pieces of evidence in Evidence for Learning (EfL) where appropriate (e.g., a pupil may use their phonics strategies to help spell a word during writing in Literacy). There will be no requirement to do a separate piece of evidence for phonics alone.

Teachers who are delivering Phase 1 planning will use phonics tracker to assess pupils half-termly. This will help teachers to see what aspects pupils need further practise in and will help them to decide when it is appropriate to move pupils onto Phase 2.

Phonics features annually in the whole-school monitoring programme. Monitoring will include learning walks, staff feedback in our morning training programme, and monitoring and moderation of EfL evidence and data on phonics tracker. This programme of monitoring will be supported by the SLT, Reading Lead, and the governing body. The Reading Lead will carry out termly learning walks alongside a member of SLT to monitor the teaching and learning of phonics. The outcomes of this monitoring will allow the Reading Lead to deliver training and share good practice.

Interventions

ELS is designed on the principle that children should keep up rather than catch-up. Interventions are delivered within the lesson by the teacher, or an experienced LSA, and any child who is struggling with the new knowledge can be immediately targeted with appropriate support. Where further support is required, 1:1 intervention is used and these interventions are short, specific, and effective. ELS is designed to make use of all the teaching time during the phonics lesson – through targeted support, where required, reducing the need for external interventions – meaning that there is minimal disruption to curriculum teaching time. Children are assessed regularly to ensure that any specific gaps can be targeted immediately.

FE

At the FE students take part in phonics sessions at least twice a week. These are delivered at an appropriate level for each student, using data from Phonics Tracker where available, and following the ELS Phonics scheme. All students work on Functional Literacy throughout the week. This includes starting with recognising signs, symbols and logos when out in the community, through to being able to complete an online shop and reading information texts to help with independent living. FE staff work with the Phonics Lead to ensure that the teaching of phonics and reading skills at the FE fits with the current cohort and their experiences of phonics throughout the school.

Streaming

Icknield has a range of pupils with different learning needs and a diverse set of classes that follow different pathways. ELS promotes a whole-class approach to teaching phonics and, as a school, we will use this approach as appropriate. There may, however, be occasions where we will stream classes, individual pupils, or teach them in different groups to meet the individual needs of our pupils.

Reading for Pleasure

We aim to instil a love of reading and books at Icknield School. The staff are readers, and we encourage our pupils to see themselves as readers also. We share stories, poems, and rhymes with our pupils regularly and we choose these carefully; we want children to experience a wide range of literature that reflect the children, Icknield, and our local community, as well as those that open windows into other worlds and cultures. We have books in our resource area for our children to visit and choose from, and there is a selection of books in each class. We hold events in school to promote reading, such as celebrating world book day each year.

We read individually with our pupils at least twice a week. We hear them read their decodable books, which are matched carefully to the sounds they know. We discuss what is being read and ask questions to deepen understanding and comprehension. We talk about new vocabulary, which our pupils may encounter during reading. For those children who are not yet being taught Phase 2 phonics, we share a book together, reading aloud and enjoying stories.

Parental involvement

ELS is supported by a wide range of completely decodable texts. These cover both fiction and non-fiction and are exciting and engaging for all our pupils. In school, we have a growing number of decodable texts, which can also be supplemented by eBooks, which we have a subscription for. We match home reading texts to each child's current phonic knowledge to ensure that they consolidate their most recent teaching and learning at home. Pupils are given a decodable book to read at home, along with a book from the 'library', which is to be shared at home to promote reading for pleasure. We ask that parents read their child's decodable book with their child three times a week and enjoy their book for pleasure, as part of story times at home.

Some classes may find it appropriate to send home harder to read and spell word flashcards or grapheme tiles to help support what is being taught in class or to help close identified gaps.

CPD & Staff Training

All members of staff are trained to teach ELS to ensure that we have an expert team of reading teachers, led by our Reading/Phonics Lead. As a staff team, we regularly meet to review our practice and to practise teaching together. Regular training sessions are timetabled into our training schedule as part of the continuing development programme offered at Icknield School. We share good practice and provide coaching opportunities. This is important to maintain the consistency of approach, ensuring high-quality practice, and that the development of reading skills continues to be highly valued among our team.