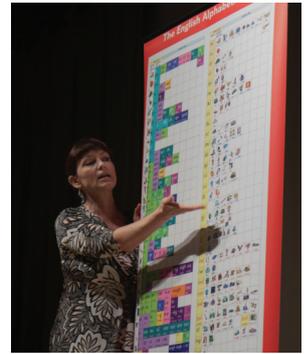


Phonics International

CONTACT: PHONICSINTERNATIONAL.COM

REVIEWED BY: JOHN DABELL



spelling alternatives in key words			
/s/	-ss	-se	-ce
snake 	glass 	house 	palace
cs	ct	sc	-st-
city 	city 	scissors 	castle
		ps	ps
		city 	pseudonym

pronunciation: /k/				
c	k	-ck	ch	qu
caravan	kindly	socket	preschool	conqueror
capital	skeleton	bottleneck	technology	bouquet
carnival	kaftan	chopsticks	melancholy	parquet
carpet	kaleidoscope	ramshackle	leprechaun	mosquito
cupboard	keepsake	shockingly	chronology	etiquette
custard	unkempt	wickerwork	bronchitis	
cultivation	kernel	woodpecker	backache	que
contents	kestrel	seasickness	mechanic	technique
contented	kettledrum	blackbuster	architect	statuesque
collapse	keypad	bricklayer	charismatic	opaquely
incredible	kidneys	cockleshells	chamomile	

ch	
school	scholar
chaos	anchor
chasm	orchid
chorus	scheme
chemist	chronic
chord	echo
stomach	arachnid
mechanism	
chameleon	chrysalis
headache	

Some resources are about as inspiring as 1:30pm on a wet Tuesday in Scunthorpe. Others have that feel-good Friday element of insane excitement to them – like Phonics International. Written and designed by literacy expert Debbie Hepplewhite MBE, this glorious online synthetic phonics programme is inspired by immense passion for the subject.

Far from being the preserve of primary pupils, her argument is that phonics is for all ages. I repeat, phonics is for everyone and the idea that it is just a method for teaching wee ones to read is seriously wonky. Let's illustrate. Can you read this: rhombicosidodecahedron? Given it a good stab? Well, without being aware of it you probably used your advanced alphabetic code knowledge to unpeel the word. It's something literate adults do. But not everyone can do this routinely. As teachers we all know the challenges of teaching lower ability pupils with shallow-end reading ages as well as helping those with English as a new or second language. The sheer volume of underachieving pupils struggling to access the wider curriculum because they can't read is nothing new; phonics is definitely not babyish and unquestionably something to include on the secondary menu. And for me, there's only one intervention programme worth entertaining and that is Phonics International.

The aim of Phonics International is to deliver guidance and practical resources for anyone who wants to learn to read, spell and write in the English language by developing lifelong alphabetic code knowledge and skills. The basis of the programme is to teach the letter/s-sound correspondence knowledge (letters, letter groups and sounds) of the English Alphabetic Code and how to put this code knowledge to use applying the three skills of: 1) all-through-the-word 'sounding out' and blending for reading (synthesising); 2) segmenting for spelling (splitting up spoken

words into their smallest constituent sounds and knowing which letters or letter groups are code for the identified sounds and building up spelling word banks over time); and 3) handwriting the letter shapes correctly.

The programme is produced in 12 progressive downloadable units and the step by step resources teach the 44 phonics phonemes/graphemes to teach reading, spelling and writing. The beating heart of the programme is the 'Alphabetic Code', which is basically a colour-coded chart of all the many spelling alternatives (graphemes) for the 44+ sounds (phonemes), split into 12 shades that correspond with the downloadable units. Dig into the programme and you will find a unique approach to teaching the alphabetic code, which is both 'systematic' and 'incidental'. Both teaching and learning can be fast-tracked for most if not all pupils, as there is a continuous approach of over-learning/review/consolidation through strategic teaching and incidental opportunities where the Alphabetic Code Chart is the perpetual supporting visual aid. This helps to address secondary-aged pupils' needs as they often have a patchy knowledge of code.

You get a wealth of resources including a programme overview and guidance manual, assessment sheets, parent letters, picture cards, picture posters mapping phonemes to graphemes, sounds book, teaching guidelines, hear the sounds online audio-visually, active online forums and email support, grapheme flash cards, printable games, handwriting resources, blend word cards, read the words make up a story materials, and over 200 cumulative texts for reading, discussing and dictation. The amount of free resources, too, puts other providers to shame. The work that has gone into creating and developing this highly organised, systematic and flexible programme is incredible and growing all the time.

The greatest compliment I can pay Phonics International is its remarkable value.

A multi-user three-year license is only £99. If you can find better value than that for so much material then I'll eat my trousers, some novelty slippers and a dozen jars of English mustard. Niggles? You might need a sat-nav to find your way around, especially some of the resource pages, which are written in nano-text. There needs to be more online testimonials from secondary folks, to convince the doubting Thomases. And there is so much stuff on the site there is a danger that your head will explode into millions of vowels and consonants, which can't be good for the environment... as you can see, I'm struggling to be negative.

I'm forced to conclude that I don't like this resource. I love it. Baby stuff? Only a dummy would say that. Teaching reading is not just the responsibility of primaries. Secondaries have to play their part too, so its damn lucky that Phonics International exists for those teachers who are shouting, "How on earth are we supposed to do that?"

VERDICT:
Truly Scrumptious
This is like eating Michelin star food but paying Harvester prices with unlimited cups of organic fair trade coffee where the maître d' knows everything there is to know about every morsel on your phonics plate...