

Heptonstall Junior and Infant School



Phonics Policy

Name of Policy Writer/Amendments	Date Written/Amended	Next Review Date
M Dodd	September 2024	September 2025

Intent

At Heptonstall, we value reading as a key life skill and are dedicated to enabling our pupils to become lifelong readers. We believe that reading is key for academic success and progress in a number of curriculum areas therefore we provide our pupils with the skills and confidence to deal with printed language from a very early age. We provide children with a structured scheme, Essential Letters and Sounds (ELS), that will lead to children becoming fluent readers so that at the end of their primary education with us, they are able to read a wide variety of texts easily.

As we hold reading for pleasure at the heart of reading, we ensure children develop a real love and thirst for reading a range of genres by providing them with an ELS story book which they are reading in class, an ELS story book to read at home and a reading for pleasure book from our school library. The ELS reading books match the individual child's phonic ability in order for them to practice at home what they have learnt in school, building on their confidence and fluency as readers.

We, as a school, are determined to provide the best phonics teaching to our children and therefore ensure all staff members teaching ELS sessions are regularly up-to-date with the correct training. Miss Dodd, our phonics lead, checks in half termly with all staff and holds 'bite-size' training sessions to ensure the teaching remains at a high level. All of our staff members have access to all of the training videos to recap different areas of the sessions they deliver. We also ensure our parents and carers are kept up-to-date too by sharing ELS resources, information and 'how-to' videos in order to support their children at home.

Aims

Right from Reception, we put phonics at the heart of everything we do as we believe it is a crucial part of our pupils' educations.

We aim to:

- Ensure that phonics has a high profile in school and we take every opportunity to celebrate success in this.
- Develop positive attitudes towards phonics to ensure reading is an enjoyable experience for all pupils.
- Ensure phonics is placed at the centre of our Early Years and Year 1 curriculum planning and development as well as for those children who need extra support in phonics in other year groups.
- Teach our children a range of phonics strategies so they can tackle reading problems and apply them to the wider curriculum.
- Involve, engage and update parents on their child's progress via home-school reading record communications and, parent information powerpoints, Stay and Read sessions and parent workshops.
- Upskill staff by providing them with training on a regular basis to ensure they are up to-date with school policies and procedures.

- Monitor and assess phonics every half-term to ensure children are placed in the right ELS group to support their individual reading ability.

Implementation

Planning, Teaching and Learning

At Heptonstall, phonics is placed at the forefront of our Early Years and Lower School curriculum planning and design. ELS teachers follow the scheme to plan daily lessons to explicitly teach children the key phonics skills. They ensure they feedback to the phonics lead and child's class teacher to discuss further intervention support and provide feedback to their parents. The ELS staff ensure their children have access to the correct bookbag books which match their phonic ability in order to support their home reading. Staff also keep a progression ticklist to ensure that all children always have the correct book suited to their individual ability. Staff also send home Harder to Read and Spell word cards and phoneme/grapheme flash cards to help support learning at home. Pupils also get the opportunity to apply their phonics skills in other areas of the curriculum, like science, geography and history, and as a school we are very keen to provide these opportunities wherever possible.

Miss Dodd, our ELS leader, ensures that all children accessing ELS are placed in the correct group and the group leader is following and delivering the correct plans when teaching. Miss Dodd will regularly conduct observations of staff delivering ELS and check books to ensure learning is suitable and on track. The children mix for phonics to suit their reading ability and to create smaller groups for more focused teaching. The groups typically mix Reception/Y1/Y2, Y1/Y2 and include any children above Y2 that we feel need the intervention to support their reading ability. All staff follow the plans from the scheme and all children are re-assessed at the end of each half-term to adjust groups if necessary, The book bag books children take home are in line with the ELS scheme we use, so every child is a confident reader at home too as they reflect the sounds they have already learnt in school.

Individual Reading

At Heptonstall, we endeavour to listen to all our pupils read at least twice a week. In some cases, particularly to support our disadvantaged pupils, pupils will read to a member of staff daily. Children will read and discuss their ELS book with their teacher or teaching assistant and this will be recorded on their online reading record (Boom Reader) along with a positive comment to motivate children and a constructive next step. The next step will be very specific and will aim to fill in any gaps in their reading or help them progress further. The next steps will be taken directly from the EYFS or National Curriculum objectives. Children who are using the ELS scheme will take home a book which reflects the sounds they already know and the learning they have done within their ELS group that week.

Inclusion

Teachers ensure that children with SEND linked to reading, have access to the resources and scaffolding they need, as per their Additional Needs Plan (ANP), in order to succeed in reading. We also carefully plan challenges for our more able pupils to help deepen their understanding and to stretch them further. We use homogeneous grouping typically from Reception – Year 2, but sometimes above for individual children still needing phonics sessions. This means we mix according to individual ability rather than the focus on their age. Children who still need support to read and are using phonics to help with this have intervention in their class using the ELS resources.

Reading for Pleasure

As well as providing our children with the skills to read, we hold reading for pleasure at the heart of everything we do so pupils develop a real love and thirst for reading a range of genres. At Heptonstall, we have a vibrant library that not only invites in reluctant readers, but provides children with a wide range of texts to choose from. We resource the library based on children's interests so that there are texts suitable for all readers.

Impact

Assessment and Feedback

At Heptonstall we believe that prompt assessment and feedback is essential to accelerating pupils progress. We use the assessments provided by the scheme ELS to assess children's phonics every half-term. These are accessed by the ELS leader and the groupings discussed. This is also fed back to the class teacher to inform that child's intervention for that half-term so they receive the correct phonics teaching in the group as well as individual intervention, if required.

We have weekly one to one conversations with each child to discuss their phonics progress when reading their phonics book or after phonics sessions. Each half-term children are re-assessed on their phonics and intervention put in place to close the individual gaps. This allows staff and children to monitor progress on the fundamental areas of phonics: sound recognition (phoneme/reading), sound representation (grapheme/writing), blending sounds to read and segmenting sounds to write. Teachers discuss the next steps with pupils and provide them with small, achievable targets that will help improve their phonics knowledge and ultimately improve their reading. This is then reassessed the following half-term and new targets may also be set. This form of assessment provides teachers with a clear, up to date picture of each child's phonics progress and because this happens weekly, it allows teachers to intervene where necessary in good time. If any problems are identified, interventions will be put into place as soon as possible which helps accelerate progress. Parents are also informed and homework produced via paper copy to support phonics skills.

Phonics Screening Check

At the end of Year 1 (June) the children sit a Phonics Screening Check (PSC) to test their phonic knowledge and understanding. This is conducted, usually, by the Year 1 class teacher who has received the PSC training. The children who score low on this, even if passed, will still be integrated into the ELS scheme the following academic year. Any children who do not pass the PSC will re-sit it in June in Year 2, they will also continue to have ELS. Any children who re-take in Year 2 and do not pass the PSC will continue to receive ELS intervention and support until they are competent at reading, typically a case study will have been produced to investigate why they have not passed and communications with the school SENDco begun.