and spelling of /ch/ and /sh/. A word chain to address this difficulty would look like this:

Letters: m, u, sh, ch, n, b, f, i, p, a, r, c
Word chain: mush–much–munch–bunch–bun–shun–shin–fin–finch–inch–pinch–pin–bin–ban–bash–brash–brush–crush–crash

The two examples above use real words, and this is suitable for young pupils. For older pupils, you can also use nonsense word chains. A typical example would look like this:

Letters: b, l, i, n, a, o, t, u
Word chain: blin–blan–lan–lon–lont–lunt–lut–blut

Here are some guidelines for creating a word chain:

1. Use one syllable words.
2. Use spellings from the simple code. It can get very confusing if vowel spellings are included as many of them can be pronounced in different ways.
3. The word chain can include changing sounds, removing sounds, and adding sounds.
4. Make only one change at a time.

How to teach reading

One of the primary goals in teaching phonics is to equip pupils with the skills necessary to decode and comprehend text effectively. When pupils are reading, encourage them to sound out each word phonetically and then blend these sounds to form words. This lays the groundwork for developing fluent reading skills, as it enables pupils to approach unfamiliar words with confidence. Slow, laboured reading can interfere with comprehension. When a pupil reads very slowly, reread each sentence after them to maintain comprehension of the text.

Once pupils are comfortable with sounding out and blending words, a next step could be to read a book from a previous lesson for a second time or multiple times to enhance fluency. This repetition helps to consolidate pupils' decoding skills. As pupils revisit the text, they begin to transition from mechanical decoding to reading with greater fluency.

This can be progressed to teaching them to vary their pitch, pace and emphasis according to the words and punctuation in the text. Reading with expression not only makes the reading experience more fun but also aids in comprehension, as it brings the text to life and highlights its meaning.

How to correct reading errors

One of the most important elements of learning is receiving error feedback. With every error feedback, the pupil can adjust their knowledge or skill and can fine-tune them and make their reading increasingly accurate. Making and correcting errors is a great learning opportunity!

Reading with our pupils is a fantastic opportunity for error feedback. But before we can address the error, we need to know what kind of error the reader is making. Here are a few tips:

1. Error feedback should be a positive experience in which the pupil can succeed. So, after the feedback has taken place, the pupil should be able to use the new information and read a word or sentence successfully.
2. It is very helpful to use a pointer or a pencil to show the pupil where the error occurred in the word. The error can even occur between letters on the page, so accurate pointing is essential.
3. When the pupil has read the word correctly, it is helpful to reread the whole sentence so that they can reread the correct word in the context of the text.

What kinds of reading errors do pupils make?

Lack of Alphabetic Code knowledge

Many pupils make reading errors because they have insufficient knowledge of the Alphabetic Code. For example, when a pupil reads the word "goat" as /g/ /o/ /a/ /t/, we can see that they don't know that the grapheme 'oa' spells the sound /oe/.

So, how can feedback be given? Point to both letters and say: "These two letters represent one sound: /oa/. Sound out the word with /oa/ here (pointing to the letters 'oa')." The pupil then blends the sounds together: /g/ /oe/ /t/ → "goat".

Not matching sounds to graphemes (letter/s)

Pupils may add or omit sounds when they read. To develop reading accuracy, they will need to match the graphemes to the sounds in the word. Here are typical examples of reading errors.

Adding sounds: When a pupil reads the word "back" as "black", we can see that they are adding the sound /l/. To give feedback, point to the word and say: "You read "black" but there is no /l/ here (pointing to the place the 'l' would be in the word "black"). Sound out the word." The pupil should then sound the word correctly: /b/ /a/ /k/ → "back".

Omitting sounds: When a pupil reads the word "frog" as "fog", we can see that they are omitting a sound in the word. To give feedback, point to the letter 'r' and say: "There is a /r/ here. Sound out the word with the /r/ here (pointing to the letter 'r')." The pupil then sounds out the word pointing to the letters /f/ /r/ /o/ /g/ → "frog".

Reversing a word

When a pupil reads "was" for "saw", we can see that they have flipped the word. So, how can feedback be given? Ask the pupil to sound out the word: /s/ /aw/. Remind the pupil that 'saw' spells /aw/. Ask the pupil to blend the sounds into a word: /s/ /aw/ → "saw".

Developing vocabulary

Systematic synthetic phonics focuses on the mechanics of learning to read: developing the skills to sound out, blend to read and segment to spell. It is a structured, progressive programme towards reading fluency. However, alongside that process, it's critical to develop the broader reading skills: prosody, pace, comprehension and vocabulary. Phonics success is based on careful, steady progression, so that pupils are only exposed to words in their books which contain the sounds and high-frequency words they know. Yet, every reading experience is an opportunity to develop a pupil's wider vocabulary, through questioning and discussion. For example: books within the Dandelion World Series include non-fiction Knowledge Builder pages intended for children and adults to read together, which help to reinforce vocabulary and enhance comprehension skills, by encouraging the pupil to think about what they have read. Talking about the words pupils decode: exploring meaning, looking at patterns, and discussing synonyms and antonyms will not only help secure comprehension and reading for meaning, but will also grow and develop a pupil's more general language knowledge. For example, while reading the word "swift", pupils can explore

PHONICS CONCEPTS

What is a phoneme?

A **phoneme** is the smallest unit of sound in a word. For example, the word "cat" has three phonemes: /k/ /a/ /t/.

Why do we need phonemes?

Phonemes are essential in learning to read and write because they are the building blocks of words, enabling us to segment and blend sounds to form words. Understanding phonemes helps in the development of literacy skills.

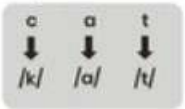
The English Alphabetic Code is based on the 44 phonemes in the English language. The letters of the alphabet represent those sounds with 150+ letter combinations.

When we teach reading, we need to show how the Alphabetic Code works: that the letters on the page spell sounds in words.

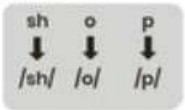
What is a grapheme?

A **grapheme** is a written representation or spelling of a sound (phoneme) in a word. A grapheme can be spelled by 1–4 letters.

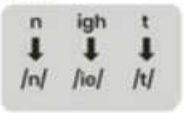
In a **1-letter grapheme**, each sound is spelled by one letter:



In a **2-letter grapheme**, a sound is spelled by two letters:



In a **3-letter grapheme**, a sound is spelled by three letters:



In a **4-letter grapheme**, a sound is spelled by four letters:

What is a digraph?

A **digraph** is when two letters represent one sound in a word (phoneme).

Therefore, a digraph means two written letters.

A **consonant digraph** is when two letters represent a consonant sound. For example: the letters 's' and 'h' spell the sound /sh/ in the word "ship".

A **vowel spelling** is when two or more letters represent a vowel sound. For example: the letters 'a' and 'i' spell the sound /ae/ in the word "rain".

What are adjacent consonants?

Adjacent consonants are also called **consonant clusters**. These are two or more adjacent consonants in a word that spell two separate sounds. For example, in the word "stop" the letters 's' and 't' spell the sounds /s/ and /t/.

What are split vowel spellings?

A **split vowel spelling** is when the spelling for the vowel sounds /ae/, /ee/, /ie/, /oe/, and /ue/ is split by a consonant.

What is a schwa?

A schwa is a weak vowel sound in an unstressed syllable.

An example of a schwa is 'a' because it is a weak vowel sound in an unstressed syllable. It gets swallowed up when we pronounce the word "chicken", becoming "chickin" or "chick'n". We need to teach pupils to use their "spelling voice" in order to spell the word correctly and not as they hear it.

LANGUAGE UNITS AND PRINCIPLES

Words to morphemes

There are different ways of looking at a word.

A **word** is a distinct meaningful unit of speech or writing.

Letters are characters used for representing sounds in speech.

Syllables are mouthfuls of words.

Phonemes are speech sounds in words.

Graphemes are spellings of sounds in words.

Morphemes are units of meaning in words.

Distinguishing phonology, phonological awareness and phonics

Phonology is an area of linguistics that deals with speech sound systems and sound patterns of spoken language.

Phonological awareness is the ability to break down words into smaller parts: syllables (mag·net), alliteration (bobby beetle bounced), onset and rime (m-at), and phonemic awareness (m-a-t).

Phonemic awareness is the ability to identify and manipulate individual sounds in words (to blend, segment, and manipulate sounds).

Phonics is the teaching of:

- letter/sound correspondences for reading and spelling: c-a-t = /k/ /a/ /t/
- blending of individual letters/sounds for reading: m-a-t
- segmenting of individual sounds/letters for spelling: m-a-t