



## Suggested implementation of the Initial Code (Foundation – UK)

Please note that this document is intended to guide the implementation of Sounds-Write in the Reception year of school. It is understood that some schools may need to adjust this sequence to suit their contexts and cohorts.

If teachers in YR deliver Sounds-Write with fidelity, the majority of students moving into Year 1 should have a strong foundation in reading, spelling and handwriting. These students will be well-prepared to start internalising the complexities of the Extended Code, as their recognition, recall and letter formation (writing) of the Initial Code should, by this time, be automatic or close to automatic.

The sequence suggested on the next page provides YR-level pupils with lots of practice of previous code knowledge learnt. This is particularly evident in Terms 2 and 3. It is during these terms that we encourage teachers to focus also on handwriting, with an expectation of mastery of letter formations.

Towards the end of Unit 3 or early Unit 4, it will be obvious to most teachers which students have not attained a degree of competency with the earlier units, i.e. Units 1 & 2. At this point, we strongly recommend that these students be afforded additional opportunities to practise, incorporate and thus master this part of the code. This would be considered Tier 2 support and would typically be provided by the Learning Support teacher or a suitably trained classroom support/learning support assistant and delivered in small groups. The goal of these additional sessions is to boost student performance so that they are able to keep up with their peers. It is expected that participation in these groups will be fluid, i.e. based on student need.

## Sample planning for Term 1

The following shows how you should be teaching a new unit (using Lessons 1, 4 and 2) whilst at the same time recycling the previous unit through Sound Swap, reading in text and additional word building and word reading (if you think it appropriate) and earlier units through dictation. At this point, you should not necessarily be expecting complete mastery yet, as this requires lots of practice and exposure.

## Sample planning for Term 1

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8
Unit 1 Wk 1 Word Building (Lesson 1) Word Reading (Lesson 4) (+ Lesson 2, Symbol Search)	Unit 1 Wk 2 Word Building (Lesson 1) Word Reading (Lesson 4) (+ Lesson 2, Symbol Search) Sound-Swap (Lesson 3) with Unit 1 words	Unit 2 Wk 1 Word Building (Lesson 1) Word Reading (Lesson 4) (+ Lesson 2, Symbol Search)	Unit 2 Wk 2 Word Building (Lesson 1) Word Reading (Lesson 4) (+ Lesson 2, Symbol Search) Sound Swap (Lesson 3) with Unit 1 & 2 words	Unit 3 Wk1 Word Building (Lesson 1) Word Reading (Lesson 4) (+ Lesson 2, Symbol Search), Sound Swap (Lesson 3) with Unit 1 & 2 words	Unit 3 Wk 2 Word Building (Lesson 1) Word Reading (Lesson 4) (+ Lesson 2, Symbol Search) Sound-Swap, (Lesson 3) with Unit 3 words	Unit 4 Wk 1 Word Building (Lesson 1) Word Reading (Lesson 4) (+ Lesson 2, Symbol Search), Sound Swap (Lesson 3) with Unit 3 words	Unit 4 Wk 2 Word Building (Lesson 1) Word Reading (Lesson 4) (+ Lesson 2, Symbol Search) Sound-Swap (Lesson 3) with Unit 4 words
		Sound Swap (Lesson 3) with Unit 1	Reading in text (Lesson 4): texts from the manual/decodable texts from Units 1 & 2	Reading in text (Lesson 4): texts from the manual/decodable texts: Units 1 & 2 words Dictation (Lesson 4a) with Unit 2	Reading in text (Lesson 4): from the manual/decodable texts: Units 1, 2 & 3 words Dictation (Lesson 4a) with Unit 2 words/sentences	Reading in text (Lesson 4) from the manual/decodable texts with Unit 1-3	Reading in text (Lesson 4) and decodable texts with Unit 3 & 4
						Dictation (Lesson 4a) with Units 1 and 2	Dictation (Lesson 4a) with Units 1-3

Week 9	Week 10	Week 11	Week 12	Week 13	Week 14
Unit 5 Wk 1 Word Building (Lesson 1) Word Reading (Lesson 4) (+ Lesson 2, Symbol Search) Sound-Swap (Lesson 3) from Unit 4 words	Unit 5 Wk 2 Word Building (Lesson 1) Word Reading (Lesson 4) (+ Lesson 2, Symbol Search) Sound-Swap (Lesson 3) from Unit 5 words	Unit 6 Wk 1 Word Building (Lesson 1) Word Reading (Lesson 4) (+ Lesson 2, Symbol Search) Sound-Swap (Lesson 3) from Unit 5 words	Unit 6 Wk 2 Word Building (Lesson 1) Word Reading (Lesson 4) (+ Lesson 2, Symbol Search) Sound-Swap (Lesson 3) from Unit 6 words	Unit 7 Wk 1 Word Building (Lesson 5 and Lesson 1) Word Reading (Lesson 4) (+ Lesson 2, Symbol Search) Sound-Swap (Lesson 3) from Unit 6 words	Unit 7 Wk 2 Word Building (Lesson 5 and Lesson 1) Word Reading (Lesson 4) (+ Lesson 2, Symbol Search) Sound-Swap (Lesson 3) from Unit 7 words
Reading in text (Lesson 4) from manual/decodable texts from Unit 4	Reading in text (Lesson 4) from manual/decodable texts from Units 4 & 5	Reading in text (Lesson 4) from manual/decodable texts from Unit 5 words	Reading in text (Lesson 4) from manual/decodable texts from Unit 5 words	Reading in text (Lesson 4) and decodable texts from Unit 6 words	Reading in text (Lesson 4) and decodable texts from Unit 6 words
Dictation (Lesson 4a) from Unit 3	Dictation (Lesson 4a) from Unit 3 & 4 words	Dictation (Lesson 4a) from Unit 4	Dictation (Lesson 4a) from Unit 4	Dictation (Lesson 4a) from Unit 5	Dictation (Lesson 4a) from Unit 5

As you can see, the detailed guidance only goes as far as Week 14 in Term 2; because the guidance is not meant to be set in stone, this is about as far as we can reasonably go, given the differences in cohorts and settings. That notwithstanding, you can see from the way in which the guidance is structured, the principles we are suggesting you follow.

The first thing you will also have noticed is that we have allowed two weeks of teaching for each unit and we strongly believe that you will need every bit of this time if you are to ensure that all children are learning what you are teaching them. Two weeks should allow time to introduce the new sound-spelling correspondences for that unit and to keep recycling previous taught code. It should also enable children who have entered school with little or no prior knowledge to keep up.

From the planning, you will see that reading in text and phoneme manipulation (Lesson 3 Sound Swap) lag behind the introduction of the new code by a unit or by about a week to two weeks. For example, in the first two weeks of teaching Unit 1, many teachers find that they can introduce Sound Swap sometime towards the end of the first week/beginning of the second week.

Thus, to give an example, in weeks 7 and 8 we are introducing the new code in Unit 4 (< b > < c > < g > and < h >) through Lesson 1 word building and Lesson 4 word reading. In addition, we are also revising the sound-spelling correspondences taught in Unit 3 through Lesson 3 Sounds Swap, Lesson 4 reading in text at sentence level from the manual, and using decodable texts to promote fluency. In addition, you will be revising Unit 2 through Unit 2 dictation at sentence level (Lesson 4a).

In the Initial Code, dictation lags (about) two units behind what you are currently introducing as new code knowledge because, before pupils are able to retrieve from memory sound-spelling correspondences from Unit 2, they will need to have had lots of exposure and practice through word building, word reading, sound swap and reading in text. However, the precise amount of time between when students are taught new code and its application through Sounds Swap, reading in text, and dictation will vary a little from cohort to cohort and is something the individual teacher will decide.

The central point we are making here is that for all students to arrive at mastery level, we need to make sure that they have enough for practice to get them there.

## Achieving mastery

Students will only be achieving mastery after substantial practice. You should not expect the majority of Tier 1 students to be achieving 80% accuracy as soon as you teach a specific unit, as it will take time for them to absorb the code knowledge and skills and for these to become automatic.

The table below shows when Tier 1 students should be achieving mastery for each unit.

<b>Unit</b>	<b>Recognise code</b> Read and write single words (Lessons 1 & 2)	<b>Read code (fluency)</b> (Lesson 4 & in decodable books) <b>Manipulate code</b> (Lesson 3)	<b>Write code</b> (Within connected text) (Lesson 4a - Dictation)
<b>1</b>	End of Unit 1	End of Unit 2 or mid-unit 3	End of Unit 4
<b>2</b>	End of Unit 2	End of Unit 3 or mid-unit 4	End of Unit 5
<b>3</b>	End of Unit 3	End of Unit 4 or mid-unit 5	End of Unit 6
<b>4</b>	End of Unit 4	End of Unit 5 or mid-unit 6	End of Unit 7
<b>5</b>	End of Unit 5	End of Unit 6 or mid-unit 7	End of Unit 8
<b>6</b>	End of Unit 6	End of Unit 7 or mid-unit 8	End of Unit 9
<b>7</b>	End of Unit 7	End of Unit 8 or mid-unit 9	End of Unit 10

Timelines for Units 8 to 11 will vary depending on students' level of mastery of the code in Units 1 to 7.

Nevertheless, after many years of experience of seeing Sounds-Write implemented in hundreds of schools, we can say with some confidence that you should be able to complete your teaching of the Initial Code by Easter (depending a little on when exactly Easter falls). The summer term should then enable you to allow plenty of time for consolidation and for teaching the bridging units.

The key aspect to focus on for Units 8 to 11 is mastery of the skills of segmenting and blending of adjacent consonants.

Below, we've given you more guidance on how fast you need to progress. What you may notice is the more detailed way in which we are now suggesting how Units 9 to 11 should be taught. On beginning Unit 9, you should spend a week on building and reading words with adjacent consonants using continuants ('frog', 'slip', 'smell', etc.) before, in the second week, getting the class to practise with continuant/non-continuant adjacent consonants ('clap', 'drop', 'stop', etc.). Notice too how we are also suggesting that you

can also move forward in your teaching of the new code at this point. For example, there’s absolutely nothing difficult about introducing < sh > for /sh/ in Unit 11, using Lesson 5 in the context of three-sound CVC words like ‘fish’, ‘mash’ and ‘ship’.

Term1	Term 2	Term 3
<p><b>Initial Code: Units 1 – 7</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unit 1 (2 wks)</li> <li>• Unit 2 (2 wks)</li> <li>• Unit 3 (2 wks)</li> <li>• Unit 4 (2 wks)</li> <li>• Unit 5 (2 wks)</li> <li>• Unit 6 (2 wks)</li> <li>• Unit 7 (2 wks)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Initial Code: Units 8 – 10</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unit 8 (2 wks)</li> <li>• Unit 9 (2 wks): Wk 1 CCVC (continuants) Wk 2 CCVC (non-continuants) + Unit 11 /sh/ (fish/mash CVC)</li> <li>• Unit 10 + continuing Unit 11</li> </ul> <p>How far you get in Term 2 will depend on where Easter falls. If Easter falls early, simply continue in Term 3 from where you left off in Term 2.</p>	<p><b>Initial Code: Unit 10 to run concurrently with:</b></p> <p><b>Initial Code: Unit 11)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unit 11 - /sh/ - &lt; sh &gt;</li> <li>• Unit 11 - /ch/ - &lt; ch &gt;</li> <li>• Unit 11 - /th/ - &lt; th &gt; un/voiced</li> <li>• Unit 11 - /k/ - &lt; ck &gt;</li> <li>• Unit 11 - /ng/ - &lt; ng &gt; &amp; &lt; n &gt;</li> <li>• Unit 11 - /k/w/ - &lt; q &gt; &lt; u &gt;</li> <li>• Unit 11 - /w/ - &lt; wh &gt;</li> </ul> <p><b>Lesson 6 – Bridging Units (#39 on USB)</b></p>

## A note on the Bridging Unit

Using **Lesson 6**, teachers can formally introduce the concept one sound, different spellings while, at the same time, keeping the code at Initial Code level. Start with the different spellings of /k/ (< c >, < k >, < ck >), move on to different spellings of /ch/ (< ch > and < tch >) and /w/ (< w > and < wh >). It is important to remember that Lesson 6 should be running alongside the continuing practice of Units 10 and 11.

### The sound /ch/.

Before teaching two ways of spelling the sound /ch/, you will need to remember to introduce < tch > using Lesson 5 and then give time for your pupils to absorb this before teaching Lesson 6. In addition, from a conceptual point of view, teaching < tch > as three letters but just one sound is important because it will extend the idea of being able to spell a sound with one or two letters to being able to spell a sound with three letters. For example, it will enable you to point to spellings such as < ere > in the word ‘were’ and to say, “Here’s another of those three-letter spellings. It’s three letters but it’s just one sound. It’s /er/. Say /er/ here.”

## Spaced practice and interleaving

By including in Sounds-Write the recycling of previous units alongside the introduction of new content, we incorporate spaced practice into the planning, which has been demonstrated by cognitive scientists to help learners get information into long-term retrieval and storage memory. Similarly, we have incorporated interleaving into the planning so that, during a typical Sounds-Write session, we can introduce into the mix any three lessons from word building, word reading, sound swap, reading in text and dictation. In this way, interleaving allows learners to ‘better distinguish between concepts... and forces the learner to retrieve the *strategy* to answer each different type of problem that they encounter. This is helpful because (a) it mirrors real life, where we do not typically get to answer a lot of similar questions in a row, and (b) it allows the learner to select incorrect strategies and make errors that can then be corrected’ (Learning Scientists, p.96).

In the first year of implementing Sounds-Write in YR, we work through the Initial Code sequence (see Learning Objectives on page 84 of the manual). The focus will be on ensuring that **teachers deliver the Sounds-Write Lessons with fidelity by using the scripts until the lessons are automatic to the teacher**. The suggested sequence above enables teachers to develop fluency in delivering the Sounds-Write lessons, practise error corrections and ensure all students have developed mastery (of both recognition and recall) of this first part of the code and of the skills of segmenting, blending and phoneme manipulation. It is also expected that teachers are planning three Sounds-Write lessons into their daily Sounds-Write session and that the programme is constantly reviewed and updated as students’ progress or student needs are identified. This is what Dylan Wiliam and Daisy Christodoulou refer to as ‘responsive teaching’. It shouldn’t be forgotten that the whole of the Initial Code provides the foundation for all our future teaching. Daily Sounds-Write sessions should have good flow and smooth transitions between the Sounds-Write Lessons.

Most teachers will be able to identify pupils with difficulties early on in the year and scaffold or provide additional support to ensure these pupils remain with the majority of the class. Typical cohorts should be able to work through to the end of Unit 9 by the end of Term 2 and cover Units 10 and 11 in Term 3. This trajectory enables students to practise their code knowledge and skills with words of four and five sounds, whilst also learning new code in the form of the digraphs (< sh >, < ch > etc.) throughout these terms. At this point, the processes of segmenting and blending when students are building and reading words should be becoming automatic and there should be far fewer children who need to say the sounds aloud before reading the word.

Additional oral language enrichment experiences outside of the daily Sounds-Write sessions should be ongoing and these will be particularly beneficial for cohorts from non-English speaking backgrounds or

economically deprived areas.

As we have already made clear, after teaching Units 1 to 11, the bridging units offer the opportunity to introduce formally 'Concept 3: One Sound – Different Spellings' to students before they commence Year 1, thus setting students up for greater success in Year 1, when they begin to learn the first spellings of /ae/. Teachers will use the Lesson 6 script but keep the code at Initial Code level, working with sound-spelling correspondences students are already familiar with. Using the Bridging Unit, teachers can now bring (formally) to their students' attention, the idea that we spell sounds in different ways, using the three different spellings of /k/, two spellings of /ch/ and two or three (optional) spellings of /w/ (< w >, < wh > and < u >).

Our advice is that you should spend approximately one week on each of these. During this period, we would still expect to see regular dictation and reading practice, sound swapping and the reviewing of previous code taught (such as words from Unit 9 and 10 and the Unit 11 digraphs) planned into the daily Sounds-Write sessions. Implementation of the Initial Code in this format provides more opportunity for review of previous code and primes students to better internalise the complexities of the Extended Code in Year 1 and beyond.

Throughout the year (from Unit 2 onwards) there should be a strong focus on reading fluency and (from Unit 4) building writing stamina through regular dictations. Remember that when choosing passages for dictations, we want to limit the text as much as is feasible to words containing sound-spelling correspondences that have already been taught and practised: for that reason, high frequency words, which contain sound-spelling correspondences not yet taught, will be written on the board for pupils to refer to as needed. Dictation is an especially effective tool for reviewing previous code taught and for cementing the relationship between sounds and print: in effect, it acts as a contextualised spelling quiz, which greatly facilitates retrieval.

## References:

Christodoulou, D., (2017), *Making Good Progress? The Future of Assessment for Learning*, Oxford

Weinstein, Y, Sumeracki, M., Caviglioli, O., (2019) *Understanding How We Learn*, Routledge,.

William, D., (2018), *Creating the Schools We need: Why What We're Doing Won't Help Much (And What We Can Do Instead)*, Learning Sciences International.

William, D., (2017), *Embedded Formative Assessment: (Strategies for Classroom Assessment That Drives Student Engagement and Learning)*, Solution Tree Press.