Phase 1 Phonics: Long-Term Overview and Progression

Nursery provision for children aged 2–3 and 3–4 years

Our Phase 1 phonics curriculum builds the foundations children need for later reading and writing. Through play, songs, stories, movement and carefully planned listening activities, children learn to notice, discriminate, remember and talk about sounds. The sequence is progressive but flexible: practitioners revisit earlier skills and adapt experiences to children's development, interests and communication needs.

2–3 years: Foundations	3–4 years: Developing phonological awareness
Children begin with shared attention and listening to sounds around them. They explore environmental and instrumental sounds, body percussion and rhythm, then increasingly imitate voice sounds, join in songs and rhymes, notice repeated initial sounds and experience gentle oral blending. The emphasis is on curiosity, communication, imitation, turn-taking and enjoyment.	Children consolidate careful listening and sound discrimination, then apply these skills more deliberately through rhythm and rhyme, voice sounds and alliteration. Across the year they develop stronger awareness of words and sounds and move towards oral blending and segmenting, preparing them for the next stage of systematic phonics.

Year at a glance

Term	2–3 years: main progression	3–4 years: main progression
Autumn (Weeks 1–12)	Listening and attention; environmental sounds; instrumental sounds; body percussion; simple rhythm and movement.	Listening and attention; environmental and instrumental sound discrimination; body percussion; rhythm, rhyme and early sound pattern awareness.
Spring (Weeks 13–24)	Voice sounds; songs and rhymes; early alliteration; turn-taking; stop/go listening; imitation and sensory sound play.	Consolidating rhyme and voice sounds; developing alliteration and sound discrimination; increasingly deliberate listening, memory and sound play.

Summer (Weeks 25–36)	Outdoor and nature listening; water sounds; supported early oral blending exposure; fast/slow, quiet/noisy and voice play; consolidation and transition.	Applying and consolidating Phase 1 skills, with increasing emphasis on oral blending and segmenting, sound talk, independent discrimination and readiness for the next stage of phonics.

36-Week Progression Overview

The overview below shows the planned focus for both age groups. Skills are revisited throughout provision, so progression is cumulative rather than a series of isolated weekly activities.

Wk	2–3 focus	2–3 strand	3–4 focus	3–4 strand
1	Settling & Listening Together	Environmental Sounds	Environmental Sounds – Listening Walks & Sound Hunt	General Sound Discrimination – Environmental Sounds
2	Exploring Everyday Sounds	Environmental Sounds	Environmental Sounds – Sound Maps & Sequences	General Sound Discrimination – Environmental Sounds
3	Environmental Sounds – Indoors	Environmental Sounds	Instrumental Sounds – Explore & Imitate	General Sound Discrimination – Instrumental Sounds
4	Environmental Sounds – Outdoors	Environmental Sounds	Instrumental Sounds – Tempo, Dynamics & Simple Composition	General Sound Discrimination – Instrumental Sounds
5	Instrument Play – Exploration	Instrumental Sounds	Body Percussion – Explore & Sequence	Body Percussion
6	Instrument Play – Loud/Quiet	Instrumental Sounds	Body Percussion – Control & Performance	Body Percussion
7	Body Sounds – Hands	Body Percussion	Rhythm & Rhyme – Rhyme Awareness	Rhythm & Rhyme
8	Body Sounds – Feet	Body Percussion	Rhythm & Rhyme – Matching & Syllables	Rhythm & Rhyme

Wk	2–3 focus	2–3 strand	3–4 focus	3–4 strand
9	Body Sounds – Whole Body	Body Percussion	Rhythm & Rhyme – Perform & Apply	Rhythm & Rhyme
10	Simple Rhythm Exploration	Rhythm	Consolidation – Mixed Sound Games	Mixed Review
11	Rhythm & Movement	Rhythm and Body Percussion	Consolidation – Rhyme & Listening	Mixed Review
12	Autumn Term Review	Review	Consolidation – Choice & Celebration	Mixed Review
13	Voice Sounds – Animals	Voice Sounds	Voice Sounds – Explore & Play	Voice Sounds
14	Voice Sounds – Vehicles	Voice Sounds	Voice Sounds – Control & Sequences	Voice Sounds
15	Voice Sounds – People	Voice Sounds	Voice Sounds – Apply in Stories & Games	Voice Sounds
16	Rhyme Exposure – Nursery Rhymes	Rhythm and Rhyme	Alliteration – Sound of the Week (1)	Alliteration
17	Rhyme Play – Action Rhymes	Rhythm and Rhyme	Alliteration – Sound of the Week (2)	Alliteration
18	Rhyme & Song Repetition	Rhythm and Rhyme	Alliteration – Mixed Practice	Alliteration
19	Early Alliteration Exposure – Same Sound Play	Alliteration	Alliteration & Rhyme – Consolidation	Alliteration + Rhyme Revision
20	Listening & Turn Taking	Environmental and Instrumental Sounds	Alliteration in Play – Role-play & Outdoors	Alliteration + General Listening
21	Listening Games – Stop/Go	Listening and Attention	Sound Sorting & Attention – Listening Games	Environmental/Instrumental + Alliteration

Wk	2–3 focus	2–3 strand	3–4 focus	3–4 strand
22	Imitation Games – Copy Me	Voice Sounds and Body Percussion	Rhyme & Alliteration – Games Carousel	Rhythm & Rhyme + Alliteration
23	Sound & Play – Sensory Trays	Environmental Sounds	Assessment & Targeted Practice	Mixed Review
24	Spring Term Review	Review	Celebration & Transition to Blending	Mixed Review
25	Summer Start – Outdoor Listening	Environmental Sounds	Oral Blending – Robot Talk (Intro)	Oral Blending
26	Water Sounds Play	Environmental Sounds	Oral Blending – In Play & Movement	Oral Blending
27	Nature Sounds Exploration	Environmental Sounds	Oral Blending – Everyday Routines	Oral Blending
28	Early Blending Exposure – Sound Stretching	Oral Blending Exposure	Oral Blending – Apply & Review	Oral Blending
29	Slow/Fast Sound Play	Rhythm	Oral Segmenting – Introduce & Move	Oral Segmenting
30	Emotion Sounds – Happy/Sad/Tired	Voice Sounds	Oral Segmenting – Map & Manipulate	Oral Segmenting
31	Quiet/Noisy Play	Environmental and Instrumental Sounds	Oral Segmenting – Discriminate & Play	Oral Segmenting
32	Sound Hunt Indoors	Environmental Sounds	Blending & Segmenting – Rotations	Oral Blending & Segmenting
33	Sound Hunt Outdoors	Environmental Sounds	Consolidation – Choice & Mastery	Consolidation
34	Music & Movement	Rhythm and Body Percussion	Consolidation – Partner & Outdoor Focus	Consolidation
35	Goodbye & Celebration Week	Review and Rhyme	Transition & Celebration (1)	Consolidation/Transition

Wk	2–3 focus	2–3 strand	3–4 focus	3–4 strand
36	Review & Transition Prep	Review	Final Week – Celebrate & Close	Celebration

What progression looks like

• Listen and attend → notice and discriminate sounds → remember and imitate sounds → recognise rhythm, rhyme and repeated initial sounds → manipulate sounds orally through supported blending and segmenting.

• 2–3-year-olds experience the foundations through sensory, movement-based and highly repetitive play.

• 3–4-year-olds revisit these foundations with greater independence, vocabulary and precision, before moving towards oral blending and segmenting.

• Assessment is ongoing and observational. Practitioners respond to children's development and revisit earlier strands whenever this will strengthen listening, language and phonological awareness.