

This year we will be using Sound Waves Literacy resources to support our teaching of reading and spelling. Sound Waves Literacy aligns with the Australian Curriculum and is informed by current scientific evidence on how children best learn to read and spell.

What will children learn in Sound Waves Literacy?

In Sound Waves Literacy, children are gradually taught a range of skills and strategies that promote a deeper understanding of words and how they work.

Teaching focuses on four main areas:

Speech Sounds

Children are taught the 43 sounds of spoken Australian English and how to work with these sounds. They learn to answer questions like, 'What is the first sound in *sun*?' and 'How many sounds are in *stop*?'. This knowledge of sounds is critical for learning to read and spell in English.

Sound–Letter Relationships

Children are taught the different letters that represent speech sounds in writing. For example, children learn that the same sound is used at the start of the words *cat*, *king* and *chemist*, but that the sound can be represented in different ways (**c**, **k** and **ch**).

Children are taught patterns that help them make decisions about which letters to use when spelling. For example, they learn that **dge** is used at the end of a word after **a**, **e**, **i**, **o** and **u**, like in *badge*, *ledge*, *bridge*, *lodge* and *budge*.

Prefixes, Suffixes, and Greek and Latin Roots

In addition, children are taught the meaning and spelling of prefixes, suffixes, and Greek and Latin roots. For example, they learn that the prefix **re** means *again*, in words such as *replay*, *reheat* and *recycle*.

They also learn patterns that help them add these small parts to base words. For example, they learn to 'drop the **e**' when adding the suffix **ing** to words ending in **e**, like when changing *bake* to *baking*.

Word Origins

Children in upper primary also learn about where words come from to help them understand and remember unusual or complex words. For example, they learn that the words *architect* and *orchestra* originate from Greek.

As children progress through primary school, the amount of time dedicated to each area changes. In the early years the majority of teaching time is spent on sound–letter relationships, whereas in the upper years children spend more time on prefixes, suffixes, and Greek and Latin roots.

Did you know?

Australian English is produced using 43 speech sounds.

English uses the 26 letters of the alphabet to represent the 43 sounds in spoken language.

This mismatch between letters and sounds means sometimes more than one letter represents a sound. For example, the **sh** in *ship* and the **igh** in *high* are examples of more than one letter representing just one sound.

How is teaching in Sound Waves Literacy organised?

The four key areas are taught across 36 units of work in a year. Each unit is centred around one or two sounds referred to as 'focus sounds' or 'focus phonemes' and takes a week of teaching to complete. In each unit, children are taught how to:

- articulate and identify the focus sound
- read and spell words with the focus sound
- read and spell words with prefixes, suffixes, and Greek and Latin Roots.

Children in Year 1 also practise reading using decodable readers. These short books provide independent practice with the sound–letter relationships children have been taught. This practice is critical for children to master the basic skills of reading, and helps ensure they are able to read more difficult texts later on in primary school.

Tips to support your child at home:

- Find out what the focus sound is for the week. Look for opportunities to find words that contain that sound and discuss their spelling.
- Listen to your child read any decodable readers that come home. Encourage your child to read the same decodable reader multiple times to build their fluency.
- Read a wide variety of books to your child (or encourage them to read independently as much as possible to support their vocabulary development and help them build knowledge of the world.

Your teacher may also provide you with login details to the Sound Waves Literacy student site. Access includes resources to work with sounds and sound–letter relationships in words.

Reminder:

The Sound Waves Literacy way of learning to read and spell may differ from how you were taught at school. However, this approach (also known as synthetic phonics) is backed by research and has a proven track record in helping children achieve a higher level of success in both reading and spelling compared to other methods.

Teachers undergo in-depth professional development to equip themselves with the knowledge and skills they need to explicitly teach reading and spelling using this method, and to do so in a way that's easy for children to understand.

It's important to try and talk about the sounds you hear in words and the letter or letters used to represent each sound, but it's okay if you don't always know how to explain the sound–letter relationships in words. If you're unsure of how to support your child with reading or spelling, seek clarification from your child's teacher.

We look forward to working with your child/children this year.