



Phonics

A guide for parents and carers



Introduction

Children use their phonic knowledge when they are reading and writing. This approach has been shown to provide a quick and efficient way for most young children to learn to read words on the page fluently and accurately. We want children to develop this skill so that it becomes automatic. This also greatly helps them with their spelling. We use a systematic phonics programme called Letters and Sounds. Letters and Sounds is divided into 6 phases, with each building on the skills and knowledge of previous learning.

Phonics glossary

blend (vb) — 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 digraph — two letters which, together, make one vowel 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 (vb) — 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/

VC, CVC, CCVC — the abbreviations for vowel-consonant, consonant-vowel-consonant, consonant-consonant-vowel-consonant, which are used to describe the order of letters in words, e.g. am, ham, slam.

Phase 1

This paves the way for systematic learning of phonics and usually starts in nursery or playgroup.

Phase 2

In this phase children will continue practising what they have learned from Phase 1, including 'sound-talk'. They will also be taught the sounds (phonemes) for a number of letters (graphemes), which sound is represented by which letter and that a sound can be represented by **more than one letter**; for example, /ll/ as in **b-e-ll**.

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 or wooden letters together to form little words, reading little words on the interactive whiteboard and breaking up words into individual sounds, which will help their spelling. These will be simple words made up of 2 sounds; e.g. **am, at, it** or 3 sounds e.g. **cat, rug, sun, tick, bell**.

Tricky words

They will also learn several tricky words: **the, to, am, I, go, no**.

Saying the sounds

Your child will be taught how to pronounce the sounds correctly to make blending easier.

Sounds should be sustained where possible (e.g. sss, fff, mmm) and, where this is not possible, 'uh' sounds should be reduced (e.g. 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**

Their confidence from the daily experience of practising and applying their phonic knowledge to reading and writing is really paying off!

Tricky words

The number of tricky words is growing. These are so important for reading and spelling: **he, she, we, me, be, was, my, you, her, they, all.**

Phase 4

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

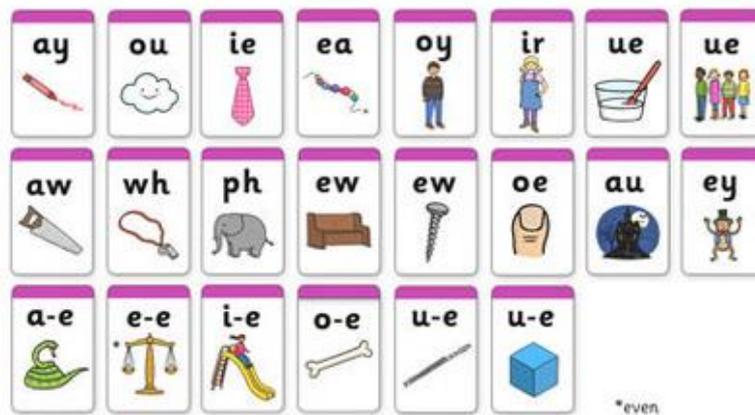
CVCC words: **tent, damp, toast, chimp** and **CCVC** words: **swim, plum, sport, cream, spoon**

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

Tricky words: **said, so, do, have, like, some, come, were, there, little, one, when, out, what**

Phase 5

Throughout Year 1, children will work through Phase 5. The purpose of this phase is for children to broaden their knowledge of graphemes and phonemes for use in reading and spelling. They will learn new graphemes and alternative pronunciations for these and graphemes they already know, where relevant (e.g. ow and ou)



All year 1 pupils will take the phonics screening check mid-June. The National phonics screening check is a statutory assessment that was introduced in 2012 to all Year 1 pupils and is a quick and easy check of your child's phonics knowledge.

What is in the phonics screening check?

It comprises of a list of 40 words and nonsense words. It will assess phonics skills and knowledge learnt through reception and year 1. Your child will read one-one with a teacher. It will be your child's current teacher or reception teacher so it is a familiar face. Your child will read up to 4 words per page and they will probably do the check in 10-15 minutes. They will be asked to

'sound out' a word and blend the sounds together. The check is very similar to tasks the children already complete during phonics lessons.

What are Nonsense or Pseudo words and why are they included?

These are words that are phonetically decodable but not actual words with an associated meaning, e.g. brip, snorb. These words are included in the check specifically to assess whether you child can decode a word using phonic skills and not just from their memory. The pseudo words will be shown to your child with a picture of an alien. The children will be asked what the alien's name is by reading the word. This will make the check a bit more fun and provides the children with a context for the nonsense word. Crucially it does not provide any clues, so your child has to be able to decode it. Children generally find nonsense amusing so they will probably enjoy reading these words.

How will the results from the screening be used?

You will be informed of your child's progress in phonics and how he or she has done in the screening check, towards the end of the summer term. All of the children are individuals and develop at different stages. The screening check ensures that teachers understand which children need support with decoding.

What happens if a child struggles with the screening check?

The screening check will identify children who have phonic decoding skills below the level expected for the end of year 1 and who therefore need help. Schools are expected to provide extra help and children will then be able to re-take the assessment in year 2.

How can I help my child?

There are a number of things that parents can do to support early reading development:

- Let your child see you enjoy reading yourself. They are influenced by you and what you do!
- Immerse your child in a love of reading.
- Make time for your child to read their school book to you.
- With all books, encourage your child to 'sound out' unfamiliar words and then blend from left to right rather than looking at pictures to guess.

There are many phonic games for children to access on the computer.

www.phonicsplay.co.uk

<http://mrthorne.com/>

www.lettersandsounds.com

www.activelearnprimary.co.uk/login?c=0 (Phonics Bug for which your child should already have log in details)

We hope this information is useful. Remember, we are here to help your child achieve their very best. If you have any questions please ask Mrs Orrey (Phonics leader), or your child's teacher. We are all happy to help.