

Phonics at St Lawrence C of E Primary School



What is Sounds-Write?

At St Lawrence C of E Primary School, we teach phonics using a linguistic phonics programme called 'Sounds-Write' – a proven Systematic Synthetic Phonics programme validated by the Department for Education. It is based on the science of reading and provides a structured, cumulative, and code-oriented approach to teaching reading and spelling. It starts with what children learn naturally, the sounds of their own language, and teaches them to represent those sounds in writing. Sounds-Write is a complete phonics curriculum that teaches the skills, concepts, and code knowledge necessary for children to read and spell.

Students are taught four key concepts:

- Letters are symbols that represent sounds
- Sounds can be spelled using 1, 2, 3 or 4 letters (dog, street, night, dough)
- The same sound can be spelled in different ways (rain, break, stay, gate)
- The same spelling can represent different sounds (head, seat, break)

Students are taught to master three key skills:

- Segmenting - the ability to pull apart the individual sounds in words
- Blending - the ability to push sounds together to build words
- Phoneme manipulation - the ability to insert sounds into and delete sounds out of words.
This skill is necessary to test out alternatives for spellings that represent more than one sound.

What do children learn in Reception?

Children in Reception begin with the Initial Code where they practise all three key skills whilst learning the one-to-one sound-spelling correspondences and securing their understanding of key concept 1. This builds up confidence and phonic knowledge enabling them to read and spell a wide range of words and sentences.

At first, children learn to read and spell simple one-syllable words with a consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) sound structure (for example, 'sat'). By the end of Reception, they can read and write one-syllable words with up to five, or even six, sounds such as 'twist', 'grand' or 'scraps'.

Children also develop their knowledge of key concept 2 as they learn to read and spell words containing some sounds spelled with two letters (the sound /sh/ in fish or the sound /th/ in 'thin' , for example) as well as the three-letter spelling < tch > for the sound /ch/ in 'catch' . Key concept 3 is introduced towards the end of Reception as the students learn about a small number of sounds that can be spelled in more than one way (for example, the sound /k/ spelled as < k > in 'kit' , < c > in 'cat' and < ck > 'pick').

What do children learn from Year 1?

Once the Initial Code has been mastered, children continue to practise all three key skills whilst learning the Extended Code and developing key concepts 2, 3 and 4. Learning of the Extended Code is a lifelong process – we all continue to develop our understanding how to read and spell in English whenever we encounter new words.

Children in Years 1 and 2 develop their code knowledge through explicit, systematic teaching of the Extended Code units. Polysyllabic words are introduced in Year 1.

When is Sounds-Write taught?

Children in Reception and Years 1 and 2 have a 30-minute Sounds-Write session every day. This is usually the first lesson of the day. This is followed by English so that skills can be immediately applied during reading and writing tasks.

Some children require more time and practice when learning to read and spell, and they are supported through intervention sessions in addition to the whole class phonics sessions.

What books or reading schemes are used?

Children who are beginning to learn to read use phonically-controlled books that we call 'decodable readers. These books are carefully written to focus on the code the children have been taught in phonics lessons so far. They will be from the 'Dandelion' scheme or from Sounds Write themselves. Both follow the Sounds Write programme explicitly. Decodable readers allow the children to practise their developing skills and they will be sent home to give even more opportunities for practice of learning. Parents/carers are asked to support their children by hearing them read aloud and highlighting the focus sounds.

At St Lawrence, we use decodable readers that match the scope and sequence of the Sounds-Write programme. This means that children access texts which directly support learning from the previous unit of learning in class. This ensures a consolidation of skills and a deeper understanding.

In the EYFS and KS1, we also send Oxford Reading Tree books from our school library home for you to read to your child. This helps to promote a culture of reading and develops your child' s

vocabulary, understanding of stories and sentence structure, as well as repeating 'tricky' or 'common exception words.

How can I help support my child at home?

If your child needs some help when they are reading you can:

- Encourage your child to use their finger under the word from left to right.
- Ask them to 'say the sounds and read the word'.
- Tell them to 'listen' for the words as they say the sounds.
- If your child needs more help, tell them the sounds in the word and ask them to listen and blend them to say the whole word.

It is important to say the sounds very precisely. You can watch and listen to the pronunciation of sounds in this short video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a8ZMfYjdN-s>

We encourage all of our parents/carers to access the free Sounds-Write online course so that they are well-informed about how best to support their children with reading and spelling at home.

This, along with other materials can be found here: <https://sounds-write.co.uk/support-for-parents-and-carers/>

If you have any questions about phonics, please do get in touch. We will be happy to help!