

Inspiring Learners For Life



Supporting Phonics, Reading & Writing at home



This leaflet gives you details about the teaching of phonics and how it relates to reading and writing at home for Key Stage 1 children.

What is Phonics?

Phonics is a way of teaching children to read quickly and skilfully. They are taught how to:

- recognise the sounds that each individual letter makes
- identify the sounds that different combinations of letters make - such as 'sh' or 'oo'
- blend these sounds together from left to right to make a word

Children can then use this knowledge to 'de-code' new words that they hear or see. This is the first important step in learning to read.

Foundation Stage children take part in Phonic lessons daily and this continues into Key Stage 1 (Years 1 and 2). Children will learn that most sounds (phonemes) can be written in more than one way.

For example, the f sound can be written as f as in fan or ff as in puffff or ph as in photo.

They will learn that most letters and combinations of letters (graphemes) can represent more than one sound. For example, the grapheme ea can be read as /ee/ as in leaf or /e/ as in bread.

Children who receive good teaching of phonics will learn the skills they need to tackle reading and spelling new words. They can then go on to read any kind of text fluently and confidently, and to read for enjoyment.

Letters and Sounds Card

At the beginning of Year 1, your child will be sent home with a Letters and Sounds Card. We use these in the classroom to help children with their spelling and writing. Each box (phoneme box) on the card contains examples of different ways we can spell the sounds we use in writing. Sometimes there is only one way, but there are many phoneme boxes which show a choice of spellings. For example, ai, ay, a, a-e. The first way in each box is the most common and taught first. These choices are taught in school as part of our Phonics lessons.



Phonics Terminology

In Phonics lessons, children will regularly hear a variety of vocabulary associated with phonics. It is not essential to use these technical terms with your child. In school we do use them but always in association with more everyday language to help the children understand.

When we **read** we change graphemes into phonemes.

(i.e. the way we interpret letters into sounds)

When we **write** we change phonemes into graphemes.

(i.e. the way we write sounds down with letters)

phoneme A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound that distinguishes one word from another word in a language. For example, 'boat' is made up of three phonemes: /b/ at the start, /oa/ in the middle and /t/ at the end.

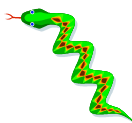
grapheme A grapheme is a written symbol that represents a sound (phoneme). This can be a single letter, or could be a sequence of letters, such as ai, sh, igh, tch etc. So when a child says the sound /t/ this is a phoneme, but when they write the letter 't' this is a grapheme.

graph **ONE** letter to represent **ONE** sound. E.g ...s...

digraph **TWO** letters to represent **ONE** sound. E.gee...
or ...sh...

trigraph **THREE** letters to represent **ONE** sound. E.g ...igh...

snake



s

tree



ee

shark



sh

light



igh

Phonics Phases

Phonics is taught in Phases. Your child will have met Phase 1 to 4 whilst in Foundation Stage. Some children will need to revisit this work during Year 1 whilst others will be ready to move on.

Phase 2

In this phase children will be taught the phonemes (*sounds*) for a number of letters (*graphemes*), which phoneme is represented by which grapheme and that a phoneme can be represented by **more than one letter**, for example, / **ll**/ as in **b-e-ll**. We use Jolly Phonics to support the teaching of Phonics in Foundation Stage. Pictures, songs and hand actions are used to help the children remember the phonics being taught.

VC and CVC words

C and V are abbreviations for 'consonant' and 'vowel'. VC words are words consisting of a vowel then a consonant (e.g. *am, at, it*) and CVC words are words consisting of a consonant then a vowel then a consonant (e.g. *cat, rug, sun*). Words such as *tick* and *bell* also count as CVC words – although they have four letters, they have only three sounds. For example, in the word *bell*, **b** = consonant, **e** = vowel, **ll** = consonant.

Now the children will be *seeing* letters and words, as well as hearing them. They will be shown how to make whole words by pushing magnetic letters together, reading little words and breaking up words into individual sounds, which will help their spelling. These will be simple words made up of two phonemes, for example, *am, at, it*, or three phonemes, for example, *cat, rug, sun, tick, bell*.

Tricky words

They will also learn several tricky words: **the, to, I, go, no**. These need to be learned off-by-heart as you can not always use phonics to sound them out.

Saying the sounds

Your child will be taught how to pronounce the sounds (*phonemes*) correctly to make blending easier. Sounds should be sustained where possible (e.g. sss, fff, mmm) and, where this is not possible, 'uh' sounds after consonants should be reduced as far as possible (e.g. try to avoid saying 'buh', 'cuh').

Phase 3

The purpose of this phase is to:

- teach more graphemes, most of which are made of two letters, for example, 'oa' as in **boat**
- practise blending and segmenting a wider set of CVC words, for example, **fizz, chip, sheep, light**
- learn all letter names and begin to form them correctly
- read more tricky words and begin to spell some of them
- read and write words in phrases and sentences

CVC words containing graphemes made of two or more letters. Here are some examples of words your children will be reading:

tail, week, right, soap, food, park, burn, cord, town, soil

How to help at home:

- Sing an alphabet song together.
- Play 'I spy', using letter names as well as sounds.
- Continue to play with magnetic letters, using some of the two grapheme (*letter*) combinations:
r-ai-n = rain blending for reading **rain = r-ai-n** – segmenting for spelling
b-oa-t = boat blending for reading **boat = b-oa-t** – segmenting for spelling
h-ur-t = hurt blending for reading **hurt = h-ur-t** – segmenting for spelling
- Praise your child for trying out words.
- Learn their Buzz Words with them: set a timer then call out one word at a time and get your child to spell it on a magic board or a small whiteboard, against the timer – remember, they can use magnetic letters.
- Play 'Pairs', turning over two words at a time trying to find a matching pair. This is especially helpful with the tricky words: **the the, to to, no no, go go, ll**

Phase 4

Children continue to practise previously learned graphemes and phonemes and learn how to read and write:

- **CVCC** words: **tent, damp, toast, chimp**

For example, in the word 'toast', **t = consonant, oa = vowel, s = consonant, t = consonant.**

- and **CCVC** words: **swim, plum, sport, cream, spoon**

For example, in the word 'cream', **c = consonant, r = consonant, ea = vowel, m = consonant.**

They will be learning more tricky words and continuing to read and write sentences together.

How to help at home:

- Practise reading and spelling some CVCC and CCVC words but continue to play around with CVC words. Children like reading and spelling words that they have previously worked with, as this makes them feel successful.
- Make up captions and phrases for your child to read and write, for example, *a silver star, clear the pond, crunch crisps*. Write some simple sentences and leave them around the house for your child to find and read. After they have found and read three, give them a treat!
- Look out for words in the environment, such as on food packaging, which your child will find easy to read, for example, *lunch, fresh milk, drink, fish and chips, jam*.
- Work on reading words together, for example, a street name such as *Park Road*, captions on buses and lorries, street signs such as *bus stop*.
- Carry on learning to read and spell their Buzz Words.

Phase 5

This is the phase when children are taught the alternative graphemes for the common phonemes they have already learned. This is where our Letters and Sounds Card can be very helpful as it shows all the graphemes that make the same sound (phoneme) in one simple box in alphabetical order to help the children find what they need.

How to help at home:

Secret Sound Game

This is to help familiarise the children with the Letters and Sounds Card and where to find spelling choices:

- Use the laminated Letter and Sounds Card we sent home (it is also available to download from the school website).
- You choose a grapheme and write it down e.g. 'ow' as in cow but don't show your child.
- Your child now asks a question to establish if it is on the 'ant/vowel' side of the card or on the 'bat/consonant' side of the card.
- They then ask questions to find out the line/row it is on; to find the 'phoneme box' it is in and finally to guess the grapheme you have chosen!

What Have You Learned Today?

Every day the children have a phonics lesson. Please take the time to ask your child to show you which grapheme they have been learning in school. Get them to show you where it is on your Letters and Sounds Card.

Now challenge them to try and remember some words that have this spelling pattern in them! How many can they find? You can also try and find correct spelling for these words in a children's dictionary.

How about making word collections that have the same spelling patterns and then you can use them to play Bingo or Pairs by making little cards with the words on.

Phase 6

Phase 6 will be taught mainly in Year 2 when the children are confident with Phase 5 phonics. Phase 6 Phonics takes place, with the aim of children becoming fluent readers and accurate spellers.

By Phase 6, children should be able to read hundreds of words using one of three strategies:

- Reading them automatically
- Decoding them quickly and silently
- Decoding them aloud

Children should now be spelling most words accurately (this is known as 'encoding'), although this usually lags behind reading. They will also learn, among other things:

- Prefixes and suffixes, e.g. 'ment', 'ness', 'ful'.
- Use of past and present tense.
- Memory strategies for high frequency or topic words
- Proof-reading
- How to use a dictionary
- Where to put the apostrophe in words like 'I'm'
- Homophones and near homophones
- Spelling rules

Sound Buttons

Draw 'sound buttons' underneath the individual graphemes (letters that represent the sounds) in words e.g.

dog boat shop
· · · · — · — · ·

(the dots are for each 'graph' and the dashes for digraphs or trigraphs)

The children will often know which phoneme (sound) they will need, but may be unsure which grapheme (letter/s) to use which is why we use the Letters and Sounds cards in order to help them make the correct spelling choices.

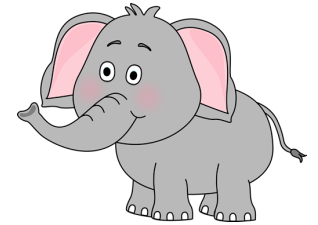
Want to Know More About Phonics, Reading and Spelling?

There is a very useful website call Oxford Owl that has useful video clips, information for parents and free e-books that you can use with your child to help them improve their reading, writing, spelling and grammar.



Children's spoken language supports

reading and writing



In order to make a good start in reading and writing, children need to have an adult listen to them and talk to them. Speaking and listening are the foundations for reading and writing. Even everyday activities such as preparing meals, tidying up, putting shopping away and getting ready to go out offer you the chance to talk to your child, explaining what you are doing. Through these activities, children hear the way language is put together into sentences for a purpose.

- **Make time to listen to your child talking** – as you meet them from their setting or school, as you walk, or travel home by car, in the supermarket as you shop, at meal times, bath times, bedtimes – any time!
- **Switch off the TV, radio and mobile phones** – and really listen!
- **Show that you are interested in what they are talking about** – look at your child, smile, nod your head, ask a question or make a response to show that you really have been listening.
- **Make a collection of different toy creatures** – for example, a duck, a snake, an alien, say the sound it might make as you play together, for example, 'quack-quack', 'sssssss', 'yuk-yuk', and encourage your child to copy you.
- **Listen at home** – switch off the TV and listen to the sounds, both inside and outside the home. Can your child tell you what sounds they heard, in the order in which they heard them?
- **Play-a-tune** – and follow me! Make or buy some simple shakers, drums and beaters, then play a simple tune and ask your child to copy. Have fun!
- **Use puppets** and toys to make up stories or retell known ones. Record your child telling the story and play it back to them.

Useful Websites with Activities

www.phonicsplay.co.uk

Lots of phonics games for reading and spelling (used in school as part of Phonics lessons).

www.phonicsbloom.com

Lots of phonic games for reading and spelling.

www.espresso.co.uk

Videos with letters, sounds and pictures. This is excellent for adults to see clearly the correct pronunciation and mouth shape for the phonemes .

www.oxfordowl.co.uk

Very helpful advice about phonics, spelling, grammar and reading; lots of e-books to read and share together.

Each class has a log in for oxford owl.

www.youtube.co.uk Mr Thorne does Phonics

Phonic videos showing correct pronunciation.

www.teachyourmonstertoread.com

Lots of phonic games for reading and spelling.

If you have any questions or need advice, please do not hesitate to speak to your child's class teacher.

Thank you for your support.