

How we teach children to read



What is synthetic phonics?

When we speak of synthetic phonics, we are referring to the process of synthesising (or blending) the sounds of a word together. Children are taught to sound out the graphemes from left to right and blend these sounds together to form the word.

The core knowledge underpinning synthetic phonics is the relationship between sounds and letters. This needs to be taught in a systematic and clearly defined, incremental sequence, so that children have time to consolidate and apply their new knowledge.

Anima Phonics: Letters and Sounds Updated encourages children to put their knowledge of letter-sound correspondences to immediate use, by teaching three core skills:

Decoding

The ability to sound out (segment) and blend (synthesise) all through the printed word, from left to right, to hear the whole word.

Encoding

The ability to orally divide a spoken word into individual phonemes, then select a grapheme to represent each sound.

Handwriting

The ability to write the correct graphemes (letters) to represent each phoneme.

Why synthetic phonics?

After decades of global research and observation of teaching practices and learning outcomes, we now know how best to teach children to read. Synthetic phonics is the proven method to achieve success for every child, regardless of their age, gender, background, language profile or additional learning needs.

Sir Jim Rose stated in his momentous and celebrated report that it is '...crucial to teach phonics work systematically, regularly and explicitly because children are highly unlikely to work out this relationship for themselves. It cannot be left to chance, or for children to ferret out, on their own, how the alphabetic code works' (*Independent Review of the Teaching of Early Reading Final Report, Jim Rose, March 2006*).

The Alphabetic Code

English is a complex and vocabulary rich language, but it is underpinned by an alphabetic code which can be applied to all words. It is the practitioners job to steadily guide children through this alphabetic code, so that children can apply their phonics skills to unknown words and develop into confident and fluent readers.

The Basic Code

Children first learn a Basic Code of 44 grapheme-phoneme correspondences. This is the bedrock of *Anima Phonics: Letters and Sounds Updated*, enabling children to immediately start reading and writing using their new knowledge.

In English we have around 44 phonemes, but only 26 letters of the alphabet to represent these speech sounds. One, two, three or four letters can represent one phoneme (e.g. c, sh, igh, eigh).

Once a Basic Code of 44 graphemes to represent 44 phonemes has been taught, children can be introduced to these additional concepts:

Alternative spellings

Most phonemes can be represented by more than one grapheme. For example, the /ur/ sound has multiple alternative spellings.

ur (turn) - **ir** (bird) - **er** (term) - **ear** (earth) - **or** (worm)

Alternative pronunciations

Some graphemes can represent alternative phonemes. For example, the grapheme **ch** can represent multiple phonemes.

/ch/ (**chin**) - /k/ (**school**) - /sh/ (**chef**)