



Department
for Education

PHONICS PARTNERSHIP GRANTS

Invitation to apply

Critical dates	Date
Deadline for expressions of interest from potential partnerships	5pm, 15 July 2016
Evaluation of expression of interests by DfE	18 July onwards
Successful partnerships notified	w/c 15 August
Partnerships develop implementation plans	September 2016
Activity commences	September 2016
Funding period ends	31 March 2016

We must receive an electronic copy of your expression of interest to DfE mailbox: standards.mailbox@education.gsi.gov.uk (please use 'Phonics Partnerships' in the subject box) by 5pm, 15 July 2016.

For further clarification on the guidelines or to discuss your application, please contact Tracy Sans on standards.mailbox@education.gsi.gov.uk or 0207 783 8231.

No paper based or late applications will be accepted and any applications that are incomplete will not be assessed.

1. Background

- 1.1. The government wants every child and young person to achieve to the best of his or her ability irrespective of prior attainment, location or background. To support pupils with their reading the government wants all primary schools to achieve excellence in phonics teaching so that all pupils are able to decode words to an age-appropriate standard by the end of year 1, giving them the foundation to become confident readers. There is sound evidence that systematic synthetic phonics is the most effective method of teaching reading to all children. The government is committed to ensuring high quality teaching of phonics in primary schools and promoting the use of systematic synthetic phonics in the teaching of early reading.
- 1.2. The national curriculum introduced in September 2014 requires children to be taught phonic knowledge and skills as the route to decoding words. From September 2011 to October 2013, the government provided match-funding to enable schools with key stage 1 and key stage 2 pupils to buy effective systematic synthetic phonics products and/or training. £23.7million was claimed by over 14,000 schools. Since 2012, all pupils have taken a screening check at the end of Year 1, repeated if necessary at the end of Year 2, to assess their ability to decode words using phonics.
- 1.3. In 2015, 77% of pupils met the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of year 1. 90% of pupils had met it by the end of year 2. There is, however, great variation at local authority and at individual school level in the proportion of pupils who meet the expected standard at the end of year 1. Achieving this standard is a strong indicator of a pupil's performance

in KS1 assessments: 99% of pupils who did so in 2014 went on to achieve level 2 or above in reading at the end of key stage 1. Of those who did not achieve this at the end of year 2, only 29% reached level 2 or above.

- 1.4. Funding for eight school-led phonics partnerships was announced on 14 July 2015. Funding of £10,000 in 2015-16 (starting in September 2015) was provided to each partnership to improve the quality of phonics teaching in the area. Each partnership was led by a high-performing school with a track record of leading improvement activity and included schools seeking to make improvements in their phonics teaching.

2. Aim

- 2.1. We are again looking for primary schools that achieve excellence in teaching early reading through systematic synthetic phonics to work with partner schools to both improve the quality of phonics teaching and early reading.
- 2.2. We will offer grants of up to £12,000 in 2015-16 to enable up to 10 groups of schools, reflecting a range of school circumstances, to work in partnership to develop sustainable models for raising the quality of phonics teaching and early reading. The approaches should have the potential to be adopted by other groups of schools in future years.
- 2.3. Each partnership will be led by a high-performing school with a track record of leading improvement activity and will include schools seeking to make rapid improvements to their phonics teaching and early reading. We have not specified the size of the partnership, but will be looking for proposals that include as many schools as is consistent with maintaining high quality activity. You will have worked out the likely membership of your partnership, including schools that will provide support, and other schools who will be partners, and agreed this with them before sending in an expression of interest form. You will need to make sure that the Partnership's overall membership meets the criteria set out in this guidance.
- 2.4. The support provided may include strategic support for schools in embedding phonics across the curriculum, practical support for improving the quality of phonics teaching and early reading, and partnership-wide training and demonstration events that disseminates the lead schools own successful practice. You will be expected to assess the impact of their activity and to share knowledge and resources resulting from their work with the wider school population.

3. Who can apply

- 3.1. Any group of schools that meet the criteria below and in section 4 can apply for a grant:
 - Only state-funded schools that have pupils at Key Stage 1 on roll are eligible to apply. Grants are not available to independent schools.

- There must be a designated lead school. This school will be responsible for co-ordinating the partnership, ensuring delivery of its workplan and assessment of its impact, and providing feedback to DfE.

4. Criteria and Expression of Interest process

4.1. Schools that lead partnerships, and any schools within the partnership that will provide support to others as part of the grant-funded activity, will need to demonstrate:

- strength in pupil achievement in phonic decoding at the end of year 1, and in reading at the end of KS1 and KS2;
- a strong commitment to the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics as the prime strategy for word recognition, rather than as the first of several alternative strategies. Using a programme that meets the core criteria¹ produced by the Department for Education (DfE);
- evidence of expertise in both high quality phonics teaching and early reading in supporting other schools to improve their performance; and
- a strong commitment to wider reading.

4.2. Schools that lead partnerships and all the schools that will provide support to other schools as part of the partnership's work must meet the criteria we have specified:

- 93% or more of pupils achieving the expected standard in the 2015 phonics screening check at the end of year 1.
- Overall good or outstanding rating at last Ofsted inspection.
- The proportion of pupils achieving L2 or above for reading at KS1 is above the national average in each of the last two years (2014: 90%, 2015: 90%)
- The proportion of pupils achieving L4b or above for reading at KS2 is above the national average in each of the last two years (2014: 78%, 2015: 80%)

4.3. We expect that most of the other members of the partnership will be schools where the proportion of pupils who met the expected standard in the phonics screening check in 2015 was below the national average (77%). As school level phonics screening check data are not published, you will need to speak directly with schools who may be interested in forming a partnership with you. Your local authority may be able to alert other schools to your interest in forming a partnership so that they can get in touch with you.

4.4. An expression of interest form accompanies this guidance and asks for:

- names of the schools that will make up the partnership and school details including Unique Reference Number (URN); and

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/phonics-teaching-materials-core-criteria-and-self-assessment>

- for the lead school, and all schools that will provide support as part of the grant-funded activity, a brief description of their approach to the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics and early reading, their expertise in supporting other schools to improve their performance and their commitment to wider reading (700 words maximum).
- for the lead school to set out their proposals for the phonics partnership, including what improvements your partnership will make, how you will measure the success of the partnership including the metrics you will use to judge success and what the targets are. The process by which you will improve the quality of phonics teaching and early reading, and why the model you propose is most appropriate and describe the activities you intend to deliver.

Expressions of interest will be evaluated against the detailed criteria set out in Annex A, and may be further prioritised on the basis of geographical coverage or to ensure that partnerships cover different school circumstances. Our aim is to enable the development of a range of school-to-school support models, each with the potential to work for other, similar groups of schools in future.

5. What funding is available

- 5.1. The Department expects to award up to 10 grants with a value of up to £12,000 per partnership for the financial year ending 31 March 2017. Grants will be subject to the Department for Education Grant Terms and Conditions². This funding is in recognition of the costs to participating schools of developing the model and measuring the impact on the quality of teaching in the 2016/17 academic year.
- 5.2. Any grant paid by the Secretary of State will be paid pursuant to Education Act 2002, Section 14 and will accordingly be paid only in respect of approved expenditure incurred by the school(s) for the purpose of the funded activities. Grant-funding will be provided on the strict understanding that none of this funding is to be used for advertising, marketing, communications and consultancy, or for any costs associated with the maintenance, technical development or updating of existing websites or for the development/creation of new websites.

6. Format of expression of interest

- 6.1. Applicants should present their proposals in the Partnership's Proposal section of the expression of interest form. The completed expression of interest form should be no more than 8 pages in length. The form should be completed in Arial Font 12.

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/grant-funding-agreement-terms-and-conditions>

7. How are applications assessed?

7.1. We will assess each eligible expression of interest against the criteria set out in Annex A on the basis of the information provided and the quality of the proposal. Proposals may be further prioritised on the basis of geographical coverage or to ensure that partnerships cover different school circumstances. Our aim is to enable the development of a range of school-to-school support models, each with the potential to be adopted by other, similar groups of schools in future.

8. Submitting expressions of interest

8.1. We must receive an electronic copy of your expression of interest to DfE mailbox: standards.mailbox@education.gsi.gov.uk (please use 'Phonics Partnerships' in the subject box) by 5pm, 15 July 2016. We do not require paper copies. Expressions of interest received after the deadline will not be considered.

9. Queries

9.1. If you have any questions about the grant application process, please contact DfE via the email address above. We will publish on Contract Finder answers to any questions that provide advice which is in addition to the information in this guidance document.

10. Grant payment

10.1. If an application is successful, the organisation will receive a Grant Agreement. The Grant Agreement will outline the objectives of the grant, the activity to be carried out and the total grant amount. During the term of the Agreement the lead school will be required to provide reports that account for the grant and demonstrate that it is spent only on the specified activity. The partnership must agree to comply with all conditions outlined in the Agreement and once signed return the Agreement to standards.mailbox@education.gsi.gov.uk.

10.2. The Department will pay this grant to the lead school for use by the partnership in accordance with the following expectations, subject to the lead school and partnership meeting the requirements set out in this guidance.

10.3. The grant of up to £12,000 will be paid in two payments, one in December 2016 and one in March 2017 subject to the funding conditions outlined in section 4 above.

10.4. In return for the grant-funding, we expect the partnership in the period to 31 March 2017 to:

- develop a detailed workplan based on their successful proposal;
- deliver the improvement activity set out in their workplan;
- provide baseline and impact information to the Department for Education;
- and

- share knowledge and resources resulting from their work with the wider school population.

10.5. And the lead school specifically to:

- co-ordinate the partnership;
- ensure delivery of the workplan and assessment of its impact;
- co-ordinate the collection and return of baseline and impact information to the Department for Education;
- provide information on progress during the year and a final overall report on the work of the partnership, to allow the Department for Education to monitor progress and to enable the development of case studies describing the work of different partnerships;
- provide partnership-wide training and demonstration events that disseminates their own successful practice;
- ensure knowledge and resources resulting from the partnership's work are shared with the wider school population; and
- attend two national meetings, in autumn 2016 and spring 2017.

Expression of interest: eligibility³

The table below will be used to assess the expressions of interest.

Requirement	Evidence required	Weighting	Score
<i>Schools that lead partnerships, and any schools within the partnership that will provide support</i>			
93% or more of pupils achieving the expected standard in the 2015 phonics screening check at the end of year 1.	We will draw on existing data using school URNs. You are not required to provide this data; only the details of the relevant schools. Schools that do not have two years of performance data will need to provide additional information about the school's performance in reading at KS1 and KS2.		Lead schools must meet all these requirements for the expression of interest to be further considered.
Overall good or outstanding rating at last Ofsted inspection.			
The proportion of pupils achieving L2 or above for reading at KS1 is above the national average in each of the last two years (2014: 90%, 2015: 90%).			
The proportion of pupils achieving L4b or above for reading at KS2 is above the national average in each of the last two years (2014: 78%, 2015: 80%).			
Strong commitment to the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics as the prime strategy for word recognition, rather than as the first of several alternative strategies. Using a programme that meets the core criteria ⁴ produced by the Department for Education.	Do all schools that will provide support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use a high quality systematic synthetic phonics programme whose publisher has demonstrated that it meets the core criteria⁵ produced by the DfE? (It is not a requirement that all schools providing support use the same programme.) • use phonics as the prime strategy for word recognition, rather than as the first of several alternative strategies? 	x3	0-5

³ In addition to the specified requirements, we will also consider geographical spread to ensure a range of school circumstances in making our decisions.

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/phonics-teaching-materials-core-criteria-and-self-assessment>

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/phonics-teaching-materials-core-criteria-and-self-assessment>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> implement the systematic synthetic phonics programme faithfully and in full, avoiding a pick and mix approach to programmes and resources? 		
Expertise in high quality phonics teaching and early reading.	Do all leaders and teachers that will provide support have relevant experience and expertise?	x2	0-5
Expertise in supporting other schools to improve their performance	Do all schools that will provide support have a track record in successful school-to-school support?	x2	0-5
Strong commitment to wider reading	Do all schools that will provide support have a track record in supporting/ promoting wider reading?	X2	0-5
<i>Schools in the partnership that will receive support</i>			
We expect that most other members of the partnership will be schools where the proportion of pupils who met the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of year 1 in 2015 was below the national average (77%).	We will draw on existing data using school URNs. You are not required to provide this data; only the details of the relevant schools.	x1	0-5
Phonics Partnership Proposal			
Requirements: We will be looking for evidence of these requirements throughout the proposal:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the proposal set out the improvements sought and how the impact of the work will be measured? Does the proposal focus on helping schools ensure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High expectations are set – specifically, that all pupils will master phonic decoding by the end of year 1? The school leadership team places a relentless emphasis on ensuring high quality phonics teaching and 		x4	0-5

<p>early reading within the school's literacy programme?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A high quality systematic synthetic phonics programme⁶ is used faithfully and in full, avoiding a pick and mix approach to programmes and resources? ○ Individual pupils' progress in mastering phonic knowledge is tracked closely and from the time they start school, and prompt support is provided if they are not making expected progress? • Does the proposal set out the process for improving the quality of phonics teaching and early reading, and why the model is appropriate? • Does the proposal set out the activities intended to be deliver the proposed improvements? Does the proposal set out who will deliver each of the activities and their relevant expertise? • Does the proposal set out how the work will be sustained beyond the funding period and learning continued and disseminated? 		
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⁶ One that meets the DfE's core criteria for high quality phonics programmes <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/phonics-teaching-materials-core-criteria-and-self-assessment>

We will use the evaluation matrix below to ensure a consistent approach when scoring expressions of interest. The evaluation team will have the scope to use its own judgement and discretion when awarding scores and should make appropriate notes to validate all scores awarded which may be used to debrief unsuccessful applicants. Applicants should note that the word count limits will be applied strictly and any additional material provided over the limits set will be ignored by evaluators.

0	No evidence/response
1	Poor response. Very little evidence of appropriate knowledge skills or experience.
2	Unsatisfactory. Some evidence of appropriate knowledge, skills or experience. Meets requirements in some areas but with important omissions.
3	Satisfactory. Reasonable evidence of appropriate knowledge, skills or experience. Meets requirements in many areas but not all.
4	Very good. Sufficient evidence provided of appropriate knowledge, skills or experience. Have confidence in their ability to deliver the required service.
5	Excellent. Very strong evidence of appropriate knowledge, skills or experience.