



Monster Phonics SEND Framework

A framework for adapting Monster Phonics for learners with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

SECTION 1: Core Principles

Creating a Route to Reading for Every Child

At Monster Phonics, we believe every child can learn to read. Reading unlocks communication, access to learning, and long-term independence. This is no less true for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). It is our shared responsibility—across classrooms, countries, and contexts—to ensure that every child is taught to read as part of a rich, inclusive education.

This framework offers guidance for educators using Monster Phonics in both mainstream and specialist settings. It focuses on supporting children with SEND to access the full phonics programme, remaining in the main lesson wherever possible. The aim is to uphold high expectations and equity of access while adapting pace and structure to meet individual needs.

Monster Phonics is an enhanced systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) programme. From the start, it was designed to support a wide range of learners through its unique colour-coded, multisensory approach. These built-in features—such as visual character cues, consistent routines, and scaffolded resources—make phonics more accessible across diverse learning profiles. Teachers are supported to adapt provision within the programme, without needing a separate or simplified track.

Monster Phonics Built in Enhancements

Understanding the Monster Phonics colour-coding system is vital. It offers built-in opportunities to support the most challenging aspects of decoding, particularly:

- Long vowels
- Silent letters
- Tricky letters

Monster Phonics does this through:

- Colour-coded graphemes
- Character cues linked to specific grapheme types
- Consistent structure and visual scaffolding
- Physical resources like flashcards and colour-coded magnetic letters

These features are explored in the Core Training modules and offer an inclusive, multisensory approach that supports learners with diverse needs.



A Mindset for Inclusion

Inclusion begins with belief. A mindset that sees potential—not limits—transforms outcomes for children with SEND. This framework is grounded in the principle that high expectations, matched with the right support, lead to meaningful progress.

This means:

- Believing that children with SEND can master the full alphabetic code.
- Teaching the complete phonics sequence—not a reduced or alternative version.
- Recognising and building on strengths.
- Planning support that develops independence, not dependency.
- Using evidence-based strategies over assumption or instinct.

This is not about creating a different route. It is about ensuring that every child, in every setting, can access the same route—with the support they need to succeed.

Who This Framework Supports

This guidance is designed to support:

- Learners with identified SEND in mainstream classrooms.
- Pupils in specialist settings requiring adapted pacing or structure.
- Children with English as an Additional Language (EAL) and additional learning needs.
- Any child not making expected progress despite quality-first teaching.

It is relevant to teachers and school leaders across a wide range of global settings—including those working within UK, bilingual, and international curriculum models.

Why Phonics for Every Child: Research and Rationale

The research base for systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) is strong and international in scope. High-quality phonics teaching is not only suitable for children with SEND—it is essential.

Same curriculum, same expectations

“These pupils have to navigate the same written language, unlock the same alphabetic code, learn the same skills, and learn and remember the same body of knowledge as their peers.”
—DfE Reading Framework, 2023

SSP is effective for SEND learners

- A 2021 French study (Sermier et al.) found that students with intellectual disabilities made strong progress in phonics-based programmes.
- Arciuli & Bailey (2021), in a review of reading instruction for autistic learners, confirmed the effectiveness of structured, cumulative phonics.



- Stanislas Dehaene, cognitive neuroscientist, wrote: “It is simply not true that there are hundreds of ways to learn to read... when it comes to reading we all have roughly the same brain.”

Dispelling common myths

- Trembath et al. (2015) found no evidence supporting visual-only, whole-word methods for autistic learners.
- Cologon (2013) advised against sight-word-only approaches for learners with Down syndrome, favouring phonics instruction.

In Summary

All children—including those with SEND—can and should make progress in reading through high-quality phonics teaching. They do not need a different curriculum. They need support to access the same one through adaptations that preserve rigour and intent.

Monster Phonics provides this through its inclusive design. The programme’s visual scaffolding, character-based cues, consistent routines and multisensory content support a wide range of learners across different contexts and cultures.

This framework will help educators around the world adapt the programme while remaining faithful to its structure—ensuring that every child can access the alphabetic code, make progress, and experience success in reading.

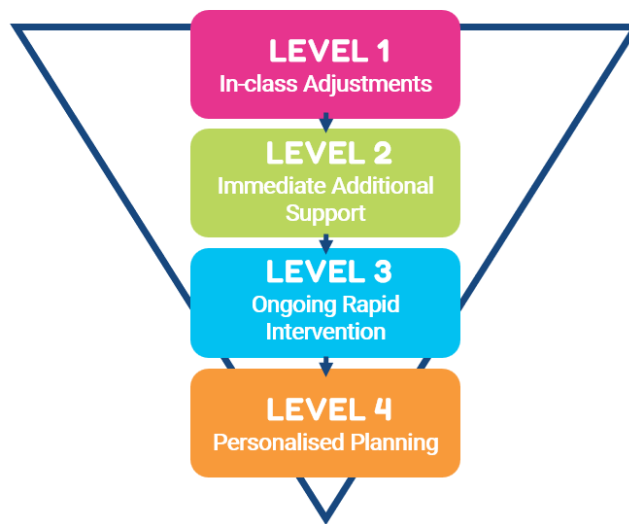
SECTION 2: Adaptions for the Learner

Adapting Monster Phonics for Learners with SEND

Most children with SEND can be taught successfully within the main Monster Phonics lesson. Adaptations help ensure access to the full programme without reducing expectations or removing children from the classroom unnecessarily. The aim is to keep children working within the same sequence of phonics content—adjusting how we teach, not what we teach.

Keeping children in the main phonics lesson allows them to follow the same progression, benefit from peer modelling, and build shared classroom routines. It promotes high expectations and reduces the risk of dependency on adult-led instruction. Inclusion protects both dignity and ambition.

Some children may need temporary or ongoing adaptations to support pace, focus, or memory. A much smaller number may need additional intervention, and in rare cases, more individualised planning. This sections below outline four broad levels of adaption.



Level 1: In-Class Adaptations

Most children with SEND benefit from small, well-targeted changes to lesson delivery. These might include:

- **Planned adaptations to the lesson plan or structure:** Consider which parts of the session may need adjustment. This could involve increasing scaffolding for specific learning points—such as using a phoneme frame or providing adult support when blending remains challenging. For example, if most of the class is blending automatically, but one child is not, using “my go, our go, your go” or adding sound buttons may unlock access to the rest of the lesson content.
- **Adapting the type or level of activity:** Some learners may benefit from an alternative task that aligns with the learning objective but better suits their needs. This might involve using matching or sorting tasks rather than writing-based activities.
- **Varying the pace of delivery:** Elements of the session might be delivered over a longer timeframe, either by stretching the lesson across the day or by increasing the number of smaller, sequential steps. Delivering the lesson in shorter blocks can reduce cognitive load and increase engagement. This can also allow a child to join for key points while receiving targeted support elsewhere.
- **On-the-fly adaptations:** Adjust tasks or instructions dynamically during the session if a child appears disengaged or unable to access the learning.
- **Allowing more time:** Often children need more time to process. Provide space for overlearning, particularly for GPCs that have not yet become automatic. For example, reduce the number of words required to blend or segment to allow for longer processing.



- **Spaced reinforcement:** Build in mini-sessions or repeated practice at different times in the day to reinforce key learning and ensure access to the main lesson.
- **Pre-teaching key content:** Introduce GPCs, skills or vocabulary before the lesson to support confidence and comprehension.
- **Frequent modelling and shared responses:** Even if the class is ready for independent work, continued modelling can benefit individual learners who are still mastering the skill. Adjust the level of scaffold to ensure confidence and success.

These adaptations can be made across any part of the five-part Monster Phonics lesson structure (Review, Learn, Hook, Activity, Plenary), supporting access without altering the sequence or learning objective.

Level 2: Immediate Additional Support

Some children may need a short, focused session before or after the main lesson to help secure the learning from that day. These learners are typically working within the lesson sequence but require extra consolidation to keep pace.

The **Same-Day Intervention** resources on the Monster Phonics teaching dashboard provide ready-made materials designed for this purpose.

These include:

- **Simplified PowerPoints** that revisit the key GPC in a low-cognitive-load format.
- A reduced number of **target words and slides** to help focus attention.
- Structured visuals that **mirror the main lesson**, maintaining consistency.

These interventions can be used flexibly:

- **Before the lesson** for pre-teaching.
- **After the lesson** for reinforcement.
- **As needed** during the week to revisit GPCs or consolidate prior learning.

Children at this level benefit from routine, repeated exposure in manageable chunks. Same-Day Interventions help close gaps before they grow, while keeping children within the same teaching sequence as their peers.

These resources are found in the **Intervention section** of the dashboard and training on their use can be found in both the Core Training and Specialised Pathways.



Level 3: Ongoing Rapid Intervention

Some children require more structured targeted support over time to address specific gaps in knowledge or skills. These children may not have responded fully to in-class adaptations or same-day support. Monster Phonics provides a clear pathway for identifying and addressing these needs through **Rapid Intervention**.

Identifying learners who need Rapid Intervention

Use a combination of:

- **Scheduled summative assessments** (via the Monster Phonics Tracker)
- **Gap analysis** to pinpoint GPCs, blending/segmenting gaps, or high-frequency word challenges
- **Classroom observations and response to same-day interventions**

Children should not have to wait for formal assessments to receive support. Any signs that a child is not keeping up should trigger intervention without delay.

Types of Rapid Intervention

Use the **Rapid Intervention Skills and Knowledge Flowchart** (available on the teaching dashboard) to determine the most suitable approach:

- **Whole-Class Intervention:** when 30% or more of the class show insecurity with the same GPCs or skills.
- **Group Intervention:** when a small number of children share common gaps.
- **Individual Intervention:** when a child has specific, individualised learning needs or has not responded to other forms of support.

Planning and delivering interventions

- Select from the **Group and Individual Rapid Intervention materials** on the dashboard
- Ensure interventions are:
 - Regular (e.g. daily or several times per week)
 - Aligned with current teaching (using the same visuals, teaching strategies and terminology)
 - Informed by data and reviewed frequently

Children may need multiple interventions if they have more than one area of need (e.g. blending and tricky word reading).

Rapid Intervention guidance recommends a 3 week re assessment timetable. This, however, may need to be extended depending on the needs of the learner.

The goal remains the same: to support children to fill any gaps in skills and knowledge whilst continuing with participating in class lessons with the appropriate Level 1 & 2 support in place.



Level 4: Personalised Planning

A very small number of learners may require a significantly individualised approach to phonics. This means making adaptations to how, when, and at what pace phonics is taught, without compromising on ambition or fidelity to the progression. This is not a separate programme but a flexible adaptation of the core Monster Phonics structure, guided by close knowledge of the learner.

At this level, phonics becomes part of the child's **individual plan** (IEP, EHCP, or personalised pathway) and may be delivered:

- At a slower pace, revisiting graphemes over longer periods (e.g. one GPC per week).
- Through structured, familiar routines that support memory and confidence.
- With high levels of adult support and scaffolding.
- Outside of the main classroom if needed, though every effort should be made to include the learner in some aspects of the main lesson.

These children may need:

- A **consistent lesson structure** even if the content is adjusted (e.g. Review, Learn, Hook, Activity, Plenary).
- Greater use of **proximate steps**, breaking learning down into very small chunks.
- Regular, **overlearning**, supported by consistent adult cues and minimal variation.
- Personalised resources that retain the familiar Monster Phonics colour coding, character prompts and physical materials, but adapted to suit learning pace and preference.

To support this:

- We provide a **slower-paced planning template** for children working at Level 2 GPCs, with further resources under development.
- A library of **case studies** will be added to illustrate how schools have adapted phonics delivery for children working at Level 4.
- A **training module on multisensory phonics** will be made available, focused on learners with complex SEND needs.
- We encourage teachers to build and share practice via the Monster Phonics community.

This level should be seen as a temporary and flexible plan, with the goal of increasing inclusion over time. Where possible, build elements of the main session back into the child's day.

However, we appreciate that for a small number of learners, this may be their long-term journey through decoding. For these children, a highly individualised pathway—carefully mapped and regularly reviewed—ensures continued progress at a pace and in a format that works best for them.



SECTION 3: Collaboration

Working with Parents and Carers

Parents and carers are essential partners in helping children learn to read—especially those with SEND.

Ways to engage families:

- Share what's being taught and how.
- Explain the Monster Phonics characters and colour coding.
- Offer visuals, sound mats, and pronunciation guides for home use.
- Encourage blending practice with decodable books.
- Provide practical routines, praise strategies, and encouragement.

Support families by:

- Translating key information where possible.
- Recognising differing home contexts, literacy levels, or access to resources.
- Celebrating small steps forward.

A family's understanding and encouragement can help reinforce classroom learning and build confidence.

Transitions and Progression

Transitions—between teachers, year groups, schools or even countries—can disrupt phonics progress.

To reduce disruption:

- Share assessment data, IEPs, and support strategies with the receiving teacher.
- Arrange handover meetings or brief team-teaching opportunities.
- Use familiar visuals, characters, and routines to maintain continuity.
- Allow a gentle return after illness, absence, or changes in setting.

A stable phonics structure, like Monster Phonics, helps children feel secure—especially those who find change difficult.

Reviewing Support and Provision

Support should evolve with the child. Regular reviews help maintain ambition and ensure every adaptation is purposeful.



Follow a clear cycle:

- Assess need and plan adaptations
- Deliver and monitor
- Review progress every 6–8 weeks
- Adjust strategies accordingly

Include the team around the child:

- Class teacher
- SENCO
- Parents and carers
- The pupil
- Support staff

Ask reflective questions:

- What's helping this learner make progress?
- Are there new barriers or strengths to consider?
- Is reintegration into the main lesson still the goal?

Conclusion

This framework is designed to support all educators—across settings, countries, and curricula—to make Monster Phonics inclusive, ambitious, and practical for learners with SEND.

Monster Phonics is not a bolt-on. Its colour coding, characters, and consistent structure embed support into every lesson. This allows teachers to adapt *how* they teach, without changing *what* they teach.

By working closely with families, responding flexibly to individual needs, and maintaining high expectations, we ensure that every child can learn to read—with dignity, confidence, and joy.

Let's keep learning together—sharing what works and refining practice across the Monster Phonics community.