

# ELS

Essential  
Letters and  
Sounds

developed by Knowledge Schools Trust

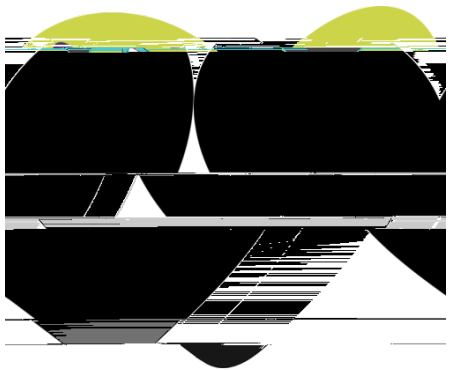
# Introduction to Phonics and Essential Letters & Sounds at Percy Hedley School

Becky Finn

Literacy Specialist

Speech & Language Therapist

June 2024



# Plan for today's session:

What is Phonics?

Commonly used terminology

Essential Letters and Sounds

What does ELS look like at PHS?

Supporting ELS at home

# Disclaimer!

- Lots of terminology related to reading
- Everyone has their own experience of learning to read, which may or may not affect their experience of supporting others

The English Language is complex – 44 sounds, 26 letters, multiple ways to spell many of the sounds

1

Pre-  
Phonics

2

Individual  
Phonics  
Plan

3

Essential  
Letters and  
Sounds  
(ELS)

4

Post- ELS

5

P16  
Functional  
Skills

1

Pre-  
Phonics

2

Individual  
Phonics  
Plan

3

Essential  
Letters and  
Sounds  
(ELS)

4

Post- ELS

5

P16  
Functional  
Skills

Systematic



```
graph TD; A[Systematic] --> B[ ]; B --> C[ ]; C --> D[ ]; E[Synthetic] --> F[Synthetic phonics is a method of teaching where words are broken up into the smallest units of sound. Children learn to make connections between the letters of written texts and the sounds. E.g. 'Cat' as three sounds]; G[Phonics] --> H[The way we teach reading and spelling];
```

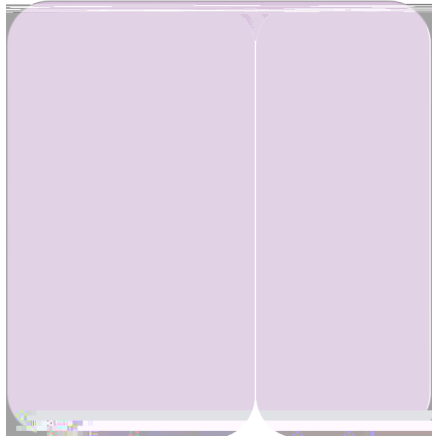
Synthetic

Phonics

Synthetic phonics is a method of teaching where words are broken up into the smallest units of sound. Children learn to make connections between the letters of written texts and the sounds.


E.g. 'Cat' as three sounds

The way we teach reading and spelling



# When writing.....

I think of the word I want to write



A purple notebook with a white page. The text is on the left page. On the right page, there is a small illustration of a dog's head and neck.




I can count the sounds in the word, there are 3.

'd' 'o' 'g'

A purple notebook with a white page. The text is on the left page. On the right page, the letters 'd', 'o', and 'g' are written in purple, each with a small purple dot above it.



I can write a letter that goes with (or represents) each sound



A purple notebook with a white page. The text is on the left page. On the right page, there is a small illustration of a hand holding a pen and writing on a piece of paper.



I can write dog!

dog

A purple notebook with a white page. The text is on the left page. On the right page, the word 'dog' is written in white inside a purple rectangular box.



# What is Phonics?

- Simple examples but not always so straight forward!
- By teaching these skills, along with:
  - An understanding of the relationships between letters and sounds
  - An understanding that sounds can have different spelling patterns
  -

# What is Phonics?

- Simple examples but not always so straightforward!
- By teaching these skills, along with:
  - An understanding of the relationships between letters and sounds
  - An understanding that sounds can have different spelling patterns
  - An understanding of what to do when you come across unfamiliar words or when words don't follow the rules you've learnt....



You are teaching the  
'code' of the English  
Language



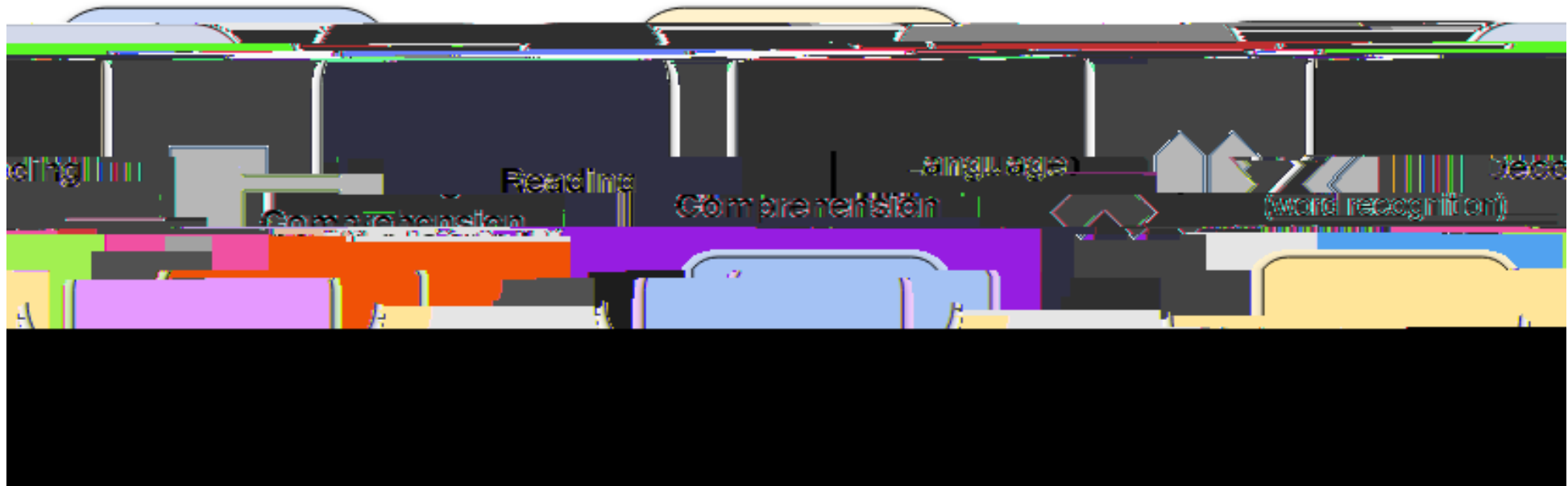
Once students have  
cracked the code they  
have access to reading  
& writing!

Aiming for this to become an **automatic** process - when you're a capable reader you don't **think** about reading, you just do it!  
(kind of like driving a car)



We want our students to read **fluently**, with **expression** - only then can they **love reading independently!**

# Phonics as one part of an inclusive reading curriculum



Simple View of Reading  
Gough & Tunmer 1986



# Terminology – what does it all mean?

**Phoneme:** a sound! The smallest single identifiable sound in a word. E.g. there are three phonemes in cat.

**Grapheme:** Letter(s) the written representation of a sound.

**Segment** – breaking a word down into its sounds



**Blend** – putting sounds together to make a word



**Grapheme Phoneme Correspondence (GPC)** – relationship between letters and sounds

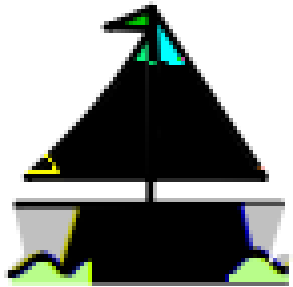
**Harder to Read and Spell Word (HRSW)**  
Words that are taught by sight as they don't follow the 'phonic code'

**Pure Sound** – saying only one sound, not adding 'uh', e.g. 'mmm' rather than 'muh', 'sss' rather than 'suh'.

**Decode** – to read  
**Encode** – to spell

3	Phonemes
3	Graphemes
3	Letters

2	Phonemes
2	Graphemes
5	Letters



3	Phonemes
3	Graphemes
4	Letters

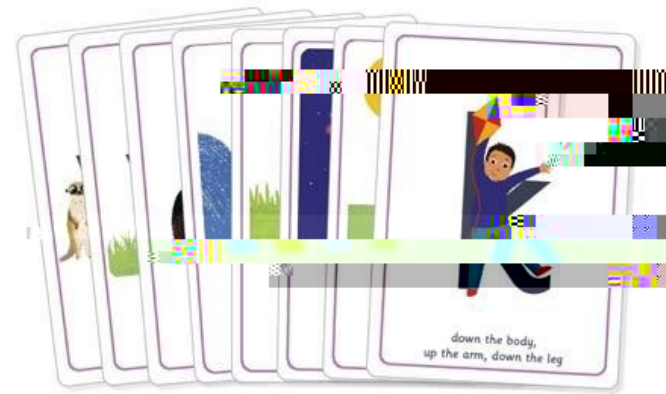

3	Phonemes
3	Graphemes
5	Letters

# What is Essential Letters and Sounds?

- Our chosen **Structured Synthetic Phonics (SSP)** Programme
- Mainstream programme being adapted to meet the needs of our students whilst maintaining **fidelity to the programme**.
- In use in over 800 schools, Percy Hedley is part of a National Working Party for use of ELS in SEN provision
- Teaches letters and sounds (**GPCs**) and Harder to Read and Spell Words (**HRSW**) in a set progression, with increasing complexity, ordered into **Phases**.

# What is Essential Letters and Sounds?

- Uses whiteboard presentations primarily, with flashcards and workbooks so students apply their learning straight away.
- Flashcards include a mnemonic/ phrase which either help students write the letter or remember the spelling pattern.











Routine - students know what to expect

Repetition - Lots of opportunity to repeat learning opportunity

Key Features of ELS that work for PHS







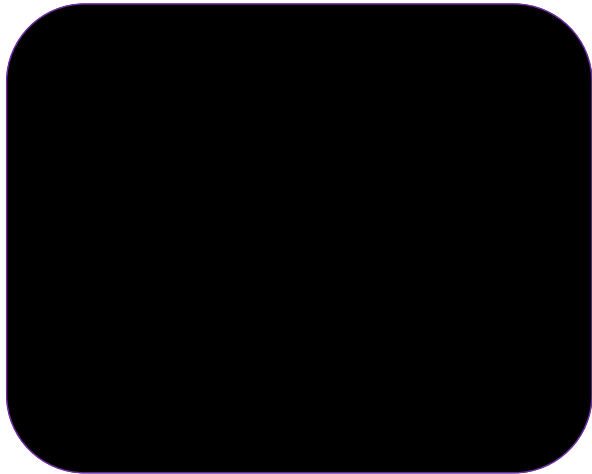




## Terminology part 2 - what does it all mean?

**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'.

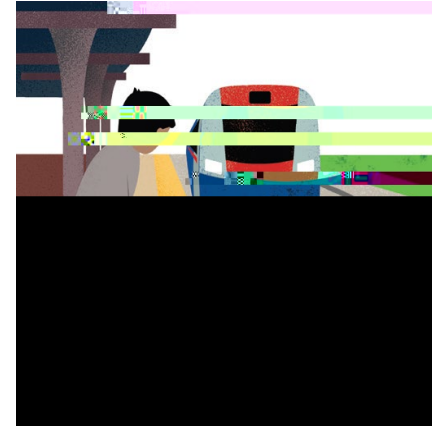


Different ways of spelling words – referred to as spelling patterns

Spelling the 'ay' sound

ai

Wait for the  
train



Taught in  
Phase 3  
(digraph)

ay

Play all day



Taught in  
Phase 5  
(digraph)

a\_e

Cake by the  
lake



Taught in  
Phase 5  
(split  
digraph)

a

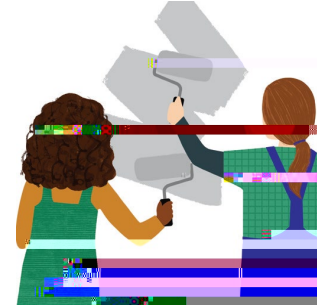
apricot on your  
apron



Taught in  
Phase 5 Alt

ey

They chose grey  
paint



Taught in  
Phase t  
ea i

eigh

My neighbour has  
a sleigh

ea

A great break



- Sessions happen daily in small groups/ individual as required.
- Each week is repeated (week A/B) to give extra opportunities to recap learning and to allow time to target areas of difficulty if needed.
- Small groups of similar abilities rather than whole class approach mean input is tailored to the students
- Daily records are kept of the students' progress
- Assessments take place every half term, with ongoing assessments by staff delivering. Assessments reviewed by literacy team.

# How do we ensure ELS is suitable for our students?

If a student needs a more bespoke approach, an '**Adaptation Record**' is written. This may include:

- Student needs to go at a faster pace (weekly as in mainstream school)
- Student needs additional processing time and so may take 3-4 weeks to complete each week, adaptation may be in place to adapt expectations based on fatigue/ presentation.
- Student finds the laptop/ whiteboard too distracting, so paper-based tasks are used
- Student may have unclear speech or may use a VOCA as their main communication method, and so a bespoke plan is written to address the skills in each part of the ELS session, using appropriate and accessible activities.
- Older student finds decodable books unappealing and 'babyish', so bespoke decodable phrases/ texts are written.

**Interventions** may also take place, where a particular skill or area of difficulty is focused on for a brief time before returning to ELS progression.

- Reading **decodable books** at home – repetition is key (and tricky for many of our students!)
- Request a **Home activity pack** from your class team or the Literacy team



# Any questions?

Thank you for your time and taking an interest in ELS at Percy Hedley School.

If you have any questions, comments or feedback please do not hesitate to get in touch with your class team or Becky Finn on [r.finn@percyhedley.org.uk](mailto:r.finn@percyhedley.org.uk)