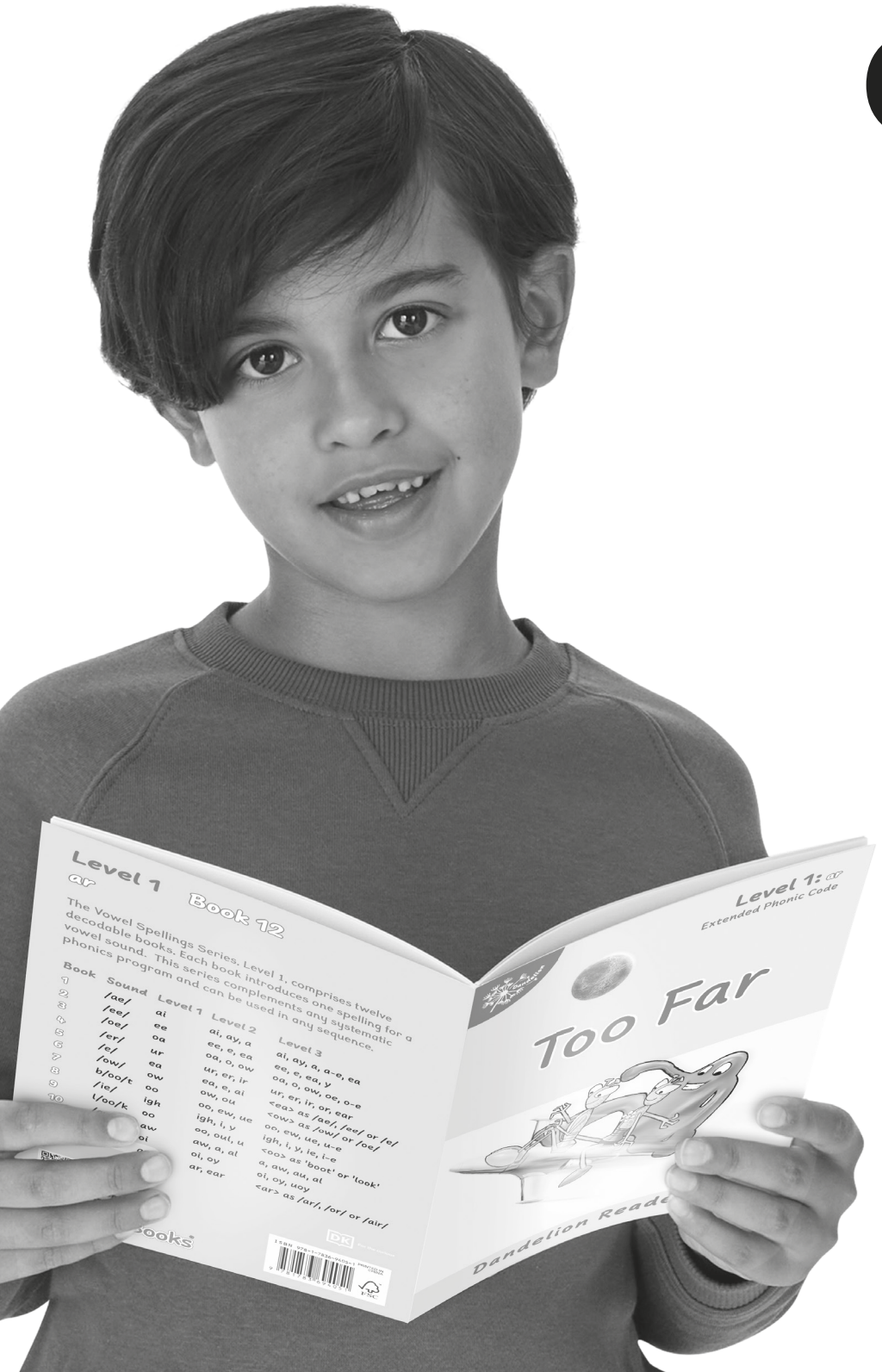
Phonics Teacher Guide

Year 1



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INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS PHONIC BOOKS?

Phonic Books specialises in publishing systematic synthetic phonic books for beginner and catch-up readers.

The company was founded in 2006 by Wendy Tweedie, Tami Reis-Frankfort and Clair Wilson, three special needs teachers passionate about teaching all children to read. Using their expertise, they set about developing phonic reading books for young children and older readers.

Following demand from customers, the range has extended from the initial 10 titles to over 300 today, and is continuing to grow. Our UK range of books caters for pupils in Reception to older readers in secondary school.

With a growing reputation for quality and effectiveness, our books are now used by schools, tutors, and parents in the UK and 40 countries around the world.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The Phonics Teacher Guide Year 1 is organised into three main parts. The first part introduces foundational concepts and prevalent teaching strategies in phonics instruction.

In the second part, the focus shifts to the practical elements of the Phonic Books programme for Year 1. It provides an overview of the programme, complementary teaching methods, a scheme of work, guidelines for lesson planning and strategies for assessment, providing teachers with the necessary tools for effective teaching.

The third part is the heart of the guide: the lesson plans for the Phonic Books programme for Year 1. The initial set of lesson plans align with the Dandelion Launchers series, a set of stories (readers) designed for beginners which is organised into 20 progressive stages. These lesson plans require the use of both the Dandelion Launchers readers and the corresponding activity books. The readers act as the instructional text, introducing new letters and sounds, while the activity books provide supplementary exercises in reading, writing, spelling and comprehension. Teachers are guided to specific pages and exercises in these resources.

Each stage in the Dandelion Launchers series is designed to build a gradual understanding of phonics, introducing new letters and sounds while reinforcing previously learned phonics and high-frequency words. It begins with sounds of the alphabet in Units 1–7, progressing to adjacent consonants and consonant digraphs in Units 8–15, then on to two-syllable words and more complex spelling patterns, tch, ve, le, and the suffixes -ed and -ing, in Units 16–20.

The second and third sets of lesson plans extend to more advanced spelling patterns. These encompass vowel spellings in the Dandelion Readers Level 1 series and split vowel spellings in the Dandelion Readers Split Vowel Spellings set.

The lesson plans are adaptable and can be taught in any order. For example: in Phonic Books, the split vowel spelling is introduced after pupils are comfortable with vowel digraphs that are not split, although some curricula introduce them earlier.

Teachers can integrate these lesson plans with different UK phonics curricula. Curriculum mapping grids are available on the Phonic Books website to align these lesson plans with their specific curriculum requirements.

ADVICE FOR TEACHERS

Decodable books, such as the Phonic Books series, are important for teaching foundational skills. These controlled texts allow the pupil to practise their phonetic knowledge and read successfully at each developmental stage. They also encourage pupils to use the most effective and reliable reading strategies for life (sounding out words).

Many teachers find they need additional resources to support pupils who are beginner and older readers. For example: pupils may face challenges with letter sounds, phonemic awareness, retaining phonics lessons, or have gaps in their vocabulary. The Phonic Books series, encompassing both decodable readers and activity books, can be used as a classroom resource in various ways: with a whole class, in reading groups, or in 1:1 reading support.

The Phonic Books website also contains many free teaching resources as well as advice for teachers. The resources include phonics infographics, teaching strategies, word lists, word chains, dictation exercises, phonic code tables, high-frequency word charts, game templates and progress trackers. The website also includes assessment tools such as reading assessments and assessment cards, alongside advice on how to use the Phonic Books series in different educational settings.

SUPPLEMENTARY RESOURCES

This teacher guide primarily focuses on the Dandelion Launchers series of decodable books and the corresponding activity books. However, Phonic Books has a wealth of parallel books and supplementary materials to help teachers with their phonics instruction. More details are provided in the programme overview section on page 19.

FOUNDATIONS OF PHONICS

WHAT IS PHONICS?

Phonics is a method of teaching reading and writing that focuses on the relationship between sounds (**phonemes**) and their spellings (**graphemes**). It involves teaching pupils to connect sounds in words with letters or groups of letters and to blend these sounds to form recognisable words.

English has a complex writing system. It has 26 letters but roughly 44 sounds (this depends on pronunciation), leading to roughly 160+ different spellings for these 44 sounds. In order to teach them in a methodical way, they have been organised according to the 44 sounds they spell. This organisation is called the **Alphabetic Code** or **Phonic Code**. Research has shown that pupils who are taught these sound–letter correspondences will learn to decode words more successfully. Decoding underpins fluency and fluency underpins reading comprehension.

Unlike languages with "transparent" writing systems like Italian and Spanish, where letters spell sounds in a simple and consistent way, English has an "opaque" writing system. Its complexity is a result of layers of adopted words from different languages and shifts in pronunciation over many years. Consequently, learning to read in English is more time-consuming, often taking years compared to the few months it might take in more phonetically consistent languages.

Where to start in phonics instruction

All phonics programmes start with the sounds of the letters of the alphabet. The Phonic Books programme starts with the simple principle of one letter corresponding to one sound. Pupils initially learn a few letters at a time, building simple words as they progress.

THE ALPHABETIC CODE abc

The **Alphabetic Code** is the framework that shows how the 44 sounds of English are represented by letters and letter combinations.

Key aspects include:

1. 26 letters are used and reused in many different combinations to represent the 44 sounds of speech.
2. A sound can be represented by 1–4 letters.
3. A sound can be spelled in numerous ways.
4. A spelling (or grapheme) can represent different sounds.

Pupils need to recognise these letter–sound relationships automatically to become fluent readers. Due to the complexity of the code, many phonics programmes will first introduce a simple part of it and later the more complex letter–sound correspondences.

CHALLENGES IN THE ALPHABETIC CODE

Navigating the complexities of the Alphabetic Code can be a daunting task, especially for pupils learning English. The Alphabetic Code is marked by a notable disparity between the sounds (phonemes) and the letters (graphemes) used to represent them. This mismatch leads to various challenges.

English uses the same letters to represent different sounds because of the mismatch between the number of letters and sounds. Because of this disparity, letters are reused to spell the extra sounds. For example, the letters 's' and 'h' together spell a completely new sound: /sh/ as in the word "**sh**ip". This is a **consonant digraph**. That wouldn't be such a problem if our Alphabetic Code were simple and straightforward – but it isn't!

Sounds spelled by 1–4 letters

Sounds in English can be spelled by 1–4 letters. In the word "cat", each letter spells one sound. In the word "chip", the consonant digraph 'ch' spells the sound /ch/. Here two letters spell one sound. In the word "night", the vowel spelling 'igh' spells one sound /ie/. Finally, in the word "dough", the four-letter spelling 'ough' spells just one sound, /oe/.

Multiple spellings for one sound

A further complication is that a sound can be spelled in different ways. For example, the sound /ae/ can be spelled in numerous ways: r**ai**n, m**ay**, c**a**m**e**, th**ey**, w**eigh**, v**ei**l, gr**ea**t, etc. Pupils need to learn these alternatives so that when they see them within words, they know how to sound them out. And when they learn to encode (spell), pupils will need to remember which alternative fits in which word. Multiple spellings for one sound are not covered in this guide.

One spelling, multiple sounds

Not only are there different ways to spell these sounds, but once learned, pupils find that some spellings can be pronounced in different ways. For example, the spelling 'ea' spells the sound /e/ in "h**ea**d", /ee/ in "m**ea**t" and /ae/ in "gr**ea**t".

These are difficult concepts to teach, and pupils need a structured system to learn them. This is why it is so important that reading instruction is taught in a systematic and structured way. When taught well, the Alphabetic Code is unlocked and pupils learn to decode and encode any word.

UNLOCKING THE ALPHABETIC CODE

Demonstrating the mechanics

We begin by illustrating the basic mechanics of the English language: reading from left to right, and understanding how individual letters and their combinations represent distinct sounds in speech.

Teaching the code

We then teach the Alphabetic Code, focusing on specific letter–sound correspondences in the English language.

Neglecting to teach the Alphabetic Code risks depriving pupils of the key to learning to read and the vast opportunities for learning and exploration it offers.

Consonant sound spellings

/j/
j	**j**et
g	**g**entle
ge	bar**ge**
dge	ju**dge**

/n/
n	**n**o
nn	pla**nn**ing
kn	**kn**ow
gn	**gn**at
pn	**pn**eumonia

/z/
z	**z**ip
zz	bu**zz**
s	i**s**
se	choo**se**
ze	snoo**ze**
x	**x**ylophone

/r/
r	**r**at
wr	**wr**ite
rr	ca**rr**y
rh	**rh**ino

/h/
h	**h**ot
wh	**wh**ole

/qu/ (/k/ + /w/)
qu	**qu**een

/t/
t	**t**in
tt	ge**tt**ing
ed	jump**ed**
bt	de**bt**
pt	**pt**erodactyl
te	defini**te**

/x/ (/k/ + /s/)
x	e**x**am

/y/
y	**y**es

/ng/
ng	si**ng**
n	pi**n**k

/s/
s	**s**ip
ss	gra**ss**
se	hou**se**
c	**c**ent
ce	voi**ce**
st	ca**st**le
sc	**sc**ience
ps	**ps**ychic

/v/
v	**v**ery
ve	ha**ve**

/ch/
ch	**ch**ip
tch	ma**tch**

/b/
b	**b**ig
bb	ra**bb**it

/th/ (voiced)
th	**th**at

/th/ (unvoiced)
th	**th**in

/f/
f	**f**an
ff	sta**ff**
ph	**ph**one
gh	lau**gh**
ffe	gira**ff**e

/w/
w	**w**ig
wh	**wh**en

/g/
g	**g**ot
gg	ju**gg**le
gh	**gh**ost

/d/
d	**d**og
ed	grabb**ed**
dd	mu**dd**le

/l/
l	**l**ip
ll	fu**ll**
le	app**le**
el	trav**el**
il	pup**il**
al	fin**al**
ol	id**ol**

/sh/
sh	**sh**op
ch	ma**ch**ine
s	**s**ugar
ti	ini**ti**al
ci	spe**ci**al

/p/
p	**p**ot
pp	ha**pp**y

/m/
m	**m**an
mm	su**mm**er
mb	la**mb**
mn	Autu**mn**

/k/
k	**k**ite
c	**c**at
ck	du**ck**
ch	**ch**ord
que	anti**que**
q	Ira**q**

/zh/
s	lei**s**ure
ge	presti**ge**
z	sei**z**ure

Vowel sound spellings

/ear/
ear	n**ear**
eer	d**eer**
ere	h**ere**

/i/
i	**i**n
y	m**y**th

/o/
o	n**o**t
a	w**a**s

/ie/
i	w**i**ld
ie	p**ie**
i–e	l**i**k**e**
igh	n**igh**t
y	dr**y**
eigh	h**eigh**t

/ee/
e	m**e**
ee	m**ee**t
ea	s**ea**t
e–e	**e**v**e**
ie	ch**ie**f
y	funn**y**
ey	k**ey**
ei	rec**ei**ve
i	var**i**ation
eo	p**eo**ple

/ae/
a	t**a**ble
ai	r**ai**n
a–e	g**a**m**e**
ea	gr**ea**t
ay	s**ay**
ey	th**ey**
ei	v**ei**n
aigh	str**aigh**t
eigh	**eigh**t

/or/
or	f**or**
our	y**our**
a	b**a**ll
al	w**al**k
ore	m**ore**
oor	d**oor**
aw	l**aw**n
au	fr**au**d
oar	b**oar**d
ar	w**ar**m
ough	f**ough**t
augh	d**augh**ter

/oa/
oa	b**oa**t
ow	gr**ow**
o	m**o**st
o–e	n**o**t**e**
oe	t**oe**
ough	th**ough**
ou	s**ou**l
ew	s**ew**

/e/
e	b**e**d
ea	br**ea**d
ai	s**ai**d
ie	fr**ie**nd
eo	l**eo**pard

/er/
er	h**er**
ur	t**ur**n
ir	g**ir**l
or	w**or**ld
ear	l**ear**n
our	col**our**
ar	coll**ar**
re	cent**re**
yr	zeph**yr**

/oo/
oo	c**oo**k
oul	c**oul**d
u	p**u**t

/a/
a	c**a**t

/ear/
ear	n**ear**
eer	d**eer**
ere	h**ere**

/u/
u	t**u**b
ou	t**ou**ch
o	M**o**nday
oo	bl**oo**d

/ar/
ar	j**ar**
a	gl**a**ss
al	c**al**m
er	cl**er**k
ear	h**ear**t

/ow/
ow	c**ow**
ou	**ou**t
ough	dr**ough**t

/oi/
oi	j**oi**n
oy	b**oy**

/ue/
u–e	t**u**n**e**
u	p**u**pil
ew	f**ew**
ue	c**ue**

/air/
air	ch**air**
are	d**are**
ear	b**ear**
eir	th**eir**
ere	wh**ere**
ayor	m**ayor**
ayer	pr**ayer**
ae	**ae**rosol

/oo/
oo	b**oo**t
ue	bl**ue**
ew	gr**ew**
u	s**u**per
ui	s**ui**t
u–e	fl**u**t**e**
ou	s**ou**p
oe	sh**oe**
o	d**o**
ough	thr**ough**