



**The Park Federation Trust
Hannah Ball Academy**



**Phonics Policy
2024 -2025**

Introduction

At **Hannah Ball Academy**, we are committed to ensuring that every child learns to read well and quickly. To achieve this, we have implemented the **Essential Letters and Sounds (ELS)** programme, a systematic synthetic phonics approach validated by the Department for Education.

Our school serves a diverse range of pupils from various backgrounds, with a significantly higher proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals compared to the national average. Additionally, we have an above-average percentage of pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), primarily in the area of language and communication. With 43% of our pupils identified as having English as an Additional Language (EAL), many new starters often join us from abroad, adapting to a new educational environment.

Given this context, it is essential that our approach to teaching phonics and reading is inclusive and accessible to all learners, regardless of their background or individual needs. We believe that reading is a fundamental life skill that opens doors to future opportunities. Through our commitment to the Essential Letters and Sounds programme, we aim to ensure that all children leave our school not only able to read proficiently but also with a lifelong love of reading.



At **Hannah Ball Academy**, we are committed to ensuring that all children become confident, fluent readers. Our chosen phonics programme, **Essential Letters and Sounds (ELS)**, aims to enable every pupil to read well and quickly by systematically teaching phonemes (the smallest unit of sound) and graphemes (the written representation of sounds).

Programme Overview

- **Validation:** ELS is a systematic synthetic phonics programme validated by the Department for Education in June 2021.
- **Staff Training:** All staff members are trained to deliver ELS effectively, ensuring we have an expert team of reading teachers led by our Reading/Phonics Lead.
- **Collaborative Practice:** Staff regularly meet to review and refine our teaching practises, ensuring high-quality first teaching every day.

Reading Culture

- **Central to Learning:** Reading is at the heart of our curriculum, and we instil a love of reading from the outset. Every child at our school is a reader, supported by their teachers.
- **Engagement:** We encourage continuous engagement with texts, fostering a desire to read for pleasure and an understanding of various texts, authors, and illustrators.

Phonics Instruction

- **Early Start:** Phonics instruction begins in Reception, explicitly taught every day during a dedicated slot on the timetable.

- **Integration across Curriculum:** Children apply their growing phonics knowledge throughout the day in various subjects, with ample opportunities to practice reading decodable texts matched to their phonics knowledge.

Teaching Model

- **Whole-Class Instruction:** ELS is delivered as a whole-class teaching model, ensuring all pupils have equal opportunities in learning to read.
- **Daily Support:** Children who find reading challenging receive daily targeted support from their teachers, allowing them to keep up with their peers rather than having to catch up.

Progression and Practice

- **Structured Learning:** We follow the ELS progression and sequence, allowing children to practice existing phonics knowledge while learning new grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs).
- **Decodable Texts:** ELS is supplemented with a wide range of fully decodable texts, covering both fiction and non-fiction, which are engaging and age-appropriate.
- **Home Reading:** Home reading texts are matched to each child's current phonic knowledge to reinforce learning and promote reading enjoyment.

Vocabulary Development

- **Ambitious Vocabulary:** ELS teaches relevant and ambitious vocabulary, supporting children's journey to becoming fluent and independent readers.

Teaching Strategies

- **Phonics Skills:** We teach children to:
 - **Decode:** Identify sounds within words and blend them to read fluently.
 - **Encode:** Segment sounds to write words accurately.
- **Lesson Structure:** ELS lessons are designed to provide clear expectations, allowing children to understand what is coming next and how to achieve success.

Intervention and Support

- **Proactive Support:** ELS operates on the principle that children should 'keep up' rather than 'catch up'.
- **In-Class Interventions:** Teachers provide immediate support to any child struggling with new knowledge during lessons.
- **Targeted 1:1 Support:** Where necessary, short, specific, and effective 1:1 interventions are implemented to address individual needs.

Key Stage 2 Support

- **Continued Phonics Instruction:** For pupils requiring further phonics support in Key Stage 2, daily sessions are timetabled to ensure rapid progress.