

## What is a systematic synthetic phonics programme (SSP)?

An SSP is the methods and strategies that we use to teach phonics and children to read. It is designed to be progressive and rigorous in its approach; whilst continuously revisiting and revising previously taught concepts. An SSP includes a whole school programme and approach for teaching phonics lessons, texts used during guided reading, strategies to develop literacy skills and associated resources for use in the classroom.

## Why have we not chosen a DfE validated SSP programme?

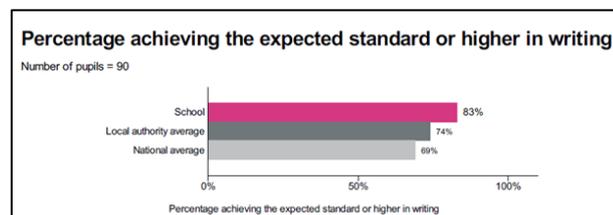
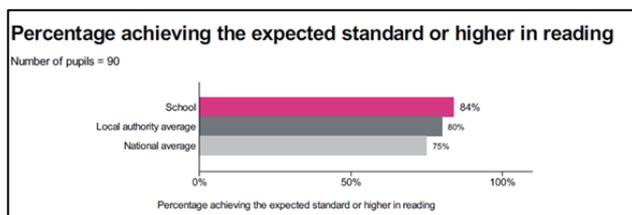
The DfE states:

*“There is no statutory requirement for schools to choose one of the SSP programmes on the validated list. Ofsted does not have a preferred programme or approach. What’s important is that schools take an approach that is rigorous, systematic, used with fidelity (any resources used should exactly match the Grapheme Phoneme Correspondence (GPC) progression of their chosen SSP approach), and achieves strong results for all pupils, including the most disadvantaged.”*

(Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/choosing-a-phonics-teaching-programme/list-of-phonics-teaching-programmes>)

In previous years our results have been consistently above the local and national average for reading and writing at the end of KS1 and our previous Phonics Screening Checks have been successful. Therefore, we feel that our current provision is more than adequate and robust enough to meet all, if not most, of our children’s learning needs. After reviewing the DfE’s Reading Framework guidance, we feel that our teaching of reading and phonics fulfils the requirements of an SSP and beyond. We have also produced further documentation; which contextualises the Reading Framework to Walter Infant School and Nursery.

2019 Data Reading and Writing Data at the end of KS1:



Phonics Data:

Yr 1	Total pupils	Number at each level								Percentage	
		A	D	L	Wt				Wa	Wt	Wa
					0-10	11-20	21-31	0-31			
2013	90	1	5	0	0	9	13	22	62	31	69
2014	90	0	1	0	1	5	21	27	62	31	69
2015	90	0	3	0	3	9	24	36	49	44	56
2016	90	0	0	0	1	3	12	16	73	18	82
2017	90	1	0	0	1	4	14	17	72	19	80
2018	90	0	0	0	2	5	4	11	79	12	88
2019	90	0	0	0	1	5	3	9	81	10	90
2020	No screening due to School disruption caused by Covid 19										
2021	90	0	1	0	0	1	6	7	82	9	91

## How do we teach synthetic phonics at Walter Infant School and Nursery?

Primarily, we use Letters and Sounds, which provides a phased approach to teaching phonics systematically. Although, Letters and Sounds has been officially ‘retired’ by the DfE, we still find that it provides a framework for a systematic phonics programme. The teaching of phonics is laid out in ‘phases’ which are progressive and provides our school with an intent. For the planning, resourcing and teaching of phonics we use [www.phonicsplay.co.uk](http://www.phonicsplay.co.uk). This provides us with the planning and high-quality resources that we can use on the interactive whiteboards to deliver our primary phonics teaching. We supplement this with custom, in-house made activities or resources and carefully selected ready-made games and resources. By using Phonics Play we also reduce teacher workload with ready made plans and a framework

for teaching phonics. However, teachers understand that this is to be used as such, and can be repeated, flexed or adapted as required or needed.

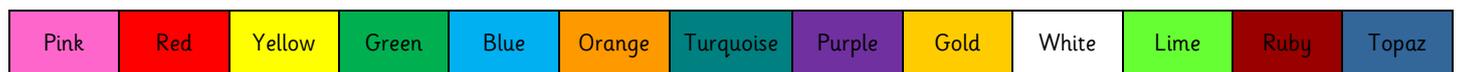
The children are sorted into groups across their year groups. These groups can be as small as one pupil or a full class. We ensure that the children who have the most need are taught in smaller groups and by someone who has demonstrated excellent teaching and has a good understanding of teaching phonics which is underpinned by a pedagogical understanding.

Phonics is modelled and taught across the curriculum when the children are writing or spelling words. It is also promoted as the prime method for decoding newly encountered words when reading. This way phonics is taught and applied more widely, not just during our timetabled, discrete phonics sessions.

### How do we teach reading at Walter Infant School and Nursery?

Our prime strategy for teaching reading is through Guided Reading. The children receive a focused guided reading session, led by an adult, at least weekly. This is followed up with a revisit of the text and activities to demonstrate understanding or comprehension. A group of children will read to an adult with discussion before, during and after the text has been explored and read. The group sizes can be from 1 child to 6 children.

We have chosen to use the colour band system, which is widely used by many schools. It provides us with a set of levels and allows for progression. The children take home a book from their colour band and read the colour band above in school during a guided reading session. This allows them to practise their skills at home with a comfortable reading book and to be challenged in school with a higher-level text.



Every class is read to on a regular basis. The texts are chosen by the class teacher and discussed through a shared reading model. This promotes enjoyment of reading and sharing of stories. It also allows the children to access texts that might be beyond or above their age-related expectations. This also helps to develop reading comprehension.

### Which books and why?

For our guided reading we have chosen the Big Cat Collin's Letter and Sounds books. We have found that this reading system links in well with the National Curriculum and provides a rigorous, progressive system with wide coverage and depth. We have chosen the texts very carefully to reflect our school ethos, culture and values. For example, we have chosen books that have photographs or illustrations of children with a range of skin colours and showing our different cultures and ethnicities, or we have chosen books that reflect our values or ethics; such as discussing why single use plastic is not good for the environment.



We have supplemented our reading scheme with additional 'pre-readers' which are easily decodable and have a focus on a single GPC. These are used to expand and supplement the Pink and Red reading colour bands. They are published by Beanstalk Books and closely match areas of our curriculum, for example animals and Science.



## Accessing Books for Home and Enjoyment of Reading

Our home reading books are made up from a range of different texts. These are reviewed annually by the class teacher and scruffy, damaged, out-of-date or unkempt books are disposed of. We replenish and replace the home reading books regularly to keep them topped up. We have chosen a wide range of texts, authors and publishers so the children are exposed to a good reading diet. The children also have access to our library, where they can take books home and replace these on a regular basis. Every class has a reading corner, which is inviting, comfortable, colourful and has a wide range of age appropriate texts for the children to enjoy.

The children have access to our Walter Reading Hub, <https://wisreading.weebly.com/>. We designed a website which shares hints, tips and advice for parents on how to read with your children at home. There are also phonics lessons for each grapheme/phoneme. The adults at Walter Infant School and Nursery have also recorded themselves reading books, which can be accessed through this website. The children are provided with a login to the Big Cat eBook Library. Books are chosen for the children to access by the class teacher based on their home reading colour. They can read these books on a screen or tablet device.



## What do we do for our lowest attainers?

We might refer to our 'lowest attainers' as children that are working towards or below age related expectations. These children are identified through rigorous assessment procedures and carefully monitored. Gaps are assessed and closed rapidly. However, if these children still need work to catch-up; this is done based on the needs of the child. For example, a child might not read at home and will require more 1:1 reading in school. We also have a range of resources to support a child's learning. Essentially, any child that is not operating at age related expectations receives a personalised provision to enable them to catch-up and rapidly close gaps. We do recognize that not all children will be at age related expectations by the end of their journey at Walter Infant School and Nursery; therefore, we ensure that every child makes good progress from their starting points. We try our best to ensure that all our children are junior school ready by the time they leave us.

## Meeting the DfE's "Essential core criteria"

The DfE suggests that an SSP must have the following:

The programme should:

1. constitute a complete SSP programme providing fidelity to its teaching framework for the duration of the programme
This document outlines our SSP programme and how we teach phonics at Walter Infant School and Nursery. It allows for progression, consolidation, depth and breadth of coverage. Phonics is used, modelled and taught as the prime method for spelling and reading newly encountered words. We have a shared and common language and strategies for teaching phonics.
2. present systematic, synthetic phonic work as the prime approach to decoding print
This happens across the curriculum at Walter Infant School and Nursery. Phonics is always the prime approach for encoding and decoding words.

3. enable children to start learning phonic knowledge and skills early in reception, and provide a structured route for most children to meet or exceed the expected standard in the year one (Y1) Phonics Screening Check and all national curriculum expectations for word reading through decoding by the end of key stage 1

Primarily, we teach phonics using the planning on Phonics Play and adapt as needed. We teach phonics from the start of Foundation and the children are mixed into ability groups to allow for a differentiation of learning. We score higher than the local and national average in our Phonics Screening Check. Our of end of KS1 data shows that we score higher than the local and national average for children reading at the expected level and for greater depth.

4. be designed for daily teaching sessions and teach the main grapheme-phoneme correspondences of English (the alphabetic principle) in a clearly defined, incremental sequence

Phonics is taught daily at Walter Infant School and Nursery. Phonics is taught in phases as outlined in the Letters and Sounds guidance.

5. begin by introducing a defined group of grapheme-phoneme correspondences that enable children to read and spell many words early on

Initially, we introduce SATPIN to the children and teach how to use these to read and spell new words. We then move on and introduce other GPCs that can be segmented for spellings and blended for reading.

6. progress from simple to more complex phonic knowledge and skills, cumulatively covering all the major grapheme-phoneme correspondences in English

This is taught as the phases progress, consolidate and build on each other.

7. teach children to read printed words by identifying and blending (synthesising) individual phonemes, from left to right all through the word

Our guided reading scheme, Big Cat Collins and Beanstalk books, are based on the Letters and Sounds programme and have specific GPCs throughout the scheme. The colour band system allows for progression and emergent readers to develop their skills. We have updated all of our guided reading books to match and to promote phonics being used as the prime method for decoding.

8. teach children to apply the skill of segmenting spoken words into their constituent phonemes for spelling and that this is the reverse of blending phonemes to read words

This is embedded into our practice at Walter Infant School and Nursery. We teach phonics as the prime method for decoding or encoding words. The children have phonics mats, that are custom made, to help with spellings.

9. provide opportunity for children to practise and apply known phoneme-grapheme correspondences for spelling through dictation of sounds, words and sentences

This happens during our English lesson, guided reading, phonics sessions and in other areas of the curriculum when the children are writing. This is taught and modelled to the children throughout the day.

10. ensure that children are taught to decode and spell common exception words (sometimes called 'tricky' words), appropriate to their level of progress in the programme

Children are taught the common exception words during their phonics lesson. We teach the children that these words have to be learned and they do not follow our standard rules or cannot be decoded using phonics. The children identify the tricky parts of the word and learn how to spell these. If there is a common misconception, such as spellings 'said' as 'sed' or 'what' as 'wot', then these words are taught and embedded into the English lessons to help close the gap. We have the common exception words listed on the back of our custom-made phonic mats.

11. provide resources that support the teaching of lower-case and capital letters correctly, with clear start and finish points. The programme should move children on by teaching them to write words made up of learned GPCs, followed by simple sentences composed from such words as well as any common exception words

We teach mark making, letter formation and hand writing progressively across the school. We have guidance for handwriting that everyone follows and progression documents for writing. Our children are expected to be able to form all their letters correctly by the end of Year 2 and our greater depth children should be joining. The children have opportunities to practise their writing across the curriculum, which includes discrete teaching during handwriting, phonics and publishing work (writing up in best) during English lessons. Age appropriate letter formations are modelled by the adults in school, for example block print in Foundation and cursive script in Year 2.

12. be built around direct teaching sessions, with extensive teacher-child interaction and involve a multi-sensory approach. The programme should include guidance on how direct teaching sessions can be adapted for online delivery (live or recorded)

All of our phonic sessions are interactive and should have the best practices and pedagogy for children to learn their phonics. Phonics Play contains planning that can be used by the adults in the lessons to deliver an effective phonics lesson. The plans can be adapted and made to best suit the children and adult delivering the lesson. All phonics lesson should be multi-sensory following the best practices built on from the EYFS. All sessions should have the opportunity for the children to write and read words and apply their phonic skills. GPC are taught systematically and there is progression in the planning; which is based on the phases suggested in the Letters and Sounds guidance.

13. provide resources to enable teachers to deliver the programme effectively including sufficient decodable reading material to ensure that, as children move through the early stages of acquiring phonic knowledge and skills, they can practise by reading texts closely matched to their level of phonic attainment, that do not require them to use alternative strategies to read unknown words

Our guided reading books are made up of Big Cat Collins Letters and Sounds decodable texts and the Beanstalk decodable books. These were carefully chosen and considered the core texts to be used to teach reading. We have chosen the books based on our curriculum, illustrations that reflect our diverse cultures in our school or to match our values and school ethos.

14. include guidance and resources to ensure children practise and apply the core phonics they have been taught

We have access to Phonics Play, which includes planning and resources, to reduce workload. We also have a range of purchased and in-house made resources to support the teaching of phonics. If we identify a need for something in particular, such as games or listening devices, we purchase these based on reviews, recommendations or if there is a need for the resource.

15. enable children's progress to be assessed and highlight the ways in which the programme meets the needs of those who are at risk of falling behind, including the lowest attaining 20% of children

All children that are working below ARE have a personalised programme and provision based on their individual needs. For example, if the pupil needs to read more often then additional reading sessions are placed into the timetable, if we need to purchase a specific resource to support a child's learning then we will do so.

16. provide full guidance for teachers to support the effective delivery of the programme and appropriate, programme-specific training either directly, through appointed agents or remotely; with assurances that there is sufficient capacity to do so and that those delivering this training will have appropriately high levels of expertise and relevant experience

Teachers can access full guidance from the Letter and Sounds documentation. They also have access to the plans and resources from the Phonics Play website. The Head Teacher and English leads are both reading, phonics and English subject experts, which is based on theory and practice. We are always available for advice and can work with adults or children to give advice or guidance on next steps. We design, create and deliver personalised training based on the needs of the adult, so they can deliver a high-quality phonics or reading session.