

# Phonics



Essential Letters and Sounds (ELS) is the phonics programme we use in school. Its aim is simple: *to help all children learn to read well, and quickly.* ELS teaches children to read by recognising phonemes (the smallest units of sound) and the graphemes (written representations of those sounds), then using this knowledge to read words.

Children begin learning phonics at the very start of Reception, with daily, explicitly taught lessons built into the timetable. Children are taught the knowledge and skills, enabling them to apply it independently.

Throughout the school day, children draw on their growing phonics knowledge across the curriculum and have frequent opportunities to practise reading.

Daily phonics lessons continue in Year 1 and beyond to ensure all pupils become confident, fluent readers.

We follow the ELS progression and sequence, which allows children to revisit and consolidate what they already know while deepening their understanding of the alphabetic code (GPCs–Grapheme-Phoneme Correspondences). This ensures they can confidently decode any unfamiliar words they encounter.

Children experience the joy of language and books while rapidly gaining the skills needed to become fluent, independent readers

and writers. ELS introduces relevant, ambitious vocabulary that supports them on this journey.

Teaching begins with single letter sounds before moving on to digraphs such as *sh* (two letters, one sound), trigraphs such as *igh* (three letters, one sound), and quadgraphs such as *eigh* (four letters, one sound).

We teach children to:

- Decode (read): by identifying each sound in a word and blending them together to read fluently.
- Encode (write): by segmenting each sound in a word to spell it accurately.

ELS lessons follow a consistent structure so children know what to expect, what they need to do, and how to succeed. This supports them in mastering the alphabetic code and applying it confidently in reading.

ELS is based on the principle that children should *keep up* rather than *catch up*. Teachers provide immediate support within lessons so that any child struggling with new content can be helped straight away. When additional support is needed, short, focused 1:1 interventions are used, ensuring they are targeted, effective, and timely.