

Primary and Early Years – Systematic Synthetic Phonics Grading Criteria

‘Providers of Initial Teacher Training (ITT) will assess trainees against the standards in a way that is **consistent with what could reasonably be expected of a trainee teacher** prior to the award of [qualified teacher status (QTS)]. Providers will need to ensure that their programmes are designed and delivered in such a way as to allow all trainees to meet these standards, as set out in the Secretary of State’s Requirements for Initial Teacher Training’.

Teachers’ Standard 3 states that **‘if teaching early reading, [teachers should] demonstrate a clear understanding of systematic synthetic phonics’**. The ITE Partnership’s preparation of trainees to teach systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) will be a key focus in full Ofsted inspections and can also be the sole subject of a focused inspection.

This document is designed to support trainees, mentors and link tutors in identifying trainees’ progress in developing their ability to effectively teach SSP as part of the English curriculum. It can do this in several ways:

- It gives trainees a clear indication of the elements involved in outstanding SSP teaching and will support them in identifying targets and next steps. Trainees are encouraged to use it as an ongoing tracking document which they can highlight and annotate as part of their evidence that they are working towards or have met the Teachers’ Standard for SSP.
- It can be used by mentors and link tutors to support lesson observations of SSP and spelling. The ‘planning’, ‘teaching’ and ‘assessment and evaluation’ sections can be used to identify a grade for the lesson and to inform SSP-specific feedback. The ‘outstanding’ grade descriptors often refer to trainees’ teaching **across the curriculum** and not just in their phonics or spelling teaching. Whenever possible, lesson observation grades and feedback should take into account evidence from the trainee’s files, discussion with the class teacher and mentor and discussion with the trainee – this becomes vital when a trainee is demonstrating outstanding performance.
- It can be used by mentors and others involved in training to support discussion with trainees around their developing subject knowledge. Here again it will support the ongoing target setting and action planning process.
- It can be used by mentors to identify the summative grade for SSP that is reported on Report Form B at the end of a Professional Practice.

As with the standard Grading Criteria, when making overall judgements of trainee achievements against the Teachers’ Standards, the following should **all** be taken into consideration:

- **Observations of the trainee in school**
- **Dialogue with the trainee** about their performance and future development
- **Evidence gathered by the trainee** and accompanying relevant documentation (such as the Additional Standards Evidence File, Teaching Files etc.)
- **Progress made by the trainee as evidenced with their Individual Training Plan**, audit(s) of subject knowledge and experience against National Priorities.

These final judgements on trainees’ progress should be made as part of a collaborative process involving the mentor, class teacher, trainee and link tutor during which all the evidence identified above is considered

Grade 1- Outstanding <i>Meeting the standards at a high level</i>	Grade 2 – Good <i>Meeting the standards at a good level</i>	Grade 3 – Satisfactory <i>Meeting the standards at a satisfactory level 3W & 3M</i>		Grade 4- Inadequate <i>Failing to meet the standards</i>
		Grade 3M	Grade 3W	
Subject Knowledge (<i>per se</i>)				
When teaching in the EYFS and throughout the early phases of phonics programmes trainees consistently plan and deliver activities and experiences to support children’s on-going phonological development including their ability to blend and segment orally. These will be matched to the children’s needs and interests and trainees will identify how they will be assessed. Some of these experiences may be planned as part of continuous provision and all will be ‘playful’.	When teaching in the EYFS and throughout the early phases of phonics programmes trainees begin to plan activities and experiences to support children’s on-going phonological development including their ability to blend and segment orally. Some of these experiences may be planned as part of continuous provision and all will be ‘playful’.	When teaching in the EYFS and throughout the early phases of phonics programmes trainees demonstrate an understanding of the importance of supporting children’s on-going phonological development including their ability to blend and segment orally.	When teaching in the EYFS and throughout the early phases of phonics programmes trainees engage appropriately with children involved in phonological awareness activities and experiences provided by the practitioner. With support trainees are able to recognise the importance of these activities and experiences in children’s early literacy development.	When teaching in the EYFS and throughout the early phases of phonics programmes trainees are not able to engage appropriately with children involved in phonological awareness activities and experiences provided by the practitioner.
In discussion or through their teaching across the curriculum they demonstrate the ability to apply their understanding of a systematic, synthetic approach to phonics in their support of children’s developing application of reading and writing skills. They demonstrate that they know how a synthetic approach to phonics compares to an analytical approach.	In discussion or through their teaching they demonstrate a sound understanding of a systematic, synthetic approach to teaching phonics for early reading.	They are able to describe the features of a systematic, synthetic approach to teaching phonics for early reading.	With some support they are able to identify the features of a systematic, synthetic approach to teaching phonics for early reading.	They do not demonstrate any ability to identify the features of a systematic, synthetic approach to teaching phonics for early reading.

<p>They are able to use the Simple View of Reading to support them in the assess / plan / teach / assess cycle.</p>	<p>They are able to relate the Simple View of Reading to their planning decisions for reading.</p>	<p>They are able to describe the Simple View of Reading.</p>	<p>With some support they are able to describe the Simple View of Reading.</p>	<p>They do not demonstrate any awareness of the Simple View of Reading.</p>
<p>They have a very good understanding of the core criteria for phonics programmes and of the alphabetic code which underpins these. They can identify how schemes that they have used meet these criteria. They are aware of the features of the most frequently used SSP programmes.</p>	<p>They demonstrate some understanding of the core criteria for phonics programmes and of the alphabetic code which underpins these. They are aware of the most frequently used SSP programmes.</p>	<p>They are aware of the most frequently used SSP programmes and, following an induction from the most appropriate school-based colleague, are able to engage with the training / teachers' materials for programmes they use during their professional practices.</p>	<p>Following an induction and with continued support they are able to engage with the training / teachers' materials for programmes they use during their professional practices.</p>	<p>They do not engage with an induction into the SSP programme used in their professional practice school or setting and do not demonstrate any understanding of the need to engage with the materials.</p>
<p>In their phonics and spelling teaching they make the features of the alphabetic code explicit to the children and they take opportunities to support children in applying this knowledge and understanding in their use of literacy skills across the curriculum.</p>	<p>Their phonics and spelling planning and teaching demonstrates a sound understanding of the features of the alphabetic code.</p>	<p>They are able to describe the features of the alphabetic code i.e.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a phoneme is represented by a grapheme; • a grapheme can be one or more letters (<i>digraphs / trigraphs / quadrigraphs</i>); • one grapheme can represent more than one phoneme (<i>e.g. s in 'snow' and in 'is'</i>); • one phoneme can be represented by more than one grapheme (<i>e.g. the 'or' sound in 'pour' / 'sore' / 'moor' / 'jaw'</i>) 	<p>With support from an experienced teacher they are able to demonstrate some understanding of the features of the alphabetic code.</p>	<p>They demonstrate no understanding of the features of the alphabetic code.</p>

<p>In their teaching they refer the children to phonics as their first approach to reading and spelling even if a word is not completely phonically regular. They model effective use of this strategy for the children in their teaching across the curriculum.</p>	<p>They demonstrate an understanding that they should ensure children apply phonic knowledge and skills as their first approach to reading and spelling even if a word is not completely phonically regular. This is evident in their phonics teaching and also through their shared and guided reading and writing work.</p>	<p>In their teaching or through discussion they demonstrate an understanding that they should ensure children apply phonic knowledge and skills as their first approach to reading and spelling even if a word is not completely phonically regular.</p>	<p>With support they begin to understand that they should ensure children apply phonic knowledge and skills as their first approach to reading and spelling even if a word is not completely phonically regular.</p>	<p>They do not know or understand the importance of ensuring that children apply phonic knowledge and skills as their first approach to reading and spelling.</p>
<p>Trainees recognise the impact of regional or local accents on children's enunciation of phonemes. They are able to identify the differences in enunciation between the different accents represented in their class, including their own and they confidently discuss these with the children in their phonics or spelling teaching.</p>	<p>Trainees recognise the impact of regional or local accents on children's enunciation of phonemes. They are able to identify the differences in enunciation between the different accents represented in their class, including their own.</p>	<p>Trainees are aware of the impact of regional or local accents on children's enunciation of phonemes.</p>	<p>With some support trainees become increasingly aware of the impact of regional or local accents on children's enunciation of phonemes.</p>	<p>Trainees are aware of differences in accents represented in their class, including their own, but they are not yet aware of the impact of this on phonics or spelling.</p>

Planning				
They are successful in planning sequences of in-depth, very well structured phonics or spelling sessions which demonstrate progression and pace.	They are very secure in independently planning sequences of well-structured phonics or spelling sessions that demonstrate progression and build on children's previous learning. Phonics session plans demonstrate good subject knowledge in SSP and spelling session plans demonstrate good subject knowledge of spelling rules, morphology and etymology.	<p>If teaching phonics from Phase 2 onwards they can independently plan and teach a structured phonics session using the four elements: <i>revisit / review, teach, practise and apply.</i></p> <p>If teaching spelling they can plan a session which follows a similar pattern and which provides opportunities for children to investigate spelling rules and patterns.</p>	<p>If teaching phonics from Phase 2 onwards they can plan and teach a structured phonics session using the four elements: <i>revisit / review, teach, practise and apply.</i></p> <p>If teaching spelling with support they can plan a spelling session which follows a similar pattern and which provides opportunities for children to investigate spelling rules and patterns.</p>	They do not show an awareness of an appropriate structure for a successful phonics or spelling session.
In discussion, through their planning or through their teaching they demonstrate the ability to appropriately differentiate for children's individual needs in phonics or spelling.	In discussion, through their planning or through their teaching they demonstrate that they are aware of the need to appropriately differentiate for children's individual needs during phonics or spelling sessions.	In discussion they recognise when an activity or experience has not been appropriately differentiated for certain children's needs. They are able to make suggestions for how this might be achieved.	With some support they are able to recognise when an activity or experience has not been appropriately differentiated for certain children's needs.	They do not understand the need to differentiate activities and experiences.

Teaching				
In their teaching across the whole curriculum they consistently enunciate phonemes correctly taking every opportunity to support children's on-going literacy development.	In their teaching across the English curriculum they consistently enunciate phonemes correctly for all GPCs to ensure that they support children's reading and writing development.	In their phonics and spelling teaching they consistently enunciate phonemes correctly for all GPCs appropriate to the phase they are teaching (<i>including consonant digraphs and trigraphs / vowel digraphs etc.</i>)	In their phonics teaching they usually enunciate phonemes correctly for all GPCs appropriate to the phase they are teaching (<i>including consonant digraphs and trigraphs / vowel digraphs etc.</i>)	They incorrectly enunciate phonemes, adding a schwa. They do not recognise the problem that this causes for early readers and spellers.
In their teaching across the curriculum they make explicit reference to the skills of blending and segmenting and to the children's knowledge of GPCs so that children are supported in making the link between their phonics learning and its application to their reading and writing.	In their phonics teaching they explicitly teach children that 'blending' is the skill used for reading and that 'segmenting' is the skill used for spelling and that the two processes involved are reversible.	Their phonics teaching demonstrates that they understand that 'blending' is the skill used for reading and that 'segmenting' is the skill used for spelling and that the two processes involved are reversible.	In discussion they demonstrate a developing understanding of 'blending' as the skill used for reading and 'segmenting' as the skill used for spelling and that the two processes involved are reversible.	They do not know or understand that 'blending' is the skill used for reading and that 'segmenting' is the skill used for spelling and that the two processes involved are reversible.
They can teach grapheme / phoneme correspondences (GPCs) and tricky words that are not phonically decodable.			With support from an experienced teacher they can teach grapheme / phoneme correspondences (GPCs) and tricky words that are not phonically decodable.	They cannot teach grapheme / phoneme correspondences (GPCs) and tricky words that are not phonically decodable.
In their English teaching generally and in their teaching across the curriculum they consistently use letter names when referring to graphemes and they also ensure that the children do so.	In their teaching of phonics and spelling they consistently use letter names when referring to graphemes and they ensure that the children do so.	Their teaching of phonics and spelling demonstrates that they understand the need to use letter names when referring to graphemes. They may not always consistently apply that knowledge in their teaching of phonics or spelling or make the importance of this explicit to the children.	In discussion they demonstrate that they have an understanding of the importance of using letter names when referring to graphemes. This may not immediately transfer into their teaching of phonics or spelling.	They do not know about or understand the need to use letter names when referring to graphemes and spelling in their teaching of phonics or spelling

<p>They know when and how to adapt resources to enable children to learn effectively. Resources are consistently appropriate for the age, phase and focus of the session.</p>	<p>In their phonics or spelling teaching they use engaging resources which are appropriate to the strengths, needs and interests of all children.</p>	<p>They use a limited range of resources appropriate to the phase of their learners within the delivery of phonics or spelling sessions. <i>E.g. actions, picture prompts, flash cards, puppets, songs, rhymes, interactive whiteboard files and electronic resources.</i></p>	<p>They are aware of a range of resources that can be used within the delivery of phonics and spelling sessions and with support they have begun to develop the skills needed to use them effectively.</p>	<p>They are aware of a limited range of resources that can be used within the delivery of phonics sessions.</p>
<p>They understand and consistently use appropriate and highly effective multi-sensory teaching methods which are engaging, interesting and firmly focused on intensifying the learning associated with the session's phonic or spelling goal.</p>	<p>In their teaching they use multi-sensory teaching methods to engage and focus learning associated with the phonic or spelling learning goal. In discussion they recognise when an activity has been over-elaborate and is only tenuously linked to the phonic or spelling learning goal.</p>	<p>They are able to plan and use some interactive teaching and learning strategies in phonics and spelling sessions.</p>	<p>With some support they are able to plan and use some interactive teaching and learning strategies in phonics and spelling sessions.</p>	<p>They are not able to plan and use interactive teaching and learning strategies in phonics and spelling sessions and do not understand the need to engage learners in those ways.</p>
<p>In discussion and/or in their teaching across the curriculum and in the classroom literacy environment they use phonically decodable texts when appropriate. <i>E.g. labels on displays; signs and other environmental print in role play areas or continuous provision; on instructions for games and activities.</i></p>	<p>Their phonics teaching always provides the children with phonically decodable texts which are appropriate to the children's level of development in phonics as part of the session. These may be taken from the published scheme in use in the school or setting or the trainee may have written them themselves.</p>	<p>Their planning for and teaching of phonics demonstrates an understanding of the need to present children with phonically decodable texts appropriate to the children's current phonic knowledge so that they are able to apply that knowledge and their understanding and skill in a meaningful context. These may be taken from the published scheme in use in the school or setting or the trainee may have written them themselves.</p>	<p>In discussion they demonstrate an understanding of what a 'phonically decodable' text is and of the need to provide children with these as opportunities to apply their phonics knowledge, understanding and skill.</p>	<p>They do not know or understand what a phonically decodable text is or the importance of these in providing children with opportunities to apply their phonic knowledge, understanding and skill.</p>

Assessment and Evaluation				
<p>They have a very strong understanding of the incremental progression of the SSP programme they are using and how to make accurate and productive use of assessments. Using appropriate assessment and tracking procedures they are able to identify difficulties and discuss future targets / required interventions for identified children and groups of learners.</p> <p>They are aware of the Year 1 phonics screening process and of how the data might be used.</p>	<p>They are aware of the incremental progression of the SSP programme they are using and with support can use this to track children's progress, assess for further learning and provide appropriate support.</p> <p>They are aware of the Year 1 phonics screening process.</p>	<p>They are aware of how the class teacher uses the incremental progression of the SSP programme to track children's progress, assess for further learning and provide appropriate support. The trainee is beginning to do this themselves with some support.</p> <p>They are aware of the Year 1 phonics screening process.</p>	<p>They are aware of how the class teacher uses the incremental progression of the SSP programme to track children's progress, assess for further learning and provide appropriate support.</p> <p>They are aware of the Year 1 phonics screening process.</p>	<p>They are not aware of how the class teacher uses the incremental progression of the SSP programme to track children's progress, assess for further learning and provide appropriate support.</p>
Spelling				
<p>Their teaching of spelling is consistently and clearly underpinned by secure subject knowledge of morphology and etymology. In their teaching across the curriculum they take opportunities to reinforce the children's spelling knowledge and understanding and to build their confidence as spellers.</p>	<p>Their teaching of spelling is usually underpinned by secure subject knowledge of morphology and etymology. They thoroughly research their planning for spelling and are aware of how to check and secure their subject knowledge when necessary.</p>	<p>When planning for, teaching and assessing spelling at Phase 6 and into KS2 they demonstrate some knowledge and understanding of morphology and etymology and the role they play in children developing successful spelling strategies.</p>	<p>When working at Phase 6 and throughout KS2 they demonstrate in discussion some awareness of morphemes and etymology and the role they play in children learning to spell accurately. They take on feedback they are given and take responsibility for addressing the issues in their subject knowledge through further study. They seek guidance with their planning for spelling.</p>	<p>They do not demonstrate any understanding of the importance of their own subject knowledge around spelling strategies, morphology and etymology.</p>

Etymology – the study of the sources and development of words

Morphology - the study of the structure of words e.g. prefixes / suffixes

Schwa - the most common sound in English. It is a weak, unstressed sound and it occurs in many words. E.g. in 'brother'. Successful SSP teaching requires that phonemes are pronounced as 'pure' sounds and so 'm' would be pronounced 'mmmmmmm' rather than as 'muh'. This BBC website has lots of useful information about pronunciation which will support trainees in developing their enunciation. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/grammar/pron/>

GPCs – Grapheme / Phoneme Correspondences

Systematic Synthetic Phonics – Core Criteria

The programme should:

- present high quality systematic, synthetic phonic work as the prime approach to decoding print, i.e. a phonics 'first and fast' approach (see note 1)
- enable children to start learning phonic knowledge and skills using a systematic, synthetic programme by the age of five, with the expectation that they will be fluent readers having secured word recognition skills by the end of key stage one (see note 2)
- be designed for the teaching of discrete, daily sessions progressing from simple to more complex phonic knowledge and skills and covering the major grapheme/phoneme correspondences (see note 3)
- enable children's progress to be assessed (see note 4)
- use a multi-sensory approach so that children learn variously from simultaneous visual, auditory and kinaesthetic activities which are designed to secure essential phonic knowledge and skills (see note 5)
- demonstrate that phonemes should be blended, in order, from left to right, 'all through the word' for reading
- demonstrate how words can be segmented into their constituent phonemes for spelling and that this is the reverse of blending phonemes to read words
- ensure children apply phonic knowledge and skills as their first approach to reading and spelling even if a word is not completely phonically regular
- ensure that children are taught high frequency words that do not conform completely to grapheme/phoneme correspondence rules
- provide fidelity to the teaching framework for the duration of the programme, to ensure that these irregular words are fully learnt (see note 6)
- ensure that as pupils move through the early stages of acquiring phonics, they are invited to practise by reading texts which are entirely decodable for them, so that they experience success and learn to rely on phonemic strategies (see note 7).

Explanatory notes

1. Phonic work is best understood as a body of knowledge and skills about how the alphabet works, rather than one of a range of optional 'methods' or 'strategies' for teaching children how to read. For example, phonic programmes should not encourage children to guess words from non-phonetic clues such as pictures before applying phonic knowledge and skills. High quality systematic, synthetic phonic work will make sure that children learn:

- grapheme/phoneme (letter/sound) correspondences (the alphabetic principle) in a clearly defined, incremental sequence;
- to apply the highly important skill of blending (synthesising) phonemes, in order, all through a word to read it;
- to apply the skills of segmenting words into their constituent phonemes to spell; and that
- blending and segmenting are reversible processes.

2. Teachers will make principled, professional judgements about when to start on a systematic, synthetic programme of phonic work but it is reasonable to expect that the great majority of children will be capable of, and benefit from doing so by the age of five. It is equally important for the programme to be designed so that children become fluent readers having secured word recognition skills by the end of key stage one.

3. The programme should introduce a defined initial group of consonants and vowels, enabling children, early on, to read and spell many simple CVC words.

4. If the programme is high quality, systematic and synthetic it will, by design, map incremental progression in phonic knowledge and skills. It should therefore enable teachers to: track children's progress; assess for further learning and identify incipient difficulties, so that appropriate support can be provided.

5. Multi-sensory activities should be interesting and engaging but firmly focused on intensifying the learning associated with its phonic goal. They should avoid taking children down a circuitous route only tenuously linked to the goal. This means avoiding over-elaborate activities that are difficult to manage and take too long to complete, thus distracting the children from concentrating on the learning goal.

6. The programme should not neglect engaging and helpful approaches to the more challenging levels where children have to distinguish between phonically irregular graphemes and phonemes.

7. It is important that texts are of the appropriate level for children to apply and practise the phonic knowledge and skills that they have learnt. Children should not be expected to use strategies such as whole-word recognition and/or cues from context, grammar, or pictures.