



Phonics Policy

We walk kindly in the footsteps of Jesus Christ as we live and learn.

For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. (Romans 14:5)

God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom (Daniel 1:17)

Phonics gives children the key to unlocking the alphabetic code for their reading and spelling; these skills are vital in accessing all areas of the curriculum. Therefore, phonics is the cornerstone of our teaching at BRW.

At Blessed Robert Widmerpool School, we endeavor to ensure that all children become successful and fluent readers by the end of Key Stage 1. We believe this is achievable through a combination of strong, high quality, discrete phonics teaching combined with a literature-rich approach that promotes a 'reading for pleasure' culture. We aim for all of the children at BRW to leave school at the end of Key Stage 2 with a genuine passion for reading and writing. We aim to ensure our pupils have obtained all of the skills they need to tackle any book of their choosing after leaving our school. It is essential that our approach to teaching phonics and reading is accessible to all learners, regardless of background.

Intent (What do we want children to learn? What beliefs and values underpin this?)

At BRW, we strive to:

- Establish consistent practice, progression and continuity in the teaching and learning of phonics throughout the school with a focus on quality first teaching. High-quality phonics teaching secures the crucial skills of word recognition that, once mastered, enable children to read fluently and automatically. Once children are fluent readers, they are able to concentrate on the meaning of the text.
- Ensure that systematic synthetic phonics is the first approach pupils use to help with their reading and spelling. As children develop knowledge of phonemes and their grapheme correspondences, they are able to segment words and apply their phonic knowledge to encode to spell and decode to read with increasing confidence and accuracy.
- Have robust assessment procedures to check progress and identify pupils in need of intervention. We use a combination of formative and summative assessment to ensure we have

a current picture of our class/school and can support and challenge the children where necessary.

- Support pupils in applying their phonic knowledge in their reading and writing across the whole curriculum so they are able to apply their phonics skill in real-life contexts.
- Help pupils to develop a love of reading and enjoy reading for pleasure, across a range of genres.
- Empower our children's parents/carers to know how to support their child with reading and writing, building on the techniques we use at school.
- Provide a communication rich environment, which during the Early Years is play-based.

Implementation (How will children learn it? How is learning organised?)

At BRW, we:

- Teach phonics in a sound to print direction which allows the children to organise their learning in an effective way.
- Sequence our lessons based upon the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised structure of teaching.
- Ensure phonics lessons are focussed and fun. Our phonics sessions are tailored to the age and attainment of the children we teach. They include a mixture of aural, motor, oral and visual tasks. Our sessions are engaging and focussed on the main goal: reading and spelling.
- Include a mixture of reading (decoding) and spelling (encoding) in our lessons to ensure children are skilled in both areas.
- Teach phonics every day from FS-Yr2. *Phonics- 'Crack the Code'* sessions will take place weekly in KS2 with further interventions for those children who needed it.
- Provide the children with decodable reading books that are matched to their phonics ability.
- Encourage the children in FS/KS1 to choose a 'sharing story' each week to share with their family. This book is not matched to their phonics ability but is instead chosen to develop their love of reading.
- Assess the children using formative strategies in every phonics lesson.
- Make early interventions for children assessed as having concerns regarding speech and language, so that poor speech does not delay the gaining of phonics skills.
- Conduct summative assessments by assessing the children each term using the Revised Letters and Sounds assessment (this will happen for all children in FS/Year 1 and where needed in Yr 2-Yr 6).
- Ensure our SEND pupils, when appropriate, are included in our phonics lessons and provided with teaching and resources that are tailored to their needs.
- Provide reading workshops for our parents to help them to gain an understanding of our phonics teaching so that they are able to continue this teaching at home.
- Ensure that our pupils who are in the bottom 20% of reading attainment are read with daily.
- Motivate our DA pupils to read as much as possible by providing them with a range of age-appropriate books at the beginning of the year and continue to support them to find books that inspire them.
- Provide all staff with regular phonics CPD to ensure that they feel confident and skilful in the teaching of phonics.

- Model the application of the alphabetic code through phonics in shared reading and writing, both inside and outside of the phonics lesson and across the curriculum.

Impact (How do you know the children have learned it? What do you do if they haven't?)

At BRW, we have:

- Children who can apply their knowledge of phonics to their reading and writing, allowing them to be confident, competent writers and readers.
- Staff who are passionate and skilled in the teaching of phonics, reading and writing.
- Children who are engaged and motivated during their phonics lessons. Our children understand the behaviour and learning mind-set needed to achieve and take part in our sessions.
- A culture where a secure knowledge of phonic sounds enables reading for pleasure as part of our reading curriculum.
- High numbers of children pass the phonics screening check and show progress in their phonics assessments each year.
- Inclusion phonics teaching where all pupils, including those with SEND, are included in phonics teaching and able to progress and achieve in their reading and writing skills.

At BRW, we evaluate our impact by:

- Taking part in continual professional dialogue with staff to receive their feedback and ensure they are kept up to date with most recent phonics research and best practice.
- Conducting phonics learning walks from FS-Yr 6 to support our staff in providing outstanding lessons.
- Analysing data and noting where they may be areas of weakness in our teaching; or recognising classes that may need further intervention or support.
- Speaking to pupils and collecting pupil voice that will help us to best support and challenge our pupils.
- Collecting parent voice to identify where parents may need extra support.

Our Phonics Timetabling

Foundations for phonics in Nursery

- We provide a balance of child-led and adult-led experiences for all children that meet the curriculum expectations for 'Communication and language' and 'Literacy'. These include:
 - sharing high-quality stories and poems
 - learning a range of nursery rhymes and action rhymes
 - activities that develop focused listening and attention, including oral blending
 - attention to high-quality language.
- We ensure Nursery children are well prepared to begin learning grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) and blending in Reception.

Daily phonics lessons in Reception and Year 1

- We teach phonics for 30 minutes a day. In Reception, we build from 10-minute lessons, with additional daily oral blending games, to the full-length lesson as quickly as possible. Each Friday, we review the week's teaching to help children become fluent readers.
- Children make a strong start in Reception: teaching begins in Week 2 of the Autumn term.
- We follow the [Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised expectations of progress:](#)

- Children in Reception are taught to read and spell words using Phase 2 and 3 GPCs, and words with adjacent consonants (Phase 4) with fluency and accuracy.
- Children in Year 1 review Phases 3 and 4 and are taught to read and spell words using Phase 5 GPCs with fluency and accuracy.

Daily Phonics lessons in Year 2

- We teach daily phonics lessons in Year 2. These lessons follow the Revisit/ Teach/ Practice/ Apply pedagogy.
- These lessons build on the teaching in FS/Y1 and support the children to develop further understanding of English orthography.

Daily Keep-up lessons ensure every child learns to read

- Any child who needs additional practice has daily Keep-up support, taught by a fully trained adult. Keep-up lessons match the structure of class teaching, and use the same procedures, resources and mantras, but in smaller steps with more repetition, so that every child secures their learning.
- We timetable extra phonics interventions for any child in Year 2 and above who is not fully fluent at reading or has not passed the Phonics screening check. These children urgently need to catch up, so the gap between themselves and their peers does not widen. We use the Rapid Catch-up assessments to identify the gaps in their phonic knowledge and teach to these using the Rapid Catch-up resources – at pace.
- These short, sharp lessons last 15-20 minutes daily and have been designed to ensure children quickly catch up to age-related expectations in reading.

Statutory assessment

- Children in Year 1 sit the Phonics screening check. Any child not passing the check re-sits it in Year 2.

Our Phonics Lessons

BRW's phonics lessons are focussed around teaching phonics in a **sound-to-print** direction. The English language system is made up of a code. The code is primarily made up of 44 units of sound that we can blend together to make words (phonemes). These sounds can be represented in a written code in approximately 175 different ways (graphemes). We would rather our pupils organise their phonics schemas into 44 categories, rather than 175 categories, therefore we teach phonics with a sound -> print focus. Teachers will focus on a phoneme each lesson and then will share ways this sound can be written.

“Today, we are exploring the /ee/ phoneme. Say this sound with me: /ee/. Here is one way we can spell the /ee/ phoneme.” (Model writing ‘ea’.)

Teachers pronounce the sounds as purely and clearly as possible so that pupils can clearly differentiate the separate phonemes in each word.

Lessons will follow the Revisit/ Teach/ Practice/Apply approach. This will enable pupils to revisit previous learning and build on previous schemas that have been developed, thus freeing up their capacity to learn new knowledge. Teachers will be clear about objectives for any session and make sure that the children understand them (e.g. *‘By the end of this week you will all be able to spell the phoneme /f/; today we are learning one way you can spell this sound.’*) Teachers will make it clear to pupils, when appropriate, that there is more than one way to represent

that phoneme they are learning about; this will happen from FS onwards. Activities must be high quality, practical, efficient and focused on the main goal – reading and spelling using phonics. Teachers will plan activities that ensure all children are involved (e.g. call and response practice) and they will plan activities that maximise the number of words children read and spell. Formative assessment will take place during the session and will be used to determine next steps clearly, including identifying children who might need immediate extra support.

Children will have the opportunity to practise their spelling and reading in every session. Spelling improves phonemic awareness at a faster rate because recalling graphemes is harder than recognising them (Uhry and Shepherd, 1993). Dictation will be a vital part of a phonics session. From Year 1 onwards, writing simple dictated sentences must be included in every session. This provides children with opportunity to practise and apply their spelling, without their having to think about what it is they want to say. In FS, children will practise spelling but they may use letter cards or magnets to arrange the spelling as this may be more appropriate for their learning needs.

Where and how children sit during phonics sessions will be decided by the class teacher. During direct teaching, it might be more beneficial for children to sit on the carpet nearer the class teacher. Whereas, children might move to tables if they are practising how to form letters accurately. In FS, some sessions take place outside to enable all groups to work in a quiet environment that promotes easy listening and/or movement. Some writing on whiteboards may take place on the carpet in order to maximise learning time during the lesson. Children will have other opportunities to practise handwriting when sitting at a table.

In KS2, all children (where appropriate) will take part in a weekly phonics session led by the class teacher. These lessons will focus on a specific sound/phoneme and some of the more complex graphemes that can represent this sound (linked to the spelling rules noted in the National Curriculum English guidance). This lesson will encourage the children to ‘crack the English code’ and be orthography detectives. The spellings that are discussed during this session will be used as the children’s spelling list for the week. Teachers will ensure all children can access the spellings for each week by condensing the list for some children. For those children who are still on the Phonics Tracker in KS2, they will receive extra weekly phonics interventions on top of the whole class phonics session.

Common Exception Words

CEWs (sometimes referred to as ‘tricky words’) are named in this way because they contain GPCs that are unusual or have not yet been taught. Children will be taught to read and spell these by noting the part that is an exception to what they have been taught so far. For example, in the word ‘said’, ‘s’ and ‘d’ correspond to the phonemes /s/ and /d/ as usual, but ‘ai’ corresponds to the phoneme /e/, which is unusual. Teachers will gradually introduce these CEWs during the course of the year so that pupils have covered all CEWs linked to their year group by the end of the year. Teachers can refer to these words as ‘common exception words’ or ‘tricky words’ depending on the age of the children.

Assessment

Formative assessment will take place every lesson and teachers will use this assessment to inform future teaching. There is no expectation that there will be formal written evidence for every phonics lesson. During some lessons, the children may practise spelling/handwriting in books, whereas in other sessions, the children might use whiteboards thus allowing the teachers and teaching assistants to quickly recognise where they might be areas of weakness across the class.

- **Summative assessment** for [Reception](#) and [Year 1](#) is used:
 - every six weeks to assess progress, to identify gaps in learning that need to be addressed, to identify any children needing additional support and to plan the Keep-up support that they need.
 - by SLT and scrutinised through the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* assessment tracker, to narrow attainment gaps between different groups of children and so that any additional support for teachers can be put into place.
- **Fluency assessments** measure children's accuracy and reading speed in short one-minute assessments. They are used:
 - in Year 1, when children are reading the Phase 5 set 3, 4 and 5 books
 - with children following the Rapid Catch-up programme in Years 2 to 6, when they are reading the Phase 5 set 3, 4 and 5 books
 - to assess when children are ready to exit their programme. For Year 1 children, this is when they read the final fluency assessment at 60–70+ words per minute. Older children can exit the Rapid Catch-up programme when they read the final fluency assessment at 90+ words per minute. At these levels, children should have sufficient fluency to tackle any book at age-related expectations. After exiting their programme, children do not need to read any more fully decodable books.

Decodable Books

Our decodable books are split according to the GPC structure covered in the Revised Letters and Sounds document. Children will be provided with decodable reading books matched to their phonics ability. For example, at the end of the Autumn Term, Year 1 children will have covered all of Phase 5.1. For those children who were able to access and understand these GPCs covered in this phase, they will be moved on to 5.1 books because they have been taught (and can read) all of the necessary sounds. For children who are not yet confident with all of the GPCs covered in Phase 5.1, they will continue to read their Phase 1, 2, 3 or 4 books in order for them to feel successful when reading.

BRW pupils take home a new decodable book each week and they are encouraged to read this text several times over the course of the week in order to build reading confidence and fluency. Teachers set reading as a daily homework activity. Parents are encouraged to write in their child's reading record and provide feedback about their child's reading. A reading workshop is

run each year for parents. This workshop shares ways in which parents can comment in reading records to help us build a dialogue about their child's reading.

Along with their decodable reading book, children will also take home a 'Sharing Story'. This will be a book that they can share with their family or their friends. This book will be chosen by the child and will not be linked to their phonics ability; therefore it may be a book that they need support with. Children are able to pick any story of their choice in order to develop a love of reading and story sharing.

SEND

Teachers use quality first teaching strategies during phonics sessions to enable all children are able to achieve and thrive. Children with SEND will be provided with lessons that are: paced suitably, engaging, motivating and take into account the child's individual strengths, weaknesses, knowledge and understanding, and profile of needs. Lessons will provide multiple opportunities for overlearning (recall, retrieval, practice and application at the level of the alphabetic code, word, sentence and text).

Handwriting

Children are taught to form letters accurately during their phonics session. This may involve the teacher modelling the accurate formation then children copying it into their books or onto whiteboards. Our school follows the Nelson Handwriting scheme. Children will not be taught to join letters or 'lead in' before Year 2 because this will obscure the children's understanding of the basic letter formation.

Catholic Social Teaching

Catholic Social Teaching is integral to our English curriculum. We prioritize themes that reflect CST principles in the following ways:

Dignity of the Human Person

Every child is made in the image and likeness of God.

- Ensure the phonics programme is **inclusive** and respects each child's unique learning journey.
- Promote **personalised support** for students who struggle, ensuring no one is left behind.
- Celebrate individual progress, not just attainment.

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

Prioritise the needs of the most vulnerable learners.

- Provide **targeted interventions** for children who are disadvantaged or have additional needs.
- Make resources accessible for all families, including those with limited literacy or English proficiency.
- Train staff to recognise and support vulnerable pupils compassionately.

Solidarity

We are one human family – what affects one affects all.

- Encourage a **community approach to learning**, including peer support during phonics activities.
- Foster a **classroom environment of encouragement**, where students help one another succeed.
- Share success as a group – not just as individuals.

The Common Good

Education is a shared good that benefits the whole community.

- Design our phonics teaching to **enable all children to fully access the curriculum**, participate in school life, and contribute to society.
- Involve **families and carers** in supporting reading at home – workshops, resources, etc

Rights and Responsibilities

Children have a right to education and a responsibility to respect others' learning.

- Create **clear, consistent expectations** for phonics learning behaviour.
- Teach children that learning to read empowers them to advocate for justice and truth.

Participation

Everyone has a right to be heard and to take part.

- Use **engaging and interactive phonics lessons** that invite all learners to participate, regardless of ability.
- Seek feedback from children about what helps them learn best.

Stewardship of Creation

Use resources responsibly and encourage creativity.

- Use **sustainable materials** where possible (e.g., digital tools instead of excessive printing).
- Encourage **storytelling and reading** that reflects care for creation and others.

Vocabulary – for teacher subject knowledge

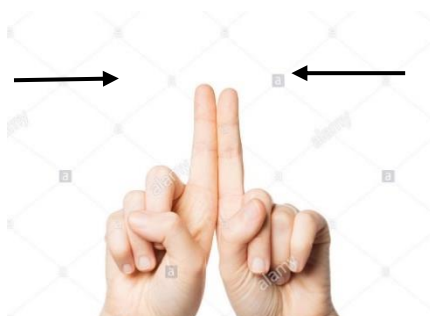
This vocabulary will be used (where appropriate) from FS-Yr 6:

base word	A word to which a prefix or suffix is added to form a new word. Examples include see + ing = seeing and play + er = player.
blending	This involves looking at a written word, looking at each grapheme and using knowledge of GPCs to work out which phoneme each grapheme represents and then merging these phonemes together to make a word. This is the basis of reading.
CEW common exception words	CEWs (sometimes referred to as ‘tricky words’) are named in this way because they contain GPCs that are unusual or have not yet been taught.

compound word	When you combine two or more words together, e.g., football, railroad, moonlight and crosswalk, you create a compound word.												
consonant clusters/ adjacent consonants	Consonant clusters (also known as ‘adjacent consonants’ or ‘consonant blends’) consist of separate phonemes and children should be taught to pronounce each one before blending them. <table><tr><th>Example word</th><th>Phonemes in word (total)</th><th>Phonemes in consonant cluster</th></tr><tr><td>s-p-i-n</td><td>4</td><td>/s/ /p/</td></tr><tr><td>c-l-u-m-p</td><td>5</td><td>/c/ /l/ and /m/ /p/</td></tr><tr><td>ch-o-m-p</td><td>4</td><td>/m/ /p/</td></tr></table>	Example word	Phonemes in word (total)	Phonemes in consonant cluster	s-p-i-n	4	/s/ /p/	c-l-u-m-p	5	/c/ /l/ and /m/ /p/	ch-o-m-p	4	/m/ /p/
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consonant digraph	A digraph made up of two consonants. Examples: sh - /sh/ ck - /k/ gn - /n/												
consonant phonemes	There are twenty one consonant letters in the English language; the whole alphabet minus the five vowels. Saying a consonant phoneme involves constricting airflow in different locations in your mouth. Consonant sounds are produced with the vocal tract restricted or completely closed. Phoneticists (who study the sound of the human voice) divide consonants into two types: voiced and voiceless. Voiced consonants require the use of the vocal cords to produce their signature sounds; voiceless consonants do not. Both types use the breath, lips, teeth, and upper palate to further modify speech. An easy way to teach a child about voiced consonants is to have them place two fingers on their throat. As they say a letter, they can actually feel their vocal cords vibrate. If they feel a vibration, the consonant is “voiced”. (Click on the picture below for more information.) Examples of Voiced and Voiceless Consonants shells gloves books												

contraction	A short way to write two words as one by writing the two words together, while leaving out one or more letters. For instance, do not = don't and would not = wouldn't, cannot = can't and so on.																													
cvc words	An abbreviation for consonant-vowel-consonant. This is a simple way of indicating the order of the graphemes in words. For example, it (VC), cat (CVC), bench (CVCC).																													
decode/ reading	Reading: To decode words, children are taught to look at graphemes in written words from left to right and to say each corresponding phoneme in turn. Then they blend the phonemes to say the whole word.																													
digraph	A grapheme containing two letters that spell one sound. Hold two fingers up and say, "Two letters; one sound" 																													
diphthong	Phoneme where the mouth glides from one vowel sound directly into another in the same syllable – both vowels may be heard, but not quite making their usual sounds because of the blending. These include oi, oy, ow, and ou.																													
fricatives	Phonics definition – consonant sounds that are made by the sound of air friction in the mouth. Examples of fricatives in English are s as in "sitter," z as in "zebra," and the two th sounds as in "think" and "this."																													
grapheme-phoneme correspondence	The number of graphemes that correspond to the number of phonemes.																													
graphemes	A grapheme is a letter or group of letters that usually represents a single phoneme. 1. One grapheme usually represents a single phoneme <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Description of example</th><th>Grapheme</th><th>Example word</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td rowspan="4">Graphemes (of one, two, three and four letters) represent a single phoneme⁶</td><td>b</td><td><u>big</u></td></tr> <tr> <td>sh</td><td><u>fish</u></td></tr> <tr> <td>air</td><td><u>hair</u></td></tr> <tr> <td>augh</td><td><u>caught</u></td></tr> </tbody> </table> 2. Different graphemes can be used to represent the same phoneme <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Description of example</th><th>Grapheme</th><th>Example word</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td rowspan="6">Graphemes (of one or more vowel and consonant letters) represent the single phoneme /oe/</td><td>o</td><td><u>old</u></td></tr> <tr> <td>oa</td><td><u>boat</u></td></tr> <tr> <td>ow</td><td><u>crow</u></td></tr> <tr> <td>oe</td><td><u>toe</u></td></tr> <tr> <td>o-e</td><td><u>stone</u></td></tr> <tr> <td>ough</td><td><u>dough</u></td></tr> </tbody> </table>		Description of example	Grapheme	Example word	Graphemes (of one, two, three and four letters) represent a single phoneme ⁶	b	<u>big</u>	sh	<u>fish</u>	air	<u>hair</u>	augh	<u>caught</u>	Description of example	Grapheme	Example word	Graphemes (of one or more vowel and consonant letters) represent the single phoneme /oe/	o	<u>old</u>	oa	<u>boat</u>	ow	<u>crow</u>	oe	<u>toe</u>	o-e	<u>stone</u>	ough	<u>dough</u>
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	Description of example	Grapheme	Phoneme
	The grapheme 'ea' represents three different phonemes in three unrelated words	<u>ne</u> at	/ee/
		he <u>a</u> d	/e/
		gr <u>ea</u> t	/a-e/
A grapheme can consist of: • one letter, for example, 'b' – in big • two letters (a digraph or a split digraph), for example, 'sh' in ship, 'a-e' in make • three letters (a trigraph), for example, 'igh' in light • four letters, for example, 'ough' in bough, 'eigh' in weight. In a few cases, one grapheme represents two phonemes, for example in the word 'uniform', the first grapheme 'u' represents /y/ and /oo/.			
homograph n.b: greek-graphein	A word with the same written form as another word, but with a different meaning.		
homonyms n.b: comes from greek word meaning 'name' (onyma)	These words can be homophones, homographs or both. Homonym may be used to refer to either homophones or to homographs. Some people feel that the use of homonym should be restricted to words that are spelled alike but are different in pronunciation and meaning, such as the bow of a ship and the bow that shoots arrows.		
homophones n.b: greek - phonos	Words that sound the same but are different in meaning or spelling.		
onset	The consonant sounds in a word that came before the first vowel sound in a syllable; Not all words or syllables have onsets (at, oar)		
open syllable	A syllable that ends in a vowel sound, typically a long vowel sound (tiger, hotel)		
oral blending	This involves hearing phonemes and being able to merge them together to make a word. Children need to develop this skill before they will be able to blend written words.		
phoneme	The smallest unit of sound. There are approximately 44 phonemes in English (it depends on different accents). Phonemes can be put together to make words. Different phonemes signal a contrast in word meaning. For example: • the difference between the words 'gap' and 'cap' is the difference between the phonemes /g/ and /k/ at the start of each word • the difference between 'fine' and 'fight' is the difference between the phonemes /n/ and /t/ at the end • the difference between 'stale' and 'stile' is the difference between the phonemes /ae/ and /igh/ in the middle of each word.		

	English has about 20 vowel phonemes and 24 consonant phonemes (this can depend on accent).
phonemic awareness	The ability to hear, identify and manipulate sounds (phonemes) is known as Phonemic Awareness. It involves teaching phonics by isolating syllables, which are made up of short vowels, long vowels and consonants. The concept is auditory; it does not involve printed words. Once mastered, Phonemic Awareness makes readers less likely to struggle with decoding and spelling skills.
prefix	A syllable or group of syllables attached to the beginning of a word or root to change its meaning (reprint, unpack, dislike)
pure sounds	Pronouncing each letter sound clearly and distinctly without adding additional sounds to the end e.g. 'f' not 'fuh.' N.B: Some are easier to say by dragging the sound out e.g. fffffff rather than 'fuh' or mmmmmm rather than 'muh.' https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IwJx1NSineE
r-controlled vowels	An 'r' sound following a vowel sound almost always distorts the vowel, making such words harder to spell – cat/car. Common r-controlled vowels are: ar, er, ir, or, ur.
rhyming	Rhyming words are words that have the same ending sounds. For example, "cat" and "hat" are rhyming words. Rhyming helps a child to develop phonological awareness skills, which play an important part of becoming a good reader.
rime	The first vowel sound and any others that follow it in a syllable (cat, treat, chair). Cat, sat and fat rhyme because they share a rime. Each syllable in a word can be analysed in terms of onset/rime: fantastic, playground, and airplane.
schwa	The vowel sound of any unaccented syllable in English. The schwa sound is represented by the symbol the /ə/. It makes the /uh/ sound of a vowel in an unstressed syllable. The word "bug" is one example of the schwa sound.
segmenting for spelling/encoding	Spelling: To encode words, children are taught to identify the phonemes in spoken words first. This is also referred to as 'segmenting' spoken words. Then they write the graphemes that represent the phonemes.
split digraph	A digraph that is split between a consonant (a-e in make). A split digraph usually changes the sound of the first vowel. For example, compare the pronunciation between hug and huge. Hold both index fingers apart then bring them together and say, "two letters; one sound". 
suffix	A syllable or group of syllables attached to the end of a word or root to change its meaning (s, ed, ing)

syllable	A minimal unit of sequential speech sounds made up of a vowel sound or a vowel consonant combination and always contains a vowel sound
synthetic phonics	The term 'synthetic' phonics refers to the verb 'synthesise', meaning 'to combine'. The skill of segmenting words into their individual sounds is needed for spelling. Word reading and spelling are 'reversible processes'. Reading involves blending sounds to say a whole word; spelling involves segmenting a whole word to identify the sounds in it.
tetragraph	A grapheme containing four letters that represent just one sound (phoneme). Eg. eigh-t = eight Hold four fingers up and say: "four letters; one sound"
the alphabetic code	The written code that translates into sounds of speech. Our complex alphabetic code has come about because English has absorbed many different languages (and, to a small extent, alphabets) through religion, invasion, trade and other reasons. The language continues to change, absorbing more words and generating entirely new vocabulary.
trigraph	A grapheme containing three letters that represent just one sound (phoneme). Hold three fingers up and say: "Three letters; one sound" 
vowel digraph	A digraph made up of two vowels Examples: ea - /ee/ ie - /igh/
vowel phonemes	Letter vowels: a, e, i, o, u Simply put, it is a speech sound that can be articulated without blocking the oral part of the breath channel. Vowel sounds are produced with the vocal tract completely open. For children, a sound made with our mouth mostly open. Each vowel has a short and long sound. • Long vowels "say their names". For instance the word "oh" contains the long vowel sound "o" and the word "paid" has the long 'a' sound. See the definition of Long Vowel Sounds below for more examples. • Short vowels do not say their names. The short "a" sound can be heard in the word 'pat'. It's an "aah" sound. The short "e" sound can be heard in the word 'pet'. It's an "eh" sound. The short "i" sound can be heard in the word "pit" or "ick". The short "o" sound can be heard 'pot'. It's an "aw" sound. The short 'u' sound can be heard in the word 'put', "but" or "rug". It's an "uh" sound.

Reviewed by Phonics Lead: September 2026

Reviewed by SLT:

Review by Governors: