

What Science and Experience Tells Us About Reading and Reading Instruction

- Learning to speak is a natural process but learning to read is not.
- A competent reader should be able to read and understand what he or she can talk about and understand.
- To be a reader in the full sense is dependent upon two main processes:
 - i) the ability to *decode the words* [What **ARE** the words?]
 - ii) the *language comprehension* to understand the words that have been decoded [What do the words **MEAN**?]This can be illustrated by the '**Simple View of Reading**' diagram:
http://www.phonicsinternational.com/The_Simple_View_of_Reading_model.pdf
- Scientific evidence from the past half-century confirms that the most effective approach for *teachers to teach reading (and spelling)* includes direct instruction in the '**Five Pillars of Literacy**':
<http://www.nichd.nih.gov/research/supported/Pages/nrp.aspx/>
 - 1) **Phonemic awareness** (awareness of the 44 smallest sounds, or phonemes, identifiable in English speech – most effectively taught alongside print)
 - 2) **Phonics** (includes teaching the letters and letter formation of the '*alphabet*', and systematically teaching knowledge of the '*alphabetic code*', that is, the 170+ letters and letter groups which represent the 44 sounds, alongside the phonics skills of blending all-through-the-word for decoding/reading; and segmenting all-through-the-spoken-word, then allotting letters and letter groups, for encoding/spelling)
 - 3) **Vocabulary** (new words explicitly taught to enrich spoken language)
 - 4) **Fluency** (ample reading practice and repeated reading)
 - 5) **Comprehension** (including specific techniques for comprehension of literature)

Parents can provide the best support for their children by routinely engaging them in high-quality conversations and by sharing experiences of a wide range of books (read to the children and talk about the nature of the books and their contents).

- All readers need to know and understand the '*alphabetic principle*' but English writing consists of the most *complex alphabetic code in the world* and so it is best taught explicitly and systematically:
http://alphabeticcodecharts.com/One_side_ACC_with_IPA_symbols.pdf

'It cannot be left to chance, or for children to ferret out, on their own, how the alphabetic code works.'

(*Independent Review of the Teaching of Early Reading*, Sir Jim Rose, March 2006):

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/http://education.gov.uk/publications/eorderingdownload/0201-2006pdf-en-01.pdf>

- Teachers need to know and understand the **Systematic Synthetic Phonics Teaching Principles**:
http://www.rrf.org.uk/pdf/Final_03_The_Synthetic_Phonics_Teaching_Principles%2011-2-10.pdf

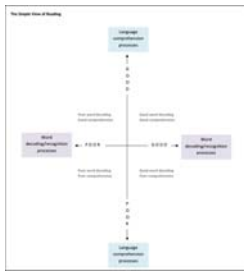
Plan the teaching based on a **Teaching and Learning Cycle**:

<http://www.phonicsinternational.com/Reflecting%20on%20the%20Teaching%20and%20Learning%20Cycle.pdf>

- Teachers should be aware of the dangers of teaching children to read using multi-cueing reading strategies which amount to guessing words from cues such as picture cues, word shape, first letters and context. Teaching learners to *guess* words can lead to bad reading habits that can be damaging in the long-term. (Note: 'Context' is required, however, to ascertain meaning of words and, on occasions, to indicate the correct pronunciation of words such as 'read' and 'wind'.)
- Even learners who have difficulty learning to read require the same teaching as described above but they may need more 'little and often' and intensive practice of phonics and/or language comprehension. Teachers can use the Simple View of Reading (link above) and specific assessments as appropriate to identify the language needs and the phonics needs of individual learners: http://www.phonicsinternational.com/Triangle_sub_core_skills.pdf
- The aim is for foundational skills, including knowledge of the main letter/s-sound correspondences, to be largely mastered in the first two to three years for most learners. Initially it is desirable to provide cumulative and decodable texts consisting of code already introduced to increase reading fluency and to build confidence. This is followed by the use of increasingly more complex texts to further increase vocabulary, comprehension skills and knowledge and understanding of the world. Phonics continues for building up '*code*' *spelling word banks*.
- Alongside teaching children to read well, teachers and parents can encourage and inspire them to love reading and to appreciate literature:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-action-plan-to-inspire-thousands-more-pupils-to-read>

Summary of main features of phonics reading and spelling/writing instruction

Simple View of Reading – official model in England:



USA: Five Pillars of Literacy

1. Phonemic awareness
2. Phonics
3. Vocabulary enrichment
4. Fluency (repeat reading)
5. Comprehension

A high-quality phonics programme includes the 'big five'.

The Alphabetic Principle:

- The Alphabet Poster
- The Alphabetic Code Chart

Display: (main walls, breakout areas, phonics folders)

- *Permanent* (Alphabet, Alphabetic Code Chart)
- *Cumulative* (Code Frieze, Tricky Words, Spelling Word Banks, planned grammar, punctuation)
- *Incidental* (code as required, unusual code, unplanned grammar, punctuation)

Change of perception of phonics from 'baby stuff' to 'adult stuff':

- Adults use phonics for reading and spelling.
- Use 'code' language not infant language (These letters *are code* for the sound /ai/...).
- 'Two-pronged systematic and incidental phonics teaching' addresses differentiation, phonics in the wider curriculum, and caters for all ages and needs.

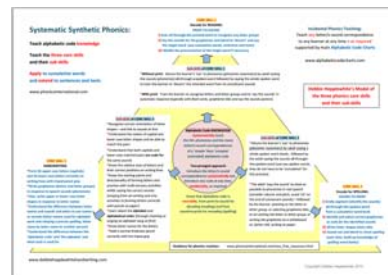
The Systematic Synthetic Phonics Teaching Principles:

- Alphabetic Code KNOWLEDGE
- Phonics SKILLS (and *sub-skills*)

No multi-cueing reading strategies for guessing words.

Apply and extend phonics knowledge and skills to cumulative, paper-based resources per learner.

The three core phonics skills and their sub-skills:



The Phonics (Hand) Routines:

Print-to-sound for reading (point)
 Sound-to-print for spelling (tally)
 Handwriting: correct grip and letter formation on lines



The Teaching and Learning Cycle (always complete):



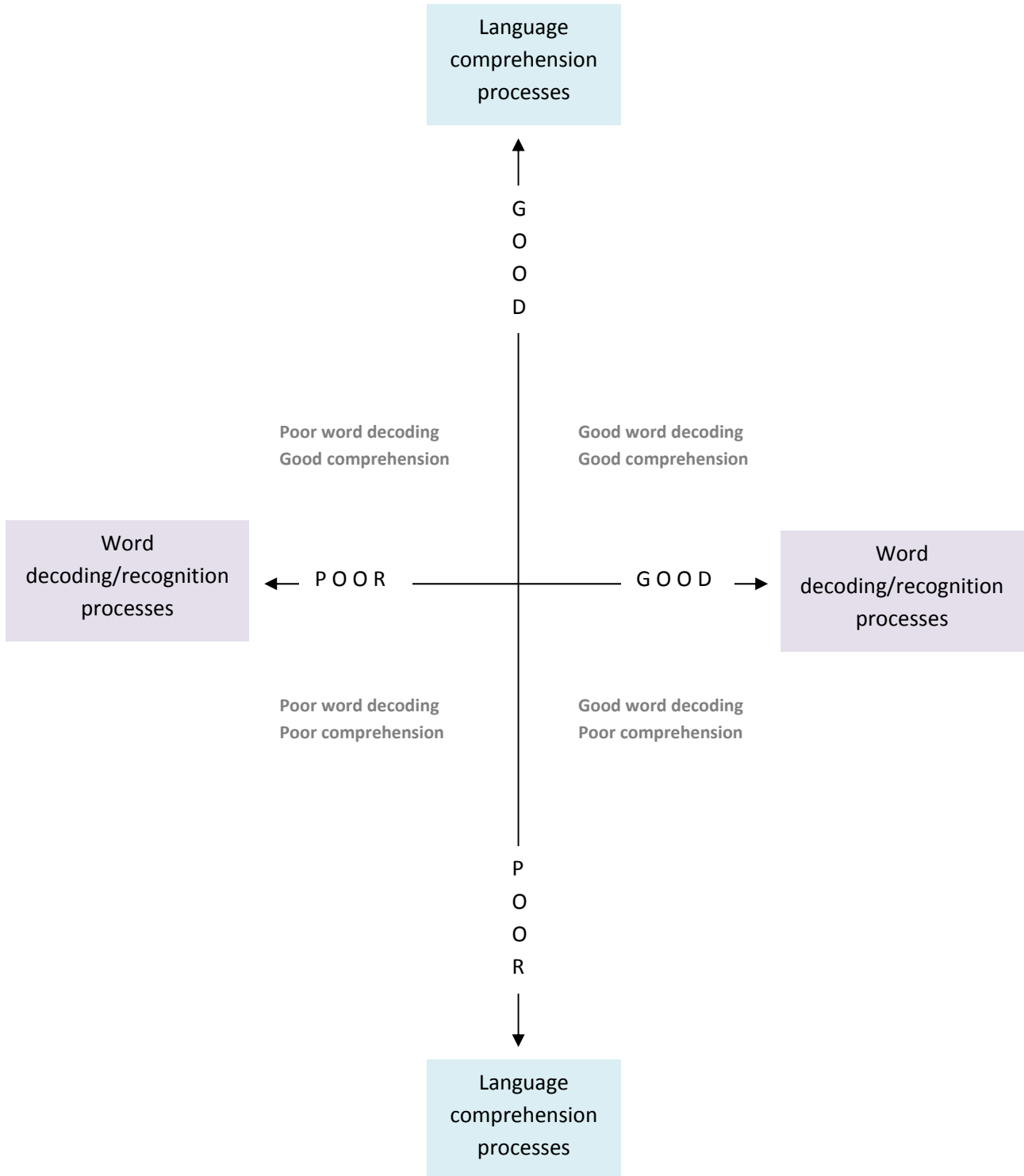
Time:

- Allow enough time – don't underestimate.
- Complete the full 'Teaching and Learning Cycle' per learner.
- Use time efficiently.
- Provide sufficient time for learners to practise – and 'little and often' for slower-to-learn pupils.
- Avoid 'extraneous' or time-consuming games.

The maths of the phonics:

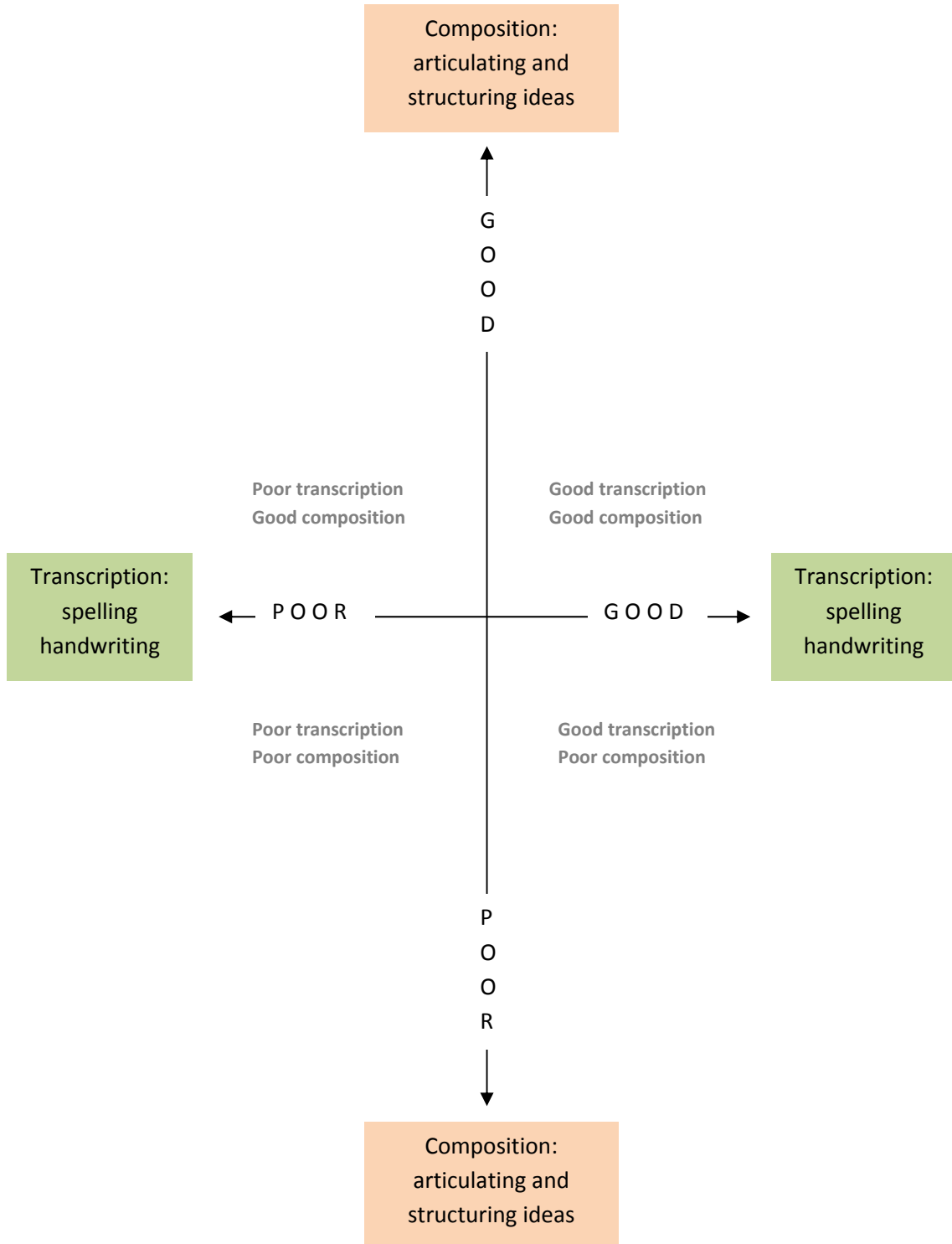
- Provide ample shorter and longer words for individuals to blend, segment and write.
- For 'revisit and review', consider the quantity of letter/s-sound correspondences, and words/sentences, repeated to build fluency.
- Quantify what 'little and often' means in your setting.

The Simple View of Reading



Simple View of Reading model: Original concept - Gough and Tunmer (1986), recommended by Jim Rose (*Final Report, March 2006*)
 Adopted by UK government (2006) as a *useful conceptual framework*: **reading = decoding x comprehension** $R = D \times C$
 Use for training; and a broad analysis of pupils' profiles for next steps planning and monitoring over time. Colour-code and date entries.
 For pupils with English as an additional or new language, plot for English and for the first language.

The Simple View of Writing



Simple View of Writing model: Adaptation of the SVoR model (Gough and Tunmer 1986) by Debbie Hepplewhite – for **training, analysis** and **planning**. Note: **Spelling** includes: knowledge of the alphabetic code (spelling alternatives) and encoding skill, high-frequency tricky words, spelling word banks, etymology (word origins), morphology (word structures), some spelling rules. **'Teach pupils to plan, revise and evaluate their writing – knowledge which is not required for reading'** (DfE National Curriculum for English, Key Stages 1 and 2 – Draft, 2012).

Systematic Synthetic Phonics:

Teach alphabetic code **knowledge**

Teach the **three core skills** and their **sub-skills**

Apply to **cumulative words** and **extend to sentences and texts**

www.phonicsinternational.com

CORE SKILL 1

Decode for **READING**:

PRINT-TO-SOUND

- i) Scan all-through-the-printed-word to recognise any letter *groups*
- ii) Say the sounds for the graphemes and *blend* to 'discern' and say the target word (use *cumulative words, sentences and texts*)
- iii) Modify the pronunciation of the target word if necessary



Sub-skills of CORE SKILL 1

***Without print:** Attune the learner's 'ear' to phonemes (*phonemic awareness*) by adult saying the sounds (phonemes) all-through-a-spoken-word followed by saying the whole spoken word to train the learner to 'discern' the intended word from its constituent sounds

***With print:** Train the learner to recognise letters and letter groups and to 'say the sounds' in automatic response (*typically with flash cards, grapheme tiles and say the sounds posters*)

Incidental Phonics Teaching:

Teach **any** letter/s-sound correspondence to any learner at any time – **as required** supported by main **Alphabetic Code Charts**

www.alphabeticcodecharts.com

Debbie Hepplewhite's Model of the three phonics core skills and their sub-skills

Sub-skills of CORE SKILL 3

- *Recognise correct orientation of letter shapes – and link to *sounds* at first
- *Understand the notion of capital and lower case letter shapes and be able to match the pairs
- *Understand that both capitals and lower case matched pairs **are code** for the same sounds
- *Know the relative sizes of letters and their correct positions on writing lines
- *Know the starting points and directionality of forming letters and practise with multi-sensory activities whilst saying the correct sounds (*ranging from air-writing and arty activities to forming letters correctly with pencils on paper*)
- *Learn about the **alphabet** and **alphabetical order** (*through chanting or singing an alphabet song at first*)
- *Know letter names for the letters
- *Hold a normal thickness pencil correctly with the tripod grip

CORE SKILL 3

HANDWRITING:

- *Form **26 upper case letters (capitals) and 26 lower case letters correctly on writing lines with tripod pencil grip**
- *Write **graphemes (letters and letter groups) in response to speech sounds (phonemes)**
- *Also, write **upper or lower case letter shapes in response to letter names**
- *Understand the difference between letter names and sounds and when to use names or sounds (letter names used for *alphabet work* and *relaying a precise spelling*, letter name by letter name to another person)
- *Understand the difference between the 'alphabetic code' and 'the alphabet' and what each is used for

Alphabetic Code KNOWLEDGE

Systematically teach the 44+ phonemes and the many letter/s-sound correspondences of a 'simple' then 'complex' (extended) alphabetic code

Two-pronged approach
Introduce the letter/s-sound correspondences **systematically** but introduce **any code at any time, incidentally, as required**

Know that alphabetic code is reversible, from print-to-sound for decoding (reading) and from sound-to-print for encoding (spelling)

Sub-skills of CORE SKILL 2

*Attune the learner's 'ear' to phonemes (*phonemic awareness*) by adult saying a whole spoken word slowly, followed by the adult saying the sounds all-through-the-spoken-word (use *any* spoken words, they do not have to be 'cumulative' for this practice)

*The adult 'says the sound' as close as possible to phonemes in real speech (consider volume and pitch, avoid 'uh' on the end of consonant sounds) – followed by the learner: *pointing to the letter or letter group; or selecting grapheme tiles; or air-writing the letter or letter group; or writing the grapheme on a whiteboard or, better still, writing on paper*

CORE SKILL 2

Encode for SPELLING:

SOUND-TO-PRINT

- i) **Orally segment (identify the sounds) all-through-the-spoken-word from a cumulative word bank**
- ii) **Identify and select correct graphemes as code for the identified sounds**
- iii) **Write letter shapes when able**
- iv) **Sound out and blend to check spelling (over time, build up knowledge of spelling word banks)**

Guidance for phonics routines: www.phonicsinternational.com/new_free_resources.html

www.debbiehepplewhitehandwriting.com

Phonics Routines

Teach the **knowledge** of the alphabetic code (the letter/s-sound correspondences) and the **three core skills** and their **sub-skills**

1. Decoding (blending or synthesising)

Sub-skill without print:

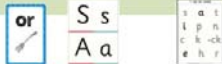


Adult says the separate sounds "/f/ /r/ /o/ /g/".

frog

Learners 'discern' or 'hear' the whole word 'frog' and then say the whole word "frog".

Sub-skill with print:



Point to pre-printed graphemes that have been taught to date:

"See the graphemes [letters or letter groups] and say the sounds."

-ng

Core skill for decoding:

- Glance at (scan) the printed word from left to right to 'recognise' any letter groups.
- Use the index finger to point directly under **each** grapheme whilst saying the sounds as close to real speech as possible from left to right of the printed word.
- Say the whole word whilst running the index finger left to right beneath the whole printed word.
- Modify the pronunciation of the blended sounds into the real word's pronunciation if necessary.

Copyright Phonics International Ltd 2012

2. Encoding (oral segmenting, spelling-with-editing)

Sub-skill without print:

Say the whole word "soap" very slowly and naturally so that the separate sounds become evident [oral segmenting].

Repeat the separate sounds as close to real speech sounds as possible "/s/ /oa/ /p/".

Do not repeat the whole spoken word after that!

Sub-skill with print:

Listen to sounds as close as possible to real speech sounds.

1. "Hear the sounds, point to the graphemes."
2. "Hear the sounds, select the graphemes."
3. "Hear the sounds, write the graphemes."



Core skill for encoding:

- Use the left hand, palm facing, to tally the sounds identified all-through-the-spoken-word onto thumb and fingers.
- Write a 'sound dash' for every sound identified which also act as 'writing lines'.
- Select grapheme tiles, magnetic letters or write graphemes, to spell the word.
- Sound out and blend the selected graphemes to check the spelling.



— — —

s oa p ✓

Copyright Phonics International Ltd 2012

3. Handwriting (linking graphemes to sounds)

Sub-skill:

Hold the pencil correctly with the tripod grip.



"Froggy legs [thumb and index finger] grip the pencil at the end of the painted part [not on the sloping cone part] with the log under [the middle finger]".

Sub-skill:

"ch" as in chick



Establishing 'directionality' of writing letter shapes whilst saying the sounds.

Finger-tracing: Use the index finger of the writing hand to trace pre-printed letter shapes.

Pencil-tracing: Trace pre-printed grey or dotted letter shapes with a pencil.

Copying: Copy letter shapes with finger or pencil.



Core skill for handwriting:

- Correct tripod pencil grip
- Correct posture sitting at a desk
- Slightly slanted paper, use free hand to hold steady
- Write under the letters and words - avoid hooking hand and wrist around
- Say the sounds whilst writing graphemes as part of the spelling process
- Write on writing lines frequently as appropriate



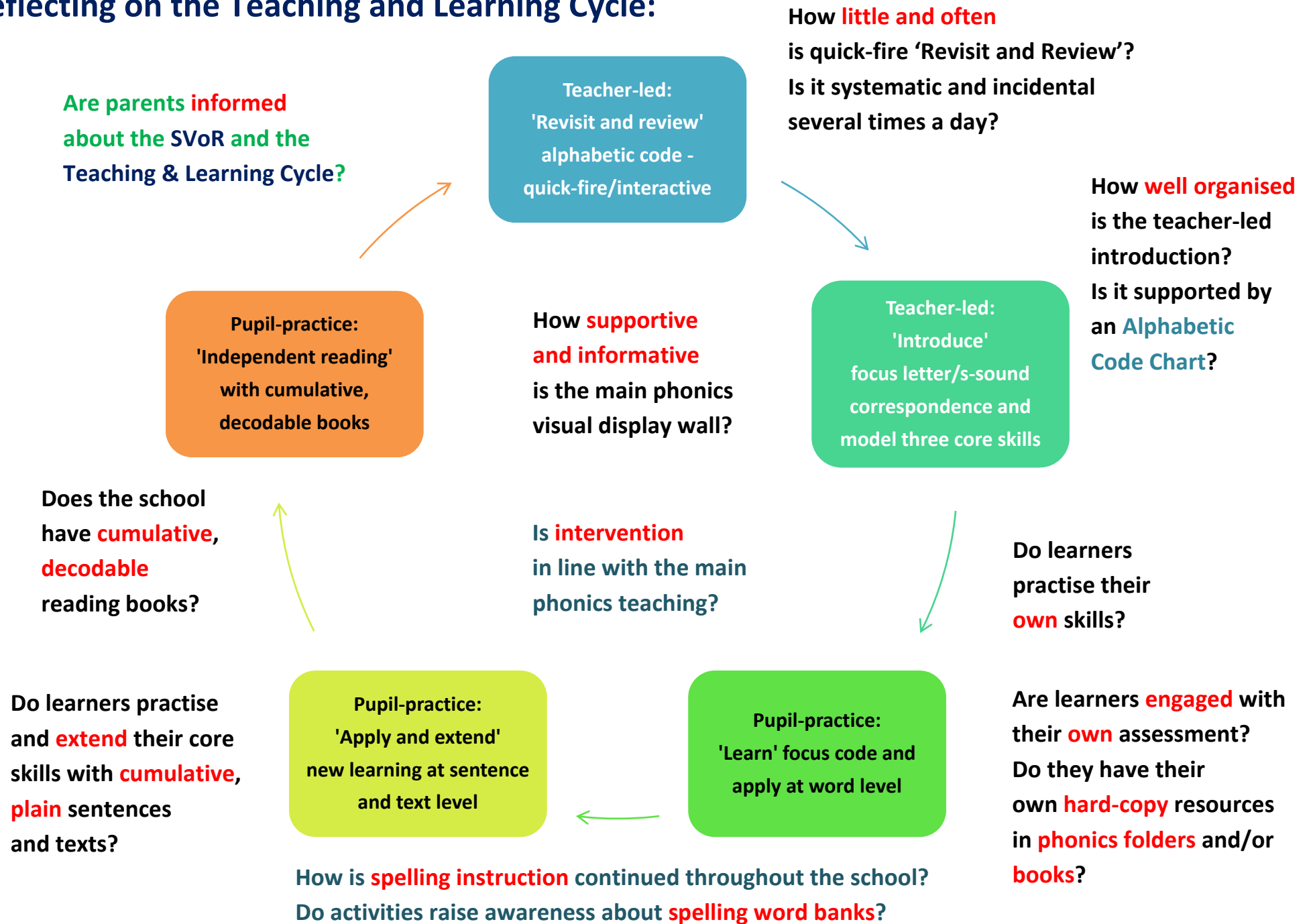
www.phonicsinternational.com

www.debbiehepplewhitehandwriting.com

Copyright Phonics International Ltd 2012



Reflecting on the Teaching and Learning Cycle:



Simple View of Schools' Phonics Provision

Phonics Programme X Practice = Phonics Provision

SSP = Systematic Synthetic Phonics

Rigorous Phonics Practice

The school's core SSP programme is 'Letters and Sounds' but this does not include any actual resources. Teachers use familiar resources from the main commercial SSP programmes to provide:

- some phonics display material on classroom walls (frieze, tricky words)
 - the 'revisit and review' part of the lesson (flash cards, IWB) often using the mnemonic system of a commercial SSP programme
 - introduction of the new or focus letter/s-sound correspondence
- Pupil-practice commonly consists of children sitting on the carpet with mini whiteboards doing sound-to-print spelling activities for very short periods of time. This may be the whole class or groups. Little or no paper-based work, no evidence of work for class or individuals.

At least some teachers promote multi-cueing guessing strategies.

Phonics lessons are invariably '20 minutes' at best - as this has become the standard time associated with L & S phonics provision.

The school invests in a content-rich, fit-for-purpose SSP programme delivered largely according to the author's guidance. SSP authors recommend far longer than '20 minutes' time allocation for phonics lessons.

Headteacher and all staff fully trained and equally committed - teachers work in full partnership with parents and carers.

Phonics coordinator has non-contact time to support all staff with CPD.

Rigorous application of the 'Teaching and Learning Cycle' using cumulative code, words, sentences, texts and reading books - ample time allowed.

Any special needs intervention uses same SSP phonics programme and guidance and extra 'little and often' practice is guaranteed. Extension activities are provided for quicker learners as required.

***No multi-cueing guessing strategies are taught or encouraged. Children provided with cumulative, decodable home reading books.**

Teachers' professional knowledge and mindset along with high-quality SSP provision, in a language and literature-rich environment, ensure that all children learn to read and write.

'Letters and Sounds' (DfES 2007)

Teachers use 'Letters and Sounds' but have 'adapted it' for 'their' children. They have bought, made and acquired various teaching and learning resources to provide a 'variety of fun games and activities' to deliver phonics lessons in ways considered to be 'child-friendly'.

Games often stuck at code and word level - not substantial texts. Phonics content has little or no progression in type and challenge of activities provided from Reception to Year One.

Slower-to-learn children may be very disadvantaged from too many varied and time-consuming games which are 'extraneous' (Sir Jim Rose warned us about 'extraneous' activities). There are likely to be a lot of Year Two 'strugglers' as the phonics games are not fit-for-purpose.

Teachers think some children are not 'developmentally ready' - this becomes self-fulfilling. **They think phonics does not 'suit' all children - intervention may be Reading Recovery with its multi-cueing reading strategies (or less-expensive equivalent) - or computer games such as Nessy.** Little or no paper-based practice or record of activities.

Teachers are perplexed about poor or inconsistent Year One Phonics Check results - but children do not get enough blending practice. Teachers disagree with the Year One Phonics Check and don't understand why their 'better readers' do not score better in the check.

The school initially invests in a content-rich SSP programme and training but the headteacher may be 'too busy' to attend the main training event for the programme.

Poor adherence to the programme - possibly because the headteacher lacks determination and commitment and no-one leads the way, or the phonics coordinator has insufficient non-contact time to lead or support.

This results in inconsistency of phonics routines and lack of continuity from person to person and/or from one year to the next, for example:

- teachers 'adapt' the programme for their children but this usually means they choose not to follow the author's guidance
- teachers stick with what they are used to - change takes effort
- over time, the programme becomes unappreciated and diluted
- new staff may introduce conflicting phonics practices
- new headteacher and/or some staff not on board with the programme
- visiting inspector or advisor instructs school to do things differently: e.g. multiple grouping - but this may not be the programme's design

At least some teachers promote multi-cueing guessing strategies or the school generally believes in multi-cueing strategies.

NOTE: Research and practice show us that multi-cueing reading strategies ('guessing' words from word-shape, pictures, initial letters and context) cause long-term bad reading habits which can be very damaging.

Fully-resourced Core SSP Programme

Weak Phonics Practice

These are examples of various profiles of schools in England (2015). The teachers in all these different schools are hardworking. The pupils, however, do not all get sufficient fit-for-purpose phonics practice. Many are taught to guess words they cannot decode. This fails many pupils.

Copyright Debbie Hepplewhite 2015