

Phonics Stay and Learn

Letters and Sounds is a fun and interactive way to support children in learning how to read and write. Initially, for the children to learn their sounds we use several strategies including Phonics Bug and Jolly Phonics. Phonics Bug is supported by a scheme of books which we share with the children during guided reading sessions. Jolly Phonics represents each sound with an action helping children to remember both more easily.

The alphabet contains only 26 letters. Spoken English uses about 42 sounds (phonemes). These phonemes are represented by letters (graphemes). In other words, a sound can be represented by a letter (e.g. 's' or 'h') or a group of letters (e.g. 'th' or 'ear')

Once children begin learning sounds, they are used quickly to read and spell words. Children can then see the purpose of learning sounds. For this reason, the first six letters that are taught are 's', 'a', 't', 'p', 'i', 'n'. These can immediately be used to make a number of words such as 'sat', 'pin', 'pat', 'tap', 'nap'

Blending—for reading

To learn to read well children must be able to smoothly blend sounds together. Blending sounds fluidly helps to improve fluency when reading. Blending is more difficult to do with longer words so learning how to blend accurately from an early age is imperative. Showing your child how to blend is important. Model how to ‘push’ sounds smoothly together without stopping at each individual sound. It is also recommended to talk to your child about what blending is so they understand what they are trying to achieve.

Segmenting—for spelling

Segmenting is a skill used in spelling. In order to spell the word cat, it is necessary to segment the word into its constituent sounds; c-a-t. Children often understand segmenting as ‘chopping’ a word. Before writing a word young children need time to think about it, say the word several times, ‘chop’ the word and then write it. Once children have written the same word several times they won’t need to use these four steps as frequently. Children will enjoy spelling if it feels like fun and if they feel good about themselves as spellers. We need, therefore, to be playful and positive in our approach – noticing and praising what children can do as well as helping them to correct their mistakes.

The phases Letters and Sounds is split into 6 phases. Below is an overview what is included in each phase.

Phase One

The aim of this phase is to foster children's speaking and listening skills as preparation for learning to read with phonics.

Sharing stories and reading together. Talking about pictures. Singing songs.

Games such as eye spy. Pointing out letters in the environment. Finding 'Your letter' (initial sound in your name)

Phase Two

In Phase 2, letters and their sounds are introduced one at a time. A set of letters is taught each week, in the following sequence:

Set 1: s, a, t, p Set 2: i, n, m, d

Set 3: g, o, c, k Set 4: ck, e, u, r

Set 5: h, b, f, ff, l, ll, ss

As soon as each set of letters is introduced, children will be encouraged to use their knowledge of the letter sounds to blend and sound out words. For example, they will learn to blend the sounds s-a-t to make the word sat. They will also start learning to segment words. For example, they might be asked to find the letter sounds that make the word tap from a small selection of magnetic letters.

Phase Three

By the time they reach Phase 3, children will already be able to blend and segment words containing the 19 letters taught in Phase 2. Over the twelve weeks which Phase 3 is expected to last, twenty-five new graphemes are introduced (one at a time).

Set 6: j, v, w, x Set 7: y, z, zz, qu

Consonant digraphs: ch, sh, th, ng

Vowel di- graphs: ai, ee, igh, oa, oo, ar, or, ur, ow, oi, ear, air, ure, er

During Phase 3, children will also learn the letter names using an alphabet song, although they will continue to use the sounds when decoding words.

Phase Four—Five

Many phonemes are represented in different ways so children learn these new ways of representing each sound and find rules and rhymes for remembering which representations are used in specific words. They also practise blending for reading and segmenting for spelling.

Phase Six

During this phase, children become fluent readers and increasingly accurate spellers. Learning different spellings patterns and rules for plurals. They have time to explore different prefixes and suffixes and find mnemonics for remembering words.

Tips and Definitions

Talk to children about Letters and Sounds - “These are letters. A letter can make a sound. Sometimes letters are stuck together and they make a new sound. Letters together can make words. If we can read those words we can read; labels, signs, notes, comics, books and lots of other things all around us.”

Tricky words

Tricky words are words that cannot be ‘sounded-out’ but need to be learned by heart. They don’t fit into the usual spelling patterns. Examples of these words are attached. In order to read simple sentences, it is necessary for children to know some words that have unusual or untaught spellings. It should be noted that, when teaching these words, it is important to always start with sounds already known in the word, then focus on the 'tricky' part.

Phonics glossary

blend — to draw individual sounds together to pronounce a word, e.g. s-n-a-p, blended together, reads snap

cluster — two (or three) letters making two (or three) sounds, e.g. the first three letters of 'straight' are a consonant cluster

digraph — two letters making one sound, e.g. sh, ch, th, ph.

vowel digraphs comprise of two vowels which, together, make one sound, e.g. ai, oo, ow

split digraph — two letters, split, making one sound, e.g. a-e as in make or i-e in site

grapheme — a letter or a group of letters representing one sound, e.g. sh, ch, igh, ough (as in 'though')

grapheme-phoneme correspondence (GPC) — the relationship between sounds and the letters which represent those sounds; also known as 'letter-sound correspondences'

mnemonic — a device for memorising and recalling something, such as a snake shaped like the letter 'S'

phoneme — the smallest single identifiable sound, e.g. the letters 'sh' represent just one sound, but 'sp' represents two (/s/ and /p/)

segment — to split up a word into its individual phonemes in order to spell it, e.g. the word 'cat' has three phonemes: /c/, /a/, /t/

Useful websites

<http://www.phonicsplay.co.uk/>

Interactive games - we use in class

<http://www.sentenceplay.co.uk/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/games/alphablocks-games>

We use alphablock books and games in class

<http://www.topmarks.co.uk/english-games/3-5-years/letters-and-sounds>

Interactive games

<http://www.free-phonics-worksheets.com/>

Worksheets for all different sounds

<http://www.kidzone.ws/phonics/>

American site, simple cvc and initial sounds

<http://www.galacticphonics.com/>

A selection of interactive games

For Parents

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/grownups/the-alphablocks-guide-to-phonics>

An explanation of phonics

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/190599/Letters_and_Sounds_-_DFES-00281-2007.pdf

This is the scheme we follow

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwJx1NSineE>

Covers all of the English letter sounds

If you know of any others please let me know.