

WRaPS and the *Letters and Sounds* framework

Letters and Sounds was published in 2007 and forms part of the Primary Strategy in England, covering work up to the end of Key Stage 1. It provides a phased structure and suggested timetable for teaching phonics and other word-recognition skills. Beginning in Reception with learning the sounds of single letters, the expectation is that by the end of Year 1, pupils will be able to “*read and spell phonically decodable two-syllable and three-syllable words*” and “*accurately spell most of the words in the list of 100 high-frequency words*”. In Year 2, children will become fluent readers and increasingly accurate spellers.

The 2nd edition of the WRaPS test, published in 2003, measures word-recognition skills in both word decoding and spelling. Both analytic and synthetic phonic skills can guide pupils to the correct word choices on the test, but visual and linguistic knowledge is also required. Overall performance is quantified on the following scales:

- an age-equivalent scale (**Word Recognition Age**) with **standardised scores**
- a **word-length** scale showing when children can recognise at least 80% of words of a given length
- a **stage** scale, with skill descriptors for ten **word-recognition stages**.

Seven diagnostic measures can also be derived, using the diagnostic scoring keys to identify strengths and weaknesses *at each stage of word recognition*. No other assessment tool provides a reliable profile of this nature. The measures are:

- knowledge of high frequency words
- knowledge of lower frequency words
- knowledge of regular words
- knowledge of irregular words
- representation of consonants
- representation of vowels
- word shortening.

The *Letters and Sounds* phases map onto the ten WRaPS stages as follows:

Letters and Sounds phase	WRaPS stage	Word recognition and phonic skills development
1	1	There is virtually no word recognition or letter knowledge.
2	2	A few initial letters are known.
	3	A few final consonants are known.
	4	Short vowels are known in some words.
3	5	Initial consonants and most final consonants are identified, while knowledge of consonant clusters is developing.
	6	Common long vowel digraphs are known.
	7	More long vowel spelling patterns are known, including <i>igh</i> and ‘magic’ <i>e</i> .
4	8	All spelling patterns in one-syllable words are recognised, plus common prefixes and suffixes in two-syllable words.
5	9	The learner has secure knowledge of spelling patterns in two-syllable words, and in some three-syllable words.
6	10	Most spelling patterns in the English language are known.

Letters and Sounds phase	Main instructional focus	WRaPS stage
1	<i>Oral</i> blending and segmentation of sounds.	1
2	Learning nineteen letter sounds. Reading and segmenting two-letter and some three-letter words.	2
		3
		4
3	Learning 25 digraphs. Reading and segmenting words of four and more letters.	5
		6
		7
4	Consonant clusters.	8
5	Learn all remaining graphemes and apply knowledge in reading and spelling words of up to three syllables.	9
6	Fluency and accuracy in applying phonic knowledge.	10

Both WRaPS and *Letters and Sounds* bring out the importance of aural and oral practice to support word recognition, and the WRaPs manual includes many complementary ideas for teaching and learning in this area. In phases 3 and 5 of *Letters and Sounds* there is a major focus on digraphs, especially vowel spellings. As there are more than 120 of these, and vowel spellings are the main source of irregularity and confusion in written English, many pupils will need support in this area. In the WRaPS manual the relevant suggestions for teaching and learning are built around the organising principles of word length and of aural discrimination between short and long vowels.

In *Letters and Sounds*, as with its NLS predecessor *Progression in Phonics*, the teaching of phonics for word decoding and spelling is compressed into a much shorter time span than had traditionally been the case. If pupils achieve mastery learning of all the skills covered to the point where decoding becomes almost entirely automatic during Year 2, it will become necessary for all standardised literacy tests to be re-calibrated, since seven-year-olds will be achieving at least a year above the norms which applied in 2003 (after five years of the National Literacy Strategy). We shall monitor the situation with interest.

New editions of the WRaPS Manual and Diagnostic Keys, to match to Letters and Sounds, are now available.

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