



Using Letters and Sounds to Move Forwards with Phonics following School Closures

Reading is the key to unlocking every child's full potential and opens up a world of possibilities.

Read On, Get On 2014

The life-changing power of reading means that effective teaching of phonics and early reading must be a priority for schools as they re-open to all pupils. It is essential that the disruption to learning caused by the COVID-19 school closures does not have a long-lasting effect on the education and life-chances of any child, but particularly those who are already vulnerable, whatever the reason. Careful identification of learning needs using a robust assessment system will be essential and schools must also ensure that every aspect of their phonics practice and provision - the day-to-day teaching of phonics and early reading as well as the systems for targeted intervention - is highly effective.

This document provides a practical approach to moving forwards with phonics that can be used by schools which choose to follow Letters and Sounds as their systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) programme. It provides a step-by-step checklist for moving through the phases of the programme from September 2020 which will enable children to build on what they already know and continue to make rapid progress with phonics and early reading in spite of the prolonged gap in teaching during the summer term. The key principles of effective teaching and learning and assessment that are intrinsic to the Letters and Sounds programme underpin each action to ensure teaching time is used effectively from the very beginning.

Guidance is provided in four sections:

Paving the Way: Preparing to Move Forwards with Phonics

Making a Swift Start: Teaching Phonics in Y1 (2020)

Completing the Programme: Teaching Phonics in Y2 (2020)

Filling the Gaps: Establishing an Effective Approach to Assessment and Intervention

Paving the Way: Preparing to Move Forwards with Phonics

Schools can begin to prepare for moving forwards with phonics during the summer term by ensuring:

*** All staff involved in teaching phonics, including any staff involved in delivering targeted interventions, have received recent training in the Letters and Sounds programme and have sufficient expertise to deliver high quality learning experiences**

Recent school closures will mean that some of the teaching content from the Letters and Sounds programme will be taught in a later year group than usual, perhaps by teachers who have not taught it before. It must be taught well and at a rapid pace by teachers who understand the key vocabulary and subject knowledge and are able to model and explain the relevant strategies.

In addition, gaps in learning must be addressed promptly and effectively so that children can catch-up and then keep-up.

Phonics and early reading intervention should take priority, and adults who are not normally involved in these interventions may be redeployed for a period of time. They will need to be trained in the specifics of the programme to ensure interventions are effective in closing gaps.

Time should be allocated for CPD to support these needs. Teachers and leaders who are not working with children over the next few weeks may be able to share their expertise with other members of staff during this time or it may be a good opportunity for all staff to receive an update in Phonics / Early Reading CPD sourced from outside school. Online training packages will be particularly useful as they can be worked through at different times by identified members of staff according to the specific needs of your school.

*** A robust system for assessing progression through the phases of Letters and Sounds is in place**

The Letters and Sounds document outlines key assessment components for each phase of the programme.

Schools should have a clear system in place for tracking progress in each of these components through the phases of Letters and Sounds which is neither time-consuming to administer nor onerous to analyse. This will enable gaps to be identified promptly and addressed effectively and without delay. Staff who will be involved in administering assessments during the autumn term may require specific training to ensure assessments are administered quickly, consistently and accurately in addition to the training needs identified above. A checklist for evaluating your current assessment system is outlined below.

Essential:	
A clear assessment content for all component parts of assessment within the Letters and Sounds programme is provided for each phase <i>i.e. specific words / GPCs are listed for assessing:</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - blending and segmentation skills - word reading and spelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GPC recognition and recall - reading and spelling tricky words
A small number of non-words or pseudo (alien) words are included within the assessment content at each phase	
Assessments are supported by clear guidelines which ensure they are administered consistently	
The assessment content and supporting guidelines ensure assessments can be administered quickly and easily <i>E.g. the key knowledge and skills for each phase are assessed using as few words as possible; there is a specific focus on automatic recognition and recall when GPCs are assessed in isolation</i>	
Assessment materials include specific summary sheets to facilitate effective analysis <i>E.g. raw data transfers easily to provide an overview of each child's current phonic phase for reading / spelling so that children at risk of falling behind are identified immediately; summary sheets are consistent across classes and year groups</i>	
Desirable:	
The assessment schedule encourages more frequent assessment of the knowledge and skills needed for reading than for spelling	
The assessment content is cumulative so that as many previously taught GPCs as possible are re-checked within each phase; revisiting previous phase assessments is therefore rarely necessary	
The specific words used for assessment of word reading and spelling are different from the words used during daily teaching and intervention activities	
The summary sheets enable practitioners and leaders to pinpoint specific areas of need when a child begins to fall behind so that interventions can be carefully targeted without the need for additional assessment	

Making a Swift Start: Teaching Phonics in Y1 (2020)

In September 2020, many Y1 children will be coming back to school after a 6 month break in their education. Providing support to re-establish emotional well-being and to re-integrate children into the rules and routines of school life will be essential but must take place alongside teaching and learning from the beginning so that valuable teaching time is not lost. Prompt assessment to identify gaps in learning will be crucial in enabling effective targeted interventions to take place, but should not be required to identify a starting point for the teaching that takes place in the daily lesson. The

lesson structure outlined within the Letters and Sounds programme has built-in opportunities for revisiting and consolidating previous teaching and there should not be a need to re-teach the phases that were taught in the first two terms of the Reception year. That said, it will be beneficial to identify specific additional opportunities for phonics work within the daily timetable, particularly during the autumn term. This aspect of the curriculum should be given priority at

this time, as becoming a reader (and writer) is important for building self-esteem and positive attitudes to learning as well as providing a vital foundation for future success in education and in life. Allocating additional teaching time to phonics will also reduce the need for intervention - essential where schools have a limited capacity for targeted support.

Teaching that has kept up with the expected pace and progression of the Letters and Sounds phases has ensured all children have already been taught the GPCs from Phase Two and Phase Three which completes the GPC content for the Reception year*.

** Where schools have not kept up with the expected pace of the programme for some or all children, additional "learning a letter" lessons should be built into the timetable—one per day—until all Phase Two / Three GPCs have been taught to all children. This teaching should be timetabled as a daily 10-15 minute session which follows the learning a letter sequence outlined in the Letters and Sounds document: focus on the phoneme—recognise the grapheme (for reading)—write the grapheme (to support spelling).*

Recognition and recall of taught GPCs will always form part of the daily lesson and specific practice linked to the chosen text may also be part of Guided Reading lessons. However, given the likely lack of practice during the spring and summer months, it will be prudent to timetable additional "flashcard" work throughout the day during the autumn term. Two five minute sessions, in addition to the practice at the beginning of the daily lesson, will ensure children develop an automaticity with recognising graphemes that is essential for fluent reading. Flashcard practice should involve speedy revision of an identified small set of graphemes several times prior to "reading through" all of the cards.

Teaching during the first two terms of the Reception year will also have focused on cvc blending and segmentation. Again, children will have built-in opportunities to practise blending and segmenting and to apply these skills for reading and writing during daily phonics lessons, and there will be further opportunities to consolidate this within carefully planned guided reading and writing lessons and at other times across the curriculum. However, these skills will not have been secure for all children by the end of March and it would be wise to timetable at least one additional opportunity to practise oral blending and segmentation for example through a fast-paced "feely bag" game in addition to the incidental practice that can take place as you give instructions to the class ("Get your c-oa-t.") or play simple action games ("Touch your f-ee-t.")

The teaching that should have taken place during the summer term of the Reception year and that will now take place at the beginning of Y1 will build on these skills so that children are specifically taught how to read and spell words containing adjacent consonants. It is therefore important to extend oral blending / segmentation to words that begin and end with adjacent consonants as well as consolidating cvc blending during these activities. Once oral blending / segmentation is secure this teaching slot can be used to build fluency with reading and spelling words used during the daily phonics lesson in order to develop automatic word recognition.

Summary: Prioritise Phonics Teaching (and practice) within your Y1 Teaching Timetable

These sessions should be specifically timetabled, and not left for incidental slots that may not happen.

NB: It is possible that a 5 min burst of teach input could require a 10 min slot on the timetable, particularly at the very beginning of the year.

Daily Phonics Lesson 1 x 30 min per day

NB If required*: *additional* Learning a Letter lesson 5 x 10-15 min per week

Flashcard (recognition) practice 2 x 5 min per day

Blending / Segmentation practice 1 x 5 min per day + frequent incidental opportunities

Guided Reading 2-3 x 30 min with an adult per week

Guided Writing 1-2 x 30 min with an adult per week

Additional reading / writing practice [linked to phonics phases](#) across the curriculum

With a clear plan in place for ensuring Phase Two and Phase Three teaching is secure for all children, it will be possible for the teaching that takes place during the daily lesson to move on within the Letters and Sounds programme, focusing mainly on the Phase Four content that would have been taught during the summer term of the Reception year. There will still be time to teach all of the Phase Five content before the end of Y1 and a specific focus on Phase Four will overcome a significant gap in teaching and learning without impacting on progress in reading and writing in the longer term.

The table overleaf provides a week-by-week overview of the focused teaching input which can take place during Y1 daily phonics lessons throughout the first part of the autumn term in order to effectively cover Phase Four of the Letters and Sounds programme at a rapid pace. It is assumed that the following key features of effective Letters and Sounds practice will also be in place:

- ✓ Teaching is delivered by a well-trained teacher who is also responsible for planning the application of phonic knowledge and skills across the curriculum
 - ✓ Teaching is whole-class so that all children participate in daily practice of Phase Two and Phase Three content, and are exposed to Phase Four content through the teacher modelling / explanation and scaffolded guided practice that takes place during the "Teach" part of the lesson
 - ✓ Lessons are carefully planned to match the four (five) part structure of lessons outlined within the Letters and Sounds programme with a clear focus on reading, writing, or tricky word work (+ consolidation) during daily phonics lessons, and frequent opportunities to **use** developing phonic knowledge and skills in meaningful and interesting contexts across the curriculum
(NB reading and writing)
 - ✓ Reading and writing tasks set within the "Practise and Apply" part of the lesson and at other times (e.g. during guided reading and writing activities) are carefully differentiated to match learning needs
 - ✓ Lessons are organised to promote active involvement - all children spend the majority of the lesson reading or writing and available adults focus on supporting learning rather than leading the lesson, particularly during the "Practise and Apply" section; vulnerable learners are seated within adults' direct line of vision
- NB This requires children to have their own resources for reading such as word grids during reading focus lessons rather than reading "from the board"*
- ✓ An effective system is in place to assess knowledge and skills and provide targeted intervention for children who have not kept up with the pace of the programme or who have specific gaps in learning
(see Filling the Gaps p. 9-11)
 - ✓ The organisation of guided reading lessons promotes using phonics as the route to decoding with a specific focus on teaching children how to apply phonic knowledge and skills and on gaining fluency by re-reading texts before taking them home or exploring them in relation to content domains
(comprehension work)

It is likely that children will master Phase Four reading before they master Phase Four spelling. This is often the case for children in Reception, but likely to be compounded by less frequent practice of writing during the period of school closure. From October half term onwards, the teaching input within reading focus lessons should move onto Phase Five part 1 so that the additional GPCs taught during this part of the Letters and Sounds programme are covered by the end of January. Consideration should be given to recognising these newly taught GPCs in simple cvc words as well as more complex words with adjacent consonants, as usual. Writing focus lessons during the second part of the autumn term should continue to focus on Phase Four spelling, extending to Phase Four root words with identified Y1 prefixes and suffixes as children gain competency.

**Suggested Overview of Focused Teaching Input for daily Letters and Sounds lessons in Y1
(Autumn Term 2020)**

Week One	Re-establish the rules and routines for daily phonics lessons including lesson structure and expectations for active involvement; re-visit use of sound buttons to support sounding and blending and phoneme frames to support accurate segmentation and spelling, plus reading of Phase Two and Three tricky words Liaise with Reception teachers to ensure the pitch matches the lessons taught prior to school closure – this will enable teachers to easily identify children with significant gaps compared to previous attainment	<i>Informal assessment during daily interactions; begin targeted interventions for children already identified as vulnerable learners</i>
Week Two	Teach reading and spelling words beginning or ending with Phase Three consonant digraphs focusing on: - spotting the digraphs before adding sound buttons and bars, using sound buttons and bars to support accurate sounding and blending, and re-reading to build fluency with identified words - accurate segmentation and recording digraphs accurately within phoneme frames Continue to practise reading Phase Two and Three tricky words	<i>Use assessment materials (prioritising word reading) to confirm informal assessment judgements and pinpoint specific gaps; extend targeted interventions as required</i>
Week Three	Teach reading and spelling words containing Phase Three vowel digraphs and trigraphs using the strategies outlined above Practise spelling Phase Three tricky words	
Week Four	Begin Phase Four: Teach the strategies for reading and spelling words ending with adjacent consonants (cvcc) focusing on words containing single letter sound correspondences Ensure cvc words containing digraphs and trigraphs are also included within “Practise and Apply” activities alongside cvcc words as appropriate, making a clear distinction between “words with digraphs and trigraphs” and “words ending in adjacent consonants” e.g. by presenting as separate word lists or phoneme frame sections Begin to teach reading Phase Four tricky words	
Week Five	Revise the strategies for reading and spelling words ending with adjacent consonants (cvcc) focusing on words which also contain digraphs or trigraphs. When reading, continue to focus on spotting the digraphs / trigraphs before adding sound buttons and bars and on applying the taught strategy for AC blending; when spelling, continue to focus on accurate use of phoneme frames Where children are not ready for the challenge of reading / spelling words with digraphs / trigraphs AND adjacent consonant blending, continue to practise them side-by-side as above Continue to teach reading Phase Four tricky words	<i>Evaluate impact of targeted interventions and review intervention schedule</i>
Week Six	Teach the strategies for reading and spelling words beginning with adjacent consonants (ccvc) focusing on words containing single letter sound correspondences Ensure cvc words containing digraphs and trigraphs are included within “Practise and Apply” activities alongside ccvc words as outlined for Week Four Continue to teach reading Phase Four tricky words	
Week Seven	Revise the strategies for reading and spelling words beginning with adjacent consonants (ccvc) focusing on words which also contain digraphs and trigraphs. When reading, continue to focus on spotting the digraphs / trigraphs before adding sound buttons and bars and on applying the taught strategy for AC blending; when spelling, continue to focus on accurate use of phoneme frames Where children are not ready for the challenge of reading / spelling words with digraphs / trigraphs AND segmentation of adjacent consonants continue to practise them side-by-side as above Begin to teach spelling Phase Three tricky words as identified within Phase Four content	<i>Key assessment point for Phase Four; identify children at risk of falling behind</i>
Week Eight	Revise the strategies for reading and spelling words with more than one syllable using words that include opportunities for adjacent consonant blending e.g. lunchbox and lipstick . During “Practise and Apply” sessions ensure children continue to practise reading and spelling words containing taught digraphs and trigraphs as required alongside words with adjacent consonants. Continue to teach spelling Phase Three tricky words as above	<i>Evaluate impact of targeted interventions and review intervention schedule including any additional children identified above</i>

This teaching sequence could be used during the second half of the summer term for teachers to follow with their Reception teaching “bubbles” and when providing activities for home-learning. However, it is likely this teaching will need to be repeated in a more familiar classroom context during the first part of the autumn term as outlined above.

NB Additional challenge for more able children can be built into this sequence by extending word reading and spelling to more complex words such as words with adjacent consonants at the beginning and the end (ccvc) or words with a string of consonants (ccvcc). An increased focus on sentence level reading and spelling using more complex sentence structures and a wider range of taught tricky words as required may also

Completing the Programme: Teaching Phonics in Y2 (2020)

In September 2020, it is possible that the majority of Y2 children will be returning to school after a 6 month break in their education. Providing support to re-establish emotional well-being and to re-integrate children into the rules and routines of school life will be essential but must take place alongside teaching and learning from the beginning so that valuable teaching time is not lost. In usual circumstances, the majority of children have completed the key aspects of the Letters and Sounds programme by Y2 and are able to move onto a focus on spelling, often linked to the content outlined in the National Curriculum spelling appendices. Many schools move away from daily phonics lessons at this point but this will not be possible this year and it is essential that all children continue to participate in a daily Letters and Sounds lesson during the autumn term and possibly beyond. Prompt assessment to identify gaps in learning will be crucial in enabling effective targeted interventions to take place, but should not be required to identify a starting point for the teaching that takes place in the daily lesson.

As stated in Part Two, the lesson structure outlined within the Letters and Sounds programme has built-in opportunities for revisiting and consolidating previous teaching and there should not be a need to re-teach the phases that have already been taught during the Reception year and the first two terms of Y1. That said, as for Y1 pupils, it will be beneficial to identify specific additional opportunities for phonics work within the daily timetable, at the start of the year. It is vital that this aspect of the curriculum takes priority at this time, as becoming a reader (and writer) is crucial for developing self-esteem and cementing positive attitudes to learning as well as providing a vital foundation for future success in education and in life. Allocating additional teaching time to phonics will also reduce the need for intervention - essential where schools have a limited capacity for targeted support.

Teaching that has kept up with the expected pace and progression through the Letters and Sounds phases has ensured all children have already been taught the content of the programme up to Phase Five part 2. This includes teaching all of the GPCs within the Basic Code (Phase Two and Three), the additional GPCs identified in Phase Five Part 1 and the alternative pronunciations of known graphemes identified within Phase Five Part 2. They have also been taught the skills needed for reading and spelling simple (cvc) and more complex (cvcc, cvcc, multi-syllabic) words and have practised them in a range of contexts across the curriculum*.

** Where schools have not kept up with the expected pace of the programme and there are some GPCs or pronunciations that have not yet been taught to some or all children, additional lessons should be built into the timetable—one per day—in order to specifically teach all of the required teaching content. This teaching should be timetabled as a daily 10-15 minute session which follows the strategies outlined in the Letters and Sounds document for teaching a new GPC or teaching an alternative pronunciation of a known grapheme.*

Recognition and recall of taught GPCs will form part of the daily lesson and specific practice linked to the chosen text may also be part of Guided Reading lessons. However, given the likely lack of practice during the spring and summer months, it will be prudent to timetable additional “flashcard” practice throughout the day during the autumn term. A daily five minute session, in addition to practice during the daily lesson, will ensure that children develop an automaticity with recognising graphemes that is essential for fluent reading. In time, it is likely that Phase Two and most Phase Three GPCs will no longer need additional practice and the identified 5 minute slot will allow for more than one review of the specific graphemes that need consolidation.

The daily phonics lesson will also include a built-in opportunity to practise blending and segmenting. Oral blending and segmentation will be secure for most children and will generally be the focus of targeted intervention if this is not the case. This part of the lesson will therefore focus on developing fluency with word reading and spelling, generally revisiting words used in previous lessons, especially regular high frequency words so that children quickly develop automatic recognition of words they will encounter frequently in texts and use often in their writing. Additional word reading practice will be essential for building up fluency at the beginning of the year, for example through an additional 5 min burst of “rapid reading” using sound button cards or a similar resource.

The teaching that should have taken place during the summer term of Y1 and that will now take place at the beginning of Y2 is the Phase Five Part 3 content. This content should be considered in light of the National Curriculum spelling appendix for Y1 to ensure appropriate objectives are selected from the huge range of spelling options listed within the Letters and Sounds document. The move from Phonics for Reading to Phonics for Spelling often involves a shift in the teaching focus for daily lessons so that three lessons focus on the new spelling content and the two further lessons are used for revision of reading skills / tricky word work. As children will have already been taught the Phase Five tricky words for reading and there is an urgent need to consolidate reading skills it would be sensible to continue a two-day focus on word reading each week alongside the three day sequence for teaching spelling. At this point, there is no new tricky word content to cover. However, practice at reading taught tricky words should be built into the timetable, for example, as a daily 5 min flashcard session or incidental opportunities to read up and down a tricky word ladder. Spelling taught tricky words should be practised within English / Talk for Writing lessons as required.

Summary: Prioritise Phonics Teaching (and practise) within your Y2 Teaching Timetable

Sessions should be specifically timetabled, and not left for incidental slots that often don't happen.

NB: It is possible that a 5 min burst of teach input may require a 10 min slot on the timetable, particularly at the very beginning of the year.

Daily Phonics Lesson 1 x 30 min per day

(Generally two reading focus lessons and three spelling focus lesson per week)

NB If required: additional new GPC / alternative pronunciation lesson 5 x 10-15 min per week

Flashcard (recognition) practice 1 x 5 min per day

Tricky word practice 1 x 5 min per day

Fluency practice 1-2 x 5 min per day

Guided Reading 2-3 x 30 min with an adult per week

Guided Writing 1-2 x 30 min with an adult per week

Additional reading / writing practice [linked to phonics phases](#) across the curriculum

The table overleaf provides a week-by-week overview of the focused teaching input which should take place during Y2s daily phonics lessons throughout the first part of the autumn term in order to effectively cover the key elements of Phase Five Part 3 at a rapid pace. It is assumed that the key features of effective Letters and Sounds practice outlined on page 4 will be in place. In addition, it is key that practitioners understand that the objectives covered in reading focus lessons and the resources (the words and sentences) used will be different from the objectives and the resources used within the spelling focus lessons. The teaching sequence for spelling focus lessons should provide opportunities for children to:

- * read and analyse the words they will learn to spell (e.g. sort words according to ai—ay—a-e graphemes)
- * practise writing (copying) target words several times
- * practise writing (spelling) words in isolation and in sentences, both in dictated and self-generated contexts

It is likely that this teaching structure will continue into the second half of the autumn term to provide further practice at reading complex words and words containing the less familiar Phase Five GPCs and alternative pronunciations as well as to continue to increase children's knowledge of spelling options and word-specific spellings. Schools should aim for the majority of children in Y2 to achieve the expected standard (previously 80% accuracy when reading 40 words) by the start of the Spring Term even if they are not required to complete a statutory screening check assessment at this point. This could be assessed using previous PSC materials but should be supported by teacher assessment during the daily phonics lesson and within Guided Reading lessons. Texts provided for Guided Reading should be matched to learning need and therefore also in line with these judgements. Children who have not reached the expected standard at this point should be prioritised for targeted intervention throughout the spring / summer term to ensure the expected standard is reached by the end of Y2, as usual.

**Overview of Focused Teaching Input for daily Letters and Sounds lessons in Y2
(Autumn Term 2020)**

Week One 01.09.2020	Re-establish the rules and routines for daily phonics lessons including lesson structure and expectations for active involvement; re-visit Phase Five Part 1 word reading (new graphemes) and confirm accurate spelling of complex words (words with adjacent consonants / more than one syllable); practise reading and spelling Phase Four and Five tricky words Liaise with Y1 teachers to ensure the pitch matches the lessons taught prior to school closure – this will enable teachers to easily identify children with significant gaps compared to previous attainment	<i>Informal assessment during daily interactions; begin targeted interventions for children already identified as vulnerable learners</i>
Week Two 07.09.2020	Revise a selection of previously taught Phase Five Part 1 GPCs (e.g. ay, ou, ea, ie, oy) Teach reading words containing these GPCs focusing on: - spotting the digraphs before adding sound buttons and bars, using sound buttons and bars to support accurate sounding and blending and re-reading to build fluency with identified words Ensure GPCs are practised in the context of cvc words, words with adjacent consonants and words with more than one syllable to provide opportunities to practise the full range of taught blending skills. Words with more than one syllable should include words with the prefixes and suffixes taught in Y1. Words containing any Phase Three GPCs that are not fully secured should also be included in practice and apply activities so that children become fluent at recognising these graphemes in words. Teach spelling an identified selection of words containing the /oi/ phoneme (oi and oy)	<i>Use assessment materials (prioritising word reading) to confirm informal assessment judgements and pinpoint specific gaps; extend targeted interventions as required</i>
Week Three 14.09.2020	Revise a selection of previously taught Phase Five Part 1 GPCs (e.g. ir, ue, aw, wh, ph) Teach reading words containing these GPCs as above Teach spelling an identified selection of words containing the /ur/ phoneme (ur, ir, er)	
Week Four 21.09.2020	Revise a selection of previously taught Phase Five Part 1 GPCs (e.g. ew, oe, au, ey) Teach reading words containing these GPCs as above Teach spelling an identified selection of words containing the /ai/ phoneme (initially ai, ay, a-e from Y1 ; extending to a, ea and ey to suit learning needs)	
Week Five 28.09.2020	Revise previously taught Phase Five Part 1 GPCs (e.g. split digraphs i-e, u-e, o-e, e-e, a-e) Teach reading words containing these GPCs as above Teach spelling an identified selection of words containing the /ee/ phoneme (initially ee, ea, e-e and y from Y1 ; extending to ey, e and ie to suit learning needs)	<i>Evaluate impact of targeted interventions and review intervention schedule</i>
Week Six 05.10.2020	Revise previously taught alternative pronunciations of known graphemes (e.g. c as /s/, g as /j/ and ow as /oa/) Teach reading words containing these pronunciations Where possible, ensure pronunciations are practised in the context of cvc words, words with adjacent consonants and words with more than one syllable to provide continued opportunities to practise the full range of taught blending skills. Words with more than one syllable should include words with the prefixes and suffixes taught in Y1. Words containing any Phase Five GPCs that are not yet secure should also be included in practice and apply activities so that children become fluent at recognising these graphemes in words. Teach spelling an identified selection of words containing the /igh/ phoneme (initially igh, ie, i-e and y from Y1 ; extending to l to suit learning needs)	
Week Seven 12.10.2020	Revise previously taught alternative pronunciations of known graphemes (e.g. o as /oa/, e as /ee/ and i as /igh/) Teach reading words containing these GPCs as above Teach spelling an identified selection of words containing the /oa/ phoneme (initially oa, oe, o-e from Y1 ; extending to ow and o to suit learning needs)	<i>Key assessment point for Phase Five Part 3; identify children at risk of falling behind</i>
Week Eight 19.10.2020	Revise previously taught alternative pronunciations of known graphemes (e.g. ea as /e/ and a as /o/ and /ai/ and (in some accents) /ar/) Teach reading words containing these GPCs as above Teach spelling an identified selection of words containing the /or/ phoneme (or, aw, au and ore from Y1 ; extending to oor and a/al to suit learning needs)	<i>Evaluate impact of targeted interventions and review intervention schedule including any additional children identified above</i>

This teaching sequence could be used during the second half of the summer term for teachers to follow with their Y1 teaching “bubbles” and when providing activities for home-learning. However, it is likely this teaching will need to be repeated in a more familiar classroom context during the first part of the autumn term as outlined above.

NB Additional challenge for more able children can be built into this sequence through an increased focus on sentence level reading using more complex sentence structures and a wider range of taught tricky words and by providing a wider range of words within spelling lessons, including words with the prefixes and suffixes taught in Y1 / Y2 and the graphemes identified as extension options.

Filling the Gaps: Establishing an Effective Approach to Assessment and Intervention

Given the extended period of school closure and the very varied home learning experiences of your cohorts it will be difficult to rely on existing assessment data as teachers usually do at the start of a new academic year. Therefore, using your school assessment system to assess children's phonic knowledge and skills will be a key priority in September. Your assessment data should enable you to identify specific gaps in learning so that targeted intervention can be provided which enables children to catch-up quickly and efficiently. Children who have fallen further behind than anticipated must be identified as a matter of urgency and intervention must be pinpointed to address specific areas of need. Targeted intervention for children already identified as vulnerable learners can begin from Day 1. Further interventions to close gaps caused by school closures should follow as soon as possible and by week 3 of the autumn term at the latest.

As Letters and Sounds is a programme for Reading and Spelling, the assessment content of a robust assessment system will include assessment of blending and segmenting skills, word reading and spelling, and reading and spelling tricky words. Even when the content is efficient this takes time. The priority for intervention is reading. Children who can read fluently develop an extensive store of words that they recognise automatically and that provide a platform for accurate spelling. Targeted intervention to ensure children make rapid and accelerated progress with **reading** needs to be implemented as a matter of urgency and so assessment of the reading component of your assessment system is the priority. All children should be assessed in reading before the end of the second week of term alongside the daily phonics teaching that takes place from Day 1. It may be necessary to deploy staff who do not normally work with children in KS1 to support this. This may include some of your EYFS capacity if your admissions into Nursery and Reception are staggered. Guidance should already be included within your assessment system, but leaders should be aware that some staff may need further training to ensure assessments are administered consistently and accurately.

The charts provided on page 11 outline an efficient way of using your assessment materials to identify children who have fallen further behind with the expected pace of the Letters and Sounds programme than anticipated and to pinpoint the focus of targeted intervention. Teachers may also wish to review their assessment data alongside data from the Reception year to identify any specific causes for concern e.g. a child who has regressed significantly more than others.

By the end of week 2 you should have a clear picture of which children are in need of additional targeted intervention and each child's specific area of need. It is likely that a greater number of children than usual will be in need of some additional support to close gaps and accelerate progress in phonics and early reading. As this area of learning is a key priority it is likely that schools will deploy as many adults as possible to address the identified needs rapidly. With an effective system for intervention in place, this will be a short-term arrangement with the ambition of closing gaps for most children during the autumn term.

- ✓ Interventions are delivered as short, sharp bursts of focused practice, ideally 5-10 mins in a 1-1 context

Scheduling intervention in this way ensures practice is carefully targeted to each child's need; it removes the need for behaviour management of a group and for finding a suitable learning spaces as well as addressing concerns about children missing out on the learning that is taking place in the classroom

- ✓ Interventions are carefully targeted to address specific learning needs
*Intervention will almost always fall into one of the following three categories:
securing oral blending—filling grapheme gaps— word reading practice*

Leaders may consider allocating specific members of staff to each area of need to minimise the need for training and build expertise quickly

- ✓ Staff delivering targeted intervention are well trained in the specific activities used for targeted intervention

The most effective interventions are repetitive and build confidence through their familiarity.

One activity per area of intervention (e.g. "Fast Blending" to secure oral blending, "Read them All" to fill grapheme gaps and "Sound Button and Swipe" to practise word reading) is sufficient

- ✓ In most circumstances addressing blending difficulties takes priority over filling grapheme gaps
Children who are unable to blend accurately will struggle with every word and are at risk of losing motivation and self-esteem due to a lack of success with all reading tasks; all intervention should focus on the earliest insecure phase

- ✓ A simple system is in place for recording interventions which focuses on recording only the key focus e.g. the specific grapheme being targeted

- ✓ The impact of interventions is reviewed regularly, at least once every three weeks to maximise progress and ensure the schedule for intervention continues to be effective

Charts to support efficient use of assessment materials in Y1 and Y2 at the start of the autumn term (2020)

Before using these charts it is important to use the evaluation checklist on p.1 to ensure your assessment system is sufficiently robust. This will enable you to make these judgements with confidence. It is also important to note that these considerations may not exactly match the usual assessment sequence — they simply suggest a way of gaining the information you need as quickly as possible in the current context. **The key principle in place is that if a child can recognise a grapheme within a word there is no need to assess it as an isolated flashcard.**

Assessment starting point for children in Y1:

Word Reading at Phase Three

Make a note of errors made during the assessment recording unknown GPCs and blending errors separately

Outcome A

If a child is able to read the identified words either by sounding and blending or by reading the words automatically you will know that he/she can recognise all Phase Two and Phase Three GPCs in the context of words and that cvc blending is secure. This is as you would expect for a child who is about to move onto Phase Four and no intervention is required.

Outcome B

Where a child makes a number of GPC errors in their Phase Three Word reading look to your **Phase Two Word Reading materials** to confirm that Phase Two word reading is secure.

If so, the focus of intervention will either be practising word reading of words containing digraphs and trigraphs or consolidating recognition of specific Phase Three graphemes.

Your word reading assessment should enable you to identify specific grapheme gaps that need to be addressed.

If not, you may wish to assess Phase Three GPC recognition using flashcards.

If Phase Two word reading is not secure, consider the points made for a child who is not secure with blending letters as outlined part-way down Outcome C.

Outcome C

Where a child makes three consecutive blending errors, discontinue the assessment and look to your **Phase Two Blending materials**.

First confirm oral blending is secure. If not, this is the focus for intervention.

If oral blending is secure, move onto **Word Reading at Phase Two**. If the child is able to read the identified words either by sounding and blending or by reading the words automatically you will know that the difficulty is around the Phase Three content and can follow the guidance part-way down Outcome B.

If Phase Two word reading is not secure, observation of the child as he / she attempts the words will identify any unknown GPCs or indicate that GPC recognition is not yet secure enough to enable the child to combine GPC recognition and blending. The focus for intervention will either be practising word reading or consolidating recognition of specific graphemes. Your word reading assessment should enable you to identify the specific grapheme gaps that need to be addressed.

If not, you may wish to assess Phase Two GPC recognition using flashcards.

NB: This provides a quick starting point for assessment enabling you to identify children in need of targeted intervention and to pinpoint the focus of support so that your intervention schedule begins as a matter of urgency. Further assessment of spelling and tricky word reading and spelling should be completed before the next key assessment point as identified in the tables on pages 5 (for Y1) and 8 (for Y2).

Assessment starting point for children in Y2:

Word Reading at Phase Five Part 1

Make a note of errors made during the assessment recording unknown GPCs and blending errors separately

Outcome A

If a child is able to read the identified words either by sounding and blending or by reading the words automatically you will know that he/she can recognise most Phase Two GPCs, some Phase Three GPCs and all of the newly taught Phase Five GPCs in the context of words AND that both cvc and more complex blending is secure. This is as you would expect for a child who is about to move onto Phase Five Part 3 and no intervention is required.

You may wish to assess word reading **within Phase Three** to ensure **all** Phase Two and Three GPCs are secure but this is not essential if an "age-related" judgement is in line with your ongoing assessments.

You also may wish to move onto assessment of **Word Reading within Phase Five part 2** but this is not a priority at this time.

Outcome B

Where a child makes repeated **blending** errors, discontinue assessment and look to the assessment materials from an earlier phase as appropriate. Consider the comments made within Outcomes C and D and perhaps the assessment chart for Y1 to support your next steps.

Where a child gives a mixture of correct and inaccurate responses, look for patterns to identify the most appropriate next steps.

Outcome C

Firstly, confirm that cvc blending **within Phase Five** is secure.

If not, consider using your **Phase Three Word Reading materials** to confirm that cvc blending **without Phase Five GPCs** is secure.

If the Phase Three words are read accurately, the focus for intervention will be recognition of Phase Five GPCs.

*Your word reading assessment should enable you to identify the specific grapheme gaps that need to be addressed. **If not, you may wish to assess Phase Five GPC recognition using flashcards.***

If the Phase Three word reading is not secure look to your **Phase Two Assessment Materials** as described in the assessment chart for Y1.

Outcome D

If cvc blending **within Phase Five** is secure, but blending of more complex words with adjacent consonants or with more than one syllable is not secure, you may consider using your **Phase Four Word Reading materials** to confirm that complex blending **without Phase Five GPCs** is secure.

If these Phase Four words are read accurately, the focus for intervention will be recognition of Phase Five GPCs. *As before, your word reading assessments should have enabled you to identify the specific grapheme gaps that need to be addressed. **If not, you may wish to assess Phase Five GPC recognition using flashcards.***

If the Phase Four words are not read accurately, intervention will focus on complex blending. You will be able to use the knowledge gleaned from the word reading assessments that have taken place to identify the best starting point for this, for example complex blending of words containing just single letter sounds OR complex blending of words containing Phase Three digraphs / trigraphs OR complex blending of words containing Phase Five graphemes. Ideally children should practise reading words across the full range of known GPCs.

NB: This provides a quick starting point for assessment enabling you to identify children in need of targeted intervention and to pinpoint the focus of support so that your intervention schedule begins as a matter of urgency. Further assessment of spelling and tricky word reading and spelling should be completed before the next key assessment point as identified in the tables on pages 5 (for Y1) and 8 (for Y2).

I hope the guidance outlined in this document is helpful for schools as things begin to return to normality post COVID-19. If you have any comments or questions I will be happy to listen and will help out where I can.

Please get in touch via my new website:

[soundstartphonics.co.uk](https://www.soundstartphonics.co.uk)



Frequently Asked Questions

How should I differentiate lessons to cover an increased range of learning needs?

The structure of lessons with the Letters and Sounds programme ensures that previously taught knowledge and skills are practised at the beginning of every lesson. Building additional opportunities to practice GPC recognition and blending skills / fluent reading will remind children of the knowledge and skills that have been taught but which may need to be refreshed. Letters and Sounds outlines a whole-class model of teaching so that all children are exposed to age-related teaching content. However, the guided practice that takes place during the “Teach” part of the lesson should be scaffolded to support less confident readers, for example, by simplifying formats or providing less text. Adult-support, including direct interaction with the teacher, should also be targeted towards these children during this part of the lesson. “Practise and Apply” activities should be carefully matched to learning needs to ensure children are successful when they move onto independent work. This may involve providing words which contain a smaller range of GPCs, perhaps from the first part of the programme, and / or less complex words, such as cvc words with only three sounds. Where assessments show that a child has fallen behind the current age-related expectation, intervention support should provide daily targeted practice focusing on a specific aspect of need, ideally in a one-to-one context. Progress should be monitored carefully and more frequent opportunities for intervention should be scheduled if they are required.

How will I manage assessing all of our Y1 / Y2 children in the second week of term (and why shouldn't I begin completing assessments in Week One)?

Assessments within the first few days of term are unlikely promote emotional well-being or to provide a clear picture of attainment. Children will need time to settle back into the (new) rules and routines of school as well as a few reminders of the knowledge and skills they have been taught but may not have practised for some time. However, there is an urgent need to gather a clear picture of the gaps in learning that have developed during school closure so that they can begin to be addressed straight away. A creative approach to the deployment of adults may be required to ensure assessments are completed swiftly before the end of Week Two, for example, some schools may consider a slight delay in the admission of their new Reception intake so that Y1 children can be taught by their Reception teacher AND their Y1 teacher for a couple of weeks. This will provide an increased capacity for targeted teaching and assessment as well as facilitating a smooth transition into the new year group.