Appendix B: A checklist for choosing a phonics programme

This guidance describes what a strong programme provides, and what good evidence for it looks like.

This checklist evaluates phonics teaching and its application in reading and spelling. It does not assess the school's whole literacy curriculum. Schools should also consider how the programme will work alongside their provision for oral language, vocabulary, comprehension, engagement with a wide range of texts, and wider writing. A phonics programme need not supply all of this teaching or its resources, but its implementation should allow these elements to develop alongside phonics.

As an initial requirement, the programme or approach should meet the definition of SSP in Section 2: grapheme-phoneme correspondences are taught explicitly in a planned cumulative sequence; blending is the primary strategy for reading unfamiliar words; and segmenting is taught for spelling.

Work through it with the programme materials in front of you, and record where you saw each thing. Mark each item **Y** (clearly met), **P** (partly met) or **N** (not met).

This checklist draws on the programme criteria, evidence guidance, and fidelity guidance in Section 4, the definition of SSP in Section 2, and the bilingual guidance in Section 3.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR	NOTES	Y / P / N
CONTENT AND SEQUENCE		
A systematic, cumulative scope and sequence, in manageable steps, with a clear lesson structure. Planned review built in, with guidance on pacing and on what to do when learners need more time. Explicit routines for blending to decode and segmenting to spell, with clear teacher language and examples. Phonemic awareness linked to letters and print.		
PRACTICE AND CONSOLIDATION		
Cumulative practice that builds accuracy first, then automaticity. Spaced retrieval of previously taught content. Practice at every level: GPC, word, sentence and connected text, in reading and in spelling.		
TEXTS AND WORD LEARNING		
Decodable or matched texts aligned to the taught correspondences, with clear guidance on how and when to use them and on combining them with richer texts. An explicit approach to common exception words that draws attention to the decodable parts. Fluency developed through accurate oral reading, with modelling and feedback, moving from words to connected text. Beyond the early code (if used past early primary) Clear progression into multisyllabic words, morphology, and spelling conventions.		
ASSESSMENT		
Built-in checks of phonemic awareness, taught GPCs and decoding (including nonword reading where appropriate), spelling, and fluency where relevant. Clear decision rules about what counts as secure, when to reteach, when to increase review, and when to provide additional support.		
SUPPORT AND INCLUSION		
Practical guidance for learners who need more support: including smaller chunks, more review, more guided practice, and structured rechecks. Implementation support: training materials, example lessons, common misconceptions, coaching tools, resource lists, and realistic time guidance.		

WHAT TO LOOK FOR	NOTES	Y / P / N
EVIDENCE AND TRANSPARENCY		
Impact claims name a comparison: compared with what, for whom, and under what conditions.		
Outcomes were measured with independent, standardised or well-validated tests, not only the programme's own assessments.		
The evidence is transparent about who was studied: participants, duration, dosage, training, fidelity, and implementation conditions.		
There is reason to expect the findings to transfer: replication across settings or a clear rationale, and attention to fit for Wales (language of instruction and assessment).		
The school knows where the programme sits on its evidence journey and treats early-stage claims with proportionate caution.		
The study design supports the claim: random or well-matched comparison groups, low dropout, and analysis that matches how learners were grouped (for example, by class or school).		
Before-and-after gains alone are not treated as evidence of impact (without a comparison group, improvement cannot show that the programme caused it)		
TRAINING AND FIDELITY		
Staff can access the recommended training, refresher training, and induction for new staff.		
The school can deliver it as designed: adherence, dosage, quality of delivery and consistency over time, with coaching or observation where appropriate.		
An explicit approach to common exception words that draws attention to the decodable parts.		
Fluency developed through accurate oral reading, with modelling and feedback, moving from words to connected text.		
Beyond the early code (if used past early primary)		
Clear progression into multisyllabic words, morphology, and spelling conventions.		