



Rocket Phonics and the Ofsted School Inspection Handbook

(July 2022)

Below is a table that sets out the main phonics and early reading relevant points from the most recent School Inspection Handbook from Ofsted. This table refers to the online version of the Handbook hosted on the DfE website at www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-eif/school-inspection-handbook. It highlights how Rocket Phonics clearly aligns with the key criteria set out in the handbook and supports schools to feel confident in meeting and exceeding the inspection standards.

<i>Ofsted School Inspection Handbook Ref</i>	Ofsted School Inspection Handbook	Rocket Phonics
<i>Applying the Education Inspection Framework (EIF) to the teaching of early reading in infant, junior, primary and lower-middle schools.</i>		
<i>Inspection outcomes, Early stages of learning to read. Paragraph 242</i>	On inspections of infant, junior, primary and lower-middle schools, inspectors will carry out a deep dive to evaluate how well pupils are taught to read. They will pay particular attention to pupils who are reading below age-related expectations (the lowest 20%) to assess how well the school is teaching phonics and supporting all children to become confident, fluent readers. This will include understanding how reading is taught remotely, where applicable.	Rocket Phonics is a fully resourced, systematic, synthetic phonics programme that enables and encourages teachers and schools to teach phonics at a steady, but progressive pace, so that <i>all</i> children can keep up and do not have to catch up.
<i>Inspection outcomes, Early stages of learning to read. Paragraph 243</i>	Inspectors will listen to several low-attaining pupils in Years 1 to 3 read from unseen books appropriate to their stage of progress. They should also draw on information from the school's policy for teaching reading, phonics assessments, phonics screening check results and lesson visits.	Rocket Phonics provides regular opportunities to assess children's progress at key intervals in the programme (end of the half term assessments, end of Pupil Practice Booklet assessments) to support teachers in analysing children's progress.
<i>In reaching an evaluation against the 'quality of education' judgement, inspectors will consider whether:</i>		
<i>Inspection outcomes, Early stages of learning to read. Paragraph 245</i>	The school is determined that every pupil will learn to read, regardless of their background, needs or abilities. All pupils, including the weakest readers, make sufficient progress to meet or exceed age-related expectations.	Rocket Phonics was designed with the intention to be used to teach phonics in a whole class setting, where children are supported and challenged appropriately as one whole group to ensure collective, steady progression. The same opportunities for learning are given to <i>all</i> children, regardless of preconceived ideas of what we <i>think</i> they can achieve.

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<i>Inspection outcomes, Early stages of learning to read. Paragraph 245</i>	Stories, poems, rhymes and non-fiction are chosen for reading to develop pupils' vocabulary, language comprehension and love of reading. Pupils are familiar with and enjoy listening to a wide range of stories, poems, rhymes and non-fiction.	Rocket Phonics is lucky enough to have not one, but two fully aligned series of books; Target Practice Reading Books and Rocket Phonics Reading Books. These are fully decodable texts, which include a range of genres within fiction and non-fiction books, tailored to children's interests and modern, inclusive topics. Both series of books expose children to rich vocabulary, varied sentence structures and engaging stories.
<i>Inspection outcomes, Early stages of learning to read. Paragraph 245</i>	The school's phonics programme matches or exceeds the expectations of the national curriculum and the EYFS early learning goals. The school has clear expectations of pupils' phonics progress term-by-term, from Reception to Year 2.	Rocket Phonics reflects and exceeds the learning aims as set out in the National Curriculum and the Early Learning Goals by incorporating teaching and learning content that successfully supports children in achieving their learning expectations.
<i>Inspection outcomes, Early stages of learning to read. Paragraph 245</i>	The sequence of reading books shows a cumulative progression in phonics knowledge that is matched closely to the school's phonics programme. Teachers give pupils sufficient practice in reading and re-reading books that match the grapheme-phoneme correspondences they know, both at school and at home.	Both the Target Practice Reading Books and Rocket Phonics Reading Books have been carefully written to match the order in which the grapheme-phoneme correspondences are introduced to children. This allows children to practise their blending skills and apply their knowledge of the newly and previously taught sounds at sentence and text levels. As well as print versions, both series of books can be accessed as an e-book, which can also be purposefully allocated to specific children to access at home. To further support comprehension of the text, a final quiz can be found at the end of the story to check for children's understanding.
<i>Inspection outcomes, Early stages of learning to read. Paragraph 245</i>	Reading, including the teaching of systematic, synthetic phonics, is taught from the beginning of Reception.	The Rocket Phonics programme is designed to be delivered from the beginning of Reception.
<i>Inspection outcomes, Early stages of learning to read. Paragraph 245</i>	The ongoing assessment of pupils' phonics progress is sufficiently frequent and detailed to identify any pupil who is falling behind the programme's pace. If they do fall behind, targeted support is given immediately.	The Rocket Phonics programme includes both formative and summative assessment opportunities. A baseline assessment is available to ensure that teachers have a good understanding of the children's initial phonics abilities, of which can then be built upon. Half termly assessments are available for teachers to analyse at significant points how the children are progressing through the programme. At the end of each Pupil Practice Booklet there are two assessments for children to consolidate what they have learned so far and for teachers to address any gaps or misconceptions in learning. The way that each daily lesson is designed, encourages the consistent and frequent assessment through revisiting previously taught content, which enables the teacher to observe and identify children who require support and ensure that they do not get left behind.

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<p><i>Inspection outcomes, Early stages of learning to read. Paragraph 245</i></p>	<p>The school has developed sufficient expertise in the teaching of phonics and reading.</p>	<p>As a fully resourced, complete phonics programme, we offer thorough training that covers all of the knowledge that is necessary not to just deliver Rocket Phonics successfully, but to develop a comprehensive understanding of phonics holistically – it’s position within education, general phonics subject knowledge, the history of phonics and bespoke consultancy for individual schools.</p> <p>As well as training, within the Teacher Guides and planning documents on the online platform, there is an abundance of support in terms of lessons, optional reading activities and suggestions for teaching and lots more support throughout the whole programme to fully enable staff to deliver the Rocket Phonics programme to their best ability.</p>
<p><i>Below are the grade descriptors for a ‘Good’ Quality of Education, with detailed information on the support that Rocket Phonics can offer in relation to these points. It is noteworthy to mention that the Ofsted inspection team will judge a school to provide a ‘Good’ Quality of Education from a ‘best fit’ approach, relying on their professional judgement. A school cannot be judged as an ‘Outstanding’ provider unless its Quality of Education is ‘Outstanding’.</i></p>		
<p>Implementation</p>		
<p><i>Evaluating early years and sixth-form provision on graded inspections. Good (2). Paragraph 411</i></p>	<p>Teachers have good knowledge of the subject(s) and courses they teach.</p> <p>Leaders provide effective support, including for those teaching outside their main areas of expertise.</p>	<p>Rocket Phonics provides continuous professional development opportunities through training days, online training and bespoke consultancy days to ensure that all staff have secure knowledge and understanding of the most effective approaches to deliver the phonics learning content.</p> <p>Additional training is provided to further support phonics leaders and the SLT to enable them to advise their team effectively.</p>
<p><i>Evaluating early years and sixth-form provision on graded inspections. Good (2). Paragraph 411</i></p>	<p>Teachers present subject matter clearly, promoting appropriate discussion about the subject matter being taught. They check pupils’ understanding systematically, identify misconceptions accurately and provide clear, direct feedback. In so doing, they respond and adapt their teaching as necessary without unnecessarily elaborate or individualised approaches.</p>	<p>The clear organisation and presentation of the learning content with both the online and physical resources assists the clear communication and delivery of the phonics sessions. This is further enhanced through the interactive aspects of the programme, such as the online big books and comprehension quizzes, which encourage in-depth discussion of the learning so far as well as opportunities to move learning forward.</p>
<p><i>Evaluating early years and sixth-form provision on graded inspections. Good (2). Paragraph 411</i></p>	<p>Over the course of study, teaching is designed to help pupils to remember long term the content they have been taught and to integrate new knowledge into larger ideas.</p>	<p>The structure of the Rocket Phonics sessions provides opportunity for children to revise previously taught phonemes to ensure that as children add to their phonic knowledge, their previous learning can be retained.</p> <p>Through the closely matched book series, children can regularly practice and apply reading new and previously learned content at sentence and text levels.</p>

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<p><i>Evaluating early years and sixth-form provision on graded inspections. Good (2). Paragraph 411</i></p>	<p>Teachers and leaders use assessment well. For example, they use it to help pupils embed and use knowledge fluently, or to check understanding and inform teaching, or to understand different starting points and gaps as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Leaders understand the limitations of assessment and do not use it in a way that creates unnecessary burdens on staff or pupils.</p>	<p>Assessment is woven seamlessly throughout the Rocket Phonics programme.</p> <p>All the assessments within the programme are designed to be a regular, natural activity, that will not distress the children in any way, to ensure that they can focus on showing what they know.</p> <p>A baseline assessment is provided to ensure that teachers have a good understanding of the children's initial phonics abilities, of which can then be built upon.</p> <p>Each Pupil Practice Booklet has two assessments to recall and consolidate learning from that term.</p> <p>Further to this, there are half termly assessments to assess the children's retainment of the learning before moving onto the next half term's sounds.</p>
<p><i>Evaluating early years and sixth-form provision on graded inspections. Good (2). Paragraph 411</i></p>	<p>Teachers create an environment that focuses on pupils. The textbooks and other teaching materials that teachers select – in a way that does not create unnecessary workload for staff – reflect the school's ambitious intentions for the course of study. These materials clearly support the intent of a coherently planned curriculum, sequenced towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge and skills for future learning and employment.</p>	<p>Rocket Phonics resources (both online and print) and reading books have been purposefully created so that children's phonic knowledge gradually develops in a sequenced, logical way.</p> <p>The resources are designed to support teachers with their delivery as well as lessen their workload, as <i>everything</i> that the children and teachers need is provided for each lesson.</p>
<p><i>Evaluating early years and sixth-form provision on graded inspections. Good (2). Paragraph 411</i></p>	<p>The work given enables pupils to achieve the aims and ambition of the curriculum, which is coherently planned and sequenced towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge.</p>	<p>The way that Rocket Phonics has been mapped out, ensures that teachers will cover enough of the alphabetic code before the Year 1 Phonics Screening Check. There is YouTube video guidance (Rocket Phonics PSC) which clearly explains the coverage and rationale behind the structure of the programme and how this supports children to be successful in the Phonics Screening Check.</p> <p>The Pupil Practice Booklets are purposefully pitched at a challenging level for children, with the idea that we should not 'cap' children's learning and provide the opportunity for <i>all</i> children to access challenging content.</p>

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<p><i>Evaluating early years and sixth-form provision on graded inspections. Good (2). Paragraph 411</i></p>	<p>A rigorous and sequential approach to the reading curriculum develops pupils' fluency, confidence and enjoyment in reading. At all stages, reading attainment is assessed and gaps are addressed quickly and effectively for all pupils. Reading books connect closely to the phonics knowledge pupils are taught when they are learning to read.</p>	<p>Rocket Phonics is a complete phonics programme that follows a systematic order of teaching. This enables children to develop reading fluency through being taught specific sounds that can be used to make words at the very start of the programme, so children can practice and apply their reading skills straight away.</p> <p>Furthermore, the programme promotes the idea that children only ever read texts with sounds that they have already been taught. Therefore, when given a fully matched, decodable text for the book series (either a Target Practice Reading Book or Rocket Phonics Reading Book) the children can access the content and apply their reading skills confidently.</p> <p>Children's enjoyment in reading is boosted in the Rocket Phonics programme, through the online platform offering interactive e-books and quizzes and online games.</p> <p>At significant points in the programme, the children's reading progress is assessed, which enables the opportunity to identify any gaps in children's learning and provide support to ensure that no child needs catch up in the future. The overarching philosophy of Rocket Phonics is for children to be able to keep up with the learning, so they do not need to catch up.</p>
<p><i>Evaluating early years and sixth-form provision on graded inspections. Good (2). Paragraph 411</i></p>	<p>The sharp focus on ensuring that younger children and those at the early stages of reading gain phonics knowledge and language comprehension necessary to read, and the skills to communicate, gives them the foundations for future learning.</p>	<p>The Rocket Phonics programme introduces two new letter sounds a week, whilst also revising previously learned sounds. As children learn the letter sounds at a steady pace, they can also focus on their reading skills (vocabulary, inference, prediction, explanation, retrieval, and sequencing) alongside this learning.</p> <p>Within the programme, there are lesson plans to accompany the Rocket Phonics Additional Reading Practice Books and Target Practice Reading Books, which include reading skills practice with a task that fulfils the reading focus. This means that the children's reading skills (both phonetically and comprehension) develop simultaneously.</p>
<p><i>Evaluating early years and sixth-form provision on graded inspections. Good (2). Paragraph 411</i></p>	<p>Teachers ensure that their own speaking, listening, writing and reading of English support pupils in developing their language and vocabulary well.</p>	<p>Rocket Phonics advocates explicit modelling for the teaching of reading, writing, and spelling. This is evident through the lesson plans and teacher guides, which advise and recommend when to model and give clear explanations for teachers to use when modelling.</p> <p>This explicit modelling practice will not only support teachers in phonics but will be transferable to all lessons for teachers to ensure quality modelling to communicate the learning as clearly as possible, supporting teachers' professional development.</p>