

Annex A: Criteria that define an effective phonics programme

Choosing a programme to support the teaching of phonics

The sequence, progression and pace of phonics teaching can be supported by using commercially produced or Primary National Strategy teaching materials. Settings and schools can use other programmes, such as those they have developed themselves, or which have been developed for use within their local area. The *Independent review of the teaching of early reading* (the Rose Report) recognised that there are a number of:

...differing approaches to teaching reading in general, and phonic work in particular... The common elements in each programme – those that really make a difference to how well beginners are taught to learn to read and write – are few in number.

Independent review of the teaching of early reading, paragraph 54, page 20

What is important is that the programme adopted by the school or setting reflects the key features of high-quality phonic work and that it is adhered to ‘with fidelity’, applied consistently and used regularly, avoiding drawing in too many elements from different programmes.

Programmes to support the teaching of phonics vary in both pace and timescale, though they are all careful to introduce phonemes, graphemes and the processes of segmenting and blending. Schools and settings will need to consider whether their current approach to the teaching of phonics, and the material they use to support their approach form a programme that will:

- be fully compatible with a broad and rich curriculum
- be systematic, with a clearly defined and structured progression for learning all the major grapheme–phoneme correspondences: digraphs, trigraphs, adjacent consonants and alternative graphemes for the same sound
- be delivered in discrete daily sessions at a brisk pace that is well matched to children’s developing abilities
- be underpinned by a synthetic approach to blending phonemes in order all through a word to read it, and segmenting words into their constituent phonemes to spell them
- make clear that blending and segmenting are reversible processes
- be multisensory, encompassing various visual, auditory and kinaesthetic activities that actively engage children (for example, manipulating magnetic or other solid letters to build words, activities involving physical movement to copy letter shapes)
- make clear the importance of speaking and listening as the foundation for embarking on a systematic phonics programme and for acquiring the skills of reading and writing
- offer clear guidance on how to assess progress and use this to inform the next steps of learning
- offer guidance about adapting the programme for children with special educational needs or who have missed earlier elements.