

## DfE Validation of Systematic Synthetic Phonics (SSP) Programmes, 2021

Validation relates to programmes that provides all that is essential to teach SSP to children in Reception and Key Stage 1 years of mainstream primary schools, up to or beyond the standards expected by the National Curriculum and provides sufficient support for them to become fluent readers.

**There is currently no validation scheme for pupils with moderate to severe and complex needs in mainstream or special school and specialist provisions.**

### Core Criteria for R-Y2 Programmes in Mainstream Schools

The Phonics for SEN programme fulfils all criteria (below) with the exception of no. 3 (see note in red) and is fully complaint with the DfE's Reading Framework: teaching the foundations of literacy 2022.

The core criteria say that the programme should:

1. constitute a complete SSP programme, as defined above; providing fidelity to its teaching framework for the duration of the programme.
  2. present systematic, synthetic phonic work as the prime approach to decoding print.
  3. enable children to start learning phonic knowledge and skills early in Reception and provide a structured route for most children to meet or exceed the expected standard in the Year One (Y1) Phonics Screening Check and all National Curriculum expectations for word reading through decoding by the end of Key Stage 1.
- Note that Phonics for SEN was written as a complete SSP to be used as initial instruction for **pupils with moderate to severe and complex needs in any setting**. The age at which pupils might begin instruction and the pace at which they might progress through a programme cannot be specifically designed as it is dependent on the individual's profile of needs. For pupils with complex SEND, it is not appropriate to use generic age-related parameters for instruction.*
4. be designed for daily teaching sessions and teach the main grapheme-phoneme correspondences of English (the alphabetic principle) in a clearly defined, incremental sequence.
  5. begin by introducing a defined group of grapheme-phoneme correspondences that enable children to read and spell many words early on.
  6. progress from simple to more complex phonic knowledge and skills, cumulatively covering all the major grapheme-phoneme correspondences in English.
  7. teach children to read printed words by identifying and blending (synthesising) individual phonemes, from left to right all through the word.
  8. teach children to apply the skill of segmenting spoken words into their constituent phonemes for spelling and that this is the reverse of blending phonemes to read words.
  9. provide opportunity for children to practise and apply known phoneme-grapheme correspondences for spelling through dictation of sounds, words and sentences.
  10. ensure that children are taught to decode and spell common exception words (sometimes called 'tricky' words), appropriate to their level of progress in the programme.

11. provide resources that support the teaching of lower-case and capital letters correctly, with clear start and finish points. The programme should move children on by teaching them to write words made up of learned GPCs, followed by simple sentences composed from such words as well as any common exception words ('tricky words') learned.
12. be built around direct teaching sessions, with extensive teacher-child interaction and involve a multi-sensory approach. The programme should include guidance on how direct teaching sessions can be adapted for online delivery (live or recorded).
13. provide resources to enable teachers to deliver the programme effectively including sufficient decodable reading material to ensure that, as children move through the early stages of acquiring phonic knowledge and skills, they can practise by reading texts closely matched to their level of phonic attainment, that do not require them to use alternative strategies to read unknown words.
14. include guidance and resources to ensure children practise and apply the core phonics they have been taught<sup>1</sup>.
15. enable children's progress to be assessed and highlight the ways in which the programme meets the needs of those who are at risk of falling behind, including the lowest attaining 20% of children.
16. provide full guidance for teachers to support the effective delivery of the programme and appropriate, programme-specific training either directly, through appointed agents or remotely; with assurances that there is sufficient capacity to do so and that those delivering this training will have appropriately high levels of expertise and relevant experience.

---

1