

Letters and Sounds

Phase Six Parent Information.

By the beginning of Phase Six, children should know most of the common grapheme-phoneme correspondences. They should also be able to read hundreds of words, doing this in three ways:

- reading the words automatically if they are familiar;
- decoding them quickly and silently because their sounding and blending routine is now well established;
- decoding them aloud.

Children's spelling should be phonemically accurate, although it may be a little unconventional at times! Spelling usually lags behind reading, as it is harder.

During this phase, children will become fluent readers and increasingly accurate spellers.

READING

At this stage many children will be reading longer and less familiar texts independently and with increasing fluency. The shift from learning to read to reading to learn takes place and children read for information and for pleasure. Children need to learn some of the rarer Grapheme Phoneme Correspondences (GPCs) and be able to use them accurately in their reading.

A few children may be less fluent and confident, often because their recognition of graphemes consisting of two or more letters is not automatic enough. Such children may still try to use phonics by sounding out each letter individually and then attempting to blend these sounds (for instance /c/-/h/-/a/-/r/-/g/-/e/ instead of /ch/-/ar/-/ge/).

The necessity for complete familiarity with these graphemes cannot be overstated. The work on spelling, which continues throughout this phase and beyond, will help children to understand more about the structure of words and consolidate their knowledge of GPCs. For example, children who are not yet reliably recognising digraphs and are still reading them as individual letters will get extra reinforcement when they learn to spell words containing the digraphs such as [road](#), [leaf](#), [town](#), [cloud](#), [shop](#).

As children find that they can decode words quickly and independently, they will read more and more so that the number of words they can read automatically builds up. Increasing the pace of reading is an important objective. Children should be encouraged to read aloud as well as silently for themselves.

To become successful readers, children must understand what they read. They need to learn a range of comprehension strategies and should be encouraged to reflect upon their own understanding and learning. Such an approach, which starts at the earliest stages, gathers momentum as children develop their fluency. Children need to be taught to go beyond literal interpretation and recall, to explore the greater complexities of texts through inference and deduction. Over time they need to develop self-regulated comprehension strategies:

- activating prior knowledge;
- clarifying meanings;
- generating questions, interrogating the text;
- constructing mental images during reading;
- summarising.

Many of the texts children read at this stage will be story books, through which they will be developing an understanding of the author's ideas, plot development and characterisation. It is important that children are also provided with opportunities to read a range of non-fiction texts, which require a different set of strategies. The use of a contents page, index and glossary makes additional demands on young readers as they search for relevant information. In reading simple poems, children need to adapt to and explore the effects of poetic language, continuing to develop their understanding of rhythm, rhyme and alliteration.

From an early stage, children need to be encouraged to read with phrasing and fluency, and to take account of punctuation to aid meaning. Much of the reading now will be silent and children will be gaining reading stamina as they attempt longer texts.

In addition, as children read with growing independence, they will engage with and respond to texts; they will choose and justify their choice of texts and will begin to critically evaluate them. It is important throughout that children continue to have opportunities to listen to experienced readers reading aloud and that they develop a love of reading.

SPELLING

Tenses

Children will learn simple past tense, e.g. **I looked**, not continuous past tense, e.g. **I was looking**.

Before children are taught to spell the past tense forms of verbs, it is important that they gain an understanding of the meaning of 'tense'. Since many common verbs have irregular past tenses (e.g. **go – went**, **come – came**, **say – said**) it is often easier to teach the *concept* of past tense separately from the *spelling* of past tense forms.

Children will learn to apply a range of suffixes and the rules that accompany them; e.g. **-ed**, **-ing**, **-ed**, **-er**, **-est**, **-ful**, **-ly** and **-y**.

These are examples of common suffixes suitable for Phase Six:

- **-s** and **-es**: added to nouns and verbs, as in **cats**, **runs**, **bushes**, **catches**;
- **-ed** and **-ing**: added to verbs, as in **hopped**, **hopping**, **hoped**, **hoping**;
- **-ful**: added to nouns, as in **careful**, **painful**, **playful**, **restful**, **mouthful**;
- **-er**: added to verbs to denote the person doing the action and to adjectives to give the comparative form, as in **runner**, **reader**, **writer**, **bigger**, **slower**;
- **-est**: added to adjectives, as in **biggest**, **slowest**, **happiest**, **latest**;
- **-ly**: added to adjectives to form adverbs, as in **sadly**, **happily**, **brightly**, **lately**;
- **-ment**: added to verbs to form nouns, as in **payment**, **advertisement**, **development**;
- **-ness**: added to adjectives to form nouns, as in **darkness**, **happiness**, **sadness**;
- **-y**: added to nouns to form adjectives, as in **funny**, **smoky**, **sandy**.

The spelling of a suffix is always the same, except in the case of **-s** and **-es**.

Children will learn high-frequency and topic words by developing their ability

to identify the potentially difficult element or elements in a word (e.g. the double **tt** in **getting**, the unusual spelling of /oo/, and the unaccented vowel **i** in **beautiful**).

Children will develop their familiarity with different strategies for memorising high-frequency or topic words e.g. by writing their own mnemonics, using the base word, syllables and analogy (e.g. using would to spell could).

The best way of giving children words to memorise is to write them in a sentence so that they get used to using the target words in context.

The purpose of this routine is for children to:

- show what they have learned;
- practise writing words that follow the same pattern or convention;
- use the words in the context of a sentence;
- reflect on what they have learned and learn from their errors.

Using dictionaries.

Children should be taught to use a dictionary to check their spelling. By Phase Six, the repeated singing of an alphabet song at earlier phases should have familiarised them with alphabetical order. Their first dictionary practice should be with words starting with different letters, but once they are competent at this, they should learn how to look at second and subsequent letters when necessary. Knowledge gained in Phase Five of different ways of spelling particular sounds is also relevant in dictionary use: for example a child who tries to look up **believe** under **belee-** needs to be reminded to look under other possible spellings of the /ee/ sound. Having found the correct spelling of a word, children should be encouraged to memorise it.

Links with handwriting.

Developing a fluent joined style is an important part of learning to spell and the teaching of spelling and handwriting should be closely linked.

In Phase Six children need to acquire more word-specific knowledge. They still need to segment words into phonemes to spell them, but they also learn that good spelling involves not only doing this and representing all the phonemes plausibly but also, where necessary, choosing the right grapheme from several possibilities. In some cases, word-specific spellings (e.g. **sea/see; goal/pole/bowl/soul; zoo/clue/flew/you**) simply have to be learned. It is important to devote time in this phase to learning common words with rare or irregular spellings (e.g. **they, there, said**) as the quantity children write increases and without correction they may practise incorrect spellings that are later difficult to put right.