

ALS Phonics at Rushey Mead Primary School

ALS Phonics overview:

At Rushey Mead Primary School we follow ALS Phonics programme. ALS Phonics: Letters and Sounds aims to provide a solid and continuous approach to the teaching of a systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) programme in Nursery, Reception and KS1. Based on the principles of Letters and Sounds, it offers training, guidance and resources to support schools in the delivery of a successful and complete SSP programme. Tried and tested teaching sequences and mantras are used daily to ensure children have a clear structure to their learning, developing their ability and confidence to decode successfully, building towards becoming independent readers. As noted by the DfE, a strength of the ALS Phonics programme is the guidance provided for supporting the lowest 20% of pupils and the training provision.

Quality first teaching of phonics is at the heart of ALS Phonics: Letters and Sounds and a comprehensive training programme for teachers and support staff.

Progression mapping has been created to help teachers to identify the order in which sounds are taught and how to recognise when learning milestones have been achieved.

In addition, the ALS Phonics: Letters and Sounds programme helps to implement consistency in teaching phonics across a school and the structured teaching sequence for each phase is of benefit to both children and staff. Children become familiar with the structure and thus develop confidence in the high expectations which are encouraged. As they progress through the phases the teaching sequence remains very similar with slight adaptations to support the stage of learning and sounds being taught. This familiarity means children can concentrate on embedding past learning and meet new learning without having to adjust a new way of teaching as they encounter more sounds – and delivery remains largely the same whether learning face to face or online.

Daily Phonics

Phonics lessons take place daily in EYFS and KS1. Phonics is also taught in KS2 where required to meet the needs of the children. Each phonics phase comes with a Phonics Lesson Plan, that includes a structured sequenced pattern of activities which include: Review & Recap, Hear, Read, Write and Apply. This enables children to become fluent in recognising and remembering previously taught graphemes and then practise and apply new and previously taught graphemes into words (both reading and writing) and reading or writing dictated sentences at the point of teaching.

Supporting children to remember and apply the learning

As part of the programme's teaching sequence and to ensure interactivity in children's learning, there are a series of mantras or chants which are used regularly or repetitively. These encourage 'a call on response' interaction between adult and child and support engagement, development of spoken language and the embedding of key phonic learning. Children are introduced to mantras to support them to apply their phonics skills to reading and writing.

The mantras explained:

Reading Mantra	Where we use it	Why we use it
Look at the letters, make the sounds, blend the sounds together	When we want the children to learn how to read the words	When independently reading, children hear practitioners voice in their head giving them the strategy to read
Writing Mantra	Where we use it	Why we use it
Reception Say the word, robot the word, write the word Or KS1& KS2 Say the word, finger the word, write the word	When we want the children to learn how to write the words	To ensure children are using the strategy when writing and to ensure children learn to distinguish the sounds in a word before they carry out guided or independent writing

Assessment

Assessment in ALS Phonics is viewed as a clear, systematic cycle to monitor progress of children and their acquisition of phonic knowledge and their ability to demonstrate their understanding. The children are assessed frequently using the Phonics Assessment Record, which follows the child from the point at which they start or join school. The assessment becomes the child's 'phonic passport' where all phonic teaching and progress is recorded, from whole class/group work through to interventions. The phonics assessment record ensures that children are retaining learning. This takes place at specific points in the phonic scheme to support the consolidation process. This also allows for groups to be reorganised when necessary and also allows for targeted one to one and small group intervention.

Teaching and assessment cycle (Phase 2-5)

Teach	The teacher teaches the phonic phase block
Assess	The children are assessed at the end of the block using the Assessment Record Sheet and Phonic Assessment Booklet
Analyse	The teacher will analyse the assessment and the analysis will be used to inform what happens next
Re-teach	Through analysis, decide which grapheme (if any) the whole class or group need to be re-taught
Support or Intervention	Through analysis, decide what extra support some children may need and which intervention will be used to help some children

High Frequency words

In ALS Phonics: Letters and Sounds programme, the names high frequency words that appear most often in written materials (e.g. and, the). Some of these words are decodable and some are not, and sometimes this is dependent on the grapheme phoneme correspondences the children know. When words are not decodable, they are labelled as tricky words. ALS Phonics: Letters and Sounds recommend that these words need to be recognised as visual wholes without much attention to the grapheme-phoneme correspondence in them, even when those correspondences are straightforward.

Reading books for early readers

As a school, we have invested in books that have been carefully structured in cumulative steps for children learning to read, so that they can decode every word as their knowledge of the alphabetic code increases. These books are often referred to as 'decodable' books. The decodable books that ALS Phonics: Letters and Sounds recommends are predominantly:

- Pearson Phonics Bug Club
- Ransom Reading Stars Phonics
- Collins Big Cat Phonics

Children should have lots of opportunities to read and re-read books that match the grapheme-phoneme correspondences they know.

Across the school week children will be taking part in shared and guided reading, where the children's phonic knowledge and skills will be taught, revised and applied. During guided reading children will be reading a decodable book with an adult, with graphemes in the block they are accessing in their learning.

Phonics interventions:

Interventions can be incredibly beneficial and are often crucial to the progress of the children. Using a structured intervention plan, the staff can quickly close progress or attainment gaps enabling children to successfully in their learning.

Staff development:

All staff are trained and equipped to deliver the programme. As a school we subscribe to ALS Phonics: Letters and Sounds, this gives us access to full training to be able to effectively implement the programme. The training reinforces key messages about the delivery of the phonics programme. The training also gives an opportunity to see the teaching sequence in action, practice key skills and further develop subject knowledge and pedagogy. Training sessions can include:

- Phase 1 Phonics
- Phase 2-5 Phonics
- Phonic Assessment
- Phonics Intervention
- Supporting children in phonics: TA Training
- Leadership of Phonics in school

Support for parents

Parents are invited to workshops throughout the year to help them to understand the basic principles of the school's phonic programme and how they can support their child at home.