

ELS (Essential Letters and Sounds) Information for Parents

What is phonics?

Phonics is a way of teaching students to read the words on the page. It teaches student how sounds are represented by written letters. Students are taught to read words by blending these sounds together to make words. For example, they will be taught that the letters 'm-a-t' blend together to make 'mat'.

A synthetic phonics programme, such as ELS, provides a structure for teaching these sounds in a certain order to build up student's learning gradually.

We follow a DfE validated systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) programme called Essential Letters and Sounds (ELS).



How is ELS taught in school?

Once students are ready to start the programme, there is a daily phonics lesson where students are taught a new sound, or where they review sounds learned earlier in the week. This may be shown to the class on the whiteboard or through other activities designed by class teachers.

Students learn the letters that represent the sounds. They are then asked to read words and sentences with the new sounds in. Students will also practise writing the letters that represent the sounds. Although at Springhallow, we often separate the teaching of writing skills as progress in reading and writing may not happen at the same rate for our students.

Additional support

Where further support is required, we use interventions to ensure that any learning gaps are filled. Where phonics is not suitable, other approaches may be used.

Assessment

Assessment of the student's reading skills is made whenever they are reading with an adult.

Decodable readers

The Oxford University Press decodable readers support Essential Letters and Sounds and have been carefully matched to every aspect of the programme. We use these books in school and as take-home readers.

How can I help at home?

Reading decodable books

Some students will bring home reading books matched to the phonic sounds they are learning in school. They will have coloured labels like this:

Phonics Phase 2
Set 1 s,a,t,p

Phonics Phase 5 set (iv)
y /igh/, /ee/, /i/, ch /c/, /sh/, dg, g /j/, ey
/ai/, /c/ c, k, ck, ch, /f/ ph, /v/ ve, /w/ wh,
/e/ ea, ie, /ow/ ou

Reading words and sentences that they **can de-code** (sound out) helps students to become confident readers. Reading texts several times can help this confidence.

There will be some words that are not de-codable, we call these ‘harder to read and spell’ words or ‘tricky’ words. You can help your child to read these words.

Shared Reading books

Some students will bring home books labelled



These books are not matched to student’s phonic knowledge and so they will need to be enjoyed together. You can read the words they do not know how to decode and also support their comprehension.

Some things you can do with your child to help them:

- Talk about and point at what you can see in the pictures.
- Take turns in turning pages and reading words or sentences.
- Talk about who is in the book, what they are doing and where the book is set.
- Make predictions about what might happen next.

Read the book a couple of times, so that they are familiar with it and can talk about the story or identify characters.

Many of our students have de-coding skills but lack an understanding of the language of the story.

If your child brings home a book which appears “too easy”, it is most likely that their teacher would like them to work on their comprehension of what is happening in the story. If the book appears “too difficult”, it is most likely a story to be told by you and discussed with your child.