

Phonics at Swannington C of E school

What programme do we use?

At Swannington, we use 'Sounds-Write' to teach children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 how to read and write through their phonics lessons. Phonics is taught daily, separately to Literacy, and it provides them with the foundational skills needed for reading and writing.

What is Sounds-Write?

Sounds-Write is a proven Systematic Synthetic Phonics programme validated by the Department for Education. It is based on the science of reading and provides a structured, cumulative, and code-oriented approach to teaching reading and spelling. It starts with what children learn naturally, the sounds of their own language, and teaches them to represent those sounds in writing. Sounds-Write is a complete phonics curriculum that teaches the skills, concepts, and code knowledge necessary for children to read and spell.

Students are taught **four key concepts**:

1. Letters are symbols that represent sounds
2. Sounds can be spelled using 1, 2, 3 or 4 letters (dog, street, night, ough)
3. The same sound can be spelled in different ways (rain, break, stay, gate)
4. The same spelling can represent different sounds (head, seat, break)

Students are taught to master **three key skills**:

1. Segmenting - the ability to pull apart the individual sounds in words
2. Blending - the ability to push sounds together to build words
3. Phoneme manipulation - the ability to insert sounds into and delete sounds out of words. This skill is necessary to test out alternatives for spellings that represent more than one sound.

What do children learn in Reception?

Children in Reception begin with the Initial Code where they practise all three key skills whilst learning the one-to-one sound-spelling correspondences and securing their understanding of key concept 1. This builds up confidence and phonic knowledge enabling them to read and spell a wide range of words and sentences.

At first, children learn to read and spell simple one-syllable words with a consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) sound structure (for example, 'sat'). By the end of Reception, they can read and write one-syllable words with up to five, or even six, sounds such as 'twist', 'grand' or 'scraps'.

Children also develop their knowledge of key concept 2 as they learn to read and spell words containing some sounds spelled with two letters (the sound /sh/ in 'fish' or the sound /th/ in 'thin', for example) as well as the three-letter spelling < tch > for the sound /ch/ in 'catch'. Key concept 3 is introduced towards the end of Reception as the students learn about a small number of sounds that can be spelled in more than one way (for example, the sound /k/ spelled as < k > in 'kit', < c > in 'cat' and < ck > 'pick').

What do children learn from Year 1?

Once the Initial Code has been mastered, children continue to practise all three key skills whilst learning the Extended Code and developing key concepts 2, 3 and 4. Learning of the Extended Code is a lifelong process – we all continue to develop our understanding how to read and spell in English whenever we encounter new words. This is why the Sounds-Write approach is used right up to the end of KS2 to read and spell polysyllabic words of increasing complexity.

Children in Years 1 and 2 develop their code knowledge through explicit, systematic teaching of the Extended Code units. Polysyllabic words are introduced in Year 1.

Children in Years 3 and 4 revisit all of the Extended Code units and learn to read and spell increasingly complex polysyllabic words.

Children in Years 5 and 6 continue to consolidate and develop their knowledge, with the Sounds-Write approach used to teach the reading and spelling of vocabulary across the curriculum. There is a growing focus on etymology (the origin of words) and morphology (the structure of words).

When is Sounds-Write taught?

Children in Reception and Years 1 to 4 have a 30-minute Sounds-Write session every day. Children in Years 5 and 6 have discrete Sounds-Write sessions as

required for the cohort, as well as planned and incidental teaching of reading and spelling across the curriculum using the Sounds-Write approach.

Some children require more time and practice when learning to read and spell, and they are supported through 'keep-up' and 'catch-up' intervention sessions in addition to the whole class phonics sessions.

What books or reading schemes are used?

Children who are beginning to learn to read use phonically-controlled books that we call 'decodable readers'. These books are carefully written to focus on the code the children have been taught in phonics lessons so far. Decodable readers allow the children to practise their developing skills and they will be sent home to give even more opportunities for practice. Parents/carers are asked to support their children by hearing them read aloud.

At Swannington, we use decodable readers that match the scope and sequence of the Sounds-Write programme.

Once children have developed their skills and their code knowledge, they begin to move away from decodable readers and read a wider range of books.

We also send books in the book bag for you to read to your child. This helps to promote a culture of reading and develops your child's vocabulary.

How can I help support my child at home?

If your child needs some help when they are reading you can:

- Encourage them to use their finger under the word from left to right.
- Ask them to 'say the sounds and read the word'.
- Tell them to 'listen' for the words as they say the sounds.
- If they need more help, tell them the sounds in the word and ask them to listen and blend them to say the whole word.

It is important to say the sounds very precisely. You can watch and listen to Alex saying the sounds in this short video ([click here](#)).

We encourage all of our parents/carers to access the [free Sounds-Write online course](#) so that they are well-informed about how best to support their children with reading and spelling at home.

If you have any further questions about phonics, please contact Miss Hickman (Phonics Lead) via the school office.