



An Introduction to Phonics

October 2015

Introduction

As you know, the ability to read and write well is a vital skill for all children, paving the way for an enjoyable and successful school experience.

Children learn and practise many of the skills that they need for reading and writing from a very early age. They do this through a wide range of activities and experiences, at home and in school.

Sounds in spoken language – the beginning of phonics

At Sutton CP School, when children enter the Reception class they take part in high quality phonics sessions every day. These are fun sessions involving lots of speaking, listening and games, where the emphasis is on children's active participation. They learn to use their phonic knowledge for reading and writing activities and in their independent play.

The aim of this booklet is to give you a clear picture of how we approach the teaching of phonics and word recognition and how, as a parent or carer, you can support and encourage your child at home.

From a very early stage, children develop awareness of different sounds in spoken language.

They develop understanding that spoken words are made up of different sounds (*phonemes*) and they learn to match these phonemes to letters (*graphemes*). Phonics is about children knowing how letters link to sounds (*graphemes* to *phonemes*), for example, **c** as in 'cat', **ll** as in 'fell', **ee** as in 'sheep'.

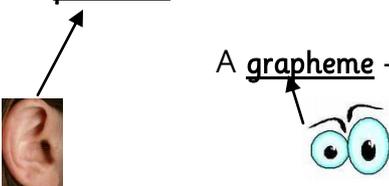
At Sutton CP School we use a systematic phonics programme called *Letters and Sounds*. This is divided into six phases, with each phase building on the skills and knowledge of previous learning. Children have time to practise and rapidly expand their ability to read and spell words. They are also taught to read and spell '**tricky words**', these are words that don't have clear, easy sounds such as 'was' (the 'a' makes an 'o' sound).

Technical vocabulary:

Segmenting – breaking up words into their individual sounds so that we can spell a word

Blending - putting individual sounds together so that we can read a word

A **phoneme** - the smallest unit of sound in a word



A **grapheme** - the letter or letters that represent the phoneme.

The grapheme could be 1 letter, 2 letters or more! Sometimes we put **sound buttons** under the graphemes to make it clearer

at **rain** **high**

Phonics and reading skills are taught in 6 distinct phases. These phases are set out in the 'Letters and Sounds' document. This can be found online at

<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFES-00281-2007>.

The Phases

<p><u>Phase 1 (Nursery/Pre-school):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing an awareness of rhyme and alliteration (words that start with the same sounds) • Distinguishing between sounds in the environment and phonemes • Exploring and experimenting with sounds and words • Beginning to orally blend and segment phonemes 	
<p><u>Phase 2 (Reception)</u> Learning graphemes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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, 	<p>Phase 2 Tricky words</p> <p>the, to, I, go, no.</p>
<p><u>Phase 3 (Reception)</u> The purpose of this phase is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ teach more graphemes, some of which are made of two or three letters, as below: • Set 6 - j, v, w, x • Set 7 - y, z, zz, qu • Consonant digraphs: ch, sh, th, ng • Long vowel graphemes: ear, air, ure, er, ar, or, ur, ow, oi, ai, ee, igh, oa, oo ➤ 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. 	<p>Phase 3 Tricky words</p> <p>he, she, we, me, be, was, my, you, her, they, all.</p>
<p><u>Phase 4 (Reception)</u> 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.</p>	<p>Phase 4 Tricky Words</p> <p>said, so, do, have, like, some, come, were, there, little, one, when, out, what</p>
<p>Phonics teaching will continue into Key Stage 1 (Year 1 and Year 2) As your child enters Key Stage 1 (Year 1) they will continue to take part in daily sessions on phonics. They will learn that most sounds (<i>phonemes</i>) can be spelled in more than one way. For example, the f sound can be written as f as in <i>fan</i> or ff as in <i>puff</i> or ph as in <i>photo</i>. This develops their knowledge of spelling choices. They will continue with this spelling work into</p>	

Year 2 and beyond. 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 /el/ as in *bread*.

How we teach Phonics

At Sutton CP School, we use a form of kinaesthetic learning called 'Jolly Phonics'. Jolly Phonics is a fun and child centered approach to teaching phonics. There are actions for each of the 42 letter sounds. This multi-sensory method is very motivating for children, who love learning the new actions, helping them to learn the sounds.

- To see a short video of some of the actions, use this link: <http://www.mrthorne.com/handactions/>

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 two phonemes, for example, *am*, *at*, *it*, or three phonemes, for example, *cat*, *rug*, *sun*, *tick*, *bell*.

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').

Teachers will model how to form letters (*graphemes*) correctly, so that children can eventually acquire a fluent and legible handwriting style. These skills develop over a long period of time. A child's ability to form a letter correctly is a separate skill from phonics.

Writing in lower-case letters

We shall be teaching lower-case letters, as well as capital letters. As most writing will be in lower-case letters it is useful if you can use these at home. A good start is for your child to write their name correctly, starting with a capital letter followed by lower-case letters.

Provide plenty of different types of pen and pencil; hold their hand to practise the correct grip.

Tips on helping your child to **read**:

- Choose a **quiet time** with no distractions
- **Make reading enjoyable.** Try not to pressurise if he or she is reluctant.
- **Be positive:** If your child is stuck say "Let's read it together." And point to the words as you say them. Boost your child's confidence with constant praise for even the smallest achievement.
- **Talk about the book** Ask your child questions, share your thoughts to help develop an understanding of the story. Use your bookmark (in the pack) for ideas
- **Regular practice** Try to read with your child on most school days. 'Little and often' is best.
- **Share other books together too and enjoy reading as a special time.**

Tips on helping your child to **write**:

- Encourage any form of **mark making** (pictures, scribbles, patterns).
- Encourage activities that will help to **strengthen** your child's fingers.
- Ensure your child forms the letters correctly, starting in the right place.
- **Name** Help your child to write their own name as a good starting point.
- Encourage your child to **write words using the sounds they can hear**, rather than the correct spellings. This gives them the power to write anything (the more sounds they learn), giving them confidence as writers. Correct spellings will come later.
- If your child is struggling to physically write letters, use magnetic letters or letters from the bath to create words.

Useful web sites

- www.ictgames.com/literacy.html literacy based games
- <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFES-00281-2007> Here you can download the Letters and Sounds Document
- <http://jollylearning.co.uk/> The main Jolly Phonics website
- <http://www.mrthorne.com/> Mr Thorne is a teacher who has filmed lots of mini videos to help children with Phonics. We sometimes use these videos in our Phonics sessions in school
- www.mrthorne.com/handactions/ Two ladies showing the Jolly Phonics actions for some of the sounds (quite amusing!)
- <http://www.phonicsplay.co.uk/> Phonics Play - a website we sometime use in lessons. There is an option to subscribe, but there are lots of games that are free too. There is also a section with parent information about phonics. Choose games from Phases 1 and 2 to start with, then 3 and 4 later in the school year.
- www.crickweb.co.uk Click on the Key Stage 1 Literacy tab. Lots of games. Not all phonics based. There are some other nice reading and writing games too. Also, maths games to try.
- www.familylearning.org.uk/phonics_games.html A website with various links to games on other websites.
- www.read-count.org/index.asp A website for you and your child to explore together – it will give you some ideas about reading with your child and has online games for young children to play, both with you and on their own. It also has ideas for games to play away from the computer.
- <http://www.teachyourmonstertoread.com/> A free website with a series of games that helps develop your child's confidence in recognising and using letters. Your child will create their own monster, who then travels to different places on an adventure to find and use letters and sounds. Fun!

Also, 'Alphablocks' is a programme on CBeebies. It is a series of adventures that invites you and your child to play with phonics. It is based on best-practice phonics teaching, helping young children to develop confidence and encouraging engagement with reading and making words.

Learning to read and write is such an important part of your child's journey in life. It is important that you and your child enjoy it! If you ever have any worries about your child's learning, please come and discuss it with us so we can help you along the way.

Miss Hamer and Mrs Dawson