

The Alphabetic Code

At the heart of the Floppy's Phonics programme is the Alphabetic Code Chart. Alphabetic code is a term used to describe the spelling system of the English language. It clarifies the relationship between the sounds of our speech and the letters or groups of letters allotted to those sounds. Alphabetic Code Charts are permanently displayed in classrooms and support step-by-step phonics teaching as well as incidental teaching, when needs arise. The charts explain the relationship between 50 units of sound (including the 44 phonemes of the English language and some combined phonemes) and the spellings or graphemes which represent these sounds. In Floppy's Phonics, the alphabetic code is not taught in alphabetical order.

One sound (phoneme) can be represented by one, two, three or four letters:

/w/ in w-e-b

/sh/ in sh-i-p

/igh/ in kn-igh-t

/eigh/ in eigh-t

One sound can be represented by alternative spellings (graphemes), for example long /oo/:

spoon glue screw move soup through flute fruit super

One grapheme can be code for alternative sounds, for example:

/ee/ eat /e/ bread /ai/ break

Picture cues and key words are used throughout the Floppy's Phonics programme. Alphabetic Code Charts feature picture cues and key words for every sound. Additional words are listed to the right of the focus sound to teach alternative spelling patterns. During Level 1 of the programme, the focus sound being taught is almost always the initial sound of the key word and picture cue (e.g. /v/ as in 'van'.) The children see the letter shape and say the sound prompted by saying the picture cue or key word slowly. Children are only expected to read the focus grapheme and not the whole word, but by seeing the grapheme in the whole word, children can link the position of it to what they hear or say.



Mnemonic systems or aids to memory are very helpful and motivating, but the system must not detract from core learning. Picture cues and key words are consistent across all of the resources of the programme. The pictures and key words also provide a reference system for using alternative spellings of sounds. They enable teachers and children to talk in the shared language of, "you need the spelling of the /v/ sound as in van, not the /v/ sound as in glove."