

This year we will be using Sound Waves resources to support our teaching of reading and spelling. Sound Waves 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?

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

At the core of Sound Waves, children learn about speech sounds (phonemes) and the different letters (graphemes) that represent these 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** or **ch**). As part of this learning, children are also taught to segment words into individual sounds (a prerequisite for spelling) and blend sounds together to form words (a prerequisite for reading).

Your child's teacher may send home Sound Waves Decodable Readers. Your child should be able to read the Decodable Reader accurately on their own without prompting. Regular reading practice is essential for fostering confidence and building fluency and expression.

In addition, Sound Waves helps children understand the meaningful parts of words, such as prefixes, suffixes and roots. For example, they learn that the prefix **re** means *again* in words such as **replay**, **reheat** and **recycle**.

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.

This layered and comprehensive approach sets children up for success when reading and spelling.

How is teaching in Sound Waves organised?

For children to learn how to read and spell, they must be systematically taught sound–letter relationships. For example, the words **tea**, **bee**, **honey**, **taxi** and **sixty** all end with the same sound, but the sound is represented using a different letter or letter combination in each word.

The Sound Waves program covers the 43 sounds of Australian English in 36 units of work. Each unit is centred around one or two sounds referred to as 'focus sounds' or 'focus phonemes'. In each unit, children are taught how to:

- articulate and identify the focus sound
- show the focus sound in writing using single letters or combinations of letters
- read words with the focus sound
- spell words with the focus sound.

This 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.

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 can I support learning at home with Sound Waves?

While there are many ways to support your child's learning at home, here are two of the most useful strategies:

1. Find out what the focus sound is for the week

Each week your child will focus on one or two of the 43 sounds of Australian English known as 'focus sounds' or 'focus phonemes'. Each sound has an accompanying 'Chant and Action', which you can watch with your child on the Sound Waves Online student site.

Once you know which sound your child is learning, you can look for opportunities to identify words containing that sound. If you have multiple children across Years 1–6, they'll be working on the same focus sound each week.

2. Read, talk and listen

Reading and spelling go hand in hand. In addition to reading Decodable Readers, reading stories (e.g. picture books and novels) with your child helps them learn about books, words and texts before formal instruction. It fosters language development and vocabulary, which contributes to the ease and efficiency of reading and spelling in the future. It can also transport them to different worlds and places to hear stories from different people.

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