

'Getting them reading early'

Distance learning materials for inspecting reading within the new framework

Guidance and training for inspectors
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361

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Contents

Introduction	4
How to use these materials	5
Distance learning 'site map' and overview of activities	7
Part 1: Reading and phonics	9
Module 1: Introduction and the 'simple view of reading'	9
Module 2: What sort of phonics?	14
Module 3: Principles of high-quality phonic work	16
Part 2: Inspecting reading in the new framework	25
Module 4: Inspecting quality	25
Part 3: Contextual information	41
Module 5: Background information on reading and phonics	41
Part 4: Responses and further reading	48
Annex 1: Suggested responses to module tasks	48
Annex 2: <i>Letters and sounds</i> : overview of phonic knowledge and skills to be covered in Phases one to six	57
Further reading	59

Introduction

This distance learning programme has been developed for all inspectors – HMI and Additional Inspectors – to prepare them to inspect reading in the context of the new inspection framework (January 2012). It forms one element of the professional development for inspectors being provided during the summer and autumn of 2011.

The programme is also being published on Ofsted's website so that it is available to schools and others.

The purpose of this programme is to ensure that all inspectors:

- have a secure knowledge and understanding of how early reading is taught, particularly in primary schools
- are able to apply that knowledge and understanding to inspecting reading
- are aware of recent debates about the teaching of reading and Ofsted's publications in this area
- are up to date with government initiatives related to this area.

Part 1 gives a short introduction to the White Paper, *The importance of teaching*, and phonics, providing the context for this distance learning programme. It looks in depth at specific aspects of teaching reading, especially phonics, with the aim of ensuring that inspectors are up to date with current thinking. It also includes information on phonics in relation to children who are deaf.

Part 2 considers how to apply the Part 1 learning to inspecting reading in the context of the new framework.

Part 3 gives some information about current Department for Education (DfE) initiatives, specifically the phonics screening check for six-year-olds (Year 1) which will be rolled out nationally in 2012 and the 'matched funding' for phonics resources. Part 3 also provides some international comparisons in terms of England's performance.

The training does not purport to cover all aspects of reading comprehensively. There is a focus on early reading in this section of the training because high-quality teaching at that stage – from the Early Years Foundation Stage onwards – is essential to children's progress and achievement. Inspectors need to be able to judge how well children are being set on the road to reading. They must be confident that they can evaluate the quality of teaching and assess the gains in children's knowledge, skills and understanding. They will be gathering evidence of outcomes not only from the test results at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 (and from the screening check at the end of Year 1) but also from what children tell them about their attitudes towards reading and their knowledge of books and authors. The prime focus throughout inspection is on the outcomes in reading when children leave primary school.

Underpinning the focus on outcomes, however, is analysis of the quality of the teaching:

... how well the teaching methods secure optimum progress and high achievement for all beginner readers and writers (Rose Review, p. 15)

The training material here that relates to Key Stage 2 focuses mainly on children who, for whatever reason, are still struggling to learn to read. It may be because previous teaching, in their current or previous school(s), has not been effective. It may also be because they have special educational needs – but remember what Ofsted said in its review of special educational needs in September 2010: ‘Schools should stop identifying pupils as having special educational needs when they simply need better teaching and pastoral support’.

A second, separate set of distance learning materials complements these, covering reading and literacy at the upper end of Key Stage 2 and secondary schools.

The training includes suggested questions for listening to children’s reading, so that inspectors are confident about assessing young children’s reading strategies and understanding, and the strategies and understanding of those who are struggling at Key Stage 2; with older or more fluent readers, inspectors should also discuss with them the range of their reading.

How to use these materials

This programme is divided into five modules. After this section, a two-page site map of all the modules (pages 7 and 8) gives an overview. It would be useful to preview the site map before beginning to read the materials. It also provides you with a way of noting what sections of the training you have read and the activities you have completed. You may find it helpful to print the two pages for reference straightaway. Click the hyperlink [here](#) to do that now. Another hyperlink will bring you back to this point.

You do not have to do all the activities in order: you may prefer to return to some later. There are hyperlinks from the site map to individual modules in case you want to return to any of them later and there are other hyperlinks throughout the materials to help you navigate.

You are asked to read the materials and any follow-up references, watch illustrative video clips and complete activities.

The modules have been designed to reflect and accommodate, as far as possible, inspectors’ varying levels of knowledge and understanding.

Inspectors who have high levels of knowledge and expertise in this area should not find any surprises in the materials. Reading the main text is likely to provide enough revision and consolidation. These inspectors might still find it helpful to consider how they might apply what they know to inspecting under the new framework.

Inspectors for whom this is less familiar material may wish to follow up all or most of the examples and activities. There are plenty of visual and auditory illustrations – particularly important in teaching phonics.

Feedback from piloting these training materials indicated that Part 1 is essential reading for inspectors who have little or no experience of phonics, while all inspectors should read Part 2. Part 3 (Module 5) provides useful background information.

The video material has been chosen from a range of publicly available online sources, including the Times Educational Supplement's website (material inherited from Teachers' TV), YouTube and commercial websites, with the intention of providing inspectors with a variety of effective and realistic illustrations at minimal cost to Ofsted. It is also hoped that including video material will provide a helpful balance between text and exemplification.

All inspectors should make sure that they are familiar both with Ofsted's recent publications on literacy and current government announcements, including the screening check for six-year-olds. Before this training, inspectors should have read, as a minimum:

- J. Rose, *Independent review of the teaching of early reading: final report* (0201-2006DOC-EN), DfES, 2006
- *Reading by six: how the best schools do it* (100197), Ofsted, 2010.

The training materials conclude with a list of publications by Ofsted and others.

Note that in the sections on phonics, a phoneme (a single sound) is presented within slashes like this: /ay/; this is the case in the text and in the video clips. Letters of the alphabet are presented in quotation marks: 'ay' or 'ai' or 'a-e'.

There will be an opportunity for inspectors to evaluate these materials and other aspects of the inspection framework training before the launch of the framework in January 2012.

Distance learning 'site map' and overview of activities

You might want to print this page and the next one straightaway and keep them to hand.

Module number and title	Sub-section title	Tick if read ✓	Activities	Tick if done ✓
Part 1				
Module 1 Introduction and the 'simple view of reading'	Prelude			
	'Getting them reading early'			
	The simple view of reading in the Rose Review		1.1 Reading task: examples of outstanding practice	
			1.2 Reading task: the simple view of reading	
Module 2 What sort of phonics?	Some definitions		2.1 Reading task: what sort of phonics?	
Module 3 Principles of high-quality phonic work	The alphabetic code		3.1 Revision on the alphabetic code (video clip)	
	The skills of blending and segmenting		3.2 (i) Listening to individual sounds (test yourself) 3.2.(ii) An optional further challenge (test yourself)	
			3.3 The importance of blending (video clip)	
			3.4: Illustrating correct articulation (video clip)	
			3.5 Evaluating the teaching of segmenting (video clip)	
			3.6 Multi-sensory approaches (video clip)	

Part 2				
Module 4 Inspecting quality	Evidence-gathering		4.1 Gathering evidence	
	Identifying children who are falling through the net		4.2 Tommy hates reading 4.3 Listening to Ayesha	
	Systems and leadership		4.4 Whole-school systems (video clip)	
	Assessment, grouping and intervention		4.5 Assessment and groupings for speedy progress (video clip) 4.6 Reading task: mixed ability teaching groups or homogeneous?	
	Expectations			
	High-quality phonic work		4.7 High quality in the early years (reading) 4.8 Identifying high-quality phonic work (reading and video clip)	
	Teaching the higher levels of phonics (complex code)		4.9 Teaching the higher levels of phonics (DfE PowerPoint)	
	Listening to children reading			
Part 3				
Module 5 Background information on reading and phonics	The Year 1 phonics screening check		5.1 Reading task: What MPs said	
	Phonics resources and DfE matched funding			
	International comparisons			
Part 4				
Annex 1 Suggested responses to module tasks				
Annex 2 Letters and sounds overview				

To return to 'How to use the materials', click [here](#).

Part 1: Reading and phonics

Module 1: Introduction and the 'simple view of reading'

Prelude

To get a feel for how important this training is going to be, click on the link below. You may well be familiar with the content, particularly if you have worked in colleges, and you might not warm to the presenter. But the clip has been chosen to get across the key message, namely that all inspectors have a duty to ensure that primary schools are teaching *all* children to read. The video clip lasts for just eight minutes and there is no need to write anything.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=l0M6aGbfY04

'Getting them reading early'

The government's White Paper, *The importance of teaching*, in November 2010 stated its case for phonics. It said that it would:

ensure that all children have the chance to follow an enriching curriculum by getting them reading early. That means supporting the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics and introducing a simple reading check at age six to guarantee that children have mastered the basic skills of early reading and also ensure we can identify those with learning difficulties (para. 4.6).

This intention is now reflected in the new Teachers' Standards, published by the DfE in July 2011 for implementation in September 2012.¹ Under the heading 'Developing good subject and curriculum knowledge' is the requirement for teachers who teach early reading to demonstrate 'a clear understanding of systematic synthetic phonics'.

The White Paper continued:

Ofsted will enhance its inspectors' expertise in assessing the teaching of reading, so that their judgements reflect appropriate expectations and recognise particular features of systematic synthetic phonics teaching (para 4.17).

This distance learning training deals with both the inspection of reading, especially early reading, and 'systematic synthetic phonics teaching'. (There are useful definitions in Module 2. You can click [here](#) to see them now – or read them later.)

¹ The new Standards apply 'to all teachers regardless of their career stage'. For further information, see: *Teachers' Standards* (DfE V1.0 0711), DfE, 2011; www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/reviewofstandards/a00192172/review-of-teachers-standards-first-report.

It should not need to be emphasised that, while Ofsted has to ensure that all inspectors are knowledgeable about inspecting reading (including phonics), inspection must focus on the *outcomes* for children. If reading and writing are good at the end of Year 2 and Year 6, inspectors do not need to look for additional evidence. If they are not good, inspectors need to have sufficient knowledge to ask and answer questions, to evaluate the teaching of reading (and writing), and to challenge leaders and managers where practice is not good enough in terms of children's progress.

Developments such as the new phonics screening check for six-year-olds mean that inspectors are highly likely to encounter the teaching of phonics – and after June 2012, schools' results from the screening check will start to be available (see the background information in Module 5). This training is not designed to equip inspectors to check on schools' teaching of phonics; it is to ensure that inspectors are confident in evaluating provision in depth *if the outcomes indicate that this is what they need to do*. Teaching phonics is a means to an end (reading and writing) and not an end in itself.

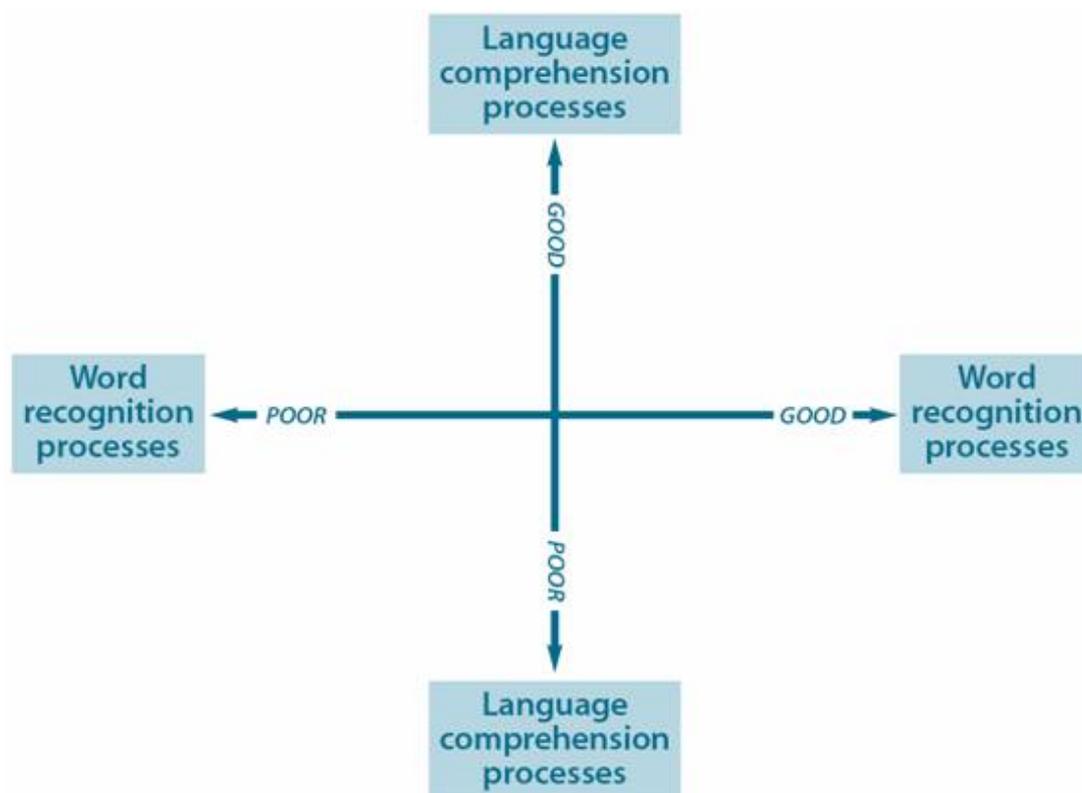
The 'simple view of reading' in the Rose Review

In 2005, the previous government commissioned Sir Jim Rose to conduct 'an independent review of best practice in the teaching of early reading and the range of strategies that best support children who have fallen behind in reading to catch up'.

The review published an interim report in December 2005 and a final report in March 2006: *Independent review of the teaching of early reading* (referred to in these materials simply as 'the Rose Review'). The final report acknowledged:

...it is an obvious truth that the goal of reading is comprehension and that skilled reading involves understanding as well as decoding text. In short, learning to read progresses to reading, effortlessly, to learn. The teaching of beginner readers requires an understanding of the processes that underpin this progression (p.35).

Taking research findings on board, the Rose Review of early reading set out a model of reading that looks like this:



The model was designed to show that skilled reading requires two processes:

- that the reader recognises and understands the words on the page (that is, word recognition processes or decoding)
- the development of language comprehension (that is, written texts as well as spoken language are understood and interpreted).

These are both necessary, but neither is enough on its own. Teaching reading needs to give attention to both dimensions: word recognition and comprehension. (It is worth saying at this point that 'comprehension' is about understanding spoken *and* written language.)

Children who are learning to read but who cannot decode the words on the page are prevented from understanding the text fully. However, even if they recognise, can say and understand the words on the page, this does not mean that they will understand the text as a whole. The Rose Review report illustrates this vividly through the story of the blind Milton's daughters (p.76):

Wishing to read ancient Greek texts, but unable to do so because he could no longer see the words, Milton encouraged his daughters to learn to pronounce each alphabetic symbol of the ancient Greek alphabet. His daughters then used these phonic skills to read aloud the texts to their father. Their father could understand what they incomprehendingly read aloud to him. The daughters possessed word recognition skills, which did not enable them to understand the text; Milton, despite his ability to

understand the Greek language, was no longer able to use word recognition skills and so was no longer able to understand Greek text without harnessing his daughters' skills.

Or, more recently, think back to Linda who featured in the Channel 4 video clip that opened this training. She could listen to and had sufficient vocabulary to comprehend the audio books she showed Phil Beadle, the presenter, but she could not decode the written text for herself.

The concept of two dimensions forming 'the simple view of reading' is useful because it:

- helps teachers to be clear about their objective(s) at any one time in terms of teaching reading
- supports assessment, in that the two dimensions distinguish between the different elements of learning to read, that is, decoding and comprehension.

Activity 1.1: Reading task – examples of outstanding practice

Excellence in English provides high-quality examples of outstanding practice. The two illustrations quoted here demonstrate the complementary nature of the simple view of reading.

- Read pages 12–14 to see how Clifton Green Primary School in York turns 'average readers into keen ones'.
- Read pages 22–25 for accounts of opportunities for early literacy in Jump Primary School in Barnsley.

Click on the link below to find the report:

www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100229

Appendix 1 of the Rose Review gives a detailed, technical account of the 'simple view of reading,' supported by substantial research. This was provided to underpin the recommendation in the Rose Review that the 'searchlights model' proposed by the National Literacy Strategy (later, the Primary National Strategy) should be replaced. You can follow this up in more detail in Activity 1.2 or leave it and use the activity as consolidation later.

Activity 1.2: reading task – the Simple View of Reading

The detailed account of the ‘simple view of reading’ and the case for change in terms of the searchlights model can be found on pp.73–93 of the report’s Appendix 1. The link is given below. The most useful paragraphs of the Appendix are listed below. (Note: the paragraph numbers refer to the Appendix, which starts at page 73 of the report, and not to the main body of the text.)

- paras. 1–3: description of the ‘searchlights’ model – now replaced
- paras. 12–20: a little more introduction to the simple view of reading
- paras. 29–40: four patterns of performance (see especially paragraph 39)
- para. 47: implications for teaching

Use either of the links below to access the full report of the Rose Review as a pdf file. (You may find one works better than the other.)



<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DFES-0201-2006>

<http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/i/independent%20review.pdf>

Module 2: What sort of phonics?

Some definitions

This short module provides an overview of terms relating to different approaches to teaching phonics.

The Schools White Paper 2010 referred to ‘the teaching of **systematic synthetic phonics** as the proven best way to teach early reading’ (p.22). The footnote accompanying that sentence referenced publications from the United States. The earlier Rose Review in 2006 was more circumspect. Although coming down on the side of synthetic phonics, it preferred to use the term ‘systematic phonics’ and continued with this throughout the review.

The framework and evaluation schedule, currently published in draft form pending legislation, use the term ‘systematic teaching of phonics’, but the emphasis in this training, reflecting the requirements of the White Paper, is on systematic, synthetic phonics. The DfE’s ‘matched funding’ (covered in Module 5) is for resources for teaching synthetic phonics and inspectors are therefore increasingly likely to see these in schools.

Here are some definitions that might be helpful:

Systematic phonics refers to phonics teaching which is done regularly, discretely, explicitly and in an agreed and rational sequence. As Jim Rose put it, ‘It cannot be left to chance, or for children to ferret out, on their own, how the alphabetic code works’ – particularly a code that is as complex as that of English. **Unsystematic** phonics would be taught incidentally, as and when, on the basis of need.

Synthetic phonics has nothing to do with the word ‘artificial’; the reference is to the process of blending (synthesising) the individual sounds in a word together, working from left to right, to read them.² Synthetic phonics work can begin simply with oral blending, that is, the children listen to sounds and then blend them. They also learn to say sounds, in order, that are represented by individual letters and pronounce these together to say a word (e.g. the sounds /c/, then /a/ and then /t/, blended together to say /cat/). Synthetic phonics also teaches children to break down (segment) a word they hear into its individual sounds, starting from the first sound and working systematically through the word. For each sound they hear, they choose the letter (or combination of letters, such as ‘ch’ or ‘ai’ or ‘th’) to represent that sound in order to spell the word.

² Teachers should encourage children to pay attention to the order in which letters appear in a word, reading from left to right. If this does not happen and they rely on glancing quickly at a word, there is a danger of confusing even simple words such as ‘on’ and ‘no’ or ‘was’ and ‘saw’.

In **analytic phonics** the children are taught to identify (analyse) the common phoneme in a set of related words in which each word contains the phoneme which is the focus of the lesson. For instance, the teacher might ask the children to listen to the words 'mat', 'men', 'meat' and say in what ways the words sound alike. Later, the focus shifts to sounds at the end of the word ('lot', 'pat', 'wet') and then, later again, the focus shifts to sounds in the middle (these being more difficult for children to identify than sounds at the beginning or end). Analytic phonics was the approach adopted by the National Literacy Strategy when it was first introduced in 1998.

The research evidence for 'what sort' of phonics teaching is simply insufficient to provide a basis for choosing between 'analytic' or 'synthetic' phonics. With that in mind, it is better, therefore, to have systematic phonics teaching than unsystematic or no phonics teaching and to give children the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to move forward confidently as readers and (writers). The Rose Review took a pragmatic stance, as follows.

Research, inspection and leading edge work of settings and schools may inform best practice. However, findings from different research programmes are sometimes contradictory or inconclusive, and often call for further studies to test tentative findings. While robust research findings must not be ignored, developers of national strategies, much less schools and settings, cannot always wait for the results of long-term research studies. They must take decisions, based on as much firm evidence as is available from a range of sources at the time, especially from replicable and sustainable best practice (p.15).

As consolidation, re-read the key paragraphs in the final report of the Rose Review – Activity 2.1 (below).

Activity 2.1: Consolidation task – what sort of phonics?

Re-read (in the main body of the report) paragraphs 47–53 of the Independent review of the teaching of early reading (the Rose Review).

<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DFES-0201-2006>

Module 3 that follows considers what 'replicable and sustainable best practice' might look like – and also looks at Ofsted's findings in *Reading by six* (2010).

To conclude:

It is implementing the principles which define high quality phonic work that should engage settings and schools, rather than debating entrenched views about less important aspects of phonics teaching (p.4).

This is a good point to take a short break. The following module will explore these principles in detail.

Module 3: Principles of high-quality phonic work

I wish commentators would make it clear that phonics is a body of knowledge we all need. No maths teacher would dream of expecting children to remember numbers as strings of digits – they teach the concept of place value. In the same way, children need to understand that letters represent sounds. This only becomes controversial when people compound phonics, the body of knowledge, with phonics as a teaching method.

Letter from Mary Kelly in the Times Educational Supplement, 10 June 2011

The alphabetic code

Beginner readers should be taught four things:

- grapheme–phoneme correspondences (that is, the alphabetic code) in a clearly defined, incremental sequence
- to synthesise (blend) phonemes (sounds) in order all through a word to read it
- to segment words into their constituent phonemes for spelling
- that blending and segmenting are reversible processes.

As the letter that opens this module says, phonics is a body of knowledge, skills and understanding that children need in order to master an alphabetic language – English, in our case. Unlike Japanese, for instance, which uses ideograms to represent ideas visually, English records the sounds of the language with an alphabet. It is generally accepted that English has 44 sounds.

The way the 26 letters of the alphabet (singly or in combination) are used to represent the 44 sounds is referred to as the alphabetic code. In the alphabetic code in English:

- a single phoneme can be represented (spelt) in different ways, using one, two, three or four letters. For example, the sound /aw/ can be represented as **'or'**, **'saw'**, **'haul'**, **'lore'**, **'fraught'** and **'sought'**
- one grapheme (that is, a letter or combination of letters) can represent different sounds. For example, the digraph (two letters) 'ow' sounds different in **'crowd'** and in **'low'**; the four letters combined in 'ough' are pronounced differently in **'through'**, **'rough'** and **'bough'**; the letter 'c'

represents a /s/ sound at the beginning of 'circus' and a /k/ sound in the middle, and so on.

The lack of a one-to-one correspondence between a sound and a letter in English is frequently used as an argument against using phonics in teaching reading (and spelling). There are also phonically irregular words (often called 'tricky' words in commercial phonic schemes), such as 'the', 'some' or 'once'. There is more about tricky words later in this module.

One reason for the irregularity of the English spelling system is the history of the language, that is, the many, many words that English has gained from being invaded (words from the Vikings and Norman French), from absorbing vocabulary from other countries (India, Australia, Africa) and from simply being a world language. Another factor is that pronunciation has altered over 500 years or so, so that the spelling of a word does not reflect its sound in the same way that happens in European languages, such as Spanish, Italian or German, or even Welsh. One reason why children in Finland learn to decode very quickly is that the sound-spelling system of Finnish is extremely regular. (Finnish grammar is rather more complex.)

However, much of English **is** regular. It can and should be taught systematically – hence the frequent use of the description '**systematic** phonics' in the White Paper, the Rose Review and elsewhere. Module 2 gave some quick definitions of types of phonics. Click [here](#) if you want to re-read these.

Activity 3.1: revision on the alphabetic code (video clip)

For a quick reminder of the difference between the alphabet and the alphabetic code, watch this short video clip from YouTube [2:46 mins.].

www.youtube.com/watch?v=5FbdAENiRyI&NR=1

For teaching purposes, the alphabetic code is frequently described in stages: 'simple' followed by 'complex' or 'higher-level'. (Module 4 later deals with higher-level phonic knowledge, using a DfE PowerPoint presentation.)

The sounds are not taught in alphabetical order, but in order of usefulness, so that children can start to read and spell simple words as swiftly as possible. Success breeds success. A very common sequence begins by teaching children how to represent each of the following six sounds by a letter (as below):

Sound	Letter
/s/	s
/a/	a
/t/	t
/i/	i
/p/	p
/n/	n

If these sounds are learnt securely and the children are *also* taught to blend sounds together to read whole words, they can then read (and spell) simple vowel-consonant (VC) words such as 'it', 'in', 'is' and 'at' and consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words such as 'sat', 'pin', 'nip', 'net', 'tip'.³

Think about... regional accents

One of the questions that arose during the piloting of this training concerned regional pronunciations – particularly if a teacher's accent were different from that of the children in her class. For example, some children in the north of England may pronounce 'but' to rhyme with 'foot' and not with 'cut'. Teachers need to be alert and sensitive to the differences. However, the key point is that teaching starts with *sounds* and not with letters. The teacher will know what letter(s) to teach to represent the sound the children say, even if it is not what she says.

The skills of blending and segmenting

The previous section looked at the alphabetic code, that is, the **knowledge** children need about how the 44 sounds (phonemes) of the English language are represented by one or more letters (graphemes).

This section looks at two essential **skills: blending for reading and segmenting for spelling**.

Blending and segmenting are, in the words of the Rose Review, 'reversible processes': that is, if you can blend the sounds together to read a word, you should also be able to identify and break down (segment) the individual sounds in a word you hear to spell it. To spell the word, you need to represent each sound you hear by a letter – or more than one letter.

³ If a child's blending skills were well advanced, she or he could also read CVCC words ('taps', 'pats'), CCVC words ('spin') and others, although in *Letters and Sounds*, blending of CVCC and CCVC words is not taught until later in the programme (Phase 4).

There is a useful summary of this on a YouTube video clip [2.55 mins.]. You can watch it now or carry on reading and use it for consolidation at the end of this section:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=7pei0o-_cFc

Before looking at blending and segmenting, here is a brief introduction to phonemes.

Phonemes

A phoneme is the smallest unit of **sound** in a word. It is important that, as an inspector, you can identify clearly the separate sounds in individual words. You are then in a position to evaluate the quality of the teaching of phonics and to talk to children about the sounds *they* can hear in words. Listening to the individual sounds in words is a skill needed for spelling, not reading, but if a child can hear individual sounds and the differences between them, she or he is well on the road to reading.

Activity 3.2 (i): listening to individual sounds

In the link given below, you'll see a list of the 44 phonemes in English.

The underlined letters in the example words will give you a good idea of how to pronounce each sound. The coloured columns (pale green for the vowel phonemes and turquoise for the consonants) show how the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) represents each phoneme, but you don't need to learn or use the IPA, either now or later.

To test out how well you can hear individual sounds, try to identify the individual, separate sounds in the word 'Ofsted' and represent them with the symbols of the IPA. Choose the sounds you need and then copy and paste the coloured rectangles from the website onto the line below:

Here is the link you need:

www.btinternet.com/~ted.power/phon00.htm

Then click [here](#) to go to the Responses section to check your answer.

Activity 3.2 (ii): an optional further challenge

HMI who piloted these materials enjoyed this activity. If you would like to segment a more challenging word, try 'scroll'. As before, identify the individual, separate sounds, copying-and-pasting the coloured rectangles onto the line below:

Here is the link again:

www.btinternet.com/~ted.power/phon00.htm

Click [here](#) to go to the Responses section.

A dictionary that uses the IPA to give a guide to how a word is pronounced would be another way to check your answer. The importance of blending

The skill of blending sounds together needs to be taught directly. Children may be able to say the sound a letter ‘makes’ when shown the letter (for instance, on a flashcard), but this does not necessarily mean that they can blend individual sounds together to make a whole word. (Letters do not actually ‘make’ sounds: they are just a way of representing that sound in writing.)

In Reception and Year 1 classes, you will often see this teaching being done with the aid of a puppet who is helped by the children to draw the sounds together to make the word. Alternatively, the teacher might refer to a robot who can make only the individual isolated sounds. The teacher might say, for instance: ‘The robot says “/l/-/a/-/m/-/p/”. How would we say it? Let’s put all the sounds together.’ Activity 3.3 illustrates blending:

Activity 3.3: The importance of blending (video clip)

Notice progression in blending in the video clip below. The examples move from CVC words (cat, fix) to words using a digraph⁴ (fish), CVC (chin) and CCVC (black) and CVCC (paint) words.

In the video clip, Mr Thorne is very clear in his articulation of the phonemes. The children in his class – he is a primary teacher – should have no difficulty in blending together the sounds that he pronounces for them. Also notice, at the start of the video, how he uses his hands, very precisely, to illustrate the ideas of blending and segmenting and his index finger to draw the letter-sounds together. You will notice teachers doing this in other clips of teaching.

Here is the link to the clip of Mr Thorne:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=5wGfNiweEkI

Correct articulation

Correct articulation is vital in helping children to learn to blend sounds together. This means making sure that the sound produced (each individual phoneme) is as precise

⁴ A digraph consists of two letters that represent one sound. Consonant digraphs include ‘sh’, ‘ch’, ‘th’ and ‘ng’; vowel digraphs include ‘ai’, ‘ee’ and ‘ea’; split vowel digraphs include ‘a-e’ (as in ‘make’), ‘i-e’ (as in ‘fine’) and ‘u-e’ (as in ‘tune’).

and accurate as possible and that no additional sounds are added. For instance, the sound /m/ that starts 'mother' or is embedded in 'impress' needs to sound /mmm/ and not /muh/. (You'll hear this in the video clip for Activity 3.4.) The clearer the sound, the easier it is for a child to blend together (synthesise) the individual sounds to read a word because there are no unnecessary sounds getting in the way. Mr Thorne's articulation in the video clip you have just watched (Activity 3.3) was an excellent example. Correct articulation is illustrated in more detail in the next video clip.

Activity 3.4: Illustrating correct articulation (video clip)

This clip [2:33 mins.] has been chosen because it illustrates not only the careful articulation of phonemes again but also mouth movements. It is important for children to be able to see as well as hear how individual sounds are pronounced; this is especially true for any children who might have additional learning needs. When you are observing teaching, make sure that all the children can see properly as well as hear.

In this clip, look out for how Mr Thorne shows the different sounds of /th/. Remember, too, that the letters that come up on the screen are representing sounds; they are presented between slashes, like this /th/.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=MOW3pB2KwGA

Segmenting

Segmenting is the reverse of blending. In segmenting to spell a word, the teacher or the child is listening to a whole word, identifying the individual sounds (not letters) that make up the word – as you did with the 'Ofsted' example earlier – and choosing a letter or more than one letter to represent each individual sound. You saw this at the end of the video clip on the alphabet and the alphabetic code earlier when the little girl at her table was setting out plastic letters to represent the sounds in the word she heard in the word 'boat' (/b/ /oa/ /t/).

Activity 3.5: Evaluating the teaching of segmenting

Watch this very short video clip [1:10 mins.] from an American classroom just once or twice. Jot down quick observations of the positive and negative features of the teaching

You should expect to see work on segmenting in Year R. The pupils in the video are much older than that.

When you have made your list of positive and negative features, compare your answers with those in the [Responses](#) section. Here is the link:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ELUDbsGWTi0&feature=related

Tricky words

So far we have looked at words that are phonically regular.

Children should also be taught to read words that are not completely phonically regular, often called 'tricky' words in phonic schemes. Children need to be taught to read these tricky words on sight, so that they do not have to spend time puzzling them out. You should expect to see teachers regularly helping children to practise their speedy recall of tricky words, often with something as simple as flashcards.

In terms of spelling, children need to remember the tricky parts of a word, that is, the letters that do not match the usual grapheme-phoneme correspondences they have learnt. For example, the word 'said' is not phonically regular in that the sound /e/ in the middle of the word is normally written 'e' as in 'bed' (or sometimes 'ea' as in 'bread', 'dread' or 'read' – past tense) and not 'ai' as in 'paid'. However, the sounds at the beginning and end of 'said' are represented with 's' and 'd', just as one might expect; it is only the middle of the word that is tricky.

Multi-sensory approaches

The Rose Review referred to the importance of multi-sensory approaches in helping children to learn the alphabetic code:

Multi-sensory activities featured strongly in high quality phonic work and often encompassed, variously, simultaneous visual, auditory and kinaesthetic activities involving, for example, physical movement to copy letters shapes and sound, and manipulate magnetic or other solid letters to build words. Sometimes, mnemonics, such as a picture of a snake or an apple in the shapes of 's' and 'a', were used to help children memorise letters. Handwriting too was often seen as a kinaesthetic activity and was introduced early. This multi-sensory approach almost always captured the interest of boys as well as girls. A common feature of the best work was that boys' progress and achievement did not lag behind that of girls – an important outcome given the generally weaker performance of boys, especially in writing.

The multi-sensory work showed that children generally bring to bear on the learning task as many of their senses as they can, rather than limit themselves to only one sensory pathway. This calls into question the notion that children can be categorised by a single learning style, be it auditory, visual or kinaesthetic (p.21).

Such multi-sensory approaches are frequently very well-established in the various published phonic schemes. If you'd like to see multi-sensory approaches illustrated at this point, follow up the activity below.

Activity 3.6: Watch – Multi-sensory approaches

If you'd like to see multi-sensory approaches in action, watch the next extract (originally from Teachers' TV).

Try listing all the multi-sensory approaches you notice and check your list against the 'Responses' at the end.

We'll return to this video for a longer, second viewing later, so you can stop watching at the point at which the teacher rehearses the words 'are' and 'you' on the whiteboard.

Check your list with the one in the [Responses](#) section when you're ready. Here's the link:

www.teachersmedia.co.uk/videos/ks1-literacy-phonics-without-tears

Think about... Deaf children and phonics

There are over 35,000 deaf children in England and there was therefore very good reason for the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) to want to respond to the government's consultation on the screening check for six-year-olds (see Module 5). The society's response provides useful insights into the role of phonics for deaf children who are learning to read. Extracts are worth quoting.

Responding to the consultation question, 'Do you agree that this screening check should be focused on phonic decoding ...?' the society wrote:

NDCS welcomes, in principle, the screening check initiative. Deafness is not a learning disability, yet government figures from 2010 show that deaf children are 44% less likely than children with no identified special educational need to achieve the expected levels of literacy in the final year of their primary education. As the screening check initiative is scheduled to take place towards the end of year 1 (Y1), it could support the identification of deaf children who are not making progress in reading at an early age and so facilitate early intervention. NDCS supports the teaching (and implicitly the checking) of phonic knowledge to the majority⁵ of deaf children but would ask the Department for Education (DfE) to be mindful of the following general issues related to the assessment of phonics in deaf children:

- Phonics, although a key tool in learning to read, is not the only skill that deaf children (and others) will need to apply in learning to read.

⁵ The NDCS added this footnote: 'In Y1, some deaf children may still be developing their first language of BSL and be delayed in the development of their second language, English and so it may not have been appropriate to start a phonics programme at this stage.'

- Phonics will usually prove to be a bigger challenge for deaf children given their lack of 'normal' hearing. New and improved technologies can allow deaf children to perceive the full range of speech sounds, but not as clearly or as easily as hearing children, and there will still be some deaf children who will not be able to access all the sounds of speech. No hearing technology replaces normal hearing.
- Those deaf children developing BSL [British Sign Language] as their first language may be more delayed in learning English and consequently more delayed in accessing phonic knowledge.
- Many deaf children, including those with 'glue' ear (it is estimated that 20% of five-year-olds have a temporary hearing loss due to 'glue' ear), may take longer than their hearing peers to acquire phonic knowledge.
- Some deaf children may not have achieved mastery at the level thought appropriate for their chronological age by the end of Y1; however, they may be making appropriate progress through the different phonic stages, albeit at a slower rate.
- It will be important for teachers to differentiate between those deaf children who are developing their phonic knowledge more slowly than their hearing peers and those deaf children who are finding the acquisition of phonic knowledge too much of a challenge.

If you are in a mainstream classroom and you notice the teacher wearing a radio aid,⁶ this alone should alert you to consider the reading provision for any deaf children, particularly younger ones, and also to find out how and in what ways the phonics teaching is being adapted to meet the needs of these children. For example, a deaf child cannot be expected to segment words into their individual sounds to spell them if she or he cannot yet discriminate between those sounds – although, as in so many cases, this is also true for children who are not deaf. The extent of adaptation the teacher needs to make will depend on the level of the child's hearing. Inspectors should be alert to this in mainstream as well as special schools.

Summary

Have a look at the video clip now if you did not view it at the beginning. It is a useful, simple summary of the material in this module, and also illustrates Key Stage 1 children engaged in phonic work. Here is the link again:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=7pei0o_cFc&feature=related

⁶ A radio aid is in two parts: a transmitter that the teacher wears and a receiver worn by the child. It works by making the sounds the child needs to hear clearer in relation to other (unwanted) noise in the classroom.

Part 2: Inspecting reading in the new framework

Module 4: Inspecting quality

Evidence-gathering

The first part of the distance learning materials considered the key knowledge and skills needed to teach early reading. This part looks at how inspectors might inspect provision and outcomes for reading. How will you secure evidence about quality?

The eight small sections that follow include video material. Some of it is optional and simply illustrative; other clips require responses. The aspects considered are:

- evidence-gathering
- identifying children who are falling through the net
- systems and leadership
- assessment, grouping and intervention
- expectations (especially in terms of phonics)
- high-quality phonic work
- teaching the higher levels of phonics
- listening to children reading.

An important starting point is Ofsted's report, *Reading by six*, published at the end of 2010. You need to be very familiar with the main messages and should have read it at least once before starting this training. You can find the report here:

www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/reading-six-how-best-schools-do-it

The 2011 Education Bill (the Bill) changed the statutory reporting areas for inspection and removed some of the earlier requirements. Inspectors will now report on 'the quality of education provided by the school' and will 'give priority to':

- the achievement of pupils
- the quality of teaching
- the quality of leadership and management
- the behaviour and safety of the pupils.

The inspection guidance for the new framework will give specific pointers about inspecting reading – and literacy more broadly. Activity 4.1 below invites you to reflect on how you might gather evidence about the quality of the teaching of reading under four main headings.

Activity 4.1: Gathering evidence

Using what you read in Reading by six, begin to formulate some questions about reading in the schools that you are going to inspect. Here are a few obvious starter questions under the four headings:

Achievement

What, if any, is the gap in achievement and attainment between boys and girls in reading?

What is the school doing to close that gap?

What proportion of pupils has failed to gain Level 4 in reading by the end of Key Stage 2? Is this proportion decreasing or not?⁷

Quality of teaching

How well does the Early Years Foundation Stage develop children's spoken language, familiarise them with books and extend their vocabulary?

What is the quality of teaching for pupils who are failing to make sufficient progress – in mainstream lessons; in any interventions?

Leadership and management

To what extent does the headteacher engage herself or himself in provision for reading?

What steps are leaders and managers taking to ensure consistency in the teaching of reading?

Behaviour and safety

To what extent is any unsatisfactory behaviour you see attributable to pupils struggling to learn to read?

Obviously, questions need to be developed to reflect your key inspection trails. Remember, though, that detailed observations of teaching and learning should be a priority. Some of the questions above can – and should – be answered in classrooms by evaluating teaching, talking to children about their reading, writing and spelling, and by listening to them reading (see the end of this module).

⁷ Currently, this information is available only from the school and is not shown in RAISEonline.

Identifying children who are 'falling through the net'

All inspectors have met young people in secondary schools who are floundering (and may be misbehaving) simply because they do not have the skills to cope with the reading and writing they have to do. (There is more about this in the second part of the distance learning training.) The new inspection framework is an opportunity for inspectors to evaluate primary school provision closely.

Remember that *Reading by six* made this key judgement:

The best primary schools in England teach virtually every child to read, regardless of the social and economic circumstances of their neighbourhoods, the ethnicity of their pupils, the language spoken at home and most special educational needs or disabilities (p.4).

Recall, also, Ofsted's recommendation in the SEN review quoted at the beginning of this training: 'Schools should stop identifying pupils as having special educational needs when they simply need better teaching and pastoral support'.

The implications of these two reports for inspecting reading are clear. Inspectors need to find out what primary schools are doing for children who are in danger of 'falling through the net' and arriving at secondary school unable to read well enough.

Consider these two scenarios the first at Key Stage 2, the second at Key Stage 1 (Activities 4.2 and 4.3). Both are based closely on real events. The contexts of the two schools are not given, because that information is not relevant.

Activity 4.2: Tommy hates reading

You are inspecting a school that was judged to be good at its last inspection. It's the second half of the summer term, a sunny morning on the first day of the inspection. You are in the playground at break-time, gathering evidence about behaviour and planning to talk to a few pupils informally about their reading habits. Tommy (Year 5) comes up to talk to you. You met him in maths before break and he is keen to talk to the inspector again! You praise him for the maths work you saw – he told you proudly he was 'good at maths' – and ask him about how he's getting on in reading. Rather to your surprise, he says that he only reads 'Horrid Henry' books, hates reading his work out loud in class and feels 'really embarrassed' at being asked to do so. He says he reads out loud to someone once a week.

How are you going to follow this up?

Write down some lines of enquiry. Then compare them with those given in the [Responses](#) section.

Activity 4.3: Listening to Ayesha

It's the end of the first half of the autumn term and you are in a primary school, judged to be good at its last inspection. You are keen to evaluate attainment in reading at the start of Year 1 to see what children have learnt during the Foundation Stage and what they have done since. You ask the class teacher to point out to you three 'average' readers, boys and girls.

Ayesha is learning English as an additional language, as are 80% of the children. She's quite shy, so you encourage her to get a book from her book-bag and, during the course of a quiet reading time, you listen to her reading it. This is a phonically regular text with pictures above the text on each page, such as 'The frog sat on the log'. Ayesha says it's a book she has read before. She reads each page accurately but very quietly and, slightly unusually, she does not follow each word with her finger. Something makes you want to probe further.

You praise her reading and say that you'd like to hear it again, this time without the pictures to look at. You quickly cover up the picture on the first page with your hand and ask her to read the page again. At this point, she stops reading completely. Further probing and encouragement reveal that Ayesha has no phonic decoding strategies at all and no alphabetic knowledge. She has been relying on memorising the pictures and knowing what to say for each page. She seems to have no concept that the print carries the meaning.

What do you do next?

Compare your ideas with those in the [Responses](#) section.

Systems and leadership

Reading by six highlighted the following common features across the schools visited:

- high-quality, committed and direct leadership of reading, especially from the headteacher
- clear agreement about what children needed to learn to be successful readers
- high-quality, consistent teaching, 'especially discrete phonics teaching'
- rigorous assessment of every child, especially identifying difficulties early on so that well-matched and timely support and intervention could be provided.

Activity 4.4: Whole-school systems

Have a look at this very short video clip [1.5 mins.] from a professional development video.

Apart from evidence of outcomes in reading, what might you look for to help you determine the consistency of a school's approach? You can check your notes later against the suggestions in the [Responses](#) section.

The video clip is also worth watching for its quick illustrations of very well-paced phonics teaching and learning.

www.oxfordschoolimprovement.co.uk/professional-development/issue-video/whole-school-literacy/ruth-whole

Assessment, grouping and intervention

One of the important judgements that inspectors will need to make will be about a school's provision for children who are falling behind in reading. Remember that one of the findings of *Reading by six* was that, in the schools visited:

The assessment of individual pupils' progress, phonic knowledge and skills is sufficiently frequent and detailed to identify quickly the pupils who are falling behind or in danger of failing to keep up with their peers. Effective provision for them to catch up is put in place early and there are high expectations of what all pupils should achieve.

Assessment, however, will be starting much earlier than this. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, teachers should already be identifying children who find it difficult to distinguish between sounds and who may need additional support. Find out what provision is made for children who may not be ready to start on a systematic programme of phonics teaching by five, the age recommended by the Rose Review for this work.⁸

In terms of later intervention, you might expect to see:

- additional tutoring in small groups: before the lesson to prepare children or after the main lesson to help them catch up
- one-to-one work with a trained teaching assistant
- a group of children who are at the same level in reading being taught together so that the teaching can focus closely on their needs

⁸ 'For most children, high quality, systematic phonic work should start by the age of five, taking full account of professional judgements of children's developing abilities and the need to embed this work within a broad and rich curriculum. This should be preceded by pre-reading activities that pave the way for such work to start.' *Independent review of the teaching of early reading: final report* (0201-2006DOC-EN), DfES, 2006.

- especially in Year R, a mixed-ability class being divided towards the latter part of the academic year for phonic work to enable the younger or less able children to make good progress before Year 1
- support for a child or a small group of children within a lesson.

Consider how well the provision being made enables children not just to catch up but also reinforces for them the learning that the rest of the class is doing. Do they have opportunities for over-learning, that is, practising the necessary skills and knowledge sufficiently so that automaticity develops? Remember that children who are struggling to learn to read need not only to catch up with their peers but also to continue to make progress.

How – and how well – does the school evaluate the impact of the interventions it makes and the value for money? Can the school give you evidence of the effectiveness of the provision it is making in terms of children's progress?

The Rose Review summarised the features of effective intervention as follows:

... no matter which provision applied, the most successful intervention arrangements were planned as part of the total programme for teaching reading and monitored carefully. The driving and coordinating force was, more often than not, a well trained, experienced member of staff, such as the coordinator for literacy or SEN; above all, the arrangements had the full backing of the headteacher (p.49, para. 162)

Activity 4.5: Assessment and groupings for speedy progress

Look at this next short clip. Notice the important phrase in the video: children with special educational needs need to be supported 'for however long it takes until they can read'. There are no activities to do; just watch the clip.

www.oxfordschoolimprovement.co.uk/professional-development/issue-video/whole-school-literacy/ruth-assessment

The video clip you have just watched (Activity 4.5) refers to grouping children for reading. Both the Rose Review and *Reading by six* referred to grouping. Follow up the references in the next activity (4.6).

Activity 4.6: Reading task: mixed-ability or homogeneous teaching groups?

Read the two extracts cited below. Be prepared to see both types of grouping across the schools you visit and consider the impact of what you see on progress.

Rose Review: paragraphs 106–107

Reading by six: paragraphs 92–95, followed by the illustrations in paragraphs 89–90

Expectations

Although the National Curriculum is supposed to provide broad benchmarks for attainment at Key Stages 1 and 2, it does not now reflect the government's expectations that children should be taught to decode words using phonics as the prime approach. The current attainment target for reading at Level 2 says: 'They [pupils] use more than one strategy, such as phonic, graphic, syntactic and contextual, in reading unfamiliar words and establishing meaning.'

You can access the current National Curriculum for Key Stages 1 and 2 online here:

<http://curriculum.qcda.gov.uk/key-stages-1-and-2/subjects/english/attainmenttargets/index.aspx>

In terms of expectations for Year 1, the framework published for the development of the phonics screening test is helpful in terms of wider reading and phonics.⁹ The framework specifically says, 'The introduction of this check in no way underestimates the importance of teaching wider reading skills. ...It is expected that teachers will ensure that elements of early reading not assessed in this check are also taught, such as reading and discussing books.' It provides the following statements to indicate additional skills that children should have by the end of Year 1 but that will not be included in the check. Children should be able to:

- 'apply phonic knowledge and skill as the prime approach to reading unfamiliar words that are not completely decodable
- read many frequently encountered words automatically
- read phonically decodable three-syllable words
- read a range of age-appropriate texts fluently
- demonstrate understanding of age-appropriate texts.'

In terms of phonics specifically, the screening test framework says that children are expected to:

- 'give the sound when shown any grapheme that has been taught
- blend phonemes in order to read words
- know most of the common grapheme-phoneme correspondences
- read phonically decodable one-syllable and two-syllable words.'

The annexes to the consultation on the Year 1 screening check give information on what is to be covered during the check. Annex A shows the types of words that will

⁹ *Year 1 phonics screening check: framework for pilot in 2011* (no reference), DfE, 2011.

be included in Section 1 of the screening check (e.g. CVC, CVCC and so forth); Annex B provides a list, with examples, of the grapheme-phoneme correspondences which could appear in each section of the screening check. The annexes have not been designed as a curriculum for teaching and inspectors need to be acutely alert to schools that might be using them in this way.

The school is very likely to have a phonics programme, probably a commercial publication but possibly one of its own devising. It is very important that teachers demonstrate what the Rose Review referred to as 'fidelity to the programme'. That is, once a school has determined the order in which letter-sound correspondences will be taught and the ways in which this will be done, the programme should be followed. If teachers dip in and out of different programmes, there is always a danger that key learning is missed out. Teaching phonics should be done *systematically*.

The link below will take you to Annexes A and B (referred to above), but it is suggested that you look at those much later.

www.education.gov.uk/consultations/index.cfm?action=conResults&consultationId=1741&external=no&menu=3

The screening check has been 'devised in an attempt to be equally accessible regardless of the phonics programme used in a school'. For example, one programme might teach the digraph 'ai' early on while another might teach 'ay', both representing the sound /ay/. This difference does not matter.

Also helpful in considering coverage of phonics is the publication *Letters and Sounds*, produced as a resource for schools following the Rose Review. This provides guidance about the phonic knowledge and skills covered in each phase of the programme, although it is not set out in terms of what children are expected to have learnt each year. The materials have been republished on the DfE website at this link:

<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DFES-00281-2007>

The evaluation of the screening check, published in September 2011, noted that: '*Letters and Sounds* was by far the most frequently used programme, used by 80% of [the pilot] schools as their main programme.'¹⁰ You will therefore certainly come across schools using *Letters and sounds*, so the index that was included in the original materials (but not republished at the above link) has been reproduced at the

¹⁰ *Process evaluation of the Year 1 phonics screening check pilot* (DFE-RB159), DfE, 2011; <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/AllPublications/Page1/DFE-RB159>.

end of these materials. Click [here](#) if you would like to print it now.¹¹ (You'll find a hyperlink at the end of it to get you back to this page.)

When the index was still available online, it was accompanied by this statement:

'The Letters and Sounds sound index is based on what research into the teaching of early reading deems necessary. By the end of Phase 3 of Letters and Sounds, children should be able represent each of the 44 phonemes which covers basically all the spoken sounds in English. 'zh' as in 'vision' is the only remaining one left to be covered in Phase 5. There are some regional differences in pronunciation which can be dealt with on a common sense basis – but essentially everything is covered by the end of Phase 3.'

Part 3 of this training gives more information on the screening check. Click [here](#) if you want to read it now, although it is more sensible to finish this module first and read it when you get to Part 3.

High-quality phonic work

High-quality reading and writing begin with high-quality planning and provision in the early years. A report by Ofsted published in 2011, *The impact of the Early Years Foundation Stage*, found that in the providers visited where outcomes for communication, language and literacy were good or outstanding (42 of the 68 visited), it was because 'practitioners were specifically planning opportunities to develop children's speaking and listening, and early reading and writing skills. This could often be traced back to specific training, for example, in developing children's language skills or in delivering phonics.'¹²

The report also noted:

'Inspectors found that systematic phonics teaching, adapted to meet the needs and interests of the children, had a particularly positive impact in many of the schools found to be good or outstanding in this survey, and in three of the seven good childcare providers on non-domestic premises visited.'

¹¹ If you already have a copy of the full *Letters and sounds* pack, you can find the one-page summary on the final page of the slim booklet called *Letters and Sounds: Principles and practice of high quality phonics: Notes of Guidance for practitioners and teachers*.

¹² *The impact of the Early Years Foundation Stage: a good start* (100231), Ofsted, 2011; <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/impact-of-early-years-foundation-stage>.

Activity 4.7: High quality in the early years

This activity gives you a chance to consider how the provision described in the early years report reflects the quality described in Reading by six.

First, read paragraph 77 from Reading by six (reproduced in the box below). Then read paragraph 30 from The impact of the Early Years Foundation Stage, given in the single-bordered box.

You do not need to make any notes. Simply take time to think about what you have read.

Paragraph 77 from Reading by six:

There were many strengths in the best teaching seen in the 12 schools. It:

- showed total clarity about what children should have learnt by the end of each phonics session
- was very well matched to children's attainment
- was fast-paced, varied and engaging
- constantly reinforced knowledge to consolidate understanding
- was highly consistent in approaches: across groups, classes and the school as a whole
- incorporated continuing formative assessment.

The teachers taught perceptively, with enthusiasm and were extremely well prepared. The pupils worked at a good pace; they too understood the purpose of what they were doing. In the very best teaching, the pupils were captivated by what was going on, repeatedly tasting and celebrating success and feeling positive about the progress they were making.

Paragraph 30 from The impact of the Early Years Foundation Stage:

'In one school the structured teaching of letters and sounds had produced a highly beneficial effect on children's progress in the Nursery and Reception years. While using national guidance and the Letters and Sounds programme, the staff amended and adapted the content to meet the needs of the children and to reflect current interests. This was typified in a session for Reception children led by the class teacher where the well- thought-out structure, lively pace and stimulating content caught and sustained the children's attention and led to new learning. The children knew the flashcard routine where the showing of a picture preceded the recognition of the initial sound. The teacher was quick to remind children not to oversound, to model and then to praise the children when they got the letters right, including the letter 'h' which was

introduced the day before. The introduction, via entertaining interactive whiteboard slides of another new sound, 'a little tricky but part of our Christmas play', heightened children's attention and all joined in as the graphics showed how 's' and 'h' combine to give 'sh'. There was rapt attention, one child spoke out to link the sound to when a character sneezes, and a couple more commented that they knew that sound. The children were then asked to help the character Shamus use a shovel to get Father Christmas on the move again, and this led to finding a shiny box under the teacher's seat. The children were invited to guess what might be in the box – children suggested 'ship', 'cash' and 'fishing rod', which led to discussion about where the sound 'sh' occurred in the words. There were 'oohs' and 'ahhs' as the box was opened to reveal many items including 'shoes', 'sheep' and 'Shrek', as well as some mentioned by the children. The session ended with children being invited to see how, as part of self-chosen activities, they might use the glitter tray to form the letters 'sh'. Several children opted for this activity and later some went on to paint 'sh' in the snow outside.'

The next activity (Activity 4.8) builds on the thinking you have just done and extends this to making judgements in the classroom. Before you start the activity, you might want to print paragraph 77 that you have read a short while ago and keep it to hand. In addition, if you have a blank evidence form nearby, use it; if not, paper is fine.

Activity 4.8: Identifying high-quality phonic work

Imagine you are making short observations in different classrooms around the school. Evaluate the episodes of teaching that you see, comparing them with the features identified in paragraph 77 of Reading by six. Use the evidence form (EF) if you have one to hand or simply make notes.

You can pause the video if you want to make notes, write down a question or think about what you've seen; you can replay a scene or activity at any stage; you can also make a note of the timing of a particular scene if you need to refer to it later.

Then compare your completed 'running EF' or notes with those in the [Responses](#) section. (The EF in the Responses section, although still a draft version at the time this training is being written, reflects the main judgements that need to be made under the new framework.) No grades have been completed; you can discuss these as part of the later seminar.

You might also want to re-read page 34 of Reading by six after you have made your observations.

Here is the link to the video clip you need:

www.teachersmedia.co.uk/videos/ks1-literacy-phonics-without-tears

Teaching the higher levels of phonics (complex code)

One of the problems with the teaching of phonics in the past has been that teachers have sometimes taught only initial sounds and graphemes such as 'ch' and 'sh', leaving out some of the more challenging material such as vowel digraphs. Although the Rose Review described the teaching of phonics as 'time-limited', it does not mean that teachers should stop teaching it too early. It is important that children master the more complex letter-sound correspondences, both for reading and spelling.

The DfE's introduction to the PowerPoint presentation used in Activity 4.9 below says:

'Even when children make good progress in phonics in Reception, this is not always sustained into Year 1. It is usually at this stage that children encounter the challenge of alternative ways of writing the same sound or of reading words that have two possible pronunciations. They are also likely to encounter more challenging vowel digraphs and trigraphs.'¹³

Failure to cover enough phonic knowledge, especially vowel digraphs, was raised as a concern by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and, later, the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) in its analyses of the Key Stage 1 national tests, especially in terms of spelling. Encoding (spelling) is more difficult than decoding (part of reading) because the writer has to make choices from a number of possibilities. Of course some children arrive at school already being able to read, but they can benefit from being taught a systematic approach to listening to the sounds in words in order to spell.

Activity 4.9: Teaching the higher levels of phonics

This PowerPoint presentation (short, but 8Mb in size) on the DfE's website, 'Teaching the higher levels of phonics,' gives some illustrations of the sorts of teaching you might see in terms of teaching the later, more complex aspects of phonics. Slide 14 provides some useful pointers to questions you might ask about leadership and management.

You do not need to make any evaluations.

When you click the link, scroll down and you'll find the PowerPoint just below the list of teachers' names.

www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/pedagogy/teachingstyles/phonics/a0075042/teaching-the-higher-levels-of-phonics

¹³ A trigraph is a group of three letters together representing one sound, such as 'igh' as in 'high', 'tch' as in 'catch' or 'ure' as in 'pure'.

Listening to children reading

Inspectors must judge how well children are learning to read, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1.

The end-of-key-stage data tell you only so much. The test results cannot give you information about children's fluency, enjoyment, and their knowledge of books and authors; they cannot provide insights into the strategies younger readers are using to decode text. Listening to children reading is therefore an important and illuminating inspection activity.

The Evaluation Schedule requires inspectors to listen to pupils read to assess their standard of and progress in reading, including their rate of progress. Listening to them is one of the ways in which inspectors can begin to evaluate not only the impact of the teaching of reading that they have seen but also how well different groups of children are making progress, including those who are at risk of not learning to read.

At this point, inspectors need to note that the additional guidance for evaluating reading, which is being drafted at the time that this training is being released, will say that inspectors must listen to the reading of some of the weakest readers. It is likely to specify that inspectors must select two or three pupils from Year 2 and two or three from Years 3 or 4 and ask them to read the book that their teacher has chosen for them. The aim of this is to evaluate the skills and knowledge that these weakest readers still need to learn and also to assess the extent to which the book they are reading matches their current level of skill. The forthcoming guidance will provide more details.

Decide which pupils you are going to listen to on the basis of the evidence you have gathered so far, both before the inspection and while you are in the school, and choose your questions accordingly. You can 'mix and match' from those below, using some of the Key Stage 1 questions for struggling readers at Key Stage 2 or some of the Key Stage 2 questions with more advanced readers at Key Stage 1. In all the cases, adjust the questions for the child and the text. You don't need to ask all of them; they are just prompts.

It is really important that you should have a conversation with the child, along the lines of the introductory questions below, before the child starts to read. If it fits in with your inspection trails, choose children from a class that you have already observed, so that at least the children have seen you before; you may have talked to them about their work already. Remember that they will be nervous, particularly if the school has told them that inspectors will listen to some of them reading.

The suggested questions here have been grouped to test out different aspects of children's reading, including:

- independence and choice
- knowledge of books and individual authors

- decoding strategies
- understanding: literal and inferential comprehension
- support from school and home
- enjoyment
- higher-order reading skills, such as inference, appreciation of an author's style, awareness of themes, similarity and differences between texts
- awareness of own progress and development as a reader
- teaching, expectations and the school's reading culture.

These will help you to reach judgements about the reading of individual children and about reading more generally in terms of standards and the progress that children are making.

After you have read the questions and before moving onto the next modules, you might want to take a moment to extract the questions and save them in your own files to use and adapt later.

At Key Stage 1

Who chose this book? Did you choose it yourself or did someone choose it for you?

Have you read it before today or is it a new book?

Do you know anything about it already?

Do you know any of the characters/people in this story?

Decoding

What do you do if you get stuck on a word?

[Return to a word that the child hesitated on and see how s/he tackles it.]

What part of the word would you look at first?

[Check that the child starts at the beginning.]

Can you show me what you do?

What sound does this letter make? And this one? And this one? [Point from left to right through the word, not randomly, making sure that you are not covering up the letter.]

What word is that when we put those sounds together?

Say the word for me?

Comprehension

Why do you think X [a character] did that?

Why do you think Y [an event] happened?

What do you think will happen next?

Do you read to someone in school? How often?

Do you read with someone at home?

Do you have a reading record/diary? Please may I see it? [Check how often an adult listens to the child read? Which adults? Parent/teacher/teaching assistant?]

Do you like this book? Why?

What are your favourite (sorts of) books?

What books has your teacher read to the class that you enjoyed?

Do you feel you are a good reader? What's easy? What's difficult? How do you think you could get even better as a reader?

Do you enjoy reading?

At Key Stage 2

Why did you choose this book? Did *you* choose it or did someone choose it for you?
Did you know anything about it before you started reading it?
Could you tell me what's happened so far [fiction] or what this book is about [non-fiction]?

What do you do if you don't know a word?
[Return to a word that the child hesitated on or mispronounced, indicating perhaps that it was new to them.]
Have you come across this word before?
How did you know how to say it? Are there any clues in the word? Does it look like any other words you know?
Do you know what the word means or can you work out what it means (in this sentence)?
What other word could the author have used that means the same sort of thing?

Why do you think X [a character] did that?
How do you think X is feeling at the moment? Show me what words/phrases tell us that.
Why do you think Y [an event] happened?
What do you think will happen next? What makes you think that?
How do you think the author wants us to feel at this moment? What is she/he trying to do here?

Have you read any other books/poems by this author?
Have you read books like this one by someone else? Which ones?
What sorts of books do you enjoy the most/least?
Who is your favourite author? Why do you like her/his books? What would you say to recommend them to other people?

Do you enjoy reading?
Does the school have the sorts of books that you would like to read? If not, what sorts would you like more of?
How do you find out about new books or authors that you might want to read?

How well do you think you're getting on as a reader?
What do you think would improve your reading even more?
What advice does your teacher give you about your reading?
Does anyone check what books you are reading? Do you get help/advice with what sorts of books to read?

How many books have you read on your own this term/since you have been in this class?
Do you read every day: at school? at home? If not, why not?
How many books do you think you read in a week? Who checks how many you read? Do you write down the titles so that you know what you've read?
How long do you think it will take you to finish this book?

Part 3: Contextual information

Module 5: Background information on reading and phonics

This short module gives some background information that might be useful if you are asked questions during inspection. The three sections deal with:

- the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2012
- the DfE's plans for 'matched funding' for schools to buy phonic resources
- international comparisons in terms of England's performance in reading.

Although this material is up to date at the time the training is being written, it would be wise to use the links to check on any new information since then, particularly in terms of the plans for the screening check.

The Year 1 phonics screening check

Ofsted received much feedback on the topic of the screening check in the public consultation on the new inspection framework. This section is designed to help inspectors prepare themselves should they be asked questions by school staff and governors.

The DfE piloted the screening check of phonic knowledge and skills for six-year-olds with 10,000 pupils in around 300 schools in June 2011. An independent evaluation of the pilot, commissioned from Sheffield Hallam University, was published in September 2011. This short publication provides helpful insights into the check.

The screening check will be used in all maintained schools in England in 2012 and the results will be published in RAISEonline. Before that happens, however, inspectors will need to rely on the data collected from the 300 pilot schools. While these data will provide an initial benchmark for putting an individual school's performance into context, inspectors should be very cautious for the following reasons.

First, most of the schools involved in the pilot committed themselves to it in February 2011 and received detailed information about the check only in the week leading up to it. Therefore, they did not adjust their teaching based on the content of the check. Inspectors should expect some differences in national performance in 2012 when schools will be informed about the content of the check and the likely standards much sooner than happened in 2011.

- Second, the data from the check should be used in a wider school context. Since the purpose of the check is to identify pupils who need extra support and ensure that they receive help, it is particularly important for the success of the check that results from it are seen primarily as a starting point for a conversation with inspectors. Inspectors might consider asking questions such as: What have you learnt about your Year 1 cohort's decoding skills?

- Did you notice any patterns in performance?
- Was there a pattern of performance across the Year 1 classes (where there is more than one Year 1 class)?
- What action, if any, are you taking as a result of your evaluation?

At the time this training is being written, the DfE is considering at what point(s) in Year 2 a re-check should be done for children who do not reach the required standard in Year 1. Later on, inspectors will need to follow up results in Year 2. The data are likely to provide useful information about the impact of any interventions that the school has put in place and the speed with which children were able to catch up with their peers.

When the screening check of phonic skills was first announced, the media tended to describe it as a 'reading test', but its focus is simply to ensure that children have mastered the basic skills of early reading, namely:

- recognising individual letters and groups of letters
- knowing which letter(s) are representing which sounds (the alphabetic code)
- blending individual sounds together to read words.

The government published the response to its consultation on the screening check on 24 March 2011. If you are interested, you can read the response later, using the link below, but you do not need to read it as part of this training. It is wiser to carry on with this module.

www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/pedagogy/a0075951/year1phonicsresponse

The report on the consultation indicated that, in the pre-pilot trial, the screening check was helpful in identifying particular areas where children were struggling. One teacher felt, for example, based on the children's responses to the check, that her school should revisit how it taught the digraphs 'oi' and 'ou'. In another school, pupils across several classes struggled with the split digraph 'a-e' and so the school reviewed how this was taught.

Teachers and senior staff should therefore find the check helpful in:

- identifying children who may be struggling with phonic decoding early on (alphabetic code and/or blending) and who need speedy intervention to catch up
- pinpointing particular aspects of phonics (e.g. vowel digraphs) that a whole class or year group found difficult and where teaching needs to be improved
- moderating their own teacher assessments against the screening check results and following up any discrepancies

- considering whether they are setting appropriate expectations, by comparing their school's results with national benchmarks.

The media coverage when the tests were announced was sometimes scathing about the inclusion of 'non-words' (or nonsense words) in the check. But children need to have a strategy for working out words that they have not come across and asking children to read 'non-words' is a way of assessing whether they have such a strategy. 'Teachers [in the pre-pilot] pointed out that all words are in effect non-words when a child first encounters them, and children only recognise new words as real once they have decoded them.'¹⁴ The consultation report noted that most of the schools involved in the pre-pilot were positive about using non-words: 'Teachers recognised that non-words assessed only phonic decoding, whereas real words could be read based on sight memory.' Obviously, instant recognition ('automaticity') rather than conscious blending is the goal – and underpins fluent reading.

Non-words are also useful in identifying children who may **know** the alphabetic code (or at least parts of it) but are struggling with the **skills** of blending sounds together to make whole words. There may also be children who are finding it difficult to learn to read whose problems are not related to blending or knowing the alphabetic code. But the screening check still acts as an important diagnostic tool in the first instance.¹⁵ This point is well illustrated in the response of the NDCS to the consultation question: 'Are there any other groups [of children] we should consider in particular [in developing the screening check]?'

'NDCS would bring the attention of DfE that up to 40% of deaf children could have additional needs (significantly higher than in the general population) and some of these needs, such as dyslexia and specific language disorders, may not have been identified prior to the screening check. This screening check could alert teachers to specific difficulties in deaf children that hitherto may have been attributed to their hearing loss.'

Despite the value of the screening check, there has been opposition. Some MPs, for instance, voiced their disquiet even before the report on the consultation was published. See Activity 5.1.

¹⁴ At this point, the report should have gone on to say: '... provided that the words they pronounce are known words in their vocabulary.' This is where it is helpful to understand the simple view of reading.

¹⁵ The check is not strictly 'diagnostic' because it will not show reliably the particular grapheme-phoneme correspondences the children do not know. However, it should prompt teachers to consider which areas of decoding might require further assessment would be most valuable, such as the skill or blending or knowledge of split digraphs.

Activity 5.1: Reading task – What MPs said

This article from the Times Educational Supplement (TES) on 18 March – ‘Key MPs demand change to national phonics test plan’ – gives a flavour of some objections. Click on the link to read the article.

www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=6073414

If you come across similar concerns from schools, the following points may be helpful in allaying their concerns:

- Children need to be taught the alphabetic code – the relationship between sounds and letters in English – and the screening check is designed to assess how much of it they know.
- The check was only ever intended as a test of phonic decoding – not as a wider test of reading – to assess whether children have learnt key knowledge and skills by the end of Year 1. Comprehension is a separate dimension and is tested at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. Remind schools of the ‘simple view of reading’ in the Rose Review.
- Schools that would like the screening check to assess speaking and listening or comprehension are missing the point that it is a specific test with a very sharp focus on key knowledge and skills.

Remember, too, that when you use the results of the screening check during inspection, they do not provide an assessment of children’s *reading*; the check assesses only phonic decoding.

The DfE’s website has much more information on the screening check in the framework used for the pilot.¹⁶ The publication includes details on how the data will be used following the national roll-out in 2012, the types of items that will be tested, and the arrangements that will be made for children with special educational needs, including those for children who use British Sign Language. Although some of the highly technical details are there to assist the developers of the screening check, the framework has useful information for inspectors if schools ask questions.

Again, you do not need to read the screening check framework for this training, but here is the link to it if you need more information later on:

www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/pedagogy/a0077650/phonicsframework

¹⁶ *Year 1 phonics screening check: framework for pilot in 2011* (no reference), DfE, 2011.

Phonics resources and DfE matched funding

The following link will take you to an overview of the DfE's work related to phonics:

www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/pedagogy/teachingstyles/phonics/

Following the Rose Review report in 2006, the then Department for Education and Skills (DfES) published 'Criteria for assuring high-quality phonics'. The DfE revised and re-published the criteria in October 2010 'to provide schools with clearly defined key features of an effective, systematic, synthetic phonics programme.' You can find the criteria on the DfE's website at:

www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/pedagogy/a0010240/criteria-for-assuring-high-quality-phonics-work

In April 2011, the government announced 'matched funding' in order for schools to buy systematic synthetic phonics products and training, following the commitment in the White Paper:

The evidence is clear that the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics is the most effective way of teaching young children to read, particularly for those at risk of having problems with reading. Unless children have learned to read, the rest of the curriculum is a secret garden to which they will never enjoy access. As this is an area of such fundamental importance, we will go further than in any other area in actively supporting best practice. We will provide the resources to support the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics in primary schools. We will support all schools with key stage one pupils to implement this approach by providing funding for high-quality training and classroom teaching resources (p.43, para. 4.16).

To be eligible for the matched funding, the materials must be approved as meeting the DfE's 'core criteria'. The DfE will match the payment up to £6,000: that is, £3,000 from the school and £3,000 from the DfE. The funding will be available until March 2013.

The DfE published an interim catalogue of approved products and training in October 2011.¹⁷ All schools with Key Stage 1 pupils will receive a copy of the final catalogue. It will also be available online and will replace the interim version. *Letters and sounds* will not be included in the catalogue because the materials have never been made available commercially.

The DfE's website also provides a revised list of commercial products that have been assessed as meeting the core criteria, although this is separate from the approved catalogue of products and training eligible for funding. You may find it useful to cast

¹⁷ www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/pedagogy/a00191791/match-funding-for-systematic-synthetic-phonics-products-and-training

your eyes over it to familiarise yourself with some of the names. The list will grow as more publishers complete the self-assessments, so it's worth returning to the list later. Click the link below to see the list and other information:

www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/pedagogy/b00198579/phonics-products-and-the-self-assessment-process

International comparisons

Behind the White Paper's focus on children's reading lies England's performance in the regular international assessments of the performance of 10- and 15-year-olds. For instance, the White Paper quotes the 2006 results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), noting that England had fallen from 7th to 17th in literacy in terms of the performance of 15-year-olds. In the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) in 2006 – an assessment of 10-year-olds – England was ranked 15th out of the 40 countries that took part, a contrast to 2001 when England was ranked third out of 35 countries (after Sweden and the Netherlands). In PIRLS in 2009, England was ranked 25th out of the 65 countries/economies on 'reading literacy'.

With this sort of evidence very much to the fore, the concern expressed in the White Paper that England has been 'slipping back in the rankings as others improve faster' is not surprising. It is not, however, about saving face internationally. The achievement gap between England and other countries imposes 'an invisible yet recurring economic loss'. A summary report on PISA 2009 calculated the economic disadvantages for the United Kingdom as follows:

A recent study carried out by the OECD in collaboration with the Hoover Institute at Stanford University suggests that a modest goal of having the United Kingdom boost its average PISA scores by 25 points over the next 20 years – which corresponds to the performance gains that some countries achieved between 2000 and 2009 alone – could imply a gain of US\$6 trillion for the United Kingdom economy over the lifetime of the generation born in 2010 ... The predictive power of student performance at school on subsequent successful education and labour-market pathways is also demonstrated through longitudinal studies (OECD, 2010a).¹⁸

The White Paper did not use the 2009 PISA results – they weren't published until 2010 – but the general thrust of the international comparisons is very clear.

Teaching phonics is not the answer to the UK's economic problems, but improving the teaching of reading, particularly at the earliest stages, might go some way to improving standards, not just in literacy but more generally across the curriculum.

¹⁸ *Viewing the United Kingdom school system through the prism of PISA*, OECD; <http://www.pisa.oecd.org/dataoecd/33/8/46624007.pdf>

Indeed, it might improve life-chances more generally. Ofsted's 2010 report, *Reading by six*, said:

Too many children do not read or write well enough by the time they leave primary school. The proportion of 11-year-olds that reach the expected level (Level 4 of the National Curriculum) in English has stalled at around 80% and the national average point score for reading at the end of Key Stage 1 has remained between 15.6 and 15.7 for the last four years.

It went on to say:

The best primary schools teach virtually every child to read, regardless of the social and economic circumstances of their neighbourhoods, the ethnicity of their pupils, the language spoken at home and most special educational needs or disabilities.

Ofsted's more recent report (May 2011), *Excellence in English*, also said that 'high-quality phonics work [was] an important part of outstanding provision and a characteristic of all the primary schools featured [in the report]'.

Why the White Paper referred so specifically to 'systematic synthetic phonics' may be answered by returning to the Rose Review of early reading, particularly the 'Simple view of reading' (covered in [Module 1](#)).

Part 4: Responses and further reading

Annex 1: Suggested responses to module tasks

Activity 3.2 (i): listening to sounds.

There are six sounds in the word 'Ofsted'. In the International Phonetic Alphabet, they would be represented like this:



As it happens, there is one letter matching each sound in the word 'Ofsted', but that is not always the case in the alphabetic code.

Click [here](#) to return to where you were.

Activity 3.2 (ii): an optional further challenge

'Scroll' consists of five sounds. The challenge was to hear the three separate consonant sounds that start the word. Notice, too, that although you saw a double letter at the end of the word (the grapheme 'll'), it is representing a single *sound* – just /l/.



If you found these two activities difficult, ask for help.

Click [here](#) to return to where you were.

Activity 3.5: Evaluating the teaching of segmenting

Positive features:

- good focus on listening to the individual sounds in a given word
- focus on individual phonemes (the /i/ and the /ch/ sounds)
- good demonstration by the teacher ('My turn, your turn.')
- good multi-sensory reinforcement: the teacher asks the class to 'touch to say', that is, to tap out on their fingers the number of sounds they hear. (In England, you might hear teachers refer to 'phoneme fingers'.)
- clear distinction made between 'sounds' and 'spelling'
- teacher asks individual pupils for a response – not a general 'hands up' (but see below).

Negative features:

- teacher records the *sounds* on the whiteboard; the key objective should be for the pupils to know what letter or letters they should use to represent (spell) each sound; writing down the sounds could be a confusing step for some pupils and divert attention from the main objective which is to *hear* the individual sounds in words
- lack of writing from the pupils (e.g. on jotters, mini-whiteboards): the teacher could have asked: 'How do we write [whatever the sound is]?' or 'What letter or letters do we need for the sound [whatever it is]?'
- missed opportunities for involving all the class and for assessment: before asking one pupil to respond, the teacher does not ask all the pupils to hold up their fingers so that he can see whether everyone has identified the number of sounds correctly
- pace of teaching is a little slow: the teacher should have the words ready at his finger-tips and not need to look them up in his notes.

Click [here](#) to return to where you were.

Activity 3.6: Watch – Multi-sensory approaches

Your bulleted list should look something like this:

- hand actions/movements to reinforce the sound being learnt or consolidated
- letter cards: to move around on the floor or to put in order, left to right, in a paper 'pocket'
- whiteboards for writing
- boards with plastic/magnetic letters.

In addition, the children are physically engaged. Do not assume, however, that because they are joining in they are actually learning.

Click [here](#) to return to where you were.

Activity 4.2: Tommy hates reading

How are you going to follow up Tommy's reading? Possible lines of enquiry might include the following:

1. Ask Tommy's class teacher about how well he is getting on in reading. What progress has he made and what provision is or has been in place (if any) to improve his fluency and confidence? Ask about the impact and how it was evaluated. Ask how much time Tommy spends reading during the day/week.
2. Ask to see her records and any other assessments about Tommy's reading, including tracking data, any optional test data, his reading record, a list of books read. Use these to inform the evidence you gather on assessment.
3. Scrutinise some of Tommy's writing for evidence of his wider literacy and the quality of his spelling.
4. Observe lessons in Tommy's class to evaluate the quality of teaching, including the opportunities to read and write. (You could evaluate both literacy and another lesson in which the children might be reading or writing.)
5. If there is an opportunity, observe Tommy reading aloud to an adult. What is the quality of the support and feedback he is getting? Is he making progress and gaining confidence? If not, what is getting in the way?
6. As an alternative, ask him to read to you. Listen closely for evidence of the strategies he uses to read and try to gauge the level of his phonic knowledge and skills. Put this evidence alongside what you have gleaned from a scrutiny of his books, including the standard of his spelling.
7. Find out whether there are others struggling like Tommy. Ask managers and Tommy's class teacher to tell you how many pupils in the school/class are in a similar position. Use their answers to draw together evidence on the leadership and management of reading and evidence for the quality of assessment.
8. Who manages the teaching of reading? Who is responsible for making sure that Tommy and others leave school able to read?

Click [here](#) to go back to where you were.

Activity 4.3: Listening to Ayesha

Possible lines of enquiry about Ayesha might include the following:

1. Listen to some more children reading in this class – across the spectrum of attainment. Are there more children 'reading' like Ayesha?
2. Discuss Ayesha's reading with the class teacher – who thinks she is an 'average' reader. What does her response tell you about assessment in this class? Gently probe how it is that Ayesha cannot match sounds and letters at this stage.
3. Ask to see all the records on Ayesha's reading, especially any assessments of her phonic knowledge and skills and her Foundation Stage profile. What does the profile say about her knowledge and skills at the end of the Foundation Stage and, in your view, was the judgement accurate?
4. Observe phonics teaching across the Foundation Stage and Year 1. Evaluate the quality of the teaching and the progress the children are making. Ask to see the individual records of a whole class and match these up with the planning for phonics. Are expectations high enough? To what extent does the school have a systematic programme for teaching phonics? Does teaching reinforce earlier learning?
5. Use your answers to draw together evidence on the leadership and management of reading and the quality of assessment. What is the quality of assessment during teaching?

Click [here](#) to go back to where you were.

Activity 4.4: Whole-school systems

Apart from outcomes in reading, evidence from or about the following might also help you to determine the consistency of a school's approach to teaching reading:

- the impact of the subject leader or reading manager across classes/year-groups, for example through her/his monitoring of progress and feedback to staff
- strong links between early language work in the Nursery and Reception classes and work in Key Stage 1
- a shared system for tracking children's progress in reading across the school
- the quick and effective transfer of children from one reading group to another, determined through whole-school reading assessments, so that teaching is matched closely to need
- common features in teaching reading across different classrooms, such as mnemonics, shared multi-sensory approaches, common vocabulary, similar literacy displays (as appropriate to the age of the children) and other resources as reference points
- strong links between any intervention work and the teaching in the mainstream classroom – and between the staff involved (teaching assistants and teachers)
- the impact of whole-school continuing professional development (CPD) for reading that has involved teaching assistants as well as teachers
- a shared language for discussing reading – shared by children and staff
- common communication to parents about how the school teaches reading – and feedback from parents that this is so.

Click [here](#) to go back to where you were.

Activity 4.8: Identifying high-quality phonic work

Evidence Form															
Date		21 June 11		Time of day			a.m. sessions		Length of observation		15 mins.				
Inspector's OIN		1962		Inspection number			123456		Observation type		L A D O				
Year Group(s)	YR, Y1	Grouping		<u>MC</u> SU SA SL O					BO GI <u>MI</u>		Present/NOR				
Subject codes	EN	LY	Support Teachers/assistants		SEN	T	S	EAL	T	S	Other	T	S	Inspector's EF number	1
Focus (inspection trail or main purpose of the activity) Follow-up to discussion with HT: quality of phonics and literacy - teaching in YR and Y1.				Context (lesson objective or description of activity)											
Evaluation															
<u>Class 1: Phonics session</u>															
Good range of activities, reinforcing alphabetic code knowledge and encouraging chn. to apply this to spelling: 'er', 'th' and 'ng' – good to consolidate this learning but pace is too slow. Over-use of letter-names at expense of sounds. Despite slow pace, T. does not allow chn time to think – provides answers for them: e.g. in segmenting activity, she does most of work, telling chn sounds in 'week' and 'spoon' before they work it out themselves. One girl able to spell 'Spain' independently with her letter cards; praised by T. who comments on what words could be made. T. does not ask focused questions of individual chn. or check whether they understand. Good opps. for multi-sensory work: actions to support sounds; letter cards for spelling. 'Swap Shop' activity takes too long for not enough benefit. Chn. not involved once they have read their word. T. decodes 'bug' for them at the end, negating point of game – that they should decode themselves. Very poor handwriting model by teacher on whiteboard, e.g. 'g' and 'y'. Also, chn. do not 'practise' writing, although T. says this is what they are going to do. Time not used well enough.															
<u>Class 2: Reading story about fox</u> (Brief observation)															
As with T. in Class 1, this T. answers her own questions. Chn. are not involved enough. Missed opportunities for chn. to talk to partners about how the fox is feeling; discuss 'evidence' for answers about the fox; learn other words for 'scared'. I was not certain that all the chn. could see the text, esp. some of the boys.															
<u>Year 1 small group:</u> (Brief observation)															
Practising/consolidating 'oa' digraph. Good focus for Y1 chn. Good, focused teaching; chn. have opps to write/spell themselves. They do this confidently and correctly. Mini whiteboards mean that T. can see/assess spellings. Of the three sessions, this is the best taught.															
Summary of main points															
<u>Positives</u>															
The teachers seen understand <u>why</u> they are doing what they are doing; they also seem to know <u>what</u> they have to do, so there is fertile ground. Range of phonic activities is at least satisfactory, covering knowledge and skills (segmenting and blending). Multi-sensory approaches evident – often engaging chn. well. Consistency across the two YR classes, e.g. mnemonic for the sound /n/. Grouping of Year R children in summer term provides closer matching of phonic work to attainment; also grouping of three Year 1 classes into six groups for phonics: should provide good match.															
<u>Negatives</u>															
Quality of teaching is not good enough for children to be making progress. Key weaknesses are:															
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - insufficient opportunity for children to practise spelling and writing on their own in phonic sessions - teachers answering questions before giving chn time to reply – missed assessment opps, too - not enough assessment that children actually know what they need to know - pace of work is not brisk enough – coverage of content could be much improved - time is wasted, e.g. in 'Swap Shop' activity. 															
Follow-up: How often are teachers seen teaching phonics? Are these weaknesses being picked up in monitoring?															

Use for grades if there is sufficient evidence:			
Achievement	Teaching*	Behaviour and safety	Leadership and management
Particular evaluations related to the provision and outcomes for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Boys sharing books together; chn. engage with each other well when working in pairs.			

*You should take account of the learning and progress of different groups of pupils in coming to an overall judgement.

Annex 2: *Letters and sounds*: overview of phonic knowledge and skills to be covered in Phases one to six¹⁹

<p>Phase One</p>	<p>Phase One paves the way for the systematic teaching of phonic work to begin in Phase Two. In this phase activities are included to develop oral blending and segmenting of the sounds of the spoken words. These activities are very largely adult-led. However, they must be embedded within a language-rich educational programme that takes full account of children’s freely chosen activities and ability to learn through play. Phase One activities are designed to underpin and run alongside activities in other phases.</p>		
<p>Phases Two to Six</p>	<p>Knowledge of grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs)</p>	<p>Skills of blending and segmenting with letters</p>	<p>High-frequency words containing GPCs not yet taught</p>
<p>Phase Two up to 6 weeks</p>	<p>19 letters of the alphabet and one sound for each.</p>	<p>Starting with a small set of GPCs and then increasing the number: Blend separate sounds together into whole words (for reading) Segment whole words into separate sounds (for spelling) (e.g. <i>in, up, cat, sit, run, and, hops, bell</i>). Optional: Simple words of two syllables using taught GPCs (e.g. <i>sunset, laptop, picnic, robin, camel</i>). Blending to read simple captions.</p>	<p><i>the, to, no, go, I</i></p>
<p>Phase Three up to 12 weeks</p>	<p>7 more letters of the alphabet. Graphemes to cover most of the phonemes not covered by single letters.</p>	<p>Blend and segment sounds represented by single letters and graphemes of more than one letter, including longer words (e.g. <i>chip, moon, night, thunder</i> – choice of word will depend on which GPCs have been taught). Blend to read simple captions, sentences and questions. #</p>	<p><i>he, she, we, me, be, was, my, you, her, they, all, are</i>. Emphasise parts of words containing known correspondences.</p>

¹⁹ Reproduced, with minor layout changes, from *Letters and sounds: principles and practice of high quality phonics – Notes of guidance for practitioners and teachers* (00282-2007BKT-EN), DfES, 2007.

<p>Phase Four 4 to 6 weeks</p>	<p>No new GPCs.</p>	<p>Blend and segment words with adjacent consonants (e.g. <i>went, frog, stand, jumps, shrink</i>).</p>	<p><i>said, so, have, little, some, come, were there, little, one, do, when, out, what.</i> Again, emphasise parts of words containing known correspondences.</p>
<p>Phase Five throughout Year 1</p>	<p>More graphemes for the 40+ phonemes taught in Phases Two and Three; more ways of pronouncing graphemes introduced in Phases Two and Three.</p>	<p>Blend and segment sounds represented by all GPCs taught so far.</p> <p>Try alternative pronunciations for graphemes if the first attempt sounds wrong (e.g. <i>cow</i> read as /coe/ sounds wrong; <i>break</i> read as /breek/ or /breck/ sounds wrong).</p>	<p><i>oh, their, people, Mr, Mrs, looked, called, asked, water, where, who, again, though, through, work, mouse, many, laughed, because, different, any, eyes, friends, once, please.</i></p>
<p>Phase Six throughout Year 2</p> <p>[Note that the teaching of spelling cannot be completed in Year 2. It needs to continue rigorously throughout primary schools and beyond if necessary.]</p>	<p>Word-specific spellings, i.e. when phonemes can be spelt in more than one way, children will learn which words take which spellings (e.g. <i>see/sea, bed/head/said, cloud/clown</i>).</p>	<p>Increasingly fluent sounding and blending of words encountered in reading for the first time. Spelling of words with prefixes and suffixes, doubling and dropping letters where necessary (e.g. <i>hop/hopping, hope/hoping, hope/hopeful, carry/carried, happy/happiness</i>).</p> <p>Increasingly accurate spelling of words containing unusual GPCs (e.g. <i>laugh, once, two, answer, could, there</i>).</p>	<p>As needed.</p>

If you are now returning to the training materials, please click [here](#).

Further reading

Publications by Ofsted

Excellence in English: what we can learn from 12 outstanding schools (100229), Ofsted, 2011;

www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/excellence-english

Reading by six: how the best schools do it (100197), Ofsted, 2010;

www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/reading-six-how-best-schools-do-it

Removing barriers to literacy (090237), Ofsted, 2011;

www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/removing-barriers-literacy

The impact of the Early Years Foundation Stage: a good start (100231), Ofsted, 2011;

www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/impact-of-early-years-foundation-stage

The special educational needs and disability review: a statement is not enough (090221), Ofsted, 2010;

www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/special-educational-needs-and-disability-review

Other publications

T. Oates, *Could do better: Using international comparisons to refine the National Curriculum in England*, Cambridge Assessment, 2010;

www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/ca/Viewpoints/Viewpoint?id=135502

J. Rose, *Independent review of the teaching of early reading: final report* (0201-2006DOC-EN), DfES, 2006;

<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DFES-0201-2006>

L. Twist, I. Schagen and C. Hodgson, *Readers and Reading: the National Report for England 2006* (PIRLS: Progress in International Reading Literacy Study), NFER, 2007.

Process evaluation of the Year 1 phonics screening check pilot (DFE-RB159), DfE, 2011.

<http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/AllPublications/Page1/DFE-RB159>

Response to public consultation on the Year 1 phonics screening check, DfE, 2011;

www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/pedagogy/a0075951/year1phonicsresponse

Teachers' standards (DfE V1.0 0711), DfE, 2011;

www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/reviewofstandards/a00192172/review-of-teachers-standards-first-report

Teaching reading in Europe: contexts, policies and practices (ISBN 978-92-9201-179-6), European Commission, 2011;

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/thematic_studies_en.php

The Importance of Teaching –The Schools White Paper 2010 (Cm 7980), DfE, 2010;

www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/CM%207980

Year 1 phonics screening check: framework for pilot in 2011 (no ref.), DfE, 2011;

www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/pedagogy/a0077650/phonicsframework

Websites

The British Association of Teachers of the Deaf (BATOD)

BATOD deals with all professional aspects of the education of deaf children and their teachers.

www.batod.org.uk

The National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS)

The society provides a range of publications and advice – both for families of deaf children and for professional working with them.

www.ndcs.org.uk/

Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), 2006

The PIRLS National Report for England is available on the NFER's website at:

www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/PRN01/

PISA 2009 Results: Executive Summary, OECD, 2010

Executive summaries are available on the OECD's website:

www.pisa.oecd.org/document/61/0,3746,en_32252351_32235731_46567613_1_1_1_1,00.html