

Debbie Hepplewhite's suggestions for effective and supportive phonics provision and practice

**Are the following suggestions features of your phonics provision and practice?
You may find this information useful as a *check list or audit!***

The Systematic Synthetic Phonics Teaching Principles:

Can all teaching staff and supporting adults readily describe the *Synthetic Phonics Teaching Principles*?

Think of the principles as teaching a body of **KNOWLEDGE** and specific **SKILLS** (**core** skills and **sub**-skills).

KNOWLEDGE:

Teach the *alphabetic code knowledge* (the letter/s-sound correspondences) in an *incremental sequence* and understand that the code is *reversible*.

SKILLS:

Model how to put the letter/s-sound correspondences introduced to immediate use with real words teaching the **three core skills**:

1. **Decoding** (reading) – Synthesise ('say the sounds' in response to the letters and letter groups and blend) all through the printed word to 'discern' the target word. *Modify the pronunciation* of the word to sound like the actual word where necessary.
2. **Encoding** (spelling) – Orally segment (split up) the spoken word from beginning to end to identify the phonemes (smallest sounds) and know which graphemes (letters and letter groups) *are code for* the identified sounds.
3. **Handwriting** – Learn to write the 26 lower case letter shapes, then the 26 upper case (capital) letter shapes, of the alphabet (including letters correctly positioned on writing lines).

Application:

Apply to a bank of *cumulative* words, *plain* sentences and texts, and *decodable* reading books which match the level of alphabetic code knowledge and blending/segmenting/handwriting skills taught to date, when asking the learner to read or write *independently*.

Avoid:

Do not teach an '*initial sight vocabulary*' or '*tricky words*' where learners are expected to memorise the whole words *by their global shapes*.

Do not teach or encourage *guessing or predicting words* from their overall shape, or from picture cues, context cues or initial letter cues (sometimes known as '*multi-cueing reading strategies*' or a '*range of reading strategies*'). Pictures and context, however, **support comprehension** of the text.

Do not link letter *names* with reading or early spelling.

For more details see:

<http://www.phonicsinternational.com/Features%20of%20the%20Synthetic%20Phonics%20Teaching%20Principles.pdf>

Free posters describing the **sub-skills** and **core skills** for decoding, encoding and handwriting:

http://www.phonicsinternational.com/FR_PI_Posters_for_phonics_routines.pdf

Display:

Do all teachers maximise teaching and learning opportunities with well-organised, clear and content-rich phonics display for reading, spelling and handwriting? How useful and supportive are the phonics visual aids for learners?

Select the most prominent and accessible wall, or walls, in your classroom or teaching area allowing plenty of space for clear and organised display. Use the display material routinely for teaching and learning purposes. Avoid mixing display material in your classroom such as numbers and letters – keep a *clear zone* for your phonics display.

Before giving learners verbal prompts with phonics reading, spelling and handwriting, are they trained and empowered to find appropriate support material *on display* to prompt themselves?

Can learners see the information required from where they work and/or can they refer to the information by quick access to the display? [Alphabetic Code *Frieze* can be much higher (if the font size is large) than the *Alphabetic Code Chart* which has much smaller font and many details on it.]

Display permanently:

- a large-size main **Alphabetic Code Chart** that can be reached readily by teachers and learners (to show the rationale of *spelling alternatives* as code for the various sounds of speech; include *whole printed words* to exemplify the spelling alternatives; display a chart with any *organisational features* which are programme-specific – e.g. colour-coding, mnemonic pictures and/or letter/s-sound correspondences introduced in a particular order)
- an **Alphabet Poster** with upper and lower case letter shapes (to show alphabetical order; letter formation; and position of letters on a writing line; when appropriate display letter formation for joined handwriting according to the school policy)

Display cumulatively:

- **Frieze posters** which feature large-font letter/s-sound correspondences as they are introduced along with any programme-specific mnemonics (aids to memory such as key pictures to prompt the sounds and link letter shapes with sounds)
- **'Say the Sounds' posters** consisting of graphemes (letters or letter groups) as they are introduced in the programme – also display multiple copies around the classroom and the school with different combinations of graphemes (useful for 'Revisit and Review' – *teacher-led* and *incidental practice*)
- **High-frequency tricky words** as they are drip-fed into the phonics programme of work and to support general reading and writing as required within the wider curriculum – note the straightforward part of the words and *highlight* the unusual parts of the words
- **Spelling word-bank posters** which are part of the systematic phonics programme (e.g. words with the same spelling/sound patterns – *bird, girl, skirt, third, birth, shirt*) and which arise incidentally in the wider curriculum

Display as required:

- posters with **sensible combinations of words** such as '*over there', 'their things', 'people, friends', 'here, there, everywhere', 'when, who, where, why, what happened'*'
- **graphemes as they are 'discovered'** which do not appear on the main Alphabetic Code Chart (create hand-made posters as required and add any further words with the rare spelling to make incidental spelling word banks – e.g. '*giraffe, gaffe*' and '*heart, hearth*'')

Please note:

Debbie Hepplewhite's approach for synthetic phonics provision and practice consists of 'two-pronged' **systematic** and **incidental** phonics teaching. The content, quality and organisation of the **main display** are key for supporting both systematic and incidental teaching and learning. Avoid mixing posters with conflicting mnemonic systems.

Teaching and Learning Sequence:

Are all teaching staff and supporting adults fully aware of the *Teaching and Learning Sequence or Cycle*?

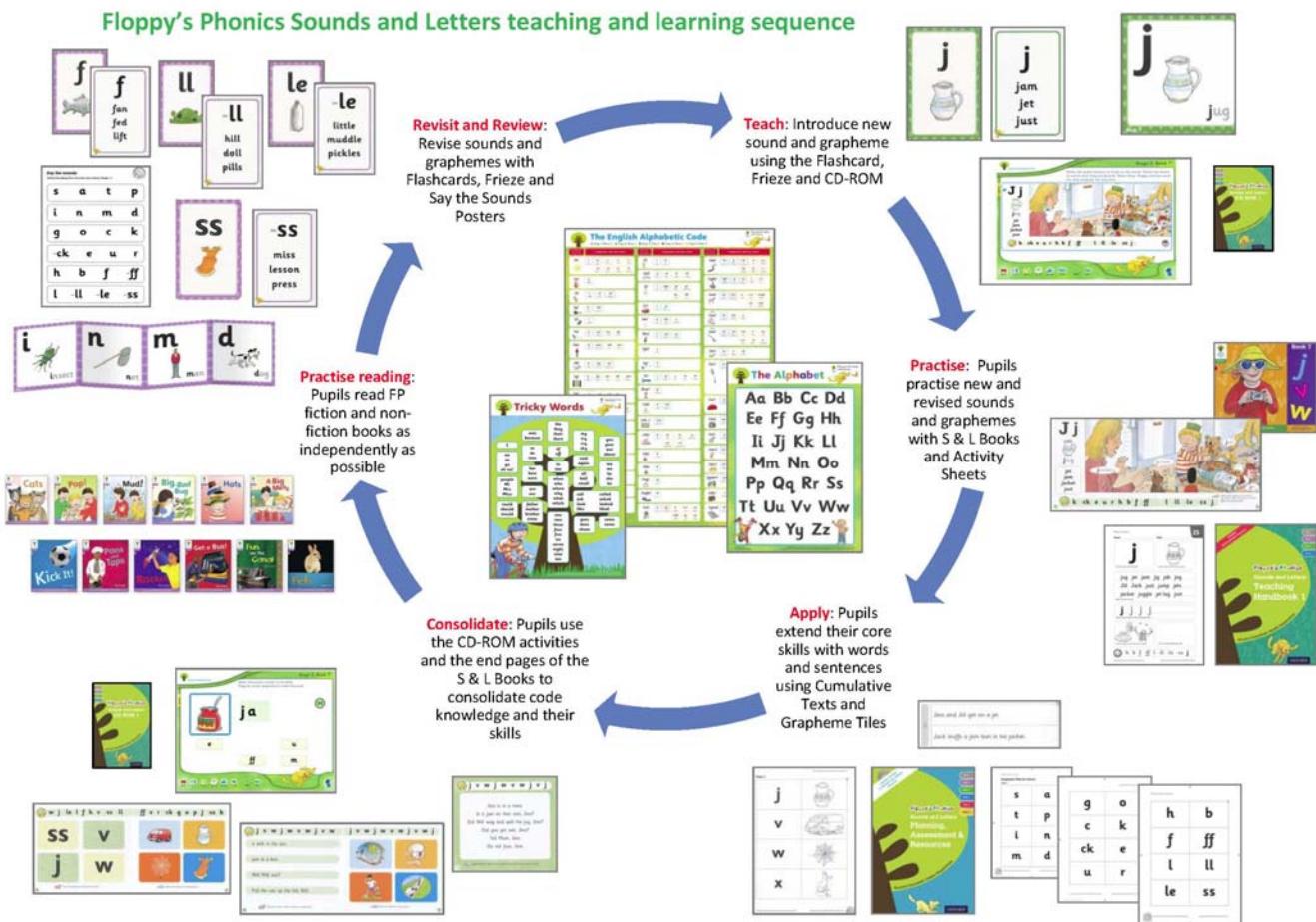
Teacher-led:

- *Revisit and Review* letter/s-sound correspondences of the alphabetic code taught to date
- *Introduce* new or focus letter/s-sound correspondence and model skills with a few word examples

Pupil-practice:

- *Practise* the new or focus letter/s-sound correspondence at *word level* with the *three core skills* with at least some paper-based resources which *belong* to each learner (most fit-for-purpose and engages each learner)
- *Apply and extend* with plain (paper-based) sentences and texts for each learner (learners may need *differentiated instructions* for use)
- *Read* cumulative, decodable reading books for *independent* practice
- *Build-up* awareness and *knowledge* of spelling word banks – on wall display and in phonics folders

Oxford Reading Tree Floppy's Phonics Sounds and Letters



The Oxford Reading Tree Floppy's Phonics Sounds and Letters programme has been designed for young learners.

Within, and in addition to, the teaching and learning sequence in the *Floppy's Phonics Sounds and Letters* programme, build up children's knowledge of **spelling word banks**. Learners are continuously engaged with their own learning and assessment through use of the *Say the Sounds Posters* (as A4 paper-based personal copies), their own *Activity Sheets* and *Cumulative Texts*.

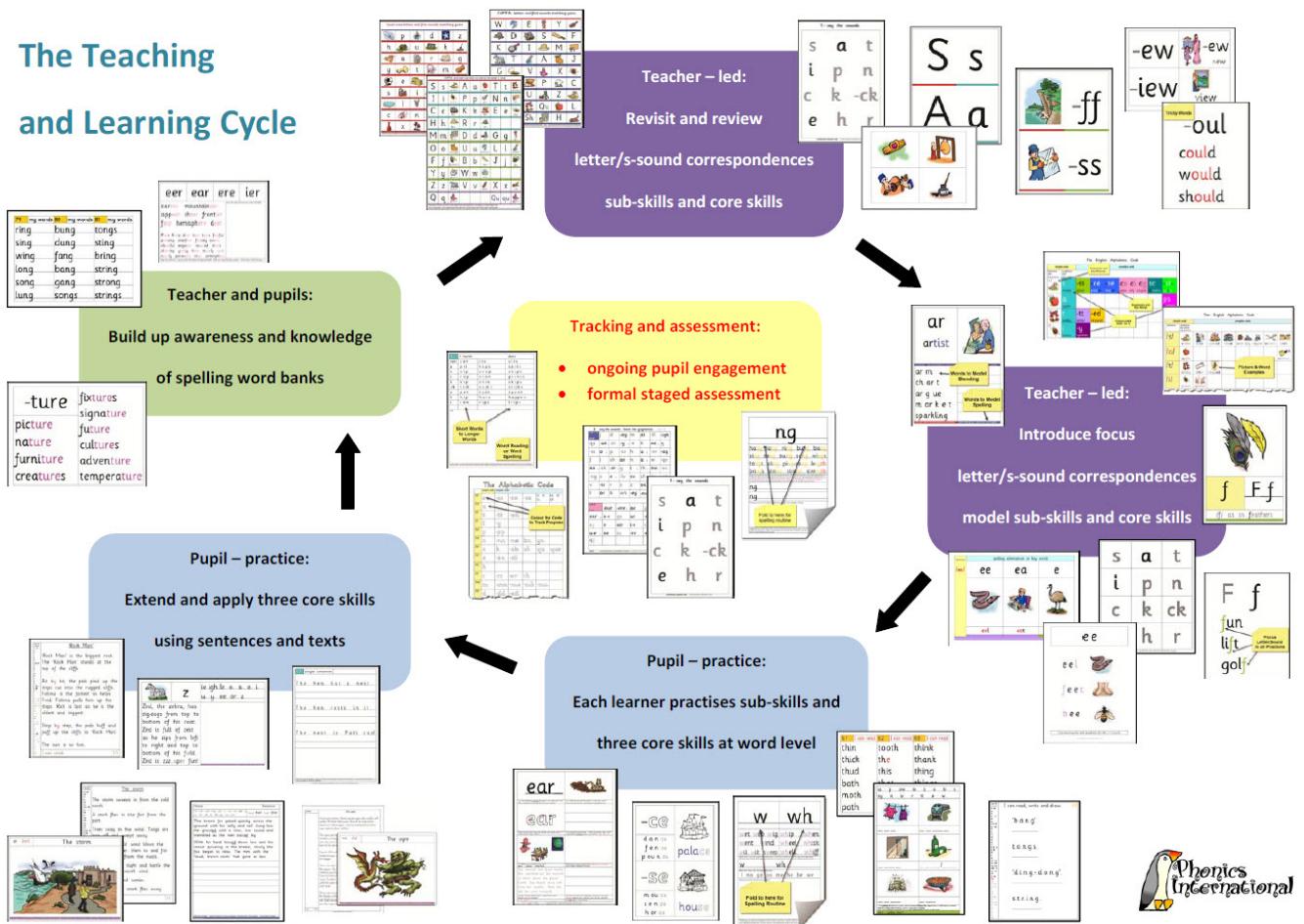
Are learners trained to ‘tick’ with pencils when they have ‘said the sounds’ and ‘blended the words’ using their own A4 *Say the Sounds* posters and *Activity Sheets*?

Continue with *Phonics International* resources for spelling and grammar to complement the infant stage or after the infant stage

Phonics International

See below an example of the *Phonics International* teaching and learning cycle which can be used from four years old onwards or as a programme *to complement*, or build on, other systematic synthetic phonics infant/beginners' programmes. *Phonics International* can be used with all ages.

The Teaching and Learning Cycle



There are 400+ plain cumulative, decodable sentences and texts within the *Phonics International* programme. Learners are readily engaged with their own learning and assessment through all their personal paper-based resources. With a ‘layering’ approach, writing and spelling may lag behind reading and you may find it helpful to use resources for the same learners from different units within the programme – for different purposes.

In addition, provide cumulative, decodable reading books in the early stages of learning to read.

Pace:

Do teachers introduce and revisit letter/s-sound correspondences at the rate of two to four per week dependent upon the learners' age and stage of learning, and capacity for learning, and their professional judgement?

Do teachers provide phonics lessons daily but find ways of revising and consolidating phonics knowledge and skills *incidentally* multiple times per day wherever possible?

Little and often practice and revision will increase and embed learning and lead to more rapid and greater *automaticity*. Aim for '**keeping up**' and '**extending quick learners**' rather than allowing learners to get behind, or coast.

Provide slower-to-learn pupils with additional time and practice as required. Work in partnership with parents and guardians if possible. **Guard against doing the work for the slower-to-learn pupils as this will disempower them.**

Whole school approach and continuity of provision and practices:

Is the Simple View of Reading, as recommended in the Rose Review, known and understood by all members of the teaching staff?

Printable diagrams of the *Simple View of Reading* and *Simple View of Writing* for training and assessment purposes:

http://www.phonicsinternational.com/The_Simple_View_of_Reading_model.pdf

Is everyone in the school fully trained in the school's phonics programme, resources and practices?

Do teachers in all years build on the alphabetic code knowledge and phonics skills using a main *Alphabetic Code Chart* routinely – increasingly building up knowledge of spelling word banks where words are spelt with the same letter/s-sound correspondences and spelling patterns? Are the **same phonics routines** for reading and spelling used across the school?

Has the school identified a **phonics manager** who has sufficient *non-contact* time to observe and support all staff in implementing the phonics programme and practices effectively?

Has the school planned regular staff meetings for continuing professional development to review the phonics and basic literacy skills teaching and learning and how this complements higher-order language and literacy provision?

Has every learner been provided with a **phonics exercise book** with writing lines?

Has every learner been provided with a **phonics folder** which becomes part of the school's daily '**bookbag**' routine?

Does every learner's phonics folder include cumulative *Say the Sounds Posters*, a *mini Alphabetic Code Chart* and annotated copies of the *Sounds Book Activity Sheets* and cumulative *plain sentences and texts*?

Intervention:

Have teachers tried using the Simple View of Reading diagram to help them think about learners' reading profiles in broad terms thus supporting them to identify learners' needs and track progress?

Do teachers appreciate that some intervention programmes attempt to teach both phonics and language comprehension at the same time in formats which are not rigorous enough for either requirement?

If learners need rigorous *phonics* intervention, ensure that the intervention provides ample practice of the sub-skills and core skills and is not diluted by masses of adult talking. Consider the actual **quantity** of grapheme-practice in

Revisit and Review and the number of words blended and segmented in *Apply* routines - as well as reviewing the overall **quality** and content of the provision. In other words, ensure *plenty of practice* at alphabetic code and word level – extending to sentences and texts being *mindful of the benefit of simple, repetitive routines* using the available time to best effect.

Guard against intervention programmes which use **different** phonics routines, different materials and different units of sound (for example, consonant clusters and onset and rime phonics) *compared to the main phonics programme*.

Please note: For phonics intervention, consider using the mainstream programme's resources but provide more time, more opportunities and quiet spaces in which to practise. Liaise with parents or guardians wherever possible.

Reading:

reading aloud to learners, independent reading, guided/group reading, home reading, free reading, stock of books

Are learners read to routinely by an adult enabling high-quality, shared, *spoken language* and *book language* as appropriate?

Do infants or beginners have ample *cumulative, decodable reading books* to enable learners to practise and apply their alphabetic code knowledge and blending skill as independently as possible?

In 'English as a new language' contexts, are there ample decodable reading books which are age appropriate and which also support vocabulary enrichment and spoken language development?

Are teachers making good use of the *Cumulative Texts* in the *Floppy's Phonics Sounds and Letters* programme and/or in the *Phonics International* programme? (There are cumulative sentences and texts throughout both programmes including 400+ cumulative sentences/texts of different levels of complexity and vocabulary in *Phonics International*.)

Do teachers use their understanding of the *Simple View of Reading* to provide group reading sessions based not just on the decodability of the books but **for their intellectual content**?

Please note: Be mindful of being *inclusive of all learners' intellect* whatever their capacity to read the words in the books. Teachers can read books to learners particularly when the learners cannot decode all the words in the books independently to:

- excite learners about books, subjects and ideas
- enrich language comprehension and oral expression
- increase knowledge and understanding of the world and empathy towards others
- develop an appreciation for the genres of literature

Information for parents:

Does the school routinely provide face-to-face parents' information events using the school's phonics programme/s, reading books and practices? Are parents provided with a mini Alphabetic Code Chart?

Do teachers *regularly* provide phonics resources and information for parents/guardians in how to support their children's literacy including alphabetic code knowledge and basic skills (reading, spelling and handwriting) along with language development? Have all teachers adopted the *phonics folder and bookbag routine* to annotate and celebrate learners' activities, to inform parents, to enable revision where required, to track learners' progress?

Does the literacy policy include the school's *mini Alphabetic Code Chart* and describe the phonics skills along with information about language and literature enrichment, book provision and **the importance of masses of talking**?