



Phonics

OUR CORE AIM FOR PHONICS

To enable our children to become accurate and automatic with phonics in order for them to become fluent and confident readers and writers.

What do Phonics lessons look like at Swiss Gardens Primary School?

In EYFS, children begin our phonics programme Song of Sounds early in the Autumn Term. The programme has 4 short daily sessions where a new sound is introduced and then on a Friday, a longer session is timetabled where the children have an extended time to apply and embed their new learning.

Each sound has a song, an action and a visual to cater for differing learning styles. Sessions are active and pacy to help engage the children but also repetitive to help retain new learning. Each phonics session contains the following elements –

- Revisit – recapping the sounds we have already learnt.
- Teach – introducing a new sound
- Practise – reading and writing words with the new sound with teacher modelling and support.
- Apply – independently reading and writing words with the new sound.

In Key Stage 1, we continue to use the Song of Sounds programme. In Year 1 we focus on song 2 which looks at different representations of a sound previously taught in song 1 e.g. ay/ai/a-e. In Year 2, we progress to song 3 that looks at trickier representations of the same sound e.g. ge/dge/g.

The format for the sessions is the same of that in early years. The repetitive nature ensures no time is wasted explaining new activities and time can be used efficiently to practise using and applying the new sounds taught.

In Key Stage 2, any children who have been identified as not yet fluent readers will continue to have access to the Song of Sounds materials and will receive targeted support to continue to close any gaps they have.

In Phonics lessons, we would expect any observers to see (in no particular order!)

- Engaged and enthusiastic learners who can talk about the sounds they know already
- Talk and questioning
- Varied resources, depending upon the learning taking place each lesson
- Clear accurate modelling from adults, ensuring sounds are pronounced in their purest form e.g. 'mmm' rather than 'muh'
- Children attempting to segment and blend
- Children applying their phonic knowledge in a range of activities
- Differentiated questioning to support and challenge
- Clear feedback given to children to move them on in their learning
- Children making use of classroom resources to support their learning (where appropriate)

What does the children's work look like in phonics?

Much of the children's work will be oral when learning to segment and blend. When ready, children will use whiteboards to attempt segmenting words to spell them. During our long phonics sessions, children will have access to a wide variety of activities to apply and embed the new sounds that have been taught that week. Some of these activities will be recorded in the children's free writing and phonics books (KS1) and others will have no formal recording. Although taught discreetly, children are actively encouraged to transfer what they have learnt in phonics when writing and spelling. Once sounds have been taught, teachers will have high expectations that children will then begin to use these correctly and next steps may be used when marking to support children with this.

How do the teachers plan for phonics?

The Song of Sounds Programme is clearly mapped out for early years and key stage 1. We follow their suggested overview to ensure we have fidelity to the programme. Regular assessment highlights any sounds the children may be particularly struggling with and there is time within the programme to further practise these.

How does the school know whether children are making good progress and attaining high standards in phonics?

Within the Song of Sounds Programme, there are planned assessment weeks to check the children's progress. Following on from these assessments, staff use the information to look at any sounds that may need some whole class revision, or if particular groups of children need some targeted support. These assessment also enable teachers to ensure children have a matched reading book based on the sounds they currently know.

The phonics subject leader (supported by SLT as necessary) monitors provision, progression and attainment e.g. via planning check-ins, lesson check-ins (observations), book looks, pupil interviews, teacher interviews.

What happens if a child is finding phonics difficult?

At Swiss Gardens, we want to ensure all children become accurate and fluent readers. Therefore children who are at risk of falling behind are quickly identified. These children will have booster sessions to help close the gap. These sessions will either be in small group or pairs and will be delivered 4 times a week by either the class teacher or learning support assistant. These children are closely monitored to ensure the booster groups are having an impact. Children can move out of the booster group once they are secure with any missing sounds they previously had. Children not responding to the booster sessions will be discussed with the assistant head for inclusion to assess wider needs the child may have.

Any children working in Key Stage 2 who still needs phonics support will continue to have access to the Song of Sounds resources. Booster groups will also continue for those that need it.

What happens if a child is achieving very high standards in phonics?

Where children are attaining particularly highly in phonics teachers extend their knowledge further through higher level questioning and/or task expectation. The teachers deepen the children's knowledge so that their learning does not "stand still". Although each Song of Sounds sound links to a particular year group, if a child is ready they will be introduced to the next song and will not have to wait for the next year.

How do opportunities for phonics extend beyond each year group's lessons?

At Swiss we are a text rich school and therefore our children have daily opportunities to apply their phonics in their everyday environment.

Is there anything else parents can do to support the learning in phonics?

There are lots of ways parents can support with phonics at home. We run phonics workshops for reception, year 1 and year 2 parents and attendance of this will give you further insight into how we teach phonics at Swiss Gardens.

Other ways to help –

- Learn the song with your child to help them practise (videos can be found on the school website under the year group pages)
- Engage children with the sounds they have been learning that week at school – these are sent home to parents
- Listen to your child read regularly, set aside 10-15 minutes each day and encourage them to use their phonics to sound out the words.
- Make notes in your child's reading diary so teachers know how they are getting on.
- Practise the red tricky words that get sent home as they cannot be sounded out.
- If your child is keen to write at home, do not feel you need to correct every spelling. However if you know it is a sound they have learnt at school point it out and encourage them to correct it.
- Keep reading to your child. It is still really important your child hears you read and sees you enjoying books.
- For more ideas and information have a look on the phonics for reading page on the school website as there are more helpful links on there.

Who to contact

If you have any questions you would like to ask about phonics, please do not hesitate to contact the office. Queries can then be passed on to our phonics subject lead: Miss Caroline Finley. Alternatively, you can speak to your child's class teacher.