

This year we will be using Sound Waves Literacy 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?

The focus of Sound Waves Literacy is teaching children about speech sounds and the letters that represent speech sounds in writing. Learning sound–letter relationships is essential for learning to read and spell, and ensures all children are ‘up and running’ with reading and spelling in their first year of school.

The Foundation year program of Sound Waves has been carefully structured to systematically and gradually introduce children to early literacy skills. Here’s what to expect:

Weeks 1–5

In the first five weeks of the program, children are introduced to the 43 sounds of spoken Australian English, and learn how to work with these sounds. They learn how to: identify the first, last and middle sounds in words; blend sounds to form words, and break words into sounds.

By the end of these first few weeks, children will be able to answer questions like, ‘What is the first sound in *moon*?’, ‘What is the last sound in *fish*?’ and ‘How many sounds can you hear in *bug*?’.

These lessons focus on oral-only activities, which allows students to practise these skills *before* working with the added load of letter identification, naming and formation.

Learning to think about the sounds in words in this way sets children up to begin learning how to read and spell words from Week 6 onwards.

Tips to support your child in Weeks 1–5:

Your teacher may provide you with login details to the Sound Waves Literacy student site. Access includes resources to familiarise yourself with the 43 sounds of Australian English. Each sound has a ‘Chant and Action’, which you can sing with your child.

Week 6 onwards

From Week 6 onwards, children begin learning how to read and spell words.

Lessons are taught in a very specific order to minimise confusion. First, children learn to use a single letter for one sound. For example, the letter **p** is used to represent the final sound in the word *top* and the first sound in the word *pin*. Then children learn that some sounds are represented by two letters. For example, the letters **sh** are used to represent the final sound in the words *fish* and *mash*. They also learn that some sounds can be represented in different ways. For example, **ee** as in *see*, **e** as in *she* and **ea** as in *eat*.

Throughout the year, children 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.

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 **ch** in *chin*, the **sh** in *ship* and the **ll** in *bell* are all two letters representing just one sound.

Tips to support your child from Week 6 onwards:

While targeted reading practice using decodable readers will occur in class, your teacher may send home these types of books for additional practice. Listen to your child read the decodable readers that come home. Encourage your child to read the same decodable reader multiple times to build their fluency.

It's important to also read to your child as much as possible. Reading a wide variety of books to children supports their vocabulary development and helps them build knowledge of the world.

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 this year.