

### **Further information about the self-assessment process**

The Department wishes to offer schools and early years settings support in choosing effective systematic synthetic phonics teaching materials. To assist in providing this, the Department has published revised core criteria that define the key features of an effective systematic synthetic phonics teaching programme.

The criteria are not prioritised; they comprise an interdependent core, and a good support programme should meet all of them. The Department is strongly encouraging heads and teachers to consider these revised core criteria when making decisions about the quality of commercial programmes and the suitability of them for their particular schools and settings.

To ensure that this process is as easy and useful as possible for schools and settings, publishers of phonics products are invited to evaluate their materials against each of the revised core criteria and complete a self-assessment form. The self-assessment should demonstrate how each of the criteria is met, or explain why a particular criterion is not applicable to the product. Please refer also to the explanatory notes where applicable.

Publishers are asked to provide information that is succinct and focused on the criteria in a form that is easy to read and understand. Please note that there is a word limit for the text boxes provided within the template.

We expect that publishers will provide accurate information about their materials, and completed entries will be independently scrutinised for accuracy.

Completed and verified self-assessments will be displayed on this website for schools to browse through before making a decision. It should be noted that the Department does not endorse or rank the programmes that appear on this website. Completed evaluation forms should not be regarded or advertised as an 'approved' programme or resource. However, completed forms can be used for the purposes of demonstrating to schools how a programme or resource meets the core criteria and can, for example, be displayed on publishers' websites.

If you would like to submit a self-assessment form, please e-mail it to: [phonics.mailbox@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:phonics.mailbox@education.gsi.gov.uk). Any feedback on this process may also be sent to this address.

## **Assuring high quality phonic work – snapshot self-assessment form**

The self-assessment below provides a snapshot of how this product meets the core criteria for a high quality phonics programme. For more detailed information on how this product meets each of the core criteria, please see the detailed form.

When completing this form you will find it helpful to refer to the explanatory notes which can be found by [scrolling down the core criteria page of this website].

**Name of product: Letters and Sounds**

**Is this a full, stand alone phonics teaching programme or a supplementary resource or group of resources? Please explain briefly how the product should be used in teaching.**

<b>This product:</b>	<b>Tick to confirm</b>
presents high quality systematic, synthetic phonic work as the prime approach to decoding print, i.e. a phonics 'first and fast' approach	√
enables children to start learning phonic knowledge and skills using a systematic, synthetic programme by the age of five, with the expectation that they will be fluent readers having secured word recognition skills by the end of key stage one	√
is designed for the teaching of discrete, daily sessions progressing from simple to more complex phonic knowledge and skills and covering the major grapheme/phoneme correspondences	√
enables children's progress to be assessed	√
uses a multi-sensory approach so that children learn variously from simultaneous visual, auditory and kinaesthetic activities which are designed to secure essential phonic knowledge and skills	√
demonstrates that phonemes should be blended, in order, from left to right, 'all through the word' for reading	√
demonstrates how words can be segmented into their constituent phonemes for spelling and that this is the reverse of blending phonemes to read words	√
ensures that children apply phonic knowledge and skills as their first approach to reading and spelling even if a word is not completely phonically regular	√
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>ensures that children are taught high frequency words that do not conform completely to grapheme/phoneme</li></ul>	√

correspondence rules	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provides fidelity to the teaching framework for the duration of the programme, to ensure that these irregular words are fully learnt</li> </ul>	√
ensures that, as pupils move through the early stages of acquiring phonics, they are invited to practise by reading texts which are entirely decodable for them, so that they experience success and learn to rely on phonemic strategies.	√

**Please explain how your product meets the core criteria above.**

Letters and Sounds is carefully structured in six phases to teach children the phonic knowledge (the alphabetic principle) and skills (blending and segmenting) they need in order to decode effortlessly and fluently. A daily teaching sequence supports the process of consolidating existing learning, acquiring new learning, and applying that learning to fully decodable texts of increasing length. The phonic phases build phonic knowledge incrementally from the simple to the more complex, and include the teaching of high frequency 'tricky' words that are not totally phonically regular. These are introduced in alignment with each phase according to their phonic components to build confidence and independence in reading and spelling. An indispensable component of each day's discrete session is the 'Apply' section of the teaching sequence, where the teacher demonstrates how new learning can be applied through reading and writing captions, instructions, questions and phoneme spotter stories. This ensures that children are consistently practising their developing phonic skills and knowledge *at the point of learning*. Experiencing early, rapid and sustained success helps children to see the relevance of phonics to reading and spelling, reinforcing each day that the purpose of phonics is to enable them to become independent readers and writers.

**Please provide a brief explanation of what your product provides, e.g. resources, training etc**

Letters and Sounds comprises:

- Notes of Guidance carefully structured to enable practitioners and teachers use the programme effectively.
- A Six Phase Teaching Programme
- A DVD which includes clips filmed in a range of schools to illustrate effective practice in each phase
- A poster providing a visual summary of the principles of high quality phonic work.

The programme includes a bank of decodable resources for phases 2 to 5, lists of high frequency 'tricky' words aligned to each phase, advice for teachers on assessment, materials for individual assessment, and advice on letter formation.

Supplementary Letters and Sounds support materials e.g. proformas for tracking children's phonic progress; materials for developing specific phases, including Interactive Whiteboard (IWB) resources; advice on assessment and tracking and on adapting the programme for older children who have not had the benefit of synthetic phonics teaching, can be readily accessed via the NS web offer or via local authority websites.

#### **Contact details**

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## **Assuring high quality phonic work – Detailed self-assessment form**

This second self assessment form gives schools and settings detailed and expanded information about this product, set against each core criterion.

**Name of product: Letters and Sounds**

**Please explain how your product meets the following core criteria:**

This product presents high quality systematic, synthetic phonic work as the prime approach to decoding print by:

...explicitly presenting in the Notes of Guidance the case for teaching children to use phonics as their 'default' approach to tackling an unfamiliar word. The underpinning theoretical model is explained and the principles of systematic synthetic phonics outlined, alongside the expectation that the acquisition of word recognition skills should be time limited and accomplished by the end of KS1. In the Notes, and in the summary information for Phases 2 to 5, readers are reminded that 'phonics is the step up to word recognition'. From the beginning, a range of activities are used to teach children how to decode, e.g. Sound buttons, What's in the Box. The use of decodable words and captions during the concluding 'Apply' part of each day's discrete session reinforces from the outset that new and unfamiliar words should be tackled by decoding the constituent phonemes in order, from left to right, all through the word.

This product enables children to start learning phonic knowledge and skills using a systematic, synthetic programme by the age of five, with the expectation that they will be fluent readers having secured word recognition skills by the end of key stage one by:

...beginning the synthetic phonic programme promptly with Phase 2 when children enter reception. Phases 2 to 5 provide timeframes that emphasise pace and rigour, enabling schools to plan milestones for children's progress. Children are taught Phases 2, 3, and 4 during reception, enabling them to read many words independently. Year 1 is devoted to the teaching of Phase 5, where children learn the more complex alternative graphemes and phonemes. During Year 1 children consolidate new knowledge through reading texts of increasing length featuring graphemes that represent alternative phonemes, polysyllabic words, and more high frequency 'tricky' words so that by Y2, they are reading more fluently. In Year 2, Phase 6 helps children embed their learning, expand their reading stamina and improve accuracy in spelling. For settings, the unique Phase 1 resources strengthen the underlying phonological and phonemic skills of oral blending and segmenting which children require to maximise progress in phonics.

This product has been designed for the teaching of discrete, daily sessions progressing from simple to more complex phonic knowledge and skills and covering the major grapheme/phoneme correspondences by:

...structuring teaching the alphabetic principle (26 letters and 44 phonemes in English) into incremental phases that dovetail. Phase 2 covers those grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) shown by research to generate the greatest number of decodable words. This enables children to be taught from the very first days of the programme how to use phonics to decode, so that they experience success from the start by reading real words. Phases 3 to 5 cumulatively build on this success by teaching the simpler GPCs in a carefully structured sequence, steadily introducing more complex GPCs. A major aim of Phase 5 is to practice recognition and recall of graphemes and different pronunciations of graphemes in order to develop automaticity. In all phases, the skills of blending for reading and segmenting for spelling are taught and practised every day. Phase 6 covers the rarer GPCs and marks the shift from 'learning to read' to 'reading to learn'.

This product enables children's progress to be assessed by:

... providing specific guidance for each Phase of the phonic programme on assessing:

- knowledge of the GPCs taught,
- the ability to blend and read words comprised of taught GPCs
- the ability to segment and make a phonemically plausible attempt at spelling words comprised of taught GPCs
- the ability to read designated 'tricky' (i.e. not fully phonically decodable) words
- the ability to spell designated 'tricky' words
- the ability to form letters

A phonic tracker enables teachers to keep an 'at a glance' record of children's progress through the phases and can be used by senior staff in school for monitoring purposes

Appendix 4 of Letters and Sounds additionally provides assessment tasks on:

- grapheme-phoneme correspondences
- oral blending
- oral segmenting
- non-word reading

These can be used with individual children to help identify particular areas of difficulty or barriers to progress.

This product uses a multi-sensory approach so that children learn variously from simultaneous visual, auditory and kinaesthetic activities which are designed to secure essential phonic knowledge and skills by:

... advocating an approach to synthetic phonics that recognises the research evidence that young children's learning is optimised when they are actively engaged through their senses. Letters and Sounds presents a range of multi-sensory activities, stressing that these must be used judiciously so that teaching remains tightly focused on the learning goal. Plentiful examples are provided on the accompanying DVD to demonstrate at each phase how teachers can use individual

whiteboards, solid letters, letters and words on card, Interactive Whiteboards, puppets and artefacts when teaching phonic knowledge and skills. The DVD illustrates the use of engaging activities within the discrete daily phonics sessions and beyond, to support the practice and application of phonics into reading and writing. The importance of combining visual and auditory methods whenever possible is emphasised throughout the programme and exemplified on the DVD, which importantly includes the demonstration of correct enunciation of each phoneme.

This product demonstrates that phonemes should be blended, in order, from left to right, 'all through the word' for reading by:

...explicitly stating in the Notes of Guidance that '*beginner readers should be taught ..... to apply the highly important skill of blending phonemes in the order in which they occur, all through the word, to read it*'. Blending is taught from week 2 of the programme, as soon as the first few graphemes are known. From this point it is an essential component of the recommended teaching sequence used each day, and it is demonstrated on the accompanying DVD. The ability to blend forms an integral part of the assessment of each phase. For settings, the Phase 1 materials emphasise the importance of teaching young children how orally to blend sounds in words, so that this crucial skill is being developed at the early stages, to maximise success when children begin the synthetic programme in reception.

This product demonstrates how words can be segmented into their constituent phonemes for spelling and that this is the reverse of blending phonemes to read words by:

... explicitly stating in the Notes of Guidance that '*beginner readers should be taught ..... to apply the skills of segmenting words into their constituent phonemes to spell*'. Segmenting is taught from week 3 of the programme, as soon as the first few graphemes are known and children have been introduced to blending. From this point it is an essential component of the recommended teaching sequence used each day, with the reversible nature of blending and segmenting demonstrated. The teaching of segmenting is demonstrated on the accompanying DVD. The ability to segment forms an integral part of the assessment of each phase. For settings, the Phase 1 materials emphasise the importance of teaching young children how orally to segment sounds in words, so that this crucial skill is being developed at the early stages, to maximise success when children begin the synthetic programme in reception.

This product ensures that children apply phonic knowledge and skills as their first approach to reading and spelling even if a word is not completely phonically regular by:

...explaining in the Notes of Guidance why children need to be taught 'tricky' (not completely phonically regular) words. Lists of the most common words are provided, and are aligned with the GPCs taught in each phase to enable teachers to maximise

opportunities to practise the words children can read, as their phonic knowledge grows. From the beginning of Phase 2, children learn to decode the high frequency words within the range of their current phonic knowledge, but are also taught some of the most common words that lie outside that range, i.e. are not phonically regular but are key to fluent early reading, such as *the* and *to*. This process builds through Phases 3, 4 and 5 and is illustrated in the DVD clips. The assessment guidance for each phase includes the expectation that children learn a steadily increasing number of common words, some of which are not phonically regular.

- This product ensures that children are taught high frequency words that do not conform completely to grapheme/phoneme correspondence rules by:

...designating high frequency words that are not completely decodable as 'tricky' words in Letters and Sounds, and teaching suitable examples of them at each phase, as described above. These words are incorporated into the decodable texts provided for use in the 'Apply' part of each day's discrete session, so that children have frequent experience of reading words, phrases and sentences that include the 'tricky' words they are learning as well as words they can decode using their current phonic knowledge. The Notes of Guidance stress that children should be taught to identify the tricky *part* of the word, as this reinforces for them the importance of decoding all through the word and avoids learning them as 'sight' words.

This product provides fidelity to the teaching framework for the duration of the programme, to ensure that these irregular words are fully learnt by:

...identifying very specifically, for each phase of the programme, which 'tricky' words are to be taught for reading and which for spelling, so that children's bank of known 'tricky' words for reading and for writing steadily expands. Letters and Sounds also includes the reading and spelling of these words in its assessment guidance for each phase, alongside the assessment of GPCs. This ensures that these 'tricky' words are not overlooked. By the end of Phase 5 in Y1, children are expected to be able to read automatically all the words on the list of 100 high-frequency words and spell the majority accurately (spelling usually lags behind reading, as it is harder). Phase 6 focuses on improving fluency in reading and accuracy in spelling, and hence continues to include the teaching and practice of high frequency words.

This product ensures that, as pupils move through the early stages of acquiring phonics, they are invited to practise by reading texts which are entirely decodable for them, so that they experience success and learn to rely on phonemic strategies by:

...providing, at Phases 2 to 5 of Letters and Sounds, a bank of fully decodable material, designed to be used every day during the discrete phonics sessions. An indispensable component of each phonics session is the 'Apply' section, where the teacher demonstrates how new phonic learning can be applied through reading and writing captions, instructions, questions and short stories. This ensures that children consistently practise their developing phonic skills and knowledge *at the point of learning*. Experiencing early and sustained success helps children to see themselves as readers from the start, reinforcing each day that the purpose of phonics is to enable them to become independent readers and writers. Teachers are expected to incorporate their own examples of decodable texts, linked to the children's interests and the wider curriculum, to reinforce young children's understanding of the importance and relevance of reading and writing.

**Please provide a brief explanation of what your product provides, e.g. resources, training etc**

Letters and Sounds comprises:

- Notes of Guidance carefully structured to enable practitioners and teachers use the programme effectively.
- A Six Phase Teaching Programme
- A DVD which includes clips filmed in a range of schools to illustrate effective practice in each phase
- A poster providing a visual summary of the principles of high quality phonic work.

Resources include a bank of captions for each phase of the programme, lists of high frequency 'tricky' words aligned to each phase, advice for teachers on assessment, materials for individual assessment, and advice on letter formation.

Supplementary Letters and Sounds support materials e.g. proformas for tracking children's phonic progress; materials for developing specific phases, including Interactive Whiteboard (IWB) resources; advice on assessment and tracking and on adapting the programme for older children who have not had the benefit of synthetic phonics teaching, can be readily accessed via the NS web offer or via local authority websites.