Phonics Policy

**Manchester Vocational and Learning Academy**

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| **Approved by:** | Linda Guest |  |
| **Last reviewed on:** | 1st September 2025 | |
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**Introduction**Pupils who are unable to read are held back in every area of their education. At Manchester Vocational and Learning Academy we understand the need to make reading a priority and offer support to those pupils who are behind with their reading.

Phonics is taught in most primary schools and so many of our students have a good grasp of this when they join our school. However, others still need support – for examples those who have missed significant amounts of schooling, have SEND that might impact on their literacy skills or who speak English as an Additional Language. For this reason, we have decided to implement a phonics policy to ensure that no student is left behind with their reading.

**Intent:**

**Our Approach to Phonics**  
Teaching children to read is an essential part of their learning. Reading is a skill that helps to develop vocabulary and improve understanding of words. In synthetic phonics lessons, students learn the relationship between letters and sounds. Teaching them to recognise the sounds each letter makes and how to put them together, enables them to read. It also helps with spelling as they learn how to break up words into sounds, in order to spell them. The idea that surrounds synthetic phonics is that once they are comfortable with the letters and sounds that make up words, students should even be able to read ‘nonsense’ words that don’t exist in the English language.

**Aims and Objectives:**

* To establish a cohesive approach to teaching phonics for those students who require this.
* To develop a whole-school approach to ensure that the pupils who need support with phonics are identified and supported quickly.
* To ensure that systematic synthetic phonics (following the Twinkl Phonics programme) is the approach used to help pupils who need support with their reading and spelling.
* To ensure students learn to read and write all 44 graphemes in the English language.
* To ensure students have specific strategies to identify and decode common exception words (tricky words).
* To have robust assessment procedures to check progress and identify pupils in need of intervention.
* For pupils to apply their phonic knowledge in their reading and writing across the whole curriculum.
* For pupils to develop a love of reading and enjoy reading for pleasure confidently across a range of genres.
* To provide consistent, high-quality phonics teaching for those students that still need this which ensures all students have a strong foundation upon which to tackle the complex processes of reading and writing.
* To ensure that the teaching of synthetic phonics is systematic and progressive for those pupils who still require this.
* To ensure that those students needing interventions to support phonetic knowledge and understanding receive this support.
* To ensure that students have strong phonetic knowledge, understanding and skills so that they can decode words confidently and engage with higher-order reading and writing skills.

**Implementation:**

**What Is Phonics?**   
Phonics is a way of teaching students how to read and write. It helps students hear, identify and use different sounds that distinguish one word from another in the English language. The Department of Education establishes the core criteria for effective systematic synthetic phonics teaching programmes. Using phonics programmes, students are taught to read and write using phonics, which is by directly linking phonemes (sounds in words) and graphemes (the symbols used to represent them).

In the UK, phonics for students is an important feature of the curriculum. Students learn phonics through a curriculum scheme such as Twinkl Phonics. Phonics is considered the best way to teach students to read.

**How We Deliver Our Phonics Teaching**   
We use Twinkl Phonics as our systematic, synthetic phonics programme (SSP). It is high quality and robust in its purpose. With a clear, structured progression through the programme, it allows all of our pupils to meet or exceed the expected standard.

The Twinkl Phonics approach combines rigorous progression with engaging learning materials. We believe that students learn best when they are enjoying their learning and that this comes from a mix of bright, fun and engaging lesson resources within a clear and systematic approach that builds on student’s skills daily.

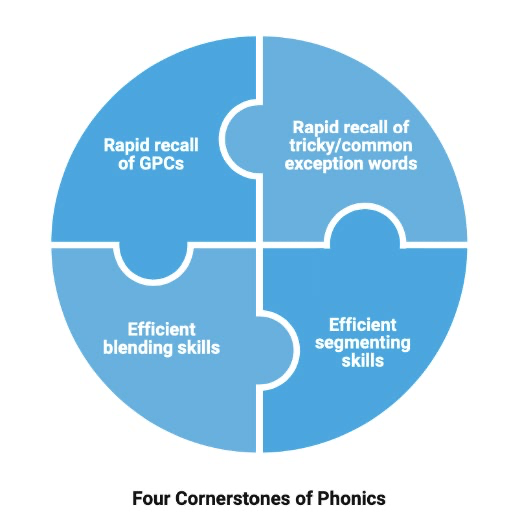
The structure of every Twinkl Phonics lesson follows this familiar five-part structure to ensure that the four cornerstones of phonics are covered. During our phonics lessons, students will repeat the elements from the four cornerstones of phonics to ensure that they have rapid and automatic recall of grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) and tricky/common exception words; each day, they will experience blending and segmenting activities to allow regular practice of these core skills.

**Ensuring that staff are appropriately skilled**  
All staff are given basic training about phonics as part of the annual CPD programme. This will enable them to identify any students who are experiencing problems with their reading and refer these students for additional interventions.

Some staff will be trained to a higher standard to ensure that they can deliver specific phonics interventions. This is done via the Twinkl phonics programme.

**Each phonics session follows the five-part structure:**

* 1. Students review previously taught GPCs and tricky/common exception words.
  2. New GPC and tricky/common exception words.
  3. Blend and segment words using the new GPCs.
  4. Read or write a caption or sentence using taught GPCs and tricky/ common exception words.
  5. Assess student’s learning against criteria and create an action plan.



Stories are used to provide a stimulus and context for phonics teaching in our Twinkl Phonics lessons. The story content also integrates games to practise the skills taught. Our phonics lessons are also supported by decodable mini books, which are part of our core provision, where students can apply the skills they have learnt in their phonics lessons. As part of our wider SSP provision, there are also follow-up activities that the students can complete independently, in pairs or in groups that relate to the day’s learning.

In addition, we use actions to help the students remember phonemes; this kinaesthetic, visual and auditory approach helps the students to retain the phonemes and supports students with SEND. Decodable reading books are also provided, matched to the student’s phonic level through the use of Rhino Readers and other books aimed at reluctant readers. We use both individual and guided reading to teach reading alongside phonics. We also use a mix of eBooks and physical books.

Appropriate home support is given to students who would benefit from this. This support will be tailored to the need of the individual and may include parent information sheets, home learning booklets, exercise sheets etc. This helps to consolidate what has been taught in school and encourages a cohesive whole-school approach.

Students will be regularly assessed to ensure they are receiving phonics teaching at the correct level.

Throughout Level 1, learners develop the knowledge, skills and understanding to use and discriminate between auditory, environmental and instrumental sounds through 7 Aspects. Level 1 underpins learning throughout the teaching of Levels 2-6.

**By the end of Level 1, students will have had opportunities to:**

* listen attentively;
* enlarge their vocabulary;
* speak confidently to adults and other students;
* discriminate different sounds including phonemes;
* reproduce audibly the phonemes they hear in words;
* orally segment words into phonemes.

**The purpose of Level 2 is to:**

* teach the first 19 most commonly used letters and the sounds they make;
* move students on from oral blending and segmenting to blending and segmenting with letters;
* introduce some tricky words for reading.

**Before starting this Level, students:**

* will have had an experience of a wide range of listening activities including stories, rhymes and musical activities;
* can distinguish between different sounds, including speech sounds;
* may be able to orally blend and segment words;
* may be able to identify some rhyming words.

**By the end of Level 2, students will have had opportunities to:**

* identify the phoneme when shown any Level 2 grapheme;
* identify any Level 2 grapheme when they hear the phoneme;
* orally blend and segment CVC words;
* blend sounds to read VC words, such as, ‘if’, ‘am’, ‘on’ and ‘up’;
* segment VC words into their sounds to spell them;
* read the tricky words: the, to, I, no, go.

**The purpose of Level 3 is to:**

* introduce another 25 graphemes, including consonant digraphs, vowel digraphs and trigraphs so that students can represent 42 phonemes with a grapheme;
* continue to practise CVC blending and segmentation;
* apply their knowledge of blending and segmenting to reading and spelling simple two-syllable words and captions.

**Before starting this Level, students:**

* recognise Level 2 GPCs;
* orally blend and segment CVC words as well as being able to blend and segment to read and spell CVC words and nonsense words;
* read the tricky words - the, to, I, no, go.

**By the end of Level 3, students will have had opportunities to:**

* say the phoneme when shown all or most Level 2 and Level 3 graphemes;
* find all or most Level 2 and Level 3 graphemes, from a display, when given the phoneme;
* blend and read CVC words (single-syllable words consisting of Level 2 and Level 3 graphemes);
* segment and make a phonetically plausible attempt at spelling CVC words (single-syllable words consisting of Level 2 and Level 3 graphemes);
* read the tricky words - he, she, we, me, be, was, my, you, here, they, all, are & spell the tricky words - the, to, I, no, go;
* write each letter correctly when following a model.

**The purpose of Level 4 is to:**

* consolidate students’ knowledge of graphemes in reading and spelling words, especially digraphs and trigraphs;
* introduce words with adjacent consonants - CVCC, CCVC, CCVCC, CCCVC, CVCCC, CCCVCC, CCVCCC;
* learn polysyllabic words and learn to read and spell some more tricky words.

**Before starting this Level, students:**

* recognise Level 2 and 3 GPCs;
* blend and read CVC words;
* segment and make a phonetically plausible attempt at spelling single-syllable CVC words;
* read the tricky words - he, she, we, me, be, was, my, you, here, they, all, are & spell the tricky words - the, to, I, no, go.

**By the end of Level 4, students will have had opportunities to:**

* give the phoneme when shown any Level 2 or Level 3 grapheme;
* find any Level 2 or Level 3 grapheme when given the phoneme;
* blend and read words containing adjacent consonants as well as segment and spell words containing adjacent consonants;
* read the tricky words - some, one, said, come, do, so, were, when, have, there, out, like, little, what & spell the tricky words - he, she, we, me, be, was, my, you, here, they, all, are;
* write each letter, usually using the correct formation;
* orally segment words into phonemes. **1**

**The purpose of Level 5 is to:**

* learn alternative graphemes for known phonemes;
* learn alternative pronunciations of known graphemes;
* introduce split digraphs;
* introduce suffixes and prefixes;
* learn to read and spell more common exception words.

**Before starting this Level, students:**

* recognise Level 2 and 3 GPCs;
* blend to read and segment to spell words containing adjacent consonants;
* read tricky words - some, one, said, come, do, so, were, when, have, there, out, like, little, what;
* spell tricky words - he, she, we, me, be, was, my, you, here, they, all, are;
* write each letter, usually correctly.

**By the end of Level 5, students will have had opportunities to:**

* give the phoneme, when shown any grapheme that has been taught;
* for any given phoneme, write the common graphemes;
* apply phonics knowledge and skills as the primary approach to reading and spelling unfamiliar words that are not completely decodable;
* read and spell phonically decodable two-syllable and three-syllable words;
* read automatically all taught tricky and common exception words;
* accurately spell all the Level 2, 3 and 4 tricky words and most of the common exception words for reading;
* form each letter correctly;
* use alternative ways of pronouncing and representing the long vowel phonemes. **2**

**The purpose of Level 6 is to:**

* develop student’s knowledge of spelling patterns and best-guess grapheme selection;
* learn more alternative graphemes for known phonemes;
* learn more alternative pronunciations for known graphemes;
* introduce the /zh/ phoneme;
* develop an understanding of the spelling rules for adding suffixes and prefixes;
* introduce homophones/near homophones and contractions;
* learn to spell more common exception words;
* develop their understanding of grammar rules;
* learn effective writing techniques including editing and proofreading and learn more strategies to read and write independently.

**Before starting this Level, students:**

* give the phoneme, when shown any grapheme that has been taught;
* for any given phoneme, write the common graphemes;
* apply phonics knowledge and skills, as the primary approach to reading and spelling unfamiliar words that are not completely decodable;
* read and spell phonically decodable two-syllable and three-syllable words;
* sight-read all taught tricky and common exception words;
* accurately spell all the Level 2, 3 and 4 tricky words and most of the common exception words for reading;
* form each letter correctly;
* use alternative ways of pronouncing and representing the long vowel phonemes.

**By the end of Level 6, students will have had opportunities to:**

* read accurately most words of two or more syllables;
* read most words containing common suffixes;
* read most common exception words;
* read most words accurately, in age-appropriate books, without overt sounding and blending, fluent enough to allow them to focus on their understanding rather than on decoding individual words;
* sound out most unfamiliar words accurately, without undue hesitation;
* segment spoken words into phonemes and represent these by graphemes, spelling many of these words correctly and making phonetically plausible attempts at others;
* spell most common exception words correctly.

Students identified as not making the expected progress will be identified early and will receive additional phonics interventions either through same-day interventions or in small focus groups following an assessment of their needs.

If, through assessment and observation, staff have decided that a child needs further phonics intervention, additional assessments and probes will be used to identify specific areas of concern. Twinkl materials will then be used to close the gap. Consideration will also be given as to whether these students would be best supported through a Support Plan (see SEND Policy).

**Impact:**

**Assessment**

Sometimes students are very effective at finding coping strategies which mask their reading difficulties. For this reason, we do not rely on one method for identifying pupils who are experiencing difficulties. Students are assessed on entry and monitored throughout their time at the school.

All pupils who are going to remain at the school beyond a two week step out programme are given a baseline assessment using the NGRT tests. For pupils who are attending a step-out placement, information about reading ability it obtained from the referring school.

**Inclusion/ Intervention**

**Supporting the Lowest Achievers**   
Regular assessment is vital to ensure the early identification of students who may need us to provide them with extra support. Ideally, these students will take part in regular, highly structured interventions, which will normally include recapping or relearning missing GPCs and tricky/common exception words and practising blending and segmenting skills. As soon as we identify any child who is struggling to succeed in phonics, the provision will be put into place to close the gap.

**Extending and Challenging Fast Learners**Regular assessment is also vital to ensuring the early identification of students who may need us to challenge them further, either through extension activities or during interventions. Our school library contains a range of books to cater for the needs and interests of all students,

**Rhino Readers Decodable Books**   
We use online Rhino Readers reading books and decodable phonics books aimed at older reluctant readers to support students with lower ability in their reading. To make sure students are well prepared to read some of these books contain a ‘before reading’ page which allows students to rehearse the grapheme-phoneme correspondences and tricky/common exception words they will meet in the text. The sound cards match the Twinkl Phonics mats, providing familiarity, and there are also blending practice activities, containing focus words with sound buttons.

The ‘after reading’ activities are designed to encourage discussion, recall, sequencing, comprehension and inference at a level appropriate to the text. There are also ‘Rhino Challenges’, with ideas for linked artwork, discussion, drama, craft, investigation - there’s something for everyone to add to the experience and help students make links to their own experiences. Students will have access to these books using the Rhino Readers app and as physical books sent home daily.

**Supporting materials (can be accessed via the Twinkl website)**

Twinkl Phonics SSP Programme Handbook <https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/twinkl-phonics-handbook-t-e-2552975>   
  
Twinkl Phonics Whole Scheme Overview Plan <https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/twinkl-phonics-whole-scheme-overview-plan-tf-l-224>   
  
Level 1 Overview <https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/level-1-overview-plan-twinkl-phonics-t-e-2549931>  
  
Level 2 Overview <https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/t-l-526610-level-2-overview-plan-twinkl-phonics>   
  
Level 3 Overview <https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/tf-l-202-level-3-overview-plan>  
  
Level 4 Overview <https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/t-l-526910-level-4-overview-plan>   
  
Level 5 Overview <https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/phonics-level-5-overview-plan-t-e-2552098>   
  
Level 6 Overview <https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/level-6-overview-plan-t-e-2549426>  
  
Phonics Glossary/ Terminology <https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/t-l-5381-phonics-glossary-a-guide-for-parents>   
  
Rhino Readers Decodable Books <https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/rhino-readers-product-guide-t-e-1632820582>

**Reviewing this Policy:**   
This policy will be reviewed at least every three years. If there are significant changes to government or school policy, it might be updated more frequently.

Its implementation is seen as the responsibility of all staff. Its use and effectiveness will be supported and monitored by the phonics subject leader, on behalf of the head teacher and governors.