Teach the relationship between sounds and letters by systematically introducing the letter/s-sound correspondences of the English alphabetic code (e.g. between three and five correspondences per week at first, including vowels and consonants). Start with mainly one spelling for each of the 42+ sounds (phonemes) identifiable in English speech before focussing on further spelling and pronunciation variations. (Initial teaching takes 2 to 3 years to teach a comprehensive level of alphabetic code; continue to build on this as required for phonics for spelling.)

Model how to put the letter/s-sound correspondences introduced (the alphabetic code knowledge) to immediate use teaching the three skills of:

Reading/decoding: synthesise (sound out and blend) all-through-the-printed-word to 'hear' the target word. Modify the pronunciation of the word where necessary.

Spelling/encoding: orally segment (split up) all-through-the-spoken-word to identify the single sounds (phonemes) and know which letters and letter groups (graphemes) are code for the identified sounds.

Handwriting: write the lower case, then the upper case, letters of the alphabet correctly. Hold the pencil with a tripod grip.

Practise regular dictation exercises from letter level to text level (as appropriate).

Provide cumulative, decodable words, sentences and texts which match the level of alphabetic code knowledge and blending skills taught to date, when asking the learner to read independently.

Emphasise letter sounds at first and not letter names. (Learn letter names in the first instance by chanting the alphabet or singing an alphabet song.)

Do not teach an initial sight vocabulary where learners are expected to memorise words as whole shapes.

Do not teach or encourage guessing/predicting words from their shape, or from picture, context or initial letter cues (sometimes known as 'multi-cueing' or a 'range of reading strategies').

This teaching approach is set within a literacy-rich environment and requires a full range of further age-appropriate communication, language and literacy activities and creative opportunities

Introduce useful, common 'tricky words' slowly and systematically emphasising the blending skill once the tricky letter or letters have been pointed out. For example, when teaching the word 'you', say, "In this word (pointing at 'you'), these letters (pointing at 'ou'), are code for /oo/." ('Tricky words' are a small number of words, in which there are rare/unusual graphemes, or, words in which not all the graphemes have yet been formally taught, which might be used in early reading material.)

Teach a planned and structured phonics progression – but also teach incidental phonics as the need arises.

Note: This teaching approach is set within a literacy-rich environment and requires a full range of further age-appropriate communication, language and literacy activities and creative opportunities. Synthetic phonics teaching is generally at the level of the 'phoneme' (single sound) and not onset and rime (e.g. tr-ick, fl-ap) or consonant clusters (e.g. bl, sp, scr, -nd, - mp, -st) or word families (e.g. cake, make, take, flake).

The complexities of the English Alphabetic Code:

1. One, two, three or four letters can represent one phoneme (e.g. s, ph, air, eigh).

2. Most phonemes can be represented by different graphemes (e.g. /oa/: o, oa, ow, o-e, eau, ough).

3. Some graphemes can represent more than one phoneme (e.g. 'ough': /oa/ though, /u/ borough, /ou/ plough, /or/ thought, /oo/ through).