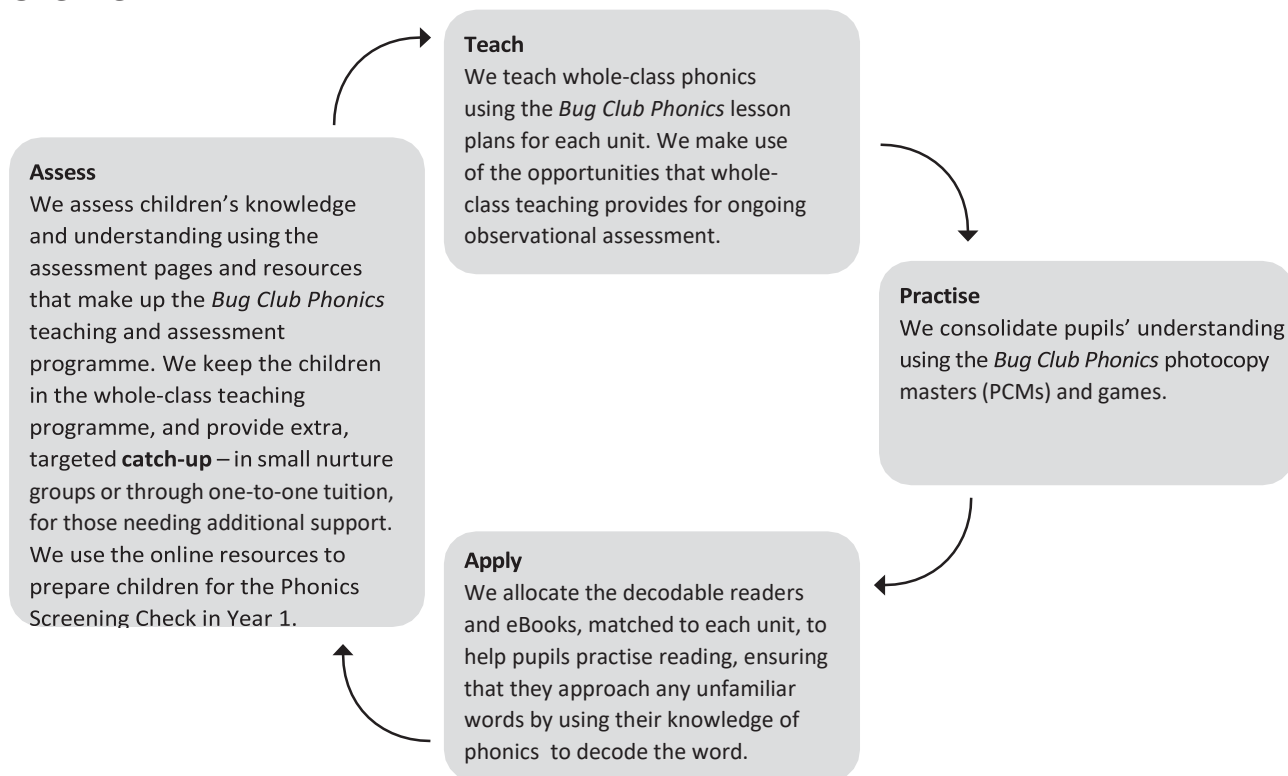


## Overview



*Bug Club Phonics* is the dedicated phonics strand of *Bug Club*, a core reading programme that is used for independent and guided reading from Reception to Year 3. Together, *Bug Club Phonics* and *Bug Club* teach children to read in Reception Key Stage 1.

The programme is a balanced approach to the teaching of reading using systematic synthetic phonics. It simultaneously teaches the segmentation of words for spelling, and develops phonemic awareness skills. The programme is the product of seven years’ research in Clackmannanshire, Scotland, which produced remarkable gains in reading and spelling among those children who followed the programme.

- The basic Revision and Lesson elements of the teaching sessions are essential and are carried out at a brisk pace. The independent work provided by the PCMs and games are tailored to meet the needs of individuals or groups.
- We use interactive whiteboards to deliver lessons in school, and if we do not have access to one, we use the resource cards and have magnetic letter boards and letters for modelling.
- We use small magnetic letter boards and letters for individual use or to share between two.

## What is systematic synthetic phonics?

In systematic synthetic phonics the graphemes and corresponding phonemes are taught just before the introduction of words that contain these letters. To read these words, children are taught to pronounce the individual phonemes (sounds) associated with the graphemes (letters) they see, and then to blend them together (synthesise) to form the word. (In this programme, we use slashes / / to denote phonemes and inverted commas ' ' to denote graphemes.)

The process is as follows:

- Children see a word, e.g. cat; it is not pronounced for them.
- They break it down into its individual letters (graphemes) and pronounce the corresponding sounds (phonemes) for each letter in turn: /c/ /a/ /t/
- Then they blend the separate phonemes together to form the word.

This process is known as **blending**.

Systematic synthetic phonics teaches letter sounds very rapidly, explicitly showing children how to build up words with letters from the start, and always includes blending with printed words.

Systematic synthetic phonics does not normally teach spelling, but *Bug Club Phonics* does teach spelling by reversing the reading process described above, i.e.

- Children hear a word, e.g. 'cat' and say it.
- They say the first phoneme: /c/.
- They write the corresponding grapheme: 'c'.
- They say the word again and say the next phoneme: /a/.
- They write the corresponding grapheme: 'a', and so on.

This process is known as **segmenting**, and is followed by the children reading the word they have produced by sounding and blending.

In our approach, both blending for reading and segmenting for spelling are fully scaffolded. We model for the children how to sound and blend words for reading, but in each lesson children must attempt to sound and blend words for themselves to find out how they are pronounced. We also model for the children how to segment for spelling and continue to scaffold the children through the process with each word they spell. This ensures that they identify each phoneme and choose the appropriate grapheme in turn, until the word is spelt.

Systematic synthetic phonics differs from analytic phonics in that in analytic phonics children are shown word families. For example, they may be introduced to the letter sound 'c', and then be shown a list of words all starting with the same letter sound, e.g. 'cat, cake, cut, cup'. Sounding and blending starts when all the letters of the alphabet have been taught in the beginning, middle and final positions of words, whereas in systematic synthetic phonics this process starts after the first few letter sounds have been taught.

## Programme rationale

### Pace and order of teaching

In Reception, *Bug Club Phonics* teaches a new grapheme and related phoneme in every Phoneme Session. This fast pace, backed up by daily revision of past teaching, has proved the most effective and successful method of phonic training. This means that the basic 40+ phonemes are acquired quickly, and early reading skills develop rapidly. Decodable readers are introduced after just 2 weeks' teaching at the end of Unit 2. This enables children to apply the taught strategies and enjoy contextualised reading early on.

The order of grapheme introduction ensures that children are able to start reading and spelling a wide range of words at the earliest possible stage.

### Introduction of graphemes and phonemes

In *Bug Club Phonics* children are taught graphemes and phonemes at the same time. The research study showed that children progressed quickly if they learnt about phonemes in the context of letters and print right from the start of the phonics teaching.

### Blending and segmenting

In *Bug Club Phonics* blending for reading and segmenting for spelling are given equal prominence, though blending is always taught first in a session. The practice of oral blending and segmentation is recommended in Phase 2. These activities are done outside the lesson; for example,

- suggesting words for children to practise sound-talk: e.g. tap, hat, mop
- using pictures from the online asset bank for sound-talk sentences, e.g.
  - Point to the m-a-p.
  - Can you h-o-p on one l-e-g?

### Introduction of letter names

The names of letters can be taught first, via the Alphabet song and magnetic letters. Since the programme was first launched, children have not had any difficulties learning both letter names and sounds early on. One of the benefits of this is that any child who misses a session will know the names of the letters they have missed. In many cases the letter names give a good guide to the letter sounds.

## Multi-sensory learning

Bringing a multi-sensory element to the teaching of phonics is widely recognised to be hugely beneficial to its effectiveness. *Bug Club Phonics* uses magnetic letters and boards to consolidate children's blending and segmenting abilities. Mini-magnetic boards are to be used by pairs (or individuals) during and after the whole-class teaching sessions. The interactive whiteboard acts as an electronic magnetic letter board for teacher demonstration.

Additionally, teaching the formation of the letters at the same time as the sounds helps to consolidate the letters in memory. Once children are competent at writing the letters, they need not use the individual boards for spelling.

## Handwriting

*Bug Club Phonics* does not replace our normal handwriting programme, but it does recognise that letter formation helps kinaesthetic consolidation of grapheme acquisition and so spelling. The teaching of letter formation accompanies the introduction of every grapheme and the talking-through element of such teaching also supports the children's cognitive processes.

## Less common grapheme–phoneme correspondences

Based on experience of the hundreds of children who have been through the programme over the last 20 or so years, *Bug Club Phonics* takes the view that children are best served by learning the basic 40+ grapheme–phoneme correspondences in the first year at school. The less frequent pronunciations, particularly for vowels, are taught when the children are secure in the basic principles, normally in the second year of school.

Very minor variations in pronunciation are not taught separately, and this has been found to pose no relevant difficulties for the children. Notes within daily lesson plans, outline areas where we may want to adopt our own regional pronunciation.

## High frequency (common) words and irregular words

High frequency decodable common words are included for reading and spelling throughout *Bug Club Phonics*. These are listed in the chart under 'Decodable words' and are always taught by sounding and blending. There is also a list of 'Not fully decodable (irregular) words'; these are also referred to as Common Exception Words (CEWs) or Tricky Words. These words are subsumed under the heading 'Irregular' in the Language Sessions. Many of these words have spellings that have irregular pronunciations; these words are always deemed 'tricky', e.g. 'one'. However, some of the words in the list have regular pronunciations and become fully decodable later on as the phonics teaching progresses; for example, 'like' becomes completely decodable when split digraphs are taught.

Children are encouraged to use their phonic knowledge to help them decode these words as far as possible; we point out and talk through the irregular aspects to help them read the words. We introduce additional irregular words as deemed necessary by the content of our particular reading schemes. We also practise the irregular words throughout the school day. However, these words, and the high-frequency decodable words, are never taught as 'sight' words using flash cards. The following chart shows the *Bug Club Phonics* progression in common words (decodable and not fully decodable) in Reception.

Phase	Unit	Decodable words	Not fully decodable words (Irregular words)
2	1	at, as	
	2	an, it, in, is, dad	
	3	can, on, not, got	to
	4	mum, up, get	the, no, go
	5	had, back, his, big, him, if, of, off, but	I, into, her
3	6	will	me, be
	7	–	he, my, by, she
	8	that, this, then, them, with	they
	9	look, see, too	we, are
	10	for, now, down	you
	11	–	all, was, give, live
4	12	went, from, children, just, help	said, have, like, so, do, some, come, were, there, little, one, when, out, what

## Guided independent work

Although *Bug Club Phonics* is delivered through teacher-modelling and rehearsal with the whole class, we also use resources for guided independent work. These are tailored to meet the needs of an individual or groups and to give a chance to work with children who may need more help to consolidate their learning.

## Introduction of graded readers

*Bug Club Phonics* is supported by decodable readers which match the order of phoneme introduction. When the children have completed the first two units of *Bug Club Phonics*, they will have acquired a sufficient number of grapheme–phoneme correspondences to start reading their own books. This should be a motivating and enjoyable experience for them.

There are books to match each unit of the teaching programme and these help children to practise and consolidate their learning at each stage.

Before, during and after the introduction of the *Bug Club Phonics* readers, children are exposed constantly to a rich and varied diet of book experiences to ensure their enthusiasm

for reading is nurtured, their comprehension skills are being developed, and their speaking and listening skills are extended.

## Speaking and listening skills

Our strategy of teacher-modelling and rehearsal for teaching reading and spelling provides opportunities for pupils to be both spectators and participants. As spectators, they listen to words and structures; as participants, they try them out. While sharing pupil magnetic boards, working in pairs or small groups, pupils respond to each other, learning to adjust the language to suit the situation and the response of partners. Using graded readers, the teacher encourages pupils to express opinions and explore, develop and sustain ideas through talk and discussion.

## Language Sessions

Language Sessions occur at the end of each unit. These sessions combine the teaching of irregular words with using words in the context of captions and sentences. The acquisition of skills for reading single words is only part of the reading process. To read with fluency and comprehension, children apply and develop the skills taught during the systematic synthetic phonics teaching element of the

programme. The Language Sessions serve to consolidate the teaching of reading and spelling in the Phoneme Sessions, and promote early comprehension skills.

Comprehension is not an end product. It is a process which occurs during active interaction between the reader and the text. In the *Bug Club Phonics* Language Sessions, a progressive programme of text-related directed activities enables children to progress from single-word reading to reading intelligently to grasp meaning from the text.

While there are no new grapheme–phoneme correspondences in Phase 4, children learn to read and spell words containing adjacent consonants and read more decodable words and words that are not fully decodable (irregular words). For this reason, there are three (rather than one) Language Sessions in Unit 12 (Phase 4).

## Teaching sequence

*Bug Club Phonics* is structured with Phoneme Sessions and Language Sessions. The following diagram illustrates the alignment of the *Bug Club Phonics* lesson structure to the recommended teaching sequence.

Teaching sequence	<i>Bug Club Phonics</i> lesson structure
Introduce ▼	Learning intentions and outcomes for the day are discussed at the start of the lesson.
Revisit and review ▼	Every Phoneme Session begins with Revision to review previous learning (with the exception of Unit 1). In Reception (P1) the Revision is not just of the previous day's target grapheme–phoneme correspondence, but also of blending for reading and segmenting for spelling of the relevant words. In Key Stage 1 (P2&3) the Revision is sometimes a review of previous learning which links with the planned teaching for that day.
Teach ▼	Every Phoneme and Language Session is composed of teaching elements (e.g. Sounds, Reading, Spelling etc.) which are easily navigated to structure the new phonic teaching. The teaching of grapheme–phoneme correspondences and high-frequency (common) words is covered.
Practise ▼	Practise opportunities are available in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Follow-up' parts of the lessons</li> <li>• unit-linked pupil games</li> <li>• unit-linked photocopy masters</li> <li>• 'free-teaching' within the Magnetic Board.</li> </ul>
Apply ▼	Language Sessions provide opportunities to apply developing phonic skills to the reading, spelling and writing of captions and sentences. This application also covers irregular (not fully decodable) common words. In addition, the linked decodable readers allow regular application of children's phonic skills, from as early as Unit 2 of <i>Bug Club Phonics</i> .
Assess learning ▼	Assessment guidance and materials provided within this guide and on the website enable ongoing formative assessment during the daily lessons and summative assessment at regular periods throughout the programme. The frequency of assessment opportunities means children's needs can be identified the moment they become apparent, ensuring that no child gets left behind. The catch-up guidance and resources allow children to stay within the main teaching sessions whilst getting the extra help they need, in the right format, to be able to keep up with their peers. The assessment resources can be used to prepare children for the Phonics Screening Check in Year 1.

## Programme structure

### Unit structure

The following table shows what is covered in each of Units 1–12 of *Bug Club Phonics*. (See also the section ‘*Bug Club Phonics* and the phases of progression’ on page 8.)

- Each of the 12 units represents a group of letters.
- Each phoneme within a group is introduced in one Phoneme Session, and each unit concludes with a Language Session, which includes teaching of associated irregular words.

Phase	Unit	F o c u s	Not fully decodable words (irregular words)
2	1	s, a, t, p	
	2	i, n, m, d	
	3	g, o, c, k	to
	4	ck, e, u, r	the, no, go
	5	h, b, f, ff l, ll, ss	l, into, her
3	6	j, v, w, x	me, be
	7	y, z, zz, qu	he, my, by, she
	8	ch, sh, th, ng	they
	9	ai, ee, igh, oa oo (long), oo (short)	we, are
	10	ar, or, ur, ow, oi	you
	11	ear, air, ure, er	all, was, give, live
4	12	Adjacent consonants (cvcc, ccvc, ccvcc, cccvc, cccvcc)	said, have, like, so, do, some, come, were, there, little, one, when, out, what

(See page 48 for a table showing what is covered in each of Units 13–30 of *Bug Club Phonics*.)

### Session structure

The following table illustrates the breakdown of teaching elements in Phoneme and Language Sessions.

- Every Phoneme and Language Session is composed of the same teaching elements (with the exception of Unit 1).
- Each Phoneme Session starts with Revision to review previous learning (with the exception of Unit 1).
- Each lesson within the Phoneme Session starts by introducing the new phoneme for the day, using a fun video clip. Children examine asset bank words in order to highlight the new grapheme in beginning, middle or end positions. It is not intended that children read these words out loud.

## Phoneme Session

Teaching element	Description
Alphabet song	Sing the Alphabet song

### Revision

Letters and Sounds	Quick-fire practice of previously taught grapheme–phoneme correspondences
Reading	Children practise reading words composed of previously taught grapheme–phoneme correspondences
Writing and Spelling	Children practise spelling and letter formation using previously taught graphemes and words

### Lesson

Introduction	Discuss learning intentions and outcomes for the day
Sounds	Children are introduced to new grapheme with corresponding phoneme. They highlight the letter’s position in words from the asset bank
Reading	Children blend phonemes for reading words
Spelling	Children segment words for spelling
Writing	Children form letters to cement grapheme–phoneme correspondence
Follow-up	Children are introduced to guided independent work, consolidating any teaching from lesson
Plenary	Discuss learning outcomes
Alphabet song	Sing the Alphabet song

## Language Session

Teaching element	Description
Alphabet song	Sing the Alphabet song

Introduction	Discuss learning intentions and outcomes for the day
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### Not fully decodable words/irregular words

Reading	Children read irregular word(s)
Spelling	Children spell irregular word(s)
Writing	Children write captions and sentences
Follow-up	Basic comprehension and introduction of guided independent work

Plenary	Discuss learning outcomes
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Alphabet song	Sing the Alphabet song
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## **Bug Club Phonics and the phases of progression**

*Bug Club Phonics* provides inbuilt formative and summative assessment. The letter order used in this programme follows a sequence that early on makes the reading of a large number of CVC words possible. Knowledge of the Phase 2 and 3 letters, digraphs and trigraphs are tested using (Rec) Terms 1A-3A Assessment Sheets, and the ability to read and spell CVC nonwords are measured using (Rec) Term 3A Assessment Sheet - Blending and segmenting (pseudo-words). However, we do not expect the children to have mastery of what they have been taught right at the end of each Phase. During the Clackmannanshire study, children at the end of Phase 3 only got about 50% of these nonwords correct; yet when tested a year later only 2.2% of the children were more than a year behind in reading, and none was more than two years behind. Phase 4 skills (adjacent consonants) are assessed in (Rec) Term 3B Assessment Sheet - Blending and segmenting (CCVC, CVCC and CCVCC), where children are asked to read and spell CCVC, CVCC and CCVCC nonwords. Struggling learners do extra catch-up sessions while staying in the whole-class programme.

A fun, informal group assessment of real words and alien words are used in the end-of-phase assessments, as well as formal photocopiable tests. These tests are designed specifically to help to prepare children for the Government's Phonics Screening Check in Year 1.

## **How we run the programme**

### **Duration of programme**

Units 1–12 support the timetable for teaching Phases 2, 3 and 4 within the first year of school – for example, teaching four letters per week in Phase 2. The units can take as little as 16 weeks to complete, but we use your professional judgement to moderate the pace in accordance with the needs of the class. For example, we may want to break for a week or so after we have finished introducing the single-letter phonemes, and use this time for assessment and catching up.

It is envisaged that the sessions will be delivered on consecutive days. This will not always be possible or sensible, but we try to maintain the brisk pace of lesson delivery as far as possible in order to achieve maximum benefits from the programme.

It should be noted that it is not expected that all of the children will have complete mastery of the phonemes as they are taught. The children will be able to master them in subsequent sessions, as they come up over and over again.

### **Attendance**

All teachers and teaching assistants in the school are aware of how phonics is delivered. The pace at which new sounds are taught means that time off school can create real gaps

in children's phonic knowledge. The regularity of the sessions is crucial for the efficacy of phonics teaching. Losing that due to periods away from school can make it difficult for children to grasp the mechanics of phonics learning, which can have a long-term impact on their ability to develop the core skills needed to learn the grapheme–phoneme correspondences, to blend the sounds together to read and to segment spoken words to spell.

*Bug Club Phonics* is designed around whole-class teaching. In order to maintain that inclusive approach the class needs to move forward together as much as possible. Periods of absence for individual children may result in them needing additional catch-up support and tuition in order to be able to keep up with their peers.

### **Daily time allocation**

The independent work provided by the PCMs does not necessarily have to be done immediately after the whole-class session, but it should be completed before the next session if possible. The games are used as consolidation work at any point in the day, and are ideal for slower learners if appropriate to their learning needs. Unit 1 contains less content than the other units, but we still use full-time allocation for these sessions as the children need more support when first introduced to the programme.

### **Classroom organisation**

The children are kept together for the daily sessions in spite of different ability levels. This has been shown to foster a sense of social inclusion and boost the performance of the children who are progressing more slowly. However, we differentiate questioning within the lesson to ensure that all children are fully engaged. Some of the follow-up activities are provided at different levels to help support different ability levels.

Children usually sit together on the floor in front of the interactive whiteboard at the start of the daily teaching sessions for the Introduction, Revision, Lesson Sounds, Lesson Visual Search and Lesson Reading elements. The children return to their seats when the Spelling element is reached.

### **Classroom management of the magnetic letters**

The children are provided with small magnetic letter boards and appropriate sets of magnetic letters (e.g. for Unit 1, s, a, t, p plus one or two distractors). One board between two is ideal. Paired work is useful because it enables the children to explain what they are doing and hear explanations from others, and in so doing consolidate the learning.

The boards are available on the children's tables, and the children return to their seats when the Spelling

teaching element is reached during the daily Phoneme Session to build the target words themselves on their boards. As children become more advanced they will begin to spell using pencil and paper instead of magnetic letters.

## Extra tuition

To keep the class together, the slower learners need extra help to target their areas of difficulty. We use a number of approaches to support these children. Where there are a couple of, or small group of, children that are struggling with the same element (for instance a specific sound), a separate **nurture group**, in addition to the whole-class session, is a useful environment in which to practise and consolidate knowledge. For those with greater needs, daily **one-to-one tuition** is a more productive format to diagnose their difficulties and consolidate their learning. These approaches enable the whole-class sessions to continue, with every child having the chance to keep up and enjoy them.

## Special Educational Needs

*Bug Club Phonics* is grounded in a proven pedagogy, based on seven years' research which produced remarkable gains in reading and spelling in the vast majority of children and very low levels of underachievement. Frequent assessment opportunities ensure all children's needs are identified and evidenced at an early stage and additional support can be put in place.

## All children together, with targeted catch-up support

The *Bug Club Phonics* approach to the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics advocates teaching all children together through daily whole-class sessions. This has been shown to foster a sense of social inclusion and boost the performance of the children who are progressing more slowly.

## Repeated teaching sequence builds familiarity to support all learners

*Bug Club Phonics* is structured around a repeated teaching sequence. Lessons each day are in short segments, in a particular order, and the same format is used every day. Familiarity with the sequence makes it easy for teachers to deliver, and predictable and straightforward for children to follow.

## Revision to reinforce previous learning

Revision is a key element of daily lessons; every session includes quick-fire practice of previously taught grapheme–phoneme correspondences together with opportunities

to read and spell words containing previously taught grapheme–phoneme correspondences. Language Sessions consolidate the teaching of reading and spelling in Phoneme Sessions, enabling children to apply developing phonic skills to the reading, spelling and writing of words, captions and sentences. Frequent revision and regular, focused activities to practise and apply taught phonics helps children who have poor working memories.

## Resources to practise and apply core phonics

In addition to the opportunities to practise and apply knowledge within the whole-class sessions outlined above, We also use resources for independent work or guided independent work, providing focused and flexible opportunities for children to consolidate the phonics they have been taught.

The resources consist of one photocopy master (PCM) for each session, plus up to five pupil games per unit. These can be tailored to meet the needs of an individual or of groups and to give a chance to work with children who may need more help to consolidate their learning. The games are engaging and accessible and are used as frequently as necessary between lessons, making them ideal for slower learners.

From the earliest stages of learning phonics with *Bug Club Phonics* – after just 10 days' teaching – children can apply the phonics they have been taught using the multiple decodable books for each unit. The eBooks have accompanying support for learners who need it, in the form of a phoneme pronunciation guide, 'Read to me' feature (for after a book has been read independently) and quiz questions for reinforcement.

Bringing a multi-sensory element to the teaching of phonics is widely recognised to be beneficial to its effectiveness and accessibility. Magnetic letters and boards are used to consolidate children's blending and segmenting. Magnetic letters and boards are especially effective in supporting the needs of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

## Adapting teaching approaches to support all learners

As outlined above, *Bug Club Phonics* is a whole-class teaching programme, with lessons delivered at a brisk pace. However, we use our professional judgement to moderate the pace in accordance with the needs of the class. Children learn at different speeds, with some children, for a range of reasons, requiring more time to embed that learning. These children may benefit from extra, targeted catch-up – in small nurture groups or through one-to-one tuition.

## Differentiation

In the Clackmannanshire study, ability groups were not formed, however there were very low levels of underachievement.

The benefits of ensuring all children are taught in whole-class sessions is explored above. However, to ensure full engagement of all children, we vary our questioning in lessons according to pupils' levels.

The resources within the teaching sessions and those for independent or guided independent work provide opportunities to read and spell words of differing lengths and structures, including multi-syllabic words, catering for different ability levels.

In addition, some follow-up activities are provided at different levels of ability to support differentiation.

## Delivering online learning with *Bug Club Phonics*

The *Bug Club Phonics* resources are ideally suited for online delivery. Direct teaching sessions can be delivered online with ease either live, by recording teaching sessions or by allocating resources for children to access remotely.

### Delivering direct teaching remotely

There are a number of ways teachers can deliver direct teaching sessions online using *Bug Club Phonics*.

Phoneme Sessions or Language Sessions can be allocated for children and their parents/carers to access from home.

The daily direct teaching sessions follow a familiar sequence and are composed of the same teaching elements – lessons are in short, engaging and focused segments.

Familiarity with the repeated sequence helps make it easy to deliver and straightforward to follow remotely with minimal time needed to explain the activities.

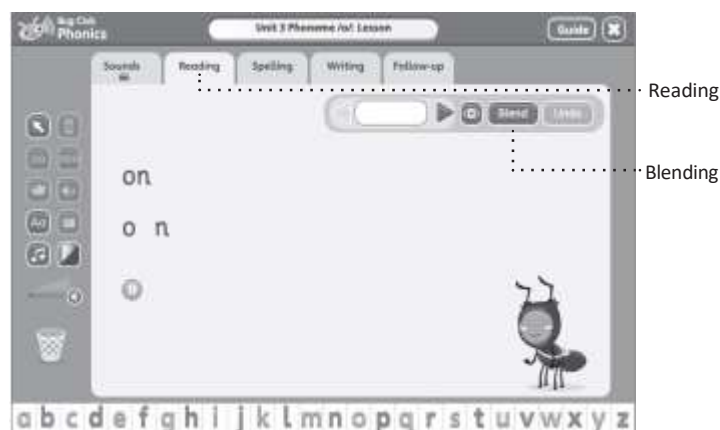
The lessons provide teachers with clear step-by-step guidance ensuring sessions are focused and easy to deliver.

## Words and texts for reading practice

*Bug Club Phonics* provides frequent opportunities for children to practise reading the GPCs they have been taught in words and texts remotely.

In Phoneme Sessions:

- children are given opportunities to practise reading words composed of previously taught grapheme–phoneme correspondences
- the process of sounding and blending the new grapheme–phoneme correspondence in words is modelled and children are also expected to attempt to sound and blend words containing it for themselves.



Language Sessions consolidate the teaching of reading in Phoneme Sessions by providing opportunities to apply developing phonic skills to the reading of words, captions and sentences.

To consolidate teaching from the Phoneme and Language Sessions, children can remotely access allocated digital games (for both practice and assessment) which provide reading practice of the previously taught phonics.



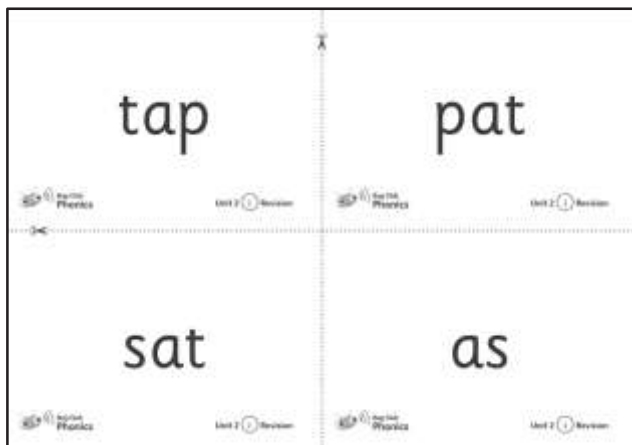
Reception Phoneme Session

PCMs provide children with further opportunities for reading practice of taught grapheme–phoneme correspondences. These can be shared using our learning platform, or via printed material.

In addition, resource cards, shared using our learning platform, or via printed material, can offer reading practice of previously taught phonics.



# Teaching systematic synthetic phonics using *Bug Club Phonics*

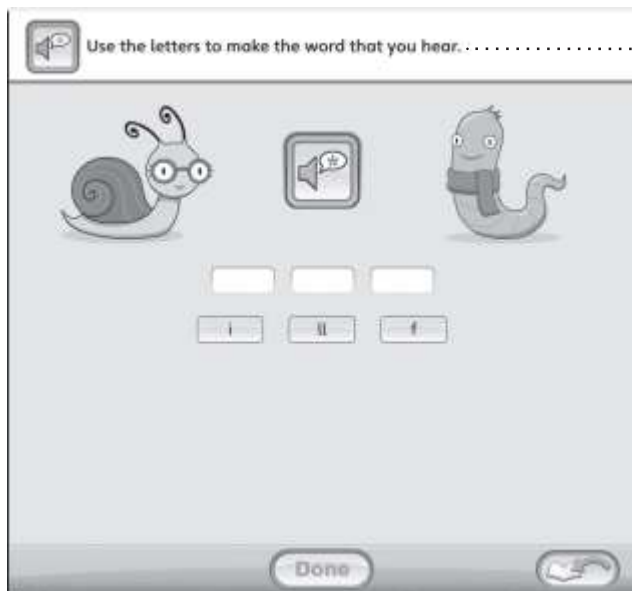


Hot spot for quiz question and pronunciation guide

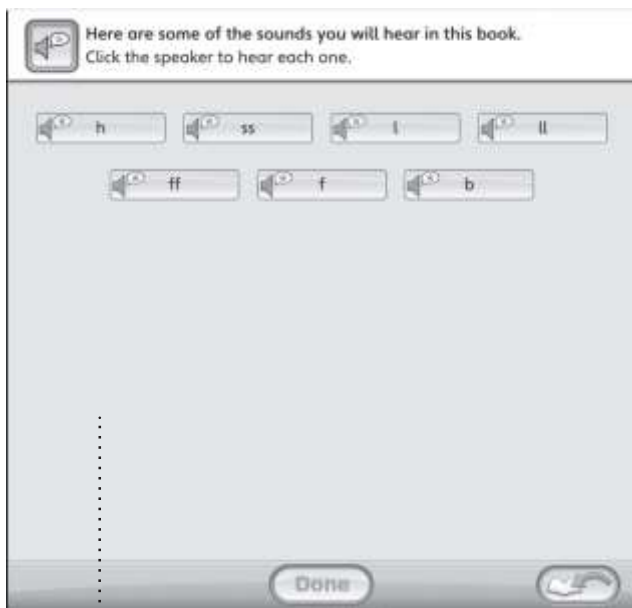
Read to me button

From the earliest stages of learning phonics with *Bug Club Phonics* – after just 2 weeks’ teaching – children can apply the phonics they have been taught in contextualised reading early on, using the multiple decodable books and eBooks matched to each unit. We allocate specific digital eBooks.

The eBooks are accompanied by easy-to-use tools for children and parents/carers to provide support with phoneme pronunciation and with fluency. These include a phoneme pronunciation guide, a ‘Read to me’ feature for after a book has been read independently, and a quiz question for reinforcement.



Quiz question in each book



Pronunciation guide

## Teaching activities for writing practice (letter formation and spelling)

*Bug Club Phonics* provides many opportunities for children to practise letter formation and to spell words containing the GPCs they have been taught remotely.

Within Phoneme Sessions:

- children are given opportunities to practise letter formation and to segment spoken words containing previously taught grapheme–phoneme correspondences for spelling

# Teaching systematic synthetic phonics using *Bug Club Phonics*

Revision



- the process of segmenting spoken words for spelling is modelled and children are expected to practise letter formation and to spell words containing the newly learned grapheme–phoneme correspondence.



Language Sessions consolidate the teaching of spelling in Phoneme Sessions by providing opportunities to apply developing phonic skills to the spelling and writing of words, captions and sentences.



To consolidate any teaching from Phoneme and Language Sessions, and to provide further writing practice, children access PCMs which are clearly referenced in each session. PCMs are shared either our learning platform, or via printed material. Parents/carers can be asked to return a scan or photo of the child's work.

Resource cards matching the GPCs and progressions in the program, shared either by our learning platform, or via printed material) feature picture stimuli, letters, words and sentences. Resource cards are provided for each session.

## Professional Development

6 units of PD materials including PowerPoints, facilitator notes and handouts enable us to deliver our own in-school PD sessions. Designed to build on the Bug Club Phonics PD course, these sessions act as a refresher to deepen and extend our learning and are used in staff meetings or training days. The slides take us through one aspect of using Bug Club Phonics for each unit, outlining outcomes and showing how we can use Bug Club Phonics materials most effectively to engage our children. We have taken the Bug Club Phonics PD course to train all teachers and teaching assistants in the pedagogy and embed the resources consistently throughout our school.

## Self-assessment

At the bottom of each PCM you will see 'happy' and 'sad' faces. In order to encourage children to consider their own performance, they tick one of the faces in accordance with how confident they felt about the tasks. In the first half of the programme, each PCM contains only the 'happy' and 'sad' faces. From Unit 8 onwards, when the tasks become more complicated, the children are given an additional 'neutral' face to choose from, to encourage them to think about the finer distinctions between being simply satisfied or dissatisfied with their performances. For example, they may select the 'neutral' face if they feel that they have performed particularly well in one task but not the other.

*Bug Club Phonics* contains a variety of useful assessment resources to help you ensure that all children are progressing in line with national expectations throughout Reception, Year 1 and Year 2.

The resources help you gauge children's knowledge of the grapheme–phoneme correspondences and their ability to blend (using both real and nonwords). These are the skills needed to reach the expected standard for the Phonics Screening Check in Year 1. You can also assess their knowledge of high-frequency irregular (tricky) words. The resources can be used at regular intervals to provide an ongoing record of children's attainment.

## Ongoing formative assessment

Daily assessment is carried out in two ways. Firstly, through using the whole-class revision section of the Phoneme Sessions you can identify strengths and weaknesses at an early stage and intervene to support those children who need it during the independent session.

Additionally, you can monitor how well children complete the independent tasks in order to give an ongoing indicator of how each child is progressing. Feedback about progress should also be given to the children so that they know what they need to do to improve.

Children should also be assessed on their ability to use taught strategies to read unknown words. This should be done individually when they are reading their reading books to you. However, it is important that children should not be asked to guess an unknown word from context or use picture cues. Such a regular, rigorous system of formative assessment reduces the opportunities for children to fall behind. It facilitates efficient, responsive catch-up tutoring so that the whole class can stay together.

## Self-assessment

Children should be encouraged to practise self-assessment, measured against the learning outcomes for the day. They can also reflect on their own performance through the inclusion of happy and sad faces on the PCMs, which they should tick in accordance with how confident they feel about the task. For further information, see page 17.

## Summative assessment

Summative assessment (to be used formatively) is also provided. We suggest you undertake assessment activities at least every six weeks in Reception, though assessments can be more frequent (see the Schedule of Assessment on the website). An assessment on entry to Reception and at the end of Week 3 provides an early picture of the class's skills and children not meeting expectations can be identified quickly and offered the support they need. Knowing which children need additional help at the soonest opportunity is critical to avoiding them falling behind. It greatly enhances their chances of being able to catch up and keep up with their peers in the whole-class sessions.

Those not meeting expectations can be categorised in the most part as 'emerging' in terms of their phonic knowledge.

However, it's important to recognise children who are some way off expectations, especially at this early stage, so that more specialised, individual support can be provided, and so they don't get left behind. Children scoring under a certain threshold, e.g. 20% on an assessment, should be considered 'developing' and their progression will be enabled by one-to-one help.

## Assessment and catch-up activities

### Letter names and sounds

From the beginning, it will be apparent that some children are slow at learning the letter names and sounds.

These children should be kept in the classroom programme, where they will get constant exposure to the role of letters in finding the pronunciation of words. It is helpful for all children to learn the letter formation as each letter sound is learnt – the more multi-sensory information they have about letters, the better they are at consolidating them in memory.

However, spelling work is carried out at the beginning using magnetic letters, so that those slow at learning letter formation are not held back in practising segmenting words for spelling. Children having difficulty in learning letters will be picked up in (Rec) Terms 1A-2A Assessment Sheets.

### Blending

Some children will be slow to learn to sound and blend to find out the pronunciation of an unfamiliar word. Again, we recommend that they stay in the classroom programme to get continuous reinforcement of the alphabetic principle, and plenty of exposure to the printed word. This will ensure they do not develop unhelpful approaches to word reading, such as focusing on the letters at the beginning and end of words. Children having difficulty in blending will be picked up in (Rec) Term 3A Assessment Sheet - Blending and segmenting (pseduo-words).

### Vowel digraphs/trigraphs and phonic rules

Vowel digraphs (covered here in Units 9–11, and more extensively in *Bug Club Phonics – Key Stage 1*) are difficult for all children. This is where there is the greatest variability in English spelling (e.g. 'ea' has multiple pronunciations, and the long 'e' sound can be spelt in a number of different ways). Inevitably, some learning has to be word specific (e.g. 'head' versus 'bead'). It is very useful to also teach certain phonic rules, such as split digraphs (i.e. silent or magic 'e'), although again there are word-specific exceptions that need to be learnt. There are also other useful rules covered in this programme, such as silent letters, and rules for when to double up the final consonant before adding a suffix. Children having difficulty with the digraphs taught in *Bug Club Phonics – Reception (Primary 1)* will be picked up in (Rec) Terms 2B & 3A Assessment Sheets.

### Adjacent consonants

Words with adjacent consonants can be read by blending, and do not need to be taught in blocks of words starting, for example, with 'sl' or ending in 'pt'. Our research shows



there is much better learning of adjacent consonants by slow learners if they are taught by the systematic synthetic phonics method, so we begin to introduce a few words with adjacent consonants from Unit 6 (start of Phase 3). Unit 12 of *Bug Club Phonics* offers consolidation (or initial) teaching to ensure children understand adjacent consonants in differing positions within words, and longer letter strings (Phase 4 teaching). Children having difficulty with adjacent consonants will be picked up in (Rec) Term 3B Assessment Sheet - Blending and segmenting (CCVC, CVCC and CCVCC). You may also wish to use this assessment (adjacent consonants) at the end of Unit 12 to get an impression of how well the children can blend.

### Support for those at risk of falling behind

The whole-class approach does not rely on complete whole-class mastery of skills before the whole class can move on as each new grapheme–phoneme correspondence comes up repeatedly in subsequent sessions. However, some children will benefit from extra consolidation through catch-up support. What is offered for those children will depend on whether they are ‘emerging’ or ‘developing’ readers. Different strategies can then be put into place (see below), and with the right targeted support the children can stay in the whole-class setting.

It’s useful to see the extra support as a flexible resource that enables slower learning children to achieve steady progress. With that in mind, some children may switch between the levels, so the support needed may vary. For instance, a child may start off as ‘developing’, move quickly into the ‘emerging’ group but then hit difficulties with a particular sound or group of sounds and so become a developing reader again.

Both ongoing formative and summative assessments will ensure that any skill weakness is identified promptly so that no child gets left behind.

### Emerging pupils

Emerging pupils would benefit from additional nurture-group teaching – small groups of children (not more than four), who are all struggling with the same concept, for instance a particular sound. A nurture group can target a specific learning need, allowing for co-operative learning. These children should remain in the whole-class sessions and work in their nurture group additionally, to master the skill they’re finding difficult. There are lots of ways to make these sessions fun, interesting and varied – see the below example for a nurture group on the sound for ‘d’. The example demonstrates how various new, alternative activities can be introduced, but also how the whiteboard sessions, relevant PCMs and games can be revisited. Teachers may decide that if a group of children is struggling with one particular sound, it’s worth revisiting some of the recently taught sounds at the same time, so that confidence can be boosted and skills consolidated in this setting. In order to help the lowest 20% of the class, it is beneficial to determine at the start of the year (and then regularly throughout the programme) whether any children do not have secure knowledge of the letter sounds and the formation of the letters. A nurture group can be formed for these children to help them catch up and stay in the class programme, which will help boost their self-esteem and

give them a feeling of social inclusion. This may reduce the number of children who need to have individually tailored one-to-one support programmes (an example of which we give in our report on the Clackmannanshire Study <https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/14793/>, pp 44–65; a shorter version can be found in our book *Teaching Synthetic Phonics in Primary Schools* (2014). Sage: London. pp 103–106).

### Revisiting the sound for ‘d’

Set aside an area in the classroom for the group of four children with a table and four chairs. You will need:

- facilities for operating the programme on the interactive whiteboard or a laptop computer
- access to materials which will be needed, e.g. magnetic boards, magnetic letters
- a fresh PCM for /d/ for each pupil.

At the start of the session, to let the children know their learning target, select the Sounds tab for the children to see the “This is ‘d’” video clip from Unit 2 (Phase 2). Then ask a child to find the letter ‘d’ and to pull it up onto the whiteboard or computer screen. Then click on the audio tool and click on ‘d’ to hear its sound. All of the children repeat the sound. Each child is then invited to select ‘d’, click on it to hear its sound and to say it at the same time. Then you click on ‘d’ again and all of the children say the sound. How well did the children do?

### Revisiting visual recognition of d

While still in the Sounds tab, click on the asset bank, and give each child a chance to circle the letter d in a word (‘stand’, ‘damp’, ‘add’ and ‘Adam’), saying whether it is in the middle, the beginning or the end of the word. They do not read the words. Now you can select the Follow-up tab and asset bank words. Another set of words will appear for the children to circle the letter ‘d’ in each word again, saying whether it is in the middle, the beginning or the end of the word. Finally, ask the children to complete this task on their PCM sheet, circling the letter d in each word. How well did the children do?

### Revisiting writing d

Next, click on the Writing tab, and click on Show to get a demonstration of how to write the letter ‘d’. Click on Show again, and ask the children to follow the instructions for forming the letter, saying the letter sound as they finish it. They can look at the whiteboard or computer screen to see how well they have done. The children can then use the Unit 2 PCM sheet for d again, where they will practise forming the letter d.

### Games to reinforce d, and all the letters sounds in Unit 2

The Unit 2 games (including all of the letter sounds taught by the end of Unit 2) were first introduced to the class through the daily lesson plans for Unit 3. These games will be motivating for the four children, but will also enable you to observe and evaluate the success or otherwise of each pupil’s contribution to each game played. Selecting the Sounds category for games, each child in turn can have a go at identifying the letters from the sounds. Then they can use the Reading category to see these letter sounds in the context of words, and use the Spelling category to reinforce selecting letters to match the sounds they hear.



## Reassess learning of Unit 2 Sounds

The next day, lay out on a magnetic board for each child, the letters: s a t p i n m d. Ask each child to give the sound for each letter as you point to it. Then rearrange the letters and say each letter sound, asking them to point to the letter. Children still having difficulty can repeat the procedure above and spend more time playing the Unit 2 games.

## Developing pupils

Developing pupils would benefit from more bespoke, one-to-one tutoring. While many of the nurture-group activities can be used in this setting, there are also some specific, more focused suggestions in the Schedule of Assessment that could be used in this format. It is these children who are most at risk of being left behind in a whole-class environment, but having one-to-one support has the dual benefit of ensuring that their skills develop, while enabling them to stay part of the inclusive whole-class approach. Tutoring for this group should be daily, alongside rather than instead of the whole-class sessions, and short – 10 to 15 minutes is optimal. The tutor should be an experienced practitioner – either an experienced TA or the class teacher.

It's important that neither of these groups feel the teaching is punitive in any way, so avoid scheduling them in break, 'golden' or free time. If it's possible, carve out some time from the literacy or English sessions to accommodate it, and make it feel as fun and interesting as possible. Having access to the games, when others do not, is very rewarding, and this helps these children find learning phonics a rewarding experience.

The Schedule of Assessment provides next steps for every summative assessment, so it's easy to see where and what the catch-up resources are.

There is analysis on page 28 of the definitions of mastery for each phase which supports the categorisation of children completing the summative assessments.

## Support for late-entry pupils

For children entering Reception late, use the first two assessments (Entry assessment and Week 3 assessment, see the Schedule of Assessment to gain an understanding of

the basic phonic knowledge children have on arrival. From that starting point, the end of unit games and PCMs can help identify the right entry point to the programme. The summative assessments provide further evidence of children's level of mastery at each milestone, and depending on how far behind children are, the right sort of additional support can be put into place – either in the nurture-group setting or through intensive tuition. It's important that inclusion in the whole-class sessions happens as soon as possible; indeed, they may benefit from joining in right away. However, keeping an eye on how well these children are mastering the skills at each stage is critical in case gaps in phonic knowledge become evident. The Schedule of Assessment can be used at any point for guidance on what activities and resources to use at what point.

## Schedule of Assessment

The Schedule of Assessment charts when the various summative assessments take place through the Reception year. These can be found on the website. It's important to remember that these are only the milestone assessments that (apart from in Phase 2) take place at the end of each phase. There are also formative assessment opportunities within the games at the end of every unit on the website which can be carried out weekly, as well as the daily session PCMs so that continued, ongoing assessment of children's level of mastery can be tracked much more frequently. It's useful to be able to step in with support and catch-up as soon as a difficulty is detected, giving children the best chance of overcoming specific challenges before they develop.

For any children needing extra help with the skills being assessed, there are suggestions to support children whose skills are emerging (within nurture groups), and those still at an early stage of developing these skills (in one-to-one tuition).

## Catch-up work for children having problems with blending and segmenting

### Support work for blending for reading

Children who are slow to learn letter sounds may also have problems with blending (but not necessarily so). Other children may learn letter sounds with ease but nevertheless have difficulty in blending. What is important in the systematic synthetic phonics approach is that children learn to track sequentially through words from left to right using letter-sound information, in order to read unfamiliar words. We recommend a smooth co-articulation of the sounds in words, spending as little time as possible pronouncing the letter sounds individually.

When children are faced with real words for blending practice, they may have seen them before and so try to recognise them on the basis of partial visual cues. This visual approach may slow down the acquisition of an extensive sight vocabulary, as many words look similar. The systematic synthetic phonics method is designed to develop a form of sight word reading that is underpinned by all-through-the-word letter-sound information. Although slower learners often have short-term memory problems, we have found that sounding and blending practice actually increases their memory spans.

For children having difficulty with blending, we carry out some support work with *nonwords*; this means that they cannot guess what the item is, so the child has to blend the letter sounds together in order to pronounce it.

### Catch-up

Research shows that practising the approach of reading nonwords is very effective in developing reading skills even in 12-year-old secondary pupils. We use plastic letters on a magnetic board while doing this, so that the letters can be pushed together from left to right as they blend. A game is made by putting the magnetic letters into two piles, vowels and consonants, and getting the child to select two consonants and a vowel, and blending the letters together (which might produce some real words).

We make sure that the child applies their blending skills when reading text. The session might include work with an appropriate *Bug Club Phonics* decodable reader; when the child hesitates over a word, they are encouraged to sound and blend it.

### Support work for segmenting for spelling

Segmenting for spelling involves children having awareness of phonemes in spoken words. However, research has shown that phonemic awareness skills are best developed through learning to read and spell.

First of all, we make sure that the child can write or select magnetic letters for all of the letter sounds on (Rec) Terms 1A-2A Assessment Sheets - Writing letters. The children then carry out the segmentation test on (Rec) Term 3A Assessment Sheet - Blending and segmenting (pseudo-words). We read out each pseudo-word clearly, repeating it until the child has heard it properly and can repeat it correctly. We ask the child to write down or select a magnetic letter for the first sound they hear. Then they should say the item again and pick out the next sound and write or select the appropriate letter. We continue like this until the whole item has been attempted, noting down the problems they experience. They may have problems like not repeating the item accurately, not keeping their place, or finding the vowel hard to identify.

### Can all of the children be kept together for phonics teaching?

In the study in Clackmannanshire it was found that the children could be kept together for the first and second year of schooling for phonics work. Although ability groups were not formed, there were very low levels of underachievement. For example, at the end of the second year at school only 2.2% (i.e. 6 out of 268) of children had reading ages more than a year below their chronological age, and none were so far behind in spelling, despite around half of the children coming from areas of deprivation. This means that there were no groups of children performing at a Phase 2 level in (the equivalent of) Year 1 classes.

## Mastery

Mastery for each phase is defined as follows but, the programme does not expect all children to have mastery of a phase before the class moves on.

A child who has mastered Phase 2 can:

- give the sound when shown any Phase 2 letter, securing first the starter letters s, a, t, p, i, n;
- find any Phase 2 letter, from a display, when given the sound;
- orally blend and segment CVC words;
- blend and segment in order to read and spell (using magnetic letters) VC words such as if, am, on, up and 'silly names' such as ip, ug and ock;
- read the seven tricky words: the, to, l, no, go, into, her.

A child who has mastered Phase 3 can:

- give the sound when shown all or most Phase 2 and Phase 3 graphemes;
- find all or most Phase 2 and Phase 3 graphemes, from a display, when given the sound;
- blend and read CVC words (i.e. single-syllable words consisting of Phase 2 and Phase 3 graphemes);

- segment and make a phonemically plausible attempt at spelling CVC words (i.e. single-syllable words consisting of Phase 2 and Phase 3 graphemes);
- read the tricky words: he, she, we, me, be, was, my, you, they, all, are, by, give, live;
- spell the tricky words: the, to, l, no, go, into, her;
- write each letter correctly when following a model.

A child who has mastered Phase 4 can:

- give the sound when shown any Phase 2 and Phase 3 grapheme;
- find any Phase 2 and Phase 3 grapheme, from a display, when given the sound;
- blend and read words containing adjacent consonants;
- segment and spell words containing adjacent consonants;
- read the tricky words: some, one, said, come, do, so, were, when, have, there, out, like, little, what;
- spell the tricky words: he, she, we, me, be, was, my, you, they, all, are, by, give, live;
- write each letter, usually correctly.

Units 1 to 12 in *Bug Club Phonics – Reception* take children through to the end of Phase 4, the recommended teaching for a child's first year at school. There are 18 further units in *Bug Club Phonics* (Units 13–30), which will take children through to the end of Key Stage 1. Using professional judgement, we decide if the class is ready to make a start on *Bug Club Phonics – Key Stage 1* in the first year of school. *Bug Club Phonics* is an incremental programme, and so the pace at which you move through the units can be set by your class. We complete Units 13–21 before the Phonics Screening Check, whilst the following units can be stretched to go into Year 2.

Units 13–30 introduce children to alternative ways of pronouncing and spelling the graphemes they have already been taught, as well as introducing new graphemes for reading. For instance, they develop the concept that some vowel sounds can be represented in more than one way (e.g. 'ai', 'ay' and 'a-e' for the long 'a' sound) and that sometimes the same grapheme is used to represent different sounds (e.g. 'ea' as in 'bead' and 'head'). Common silent-letter digraphs are introduced as well as the concept of root words, prefixes and suffixes. Throughout these units children learn how to tackle reading and spelling polysyllabic words by applying phonic rules.

The following table presents an overview of *Bug Club Phonics* Units 13 to 30.

Phase	Unit	Focus	Not fully decodeable (Irregular words)/high-frequency words
5	13	wh, ph	oh, their, people
	14	ay, a-e, eigh/ey/ei (long a)	Mr, Mrs, Ms
	15	ea, e-e, ie/ey/y (long e)	looked, called, asked
	16	ie, i-e, y, i (long i)	water, where
	17	ow, o-e, o/oe (long o)	who, again
	18	ew, ue, u-e (long u), u/oul (short u)	thought, through
	19	aw, au, al	work, laughed, because
	20	ir, er, ear	Thursday, Saturday, thirteen, thirty
	21	ou, oy	different, any, many
	22	ere/eer, are/ear	eyes, friends
	23	c, k, ck, ch	two, once
	24	ce/ci/cy, sc/stl se	great, clothes
	25	ge/gi/gy, dge	it's, I'm, I'll, I've
	26	le, mb, kn/gn, wr	don't, can't, didn't
27	tch, sh, ea, zh, (w)a, o	first, second, third	
6	28	Suffix endings: -ing, -ed (morphemes)	clearing, gleaming, rained, mailed
	29	Suffix plurals: -s, -es (plural morphemes)	man/men, mouse /mice, foot/feet, tooth/teeth, sheep/sheep
	30	Prefix morphemes: re-, un-	vowel, consonant, prefix, suffix, syllable

Every Phoneme Session in the programme follows exactly the same pattern of teaching (with the exception of Unit 1), as does every Language Session. There is a Language Session for each unit (group of letters). The pattern and delivery method of teaching each session is described here

If we have only limited access to an interactive whiteboard, you can:

- Use the resource cards and writing on the board to substitute for the Reading teaching elements, the asset bank contents and free-writing on screen.
- Use magnetic letters for all uses of the electronic magnetic letters.
- Carry out your own demonstrations of letter formation, letter-sound articulation and blending.

## Generic lesson guidance

Each Phoneme and Language Session should feature the following:

- the Alphabet song to begin and end every session (if letter names are taught)
- learning intentions and desired outcomes discussed at the beginning of each lesson
- learning outcomes discussed at the end of each lesson
- the necessary next steps (online pupil games, relevant unit PCMs for guided independent work, and relevant reading books).

## The daily lesson plans

Each Phoneme Session is divided into Revision and Lesson (with the exception of Unit 1, sessions 1–4). The Revision Session ensures that the children have retained all the teaching from their previous sessions – grapheme–phoneme correspondences; blending for reading and segmenting for spelling of the relevant words. Each Language Session is divided into Irregular (key words) and Lesson. The children are active participants in the lessons, making the lesson effective.

## Alphabet song

The Alphabet Song, automatically highlighting the letters, begins and ends every session. It helps children to learn the alphabet and to practise letter-name correspondence. One version of the song includes accompaniment and singing, but before long the children can sing the song on their own, so the second version of the song needs only the accompaniment with one child coming out to point to the letters as they are sung. It provides for singing in both lower case and upper case letters.



## Glossary of terms

**Adjacent consonants** two or more letters that represent two or more phonemes, e.g. 'fr' beginning the word 'fridge'.

**Blend** drawing together the constituent phonemes of a written word in order to read it

**Digraph** two successive letters that represent one phoneme, e.g. 'oa', 'ck', etc.

**Grapheme** letter or combination of letters that represent a phoneme, e.g. 'r', 'ch'

**Phoneme** the smallest unit of sound that changes a word's meaning; it can be represented by one or several letters, e.g. /a/ or /sh/

**Segment** breaking down the sounds of a spoken word into phonemes in order to spell it

**Trigraph** three successive letters representing one phoneme, e.g. 'igh'





