

Greenhills  
Primary School

Active Literacy  
Guide for Parents  
Stage 1-3



## Introduction

Literacy is fundamental to all areas of learning, as it unlocks access to the wider curriculum. Being literate increases opportunities for the individual in all aspects of life, lays the foundation for lifelong learning and work, and contributes strongly to the development of all four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence. The aim of this leaflet is to provide you with information about how your child is taught spelling, reading and writing at school and to enable you to support your child at home.

## Principles of the Programme

The programme takes a holistic, synthetic and integrated approach to phonics learning and it promotes daily Talking and Listening, Reading and Writing across the curriculum. Children work at the stage appropriate to their ability.

## Reading

Children are taught to read through the process of guided reading using a variety of quality short texts, from a range of publishers. They are no longer following what is considered to be the traditional model of a 'reading scheme'. The books are organised into levels. This is known as 'banding'. Each band is represented by a different colour. Within each band there will be a variety of fiction and non-fiction texts that allow the children to experience many styles of writing. The basic guide within the banding is that most children start at the pink level and will progress through the colours before moving onto novels. Some children may require an alternative reading pathway. Assistive Technology will support some pupils, for example the use of specialised software on iPads.

## Reading for pleasure

Greenhills Primary are committed to building a culture of reading for pleasure for their learners and communities. Through the Scottish Book Trust, we are working towards gaining an accreditation through the 'Reading Schools' programme. More information can be found by using the link below.

<https://www.readingschools.scot/>

Some ways we are building a culture of reading for pleasure:

- DEAR time in class (drop everything and read)
- Book recommendations by pupils and staff
- Celebrating reading achievements
- Author and librarian visits
- Pupil reading group
- Pupils asked their opinions about reading through questionnaires
- Pupils asked what books they want the school to purchase
- Pupils and staff are encouraged to talk about books

At home, encouraging your child(ren) to read for pleasure independently or with you even for fifteen minutes a day at bedtime, can have many benefits.

*Reading for pleasure has many non-literacy benefits and can increase empathy, improve relationships with others, reduce the symptoms of depression and improve wellbeing throughout life (The Reading Agency).*

*Reading for pleasure was associated with better sleeping patterns (Billington 2015).*

*Students who read for pleasure make significantly more progress in vocabulary, spelling and maths than children who read very little (Sullivan and Brown 2013).*

Some tips for fitting reading for pleasure into the day:

- Encourage your children to always carry a book. Keep books in the car.
- Listen to audio books in the car or download them onto your phone/tablet and listen to whilst playing or relaxing.
- Encourage your child to read aloud during dinner preparations.
- Add reading time to the calendar.

### Spelling

Spelling is taught with one main focused lesson in the week, followed by short daily activities to reinforce the learning. The words from the taught lesson are known as common words. These are the words which the children are most likely to come across when reading simple texts. They will also use these words in writing.

Children have opportunities throughout the week to work with a partner. This is called reciprocal teaching. They take turns to dictate words and sentences. The activity alternates between partners and they then check their partner's work for correct formation and accurate spelling.

Children are taught spelling strategies. These teach children to problem solve and enables them to spell words.



## Phonics

Phonics is taught with one main focused lesson in the week, followed by short daily activities to reinforce the learning. Initially two sounds are taught per week (Stage 1/Term 1). This is followed by one taught phoneme sound per week.

The teacher introduces each sound within a context e.g. a story/song and then demonstrates the letter formation and word building through the use of a magnetic board and letters. The children are provided with a magnetic board to allow them to mirror the taught lesson and work independently/with a partner throughout the week.

Some weeks are consolidation weeks when no new phonemes are taught. Children will complete activities to revise previously taught phonemes and common words.

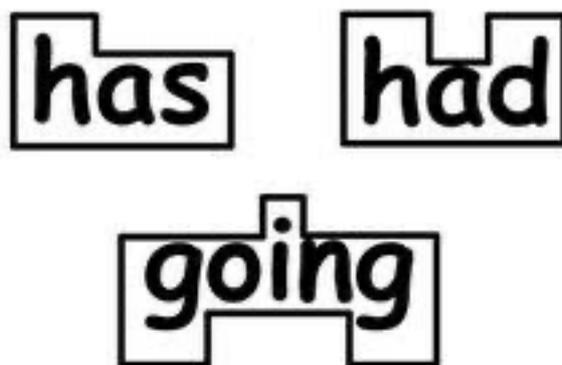
## Assessment

Children are not assessed purely on the basis of a single word spelling test. Teachers can make judgements about a child's ability to spell common words/words containing taught phonemes, by placing them in a context e.g. a dictated sentence.

## Spelling Strategies

The strategies the children are taught are:

- Using Phoneme Knowledge (sounding out)
- Syllabification (breaking words down into syllables. The children can clap out words to identify syllables e.g. go-ing/An-drew).
- Word Shape (look at letter shape, size, ascending and descending letters).
- Tricky Letters (looking at the position of tricky letters as an aid to spelling).
- Compound Words (breaking the compound word into simple words e.g. **into** makes **in** and **to**).
- Mnemonic (using an aide memoire e.g. because – **big** **elephants** can **add up** sums easily).
- Using Analogy (if you know how to spell one word you can spell similar words e.g. if you can spell **hill**, you can spell **mill**, **will**, **fill** etc).



## Terminology

**Phoneme:** A phoneme is a unit of sound. It can be one letter, two letters or a group of letters that make a single sound. For example, 'pin' contains three phonemes – p-i-n, 'chips' contains four phonemes ch-i-p-s.

**Common words:** Words that are used most commonly in speech, texts and by the children to write in school.

**Tricky words:** Words which don't always follow patterns or rules.

**Phoneme words:** Words that can be sounded out, or can be placed in an Elkonin box or can be diacritically marked.

**Elkonin boxes:** These boxes are named after their inventor and they are a great way for children to demonstrate that they can pick out all of the different sounds within a word. Every sound is placed in its own box.

|    |    |   |   |
|----|----|---|---|
| ch | ai | r | s |
|----|----|---|---|

**Whiteboards:** Laminated boards that are used in class for the children to make words, write sentences or revise letter formation. Children use a dry wipe marker on these boards.

**Magnetic boards:** Boards with a thin layer of metal. The boards are used with magnetic letters and the children are encouraged to make, break and blend words on these boards. They are mainly used in Primary One, Two and Three.

**FIVE Finger Strategy:** From Primary One, the children are taught the FIVE Finger Strategy. It is an easy way for the children to remember what they need to be able to do with each of their spelling words. The strategy words alongside the magnetic boards with magnetic letters.



SAY: The children say the word.

MAKE/ BREAK: The children make the word and they break it into its different sounds. For example - hat – children bring down the h,a,t magnetic letters in order and then separate them.

BLEND: The children say and push the individual sounds together with their finger. Children may need to repeat several times by running finger underneath the sounds to read the word.

READ: The children read the word.

WRITE: The children write the word with the correct formation and position on the line.

Diacritical Marking: Not all words will fit inside an Elkonin box, especially when we introduce split phonemes to the children. Instead, they use a strategy called diacritical marking. The principle behind this strategy is to encourage the children to think about all of the different sounds that make up a word.

Single Phoneme Sounds are marked with a dot

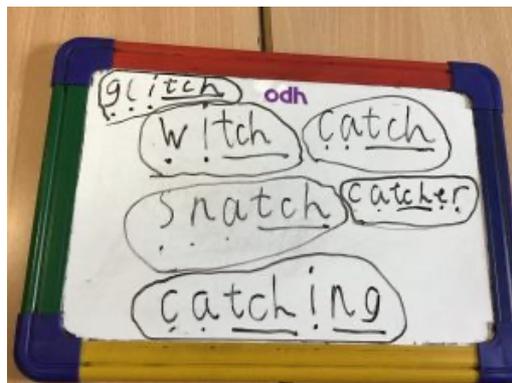
b e d  
• • •

Joined Phoneme Sounds are marked with a line

ch e ck  
— • —

Split Phoneme Sounds are marked with an arch

sh a p e  
— ◡ —



## Writing

There will be one taught writing lesson per week that focuses on teaching a particular genre. Six writing genres are taught within Stage 1-3. Narrative genre should feature in every term (this allows children the opportunity to write personal/imaginative pieces). Children will also have opportunities to write daily for a variety of purposes and for a variety of reasons. P1 will develop their early writing skills through detailed black pen drawings.

## Supporting learning through a Play-Based approach

Research shows that when children play and communicate through play, they are learning how language works and gaining an understanding of how to interact with other people. Eventually, children connect the meaning of spoken language to written language, which is the key to success in school.

Many classes with children working within Stage 1-3, incorporate a Play-Based approach to support Literacy learning.

For example;

- Children are given the choice of what to write at writing zones – e.g. stories, shopping lists and writing about models they have built.
- Print rich environment where the children take ownership of the print in class, e.g. writing labels and choosing what work they would like displayed.
- Opportunities to retell stories with toys and puppets.
- Reading opportunities in all learning zones.
- Talking and listening opportunities at all learning zones – through collaboration and problem solving, for example.

## At Home

When your child comes home with a reading book you should encourage them to read aloud. Try to make use of the word attack strategies if they meet a tricky word. You can also help them make links to the spelling and phonics programme by encouraging them to find, read and write common words and words containing their phoneme within the reading book.

Weekly homework activities will reinforce the learning of new phonemes and common words. It is important that children regularly revise taught phonemes and common words - for example through games (links below).

Encourage your child to write – stories, shopping lists, diary entries or letters to relatives and friends.

### Useful Websites/Apps/Links (free)

<https://www.topmarks.co.uk/english-games/5-7-years/letters-and-sounds>

<https://www.ictgames.com/mobilePage/literacy.html>

<https://pbskids.org/games/reading>

<https://home.oxfordowl.co.uk/reading/learn-to-read-phonics/>

### Useful Websites/Apps/Links (potential cost involved)

<https://www.jollylearning.co.uk/shop/uk-shop/phonics-resources/jolly-apps/jolly-phonics-lessons-app/>

<https://www.phonicsplay.co.uk>

<https://www.phonicsbloom.com>

<http://www.letters-and-sounds.com/phase-2-games.html>

<https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resources/literacy/literacy-phonics>

<https://www.education.com/games/word-patterns/>

<https://monsterphonics.com/games/>

<https://learn.readwithphonics.com/school/phonics-games>

<https://www.teachyourmonstertoread.com>

<https://www.getepic.com/>

[https://www.audible.co.uk/cat/Childrens-Audiobooks-Audiobooks/19376662031?ref=a\\_ep\\_popula\\_b\\_breadCrumb\\_0](https://www.audible.co.uk/cat/Childrens-Audiobooks-Audiobooks/19376662031?ref=a_ep_popula_b_breadCrumb_0)

<https://readingeggs.co.uk/gaw/branded/>