

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 /ee/; and
- blend these sounds together from left to right to make a word.

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

**The more that you read,
The more things you will know.
The more that you learn,
The more places you'll go.
-Dr. Seuss**

Why Phonics?

Research shows that when phonics is taught in a structured way – starting with the easiest sounds and progressing through to the most complex – it is the most effective way of teaching young children to read. It is particularly helpful for children aged 5 to 7.

Almost all children who receive good teaching of phonics will learn the skills they need to tackle new words. They can then go on to read any kind of text fluently and confidently, and to read for enjoyment. Children who have been taught phonics also tend to read more accurately than those taught using other methods, such as 'look and say'.

Term	Definition
Phoneme	A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in a word. It is generally accepted that most varieties of spoken English use about 44 phonemes.
Grapheme	A grapheme is a letter or group of letters representing a sound.
Oral Blending	Hearing a series of spoken sounds (phonemes) and merging them together to make a spoken word. No text is used.
Blending	Merging the individual phonemes together to read a word.
Segmenting	Consists of breaking words down into phonemes to spell.
Diagraph	This is when two letters come together to make a phoneme. For example, /oa/ makes the sound in 'boat' and is also known as a vowel digraph. There are also consonant digraphs, for example, /sh/ for ship and /ch/ for chick.
Trigraph	This is when three letters come together to make one phoneme, for example, /igh/ for night.
Split Diagraph	A digraph in which the two letters are not adjacent – e.g. make, bone.

Phonics at home

Tips for teaching your child the phonemes (sounds):

It is important for a child to learn lower case or small letters rather than capital letters at first. Most early books and games use lower case letters and your child will learn these first at school. Obviously you should use a capital letter when required, such as at the beginning of the child's name, e.g. **Paul**.

When you talk about letters to your child, remember to use the letter sounds: **a buh cuh duh ...** rather than the alphabet names of the letters: **ay bee see dee ee**. The reason for this is that sounding out words is practically impossible if you use the alphabet names. For example, cat would sound like: **see ay tee** which does not sound like 'cat'.

When saying the sounds of **b, d, g, j** and **w** you will notice the 'uh' sound which follows each, for example buh, duh... You cannot say the sound without it, however, try to emphasise the main letter sound.

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

- enjoy reading yourself
- 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' and then blend from left to right rather than looking at pictures to guess the word.
- Regularly go over the phonemes with your child to support them with the ones they struggle with

One of the key strategies we use to support the children is by asking them to **add sound buttons/lines** underneath words to help them identify the sounds they need to read, for example:



You can make this fun by using different writing materials like paint, crayons, felt tips as well as tracing the word on glitter or sand/salt trays.





Useful websites for more information and phonic games:

- Little Wandle - For parents' guidance (videos) on how to use phonics in reading, please click on the link below.) <https://www.littlewandlelettersandsounds.org.uk/resources/for-parents/>
- www.wordsforlife.org.uk/
- www.educationcity.com
- http://www.familylearning.org.uk/phonics_games.html
- <https://www.phonicsplay.co.uk/> this website has a whole range of different games particularly good for early readers.
Username: stonestmary
Password: lantern10
- Alphablocks – Great for helping to start blending/chunking letter sounds together
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/shows/alphablocks>
- Topmarks – a great website full of fun and educational phonic games
<https://www.topmarks.co.uk/Search.aspx?q=phonics>
- <https://www.phonicsbloom.com/> (some games are free without an account)
- <https://www.readingbear.org/>
- <http://abcfastphonics.com/>
- <https://www.ictgames.com/mobilePage/forestPhonics/index.html>
- <https://primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com/greenside-primary-school/UploadedDocument/bad2194cfd3f4de4a075b827ad1e37e5/phonics-screening-practice-list-1.pdf> - list of words to help with the year 1 phonics screening test.