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# Phonics Policy

May 2026

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Signed:

Headteacher: Mrs Rebecca Day

Date:

Signed:

Chair of Governors: Mr Dave Smithers

Date:

Review Date: May 2027

## **Intent:**

At Greenmount Primary School, we are committed to the delivery of excellence in the teaching of phonics and strive for all children to become confident and fluent readers, quickly. We aim to develop each child's reading through progressive phonics teaching and promote a love of reading that will stay with our children all their lives. Being able to read is the most important skill children will learn during their early schooling and has far-reaching implications for lifelong confidence and wellbeing. The independent review of early reading conducted by Jim Rose confirmed that 'high quality phonic work' should be the prime means for teaching children how to read and spell words. The review also highlighted the importance of developing from the earliest stages children's speaking and listening skills, ensuring that beginner readers are ready to get off to a good start in phonic work. Such work should be set within a broad and rich language curriculum. The use of phonics is one of the many skills needed to be able to be a reader and writer.

We aim to teach high quality phonics daily to ensure the children have the best start possible in reading and writing. The learning of phonics is the beginning of children's body of knowledge, skills and understanding that are an essential part of learning to read. In order to read and understand texts, children must learn to recognise/decode the words on the page. Good quality phonics teaching allows the child to be secure in the skills of word recognition and decoding which allows children to read fluently. This will result in children being able to read for pleasure and will allow them to move onto developing higher order reading skills. These phonic skills need to be taught systematically with accurate use of assessment to ensure learning is pitched at the correct level for all children.

## **Implementation:**

For children to be able to achieve these intentions, we provide them with a consistent and engaging approach of phonic teaching, following Essential Letters and Sounds. The aim of ELS is to get all children to read well, quickly. It teaches children to read by identifying the phonemes (the smallest unit of sound) and graphemes (the written version of the sound) within words and using these to read words. Essential Letters and Sounds is a systematic synthetic phonics programme and was validated by the Department for Education in June 2021.

## **The principles of ELS are based upon:**

- The delivery of whole-class, high-quality first teaching, with well-structured daily lesson plans
- The use of consistent terminology by teachers, children and parents
- The use of consistent resources that support effective teaching
- Repetition and reinforcement of learning

- Regular and manageable assessment to ensure that all children 'keep up' rather than 'catch up'

We believe every child should leave Greenmount Primary School with the skills of a successful reader and writer. All members of staff are trained in ELS to ensure that we have an expert team of reading teachers led by our Phonics Lead. As staffing teams, we regularly meet to review our practice and plan interventions to ensure all children are accessing the teaching and regular assessments are completed to monitor progress (week 5 of each half term). Our classrooms consistently follow the clear lesson structure of ELS and this ensures that all children receive high-quality first teaching every day. Individuals and groups of children access interventions for blending and/or GPC (grapheme-phoneme correspondence). In addition, some children are taught through a SEN, slower progression approach to ensure recall and application of sounds.

From the moment children enter our Preschool, they are exposed to a variety of sounds throughout the day (environmental and instrumental) with the emphasis on speaking and listening. Phase One in Preschool, plays a vital role in a child's introduction to phonics. This also focuses on; body percussion, rhythm and rhyme, alliteration, voice sounds and oral blending. This supports and prepares our children for learning grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPC) when they start school in Reception.

In line with the School's commitment to excellence in Phonics, each class in Reception and KS1 teach phonics as a discrete lesson every day, as well as referring to phonics as part of teaching and learning throughout other curriculum lessons. Throughout the day, children use their growing phonic knowledge to support them in other areas of the curriculum and have many opportunities to practise reading decodable texts precisely matched to the phonic knowledge. This includes reading 1:1 with a member of staff, with a partner during paired reading and during whole class reading sessions. We know that reading is a fundamental life skill and we ensure this is reflected in our timetabling across all year groups.

The structure of each lesson at Greenmount Primary School ensures fidelity to the ELS scheme. Through the rigorous ELS teaching programme, children will build an immediate understanding of the relationship between the sounds they can hear and say (phonemes) and the written sounds (graphemes). Every ELS lesson has been designed to ensure that the minimum cognitive load is placed on the learner. The structure of the lessons allows children to predict what is coming next, what they need to do, and how to achieve success. Lessons enables regular opportunities for blending and segmenting of phonemes/graphemes in every lesson. Lessons follow structured to meet the needs of all our learners, based on regular and accurate assessment, and there is fidelity to the scheme.

## **Teaching and Learning**

ELS teaches children to read using a systematic synthetic phonics approach. It is designed to be used as part of an early learning environment that is rich in talk and story, where children experience the joy of books and language whilst rapidly acquiring the skills to become fluent independent readers and writers. ELS teaches children to:

- decode by identifying each sound within a word and blending them together to read fluently
- encode by segmenting each sound to write words accurately.

As noted, Phase 1 phonics begins in Preschool; supporting the fundamental development of foundations skills for early reading. Discrete phonics lessons take place daily across Reception and Key Stage 1 (as well as for those children in KS2, who continue with phonics). Lessons follow the cycle of 'Review, Teach, Practice, Apply, Review'. Daily phonics lessons are taught from the first day in Reception, where children will be introduced to phonemes and graphemes. Reception teaching incorporates Phase 2-4 throughout the year, and they are introduced to Phase 5 in the summer term. (See Appendix 1 for ELS overview for Phase 1-5). Children develop their ability to segment and blend phonemes together to say a word. Opportunities for reading are provided through daily fluency reading sessions and opportunities are provided for children to practice and apply their learning in provision. Children are provided with fully decodable books that are matched to their ability. Children are taught 'Harder to read and spell words' (HRSW) weekly. (See Appendix 2 for – How ELS is delivered).

In Year 1, these skills are built upon further, where children can revisit prior phases of phonics and learning. Daily phonics sessions continue into Year 1 most specifically incorporating phase 5 throughout most of the year. They continue to build upon that by learning alternative spelling and pronunciation. Daily phonics and where appropriate interventions are given to children to help them in their reading and writing skills. Children are provided with decodable books matching their reading level so they can decode and feel confident reading, as well as offered a book for pleasure. We want children to leave Year 1 with the confidence to read in a fluent and accurate manner and support our families to achieve this aim. Phonics plays a hugely important part in Year 1 as the statutory Screening Test is taken during this year. Staff work closely with children and parents to provide as many opportunities as possible to revisit and apply their knowledge. We hope that this provides children with the tools to achieve success in their Phonics Screening.

Year 2 consolidates all previous learning and expands upon it once again. Children can practice and revisit their knowledge and apply that to their reading and writing. The emphasis moves towards spellings, homophones, and suffixes. Children are still provided with decodable books which help revisit and maintain good phonetic knowledge. At this stage, most children should have passed their phonics screening and have good level of phonetic knowledge to start building up their fluency. Building up fluency is a key focus alongside developing confidence and understanding readers. Every year however, there are children who retake the Screening Test in year 2. These children continue with the teaching and learning of phonics with the main class body and supplement this with further interventions to close gaps, specific to their need. These interventions are individual specific and match to specific gaps in learning. Alternatively, where appropriate, some children may require reteaching of phonics

phases and may work in a smaller group to receive high quality teaching by revisiting ELS teaching presentations from a previous phase.

As children move further up school, support with phonics continues. At Greenmount Primary School we strive to ensure that children are given the opportunity to continue to practice their skill and phonics knowledge and where appropriate children are still provided with decodable books to match their fluency and understanding. For those needed continued phonics teaching, all key stage 2 phonic interventions are structured in the same way following Essential Letters and Sounds. We have incorporated the non-negotiables from Essential Letters and Sounds within school to ensure that all staff are consistent in their approach when teaching phonics and all members of staff are fully trained.

### **Organisation**

Children are grouped across KS1 depending on their current level of attainment. As attainment levels change, children move groups. Lessons are 30 mins every day and follow the 'Review, Teach, Practice, Apply, Review' structure. Guided reading is taught alongside phonics three times a week.

In KS2 phonics interventions are delivered to small groups and/or individuals as required.

### **Decodable Books**

It is vital that whilst children are learning to read, they read books that match their phonic knowledge. ELS aims that children will read a book matched to the current week of teaching, some children will require a book from earlier on in the programme. It is vital that children know the GPCs within the text they are reading independently. At Greenmount Primary School we use The Oxford University Press decodable readers to support Essential Letters and Sounds. These reading books are used during the Review lesson on Day 5 of each week and then sent home to practice at home. Reading books are therefore changed weekly and children keep the books for a week. The aim is for the books to be read three times in school and a further three times at home. Re-reading ensures that children develop their reading skills and fluency. This, in turn, supports their learning in school; as children become more fluent at reading, they are able to focus on their new learning.

### **Correct articulation**

Correct articulation is vital in helping children to learn to blend sounds together. We make sure that the sound produced (each individual phoneme) is as precise and accurate as possible and that no additional sounds are added. For instance, the sound /m/ that starts 'mother' or is embedded in 'impress' needs to sound /mmmm/ and not /muh/. The clearer the sound, the easier it is for a child to blend together (synthesise) the individual sounds to read a word because there are no unnecessary sounds getting in the way. Correct articulation is modelled by staff in all lessons and misconceptions are addressed.

## **Organisation of Phonics**

The Head teacher and Phonics Lead are responsible for overseeing the teaching of phonics to ensure the highest standards of phonics teaching. This includes: Ensuring continuity and progression from year group to year group and the transition from each phase.

- Providing all members of staff with guidelines for the teaching of phonics in line with the school's scheme.
- Advising and supporting colleagues in the implementation and assessment of phonics.
- Assisting with the requisition and maintenance of resources required for the teaching of phonics, within the confines of the school budget.
- Monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in phonics across the school.

The class teacher is responsible for:

- Ensuring progressing in the acquisition of phonics knowledge and skills with due regard to the National Curriculum for English and the non-negotiables for each phase.
- Developing and updating skills, knowledge and understanding of phonics
- Identifying needs in phonics and adapting planning to suit all children.
- Keeping appropriate on-going records (e.g. intervention planning, phonics tracker data)
- Planning effectively for phonics with fidelity to the ELS phonics scheme, liaising with phonics lead when necessary
- Informing pupils and parents of progress, achievements and attainment

## **Inclusion**

All children have equal access to the curriculum as expressed in our Equal Opportunities Policy. We will ensure that phonics is accessible to pupils by using accurate assessment and interventions where required. This is monitored by analysing pupil performance throughout the school to ensure that there is no disparity between groups.

Most able children are identified and suitable learning challenges are provided to give opportunities to deepen their reading skills and to develop confidence.

## **Assessment**

It is important that children's progress is assessed thoroughly, so that any gaps can quickly be identified. Assessment of the children's reading skills is key to ensuring that all children make rapid progress through the programme, and that they keep up rather than catch up. Using the assessment cycle alongside daily in-class formative assessments ensures that all teachers know where every child is in their early reading journey. Assessment occurs in the fifth week of each half term, to allow teachers to target and close any gaps that may be present in either sound knowledge or reading skills. (Appendix 3 – the three interventions used to support the closing of gaps). Assessments may be completed more regularly for

groups/individuals who are participating in daily interventions to monitor progress closely. At Greenmount Primary School we use Phonics Tracker which is an online tool to assess and store data. This provides gap analysis by phoneme and blending. ELS includes specific revision points throughout the programme. Each of these revision points focus on specific skills to support children's rapid movement through the programme, the consolidation of their understanding and the re-activation of knowledge.

Year 1 pupils complete the statutory Phonics Screen in the Summer term and those who did not pass in Year 1 retake the Phonics Screen in the Summer term of Year 2.

# Appendix 1

## ELS Overview – Phase 1 to Phase 5

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3*
<p><i>Nursery/Pre-School</i> <i>ELS Foundation Stage</i></p> <p>Seven aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental sounds</li> <li>• Instrumental sounds</li> <li>• Body percussion</li> <li>• Rhythm and rhyme</li> <li>• Alliteration</li> <li>• Voice sounds</li> <li>• Oral blending</li> </ul>	<p><i>Reception/Primary 1 Autumn 1</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oral blending</li> <li>• Sounding out and blending with 23 new grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs)</li> <li>• 12 new harder to read and spell (HRS) words</li> </ul>	<p><i>Reception/Primary 1 Autumn 2, Spring 1 and Spring 2</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oral blending</li> <li>• Sounding out and blending with 29 new GPCs</li> <li>• 32 new HRS words</li> <li>• Revision of Phase 2</li> </ul>
Phase 4*	Phase 5 including alternatives and lesser-known GPCs	Beyond Phase 5
<p><i>Reception/Primary 1 Summer 1</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oral blending</li> <li>• No new GPCs</li> <li>• No new HRS words</li> <li>• Word structures – cvcc, ccvc, ccvcc, cccvc, cccvcc</li> <li>• Suffixes</li> <li>• Revision of Phase 2 and Phase 3</li> </ul>	<p><i>Reception/Primary 1 Summer 2</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to Phase 5 for reading</li> <li>• 20 new GPCs</li> <li>• 16 new HRS words</li> </ul> <p><i>Year 1/Primary 2 Autumn 1 and 2</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revision of previously taught Phase 5 GPCs</li> <li>• 2 new GPCs</li> <li>• 9 new HRS words</li> </ul> <p><i>Year 1/Primary 2 Spring 1 and 2</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alternative spellings for previously taught sounds</li> <li>• 49 new GPCs</li> <li>• 4 new HRS words</li> <li>• Oral blending</li> <li>• Revision of Phase 2, Phase 3 and Phase 4</li> </ul>	<p><i>Year 1/Primary 2 Summer, Year 2/Primary 3 and Key Stage 2</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With ELS, phonics teaching does not stop at the end of Year 1, but continues as children move through the school, with links being made between their GPC knowledge and spelling</li> <li>• Revision of all previously taught GPCs for reading and spelling</li> <li>• Wider reading, spelling and writing curriculum</li> </ul>

# Appendix 2

## How to Deliver ELS Lessons

ELS is based on simplicity and consistency, and the programme is delivered through whole-class lessons. Throughout ELS, you will use the same teaching sequence – Show, copy, repeat – until each child is independent. The teaching sequence is the same in all stages of the lesson, from whole class teaching to one-to-one intervention. Children are given the opportunity to hear and say each sound, first in isolation, and then within words and sentences. When introducing a new grapheme– phoneme correspondence (GPC) we use a mnemonic or rhyme with an accompanying picture to ensure that children understand. Children then hear this sound in the context of a word, and a picture and/or definition is given to support their understanding. Practice and repetition are key.

### **Give, give, give:**







- Give the GPC – share the new sound or spelling being taught.
- Give the word – put it into context.
- Give the meaning – ensure children can use the vocabulary.

Key teaching features	
<b>Me, then you</b>	The teacher says something, and then the children repeat it exactly.
<b>Provide opportunities</b>	Practice and repetition are key. There is no 'down time' in the lesson – a consistent fast pace is maintained. Children have many opportunities to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hear the sound or word</li><li>• Say the sound or word</li><li>• See the sound or word</li><li>• Read the word</li><li>• Write the word</li><li>• Use new vocabulary.</li></ul>
<b>Provide modelling</b>	Every single aspect of the lesson is modelled for children. As the teacher, your main purpose is not to test the children but to teach them. The Apply activity must always be modelled to the children, even when they are familiar with the structure.
<b>Active teaching and learning</b>	ELS lessons are active – children are engaged at all times, whether joining in with a 'drum roll' to introduce the new sound, using 'robot arms' or 'tracking the teacher' as you move around the room.

## Key teaching features

### Spelling sequence

Encourage children to follow the sequence:

- Say the word 
- Stretch the word 
- Segment the word 
- Blend the word 
- Count the sounds within the word 
- Say the whole word 

This sequence can be used for any word where the children have been taught the GPCs within the word.

## Weekly lesson structure for teaching new phonemes and graphemes

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Review Teach new sound Practise Use the Apply sound-specific sheet Review	Review Teach new sound Practise Use the Apply sound-specific sheet Review	Review Teach new sound Practise Use the Apply sound-specific extract sheet Review	Review Teach new sound Practise Use the Apply sound-specific extract sheet Review	Review newly taught sounds for the week, previously taught graphemes, and harder to read and spell (HRS) words Practise – reading and writing words Apply – reading decodable books and writing phrases and sentences

The review weeks are there to support children in consolidating their understanding of all prior learning. The 'ELS term-by-term progression' chart shows where these occur (available in the ELS handbook). The lesson plans and interactive whiteboard presentations ensure that there is rigour, pace and fidelity in every lesson.

# Appendix 3

## Interventions

Interventions to support ELS 'Decoding fluency is achieved through accurate initial instruction followed by lots of practice.' (Hirsch, 2003)

### Enable intervention plans

Oral blending	
<b>Review</b>	Orally blend up to three words that the child has successfully orally blended before. Using robot arms, model sounding out, and then the child repeats the sounds (if necessary) and says the whole word.
<b>Teach</b>	Model sound-talking and blending a whole word with less familiar GPCs; for example, /r/ /ai/ /n/ – rain. The child repeats this. Do the same with up to six words, which can contain any GPCs. Take care not to use words that are too long for the child to recall and blend.
<b>Practise</b>	Sound-talk a word – do not blend the whole word, as the child needs to practise blending independently. The child repeats the sounds and says the whole word. Repeat with up to six words, which can contain any GPCs. Take care not to use words that are too long for the child to recall and blend.
<b>Apply</b>	<p>Oral storytelling: read aloud a pre-planned short extract*. Choose six words within the extract to be sounded out. These words should vary in length and include GPCs children have already learned and ones they have not yet been taught. The focus here is on ensuring that the child can sound-talk the word and blend. Model sounding out the word, and then the child repeats the sounds in the word and says the whole word. Continue with the story.</p> <p>When the child is more confident with their oral blending, they do not need to sound-talk the word first; they can just blend it.</p>

**Oral blending** - Oral blending is a precursor to reading. This intervention supports children struggling with oral blending and those with any auditory processing difficulties. It allows children who require additional practice of this skill to have short bursts of oral blending to consolidate their understanding and support their auditory discrimination. During this intervention, the Reading Teacher needs to model sound-talking for the child, who then sound-talks before blending the word. This additional one-to-one practice also supports vocabulary learning, communication, listening and speaking skills, and interaction with others.

## GPC recognition

<b>Review</b>	Review up to 12 known sounds using grapheme cards. Where appropriate, model reading the sounds using 'Me, then you'.
<b>Teach</b>	<p>Say the new sound for the child to repeat. Repeat the sound multiple times.</p> <p>Show the grapheme for the sound – say the sound, then show the grapheme. Repeat multiple times.</p> <p>Show the picture and mnemonic for the grapheme.</p> <p>Model running your finger over the grapheme whilst saying the sound. The child then repeats this.</p>
<b>Practise</b>	Spot the grapheme in known words from the lesson or from the word list provided (see Week-by-week Progression Appendix i). Use sound tiles or magnetic letters to make the word. Identify the focus grapheme within the word. Point to the grapheme, sound-talk the word and then blend to read the whole word. The child repeats this.
<b>Apply</b>	Use a decodable reader to show the child sentences that have words with the new sound, known sounds and known HRS words. The child reads the sentences (not necessarily the whole book).
<b>Review</b>	<p>Review the focus sound by showing the grapheme and using 'Me, then you' to model saying the sound.</p> <p>Show the focus grapheme throughout the day and ask the child to say the sound.</p>

**Grapheme–phoneme correspondence (GPC) recognition** - This intervention involves deliberate over-learning, re-teaching and repeated exposure. It will support children with English as an additional language, those new to ELS, those with additional needs and those with auditory processing weaknesses or a fluency block. Before this intervention, you will need to assess the child's grapheme knowledge and be aware of any sound gaps – this should be happening as part of your assessment in every lesson. The intervention is targeted to the day's teaching and can also be used after the Half-termly Assessment to address any gaps that may be apparent. The intervention follows a similar structure to the whole-class session: reviewing previously taught sounds using grapheme cards, teaching the sound/grapheme that needs reinforcing, and applying this skill by word-building and reading.

<b>Blending for reading</b>	
<b>Review</b>	Review reading words with known sounds, including those recently taught, to build fluency and accuracy.
<b>Teach</b>	<p>Show the focus grapheme/s, for example &lt;ai&gt;. Say the sound and ask the child to repeat. Do this multiple times.</p> <p>Say a word with the focus sound, for example 'rain'. The child repeats.</p> <p>Sound-talk the word using robot arms and then blend using blending hands.</p> <p>Say the sound and show the grapheme (using a grapheme card or magnetic letters).</p> <p>Make the word using grapheme cards or magnetic letters.</p> <p>Point at each grapheme and read the word.</p> <p>Repeat with up to four other words that include the focus sound.</p>
<b>Practise</b>	<p>Use word cards to read words with the focus grapheme and other known words.</p> <p>First read-through for each grapheme card: spot the grapheme, sound-talk the word, read the word.</p> <p>Second read-through for each grapheme card: model reading the word quickly. The child repeats.</p>
<b>Apply</b>	Use decodable readers that include the focus sound for spotting sounds. Read words from the book, particularly those with the focus sound. Read sentences that contain words with the focus grapheme and other known graphemes.

**Blending for reading** - This intervention supports a child who requires additional practice for blending. You will need to be aware of any GPC weaknesses and ensure that these are targeted within the session. There is a strong focus on word-building, listening to the sounds within a word and identifying these. Again, this intervention particularly supports the needs of children with auditory processing weaknesses, those new to English and those who are struggling to apply their understanding of digraphs, trigraphs and quadgraphs as their phonic knowledge builds and their awareness of alternative spellings and pronunciations increases.