

# A PARENTS' GUIDE TO PHONICS



## LETTERS AND SOUNDS

# AIMS



- ① Understand what phonics is and how it is taught at school.
- ① Parents have confidence to support their child at home.



# 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 represents.
  - identify the sounds that different combinations of letters represent (e.g. 'ch or 'ai').
  - blend these sounds together from left to right to make a word.
  - Automatic reading of all words - decodable and tricky - is the ultimate goal.

# INTRODUCTION



- ⦿ Children learn a great deal from other people.
- ⦿ As parents and carers, you are your child's first teachers. You have a powerful influence on your child early learning.



# SPOKEN LANGUAGE

- From a very early age, children develop an awareness of the different sounds in our spoken language.
- They learn how to use their voices :
  - to make contact with you
  - to let you know what they need
  - to show how they are feeling
- As parents and carers, you best understand your child's communications; you are key in helping them to develop their speaking and listening skills.



# HOW CAN YOU HELP?

- Provide your child with lots of different opportunities to speak and listen with others:
  - Tidying up
  - Preparing meals
  - Putting shopping away
  - Getting ready to go out
- Switch off the TV, radio and mobile phones.
- Show you are interested in their conversation .
- Read stories.
- Use puppets and toys.

# THE IMPORTANCE OF SPEECH SOUNDS



- ⦿ As children grow older, they will begin to understand the different sounds in languages, and join in with stories, songs, rhymes by clapping, stamping and skipping.
- ⦿ This is an important stage, as the ears are beginning to tune into the important sounds they can hear, and discriminate.
- ⦿ Over time, your child will begin to distinguish between different speech sounds (phonemes), and they will match sounds to letters (graphemes). This is called phonic knowledge.



# VOCABULARY GUIDE

- ⦿ **Phoneme** - the smallest unit of spoken sound.
- ⦿ **Grapheme** - phonemes are represented in writing by letters/ groups of letters.
- ⦿ **Letter name** - ai, bee, cee.
- ⦿ **Letter sound** - ah, buh.
- ⦿ **Blending** - for reading, saying each sound and putting it all together c-a-t cat.
- ⦿ **Segmenting** - for writing, breaking a word into the sounds we need to write - dog d-o-g.
- ⦿ **CVC** - consonant vowel consonant.
- ⦿ **Tricky words** - words that cannot be decoded.



# 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 represents.
- ⦿ Identify the sounds that different combinations of letters represent (e.g. 'ch' or 'ai').
- ⦿ Blend these sounds together from left to right to make a word.
- ⦿ Automatic reading of all words - de-codable and tricky - is the ultimate goal.

# LETTERS AND SOUNDS



- A Six Phase Teaching Programme
- Used in YN, YR, Y1 and Y2
- Phase 1 - Nursery, Entry to Reception
- Phase 2 - Term 1 of Reception
- Phase 3 - Term 2 and 3 of Reception
- Phase 4 - Summer Term of Reception
- 5 x 20/30 min sessions per week



# PHASE 1

- Phase One of Letters and Sounds concentrates on developing children's speaking and listening skills and lays the foundations for the phonic work which starts in Phase 2. The emphasis during Phase 1 is to get children attuned to the sounds around them and ready to begin developing oral blending and segmenting skills.
- Your child will be learning to:
  - Have fun with sounds
  - Listen carefully
  - Develop their vocabulary
  - Speak confidently to you, other adults and children
  - Tune into sounds
  - Listen and remember sounds
  - Talk about sounds
  - Understand that spoken words are made up of different sounds

# PHASE 1 cont...



- ◉ Phase 1 is made up of 7 different areas:
  - ◉ Environmental sounds
  - ◉ Instrumental sounds
  - ◉ Body percussion
  - ◉ Rhythm and rhyme
  - ◉ Alliteration (words that begin with the same sound)
  - ◉ Voice sounds
  - ◉ Oral blending and segmenting

# PHASE 2



- ⦿ This is begun in YR .
- ⦿ We use the ‘Letters and Sounds’ programme to introduce the letter sounds in a particular order - see next slide. Using this order enables children to make lots of simple decodable words.
- ⦿ Children begin to formally learn the sounds in the English language
- ⦿ Phonics sessions are fun sessions involving lots of speaking, listening and games
- ⦿ We use Read, Write, Inc. Speed Sound cards as visual prompts. These can be bought on Amazon for about £9. Set 1 covers Phase 2.



## PHASE 2 CONT...

- 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.
- Tricky words - the, to, no, go, l



# SAYING SOUNDS - PURE SOUNDS

- Your child will be taught how to pronounce the sounds (phonemes) correctly to make blending easier.
- Sounds should be sustained where possible (eg, sss, mmm, fff).
- If not, 'uh' sounds after consonants should be reduced where possible (eg, try to avoid saying 'b-uh', 'c-uh').
- [How to pronounce pure sounds](#)



# SOUND TALK - BLENDING

- The separate sounds (phonemes) are spoken aloud, in order, all through the word, and are then merged together into the whole word.
- The merging is called **blending**, and is a vital skill for reading.
- E.g.: c-a-t = cat.
- [Oxford Owl - blending](#)



# SOUND TALK - SEGMENTING

- Children will also learn to do this the other way round. Eg: cat = c-a-t.
- The whole word is spoken aloud and then broken up into its sounds (phonemes) in order, through the word.
- This is called **segmenting**, and is a vital skill for spelling.
- When children spell, praise them for phonetically plausible spelling, but explain that this word is spelt this way. E.g. hows - house; babe - baby.



# PHASE 3

- 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 digraphs:** 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.

## Tricky words

- During Phase 3, the following tricky words (which can't yet be decoded) are introduced:  
he, she, we, me, be, was, you, they, all, are, my, her



# PHASE 4

- ◉ When children start **Phase 4** of the Letters and Sounds phonics programme, they will know a grapheme for each of the 42 phonemes. They will be able to blend phonemes to read CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) words and segment in order to spell them.
- ◉ Children will also have begun reading straightforward two-syllable words and simple captions, as well as reading and spelling some tricky words.
- ◉ In Phase 4, no new graphemes are introduced. The main aim of this phase is to consolidate the children's knowledge and to help them learn to read and spell words which have adjacent consonants, such as trap, string and milk.

## Tricky words

- ◉ During Phase 4, the following tricky words (which can't yet be decoded) are introduced:  
said, have, like, so, do, some, come, were, there, little, one, when, out, what



# PHASE 5

- Children entering Phase Five will already be able to read and spell words with adjacent consonants, such as trap, string and flask. They will also be able to read and spell some polysyllabic words.
- In Phase Five, children will learn more graphemes and phonemes. For example, they already know ai as in rain, but now they will be introduced to ay as in day and a-e as in make.
- Alternative pronunciations for graphemes will also be introduced, e.g. ea in tea, head and break.
- With practice, speed at recognising and blending graphemes will improve. Word and spelling knowledge will be worked on extensively.

## Tricky words

- During Phase 5, the following tricky words (which can't yet be decoded) are introduced:
  - oh, their, people, Mr, Mrs, looked, called, asked, could



## PHASE 6

- ⦿ At the start of Phase 6 of Letters and Sounds, children will have already learnt the most frequently occurring grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) in the English language. They will be able to read many familiar words automatically. When they come across unfamiliar words they will in many cases be able to decode them quickly and quietly using their well-developed sounding and blending skills. With more complex unfamiliar words they will often be able to decode them by sounding them out.
- ⦿ At this stage children should be able to spell words phonemically although not always correctly. In Phase 6 the main aim is for children to become more fluent readers and more accurate spellers.



# THE PHONICS SCREENING CHECK

- The **phonics screening check** is a short test taken by all children in England in Year 1. It is usually taken in June. The check is designed to give teachers and parents information on how your child is progressing in phonics.
- The main purpose of the check is to see which children might benefit from additional support with their phonics, so that every child gets the opportunity to master this vital early reading skill.
- Children are asked to decode and say aloud 40 words and ‘non-words’, also known as ‘alien words’, to their teacher. The screening check is taken on a one-to-one basis.



# TOP TIPS

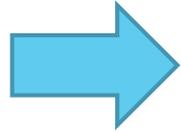
- Try to make reading time fun. Aim to do little and often, but not when the reader is tired.
- Blending - encourage the reader to break down words into a series of sounds, e.g. c-r-a-sh.
- Run your finger under each sound in turn to assist the reader to blend the sounds.
- Talk about the book as much as possible; ask questions about the book, what happened or what may happen.
- Occasionally read the book, or several pages, out loud to model what fluent reading sounds like.
- Draw attention to punctuation marks and help the reader to read with feeling, e.g. “hooray” they shouted.
- Practise their sounds or make flash cards of tricky words.
- [Phonics help: top 10 tips - Ruth Miskin](#)

# PHASES 1 - 4



## PHASE 1:

- Sound discrimination
- Rhythm and rhyme
- Alliteration
- Voice sounds
- Oral blending and segmenting



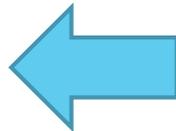
## PHASE 2:

- Learn 19 letters, 23 graphemes
- Read and write some VC and CVC words.
- Read two-syllable words and simple captions
- Read tricky words - the, to, no, go, I



## PHASE 4:

- Consolidate children's knowledge of graphemes in reading.
- Spelling words containing adjacent consonants and polysyllabic words.



## Phase 3:

- Learn remaining 7 letters, another 25 graphemes
- Continue to practice CVC blending and segmenting .
- Read and spell simple two-syllable words and captions.
- Learn letter names
- Learn to read and write more tricky words - he, she, we, me, be, was, my, you, they, her, all, are



# ACTIVITY 1

## Hunt for the Sounds

- ⦿ Cards with letters from Phase 2 are hiding around the room.
- ⦿ Can you find them and tell your partner which letters you find?



# ACTIVITY 2

## I Spy

- ⦿ Have a collection of items in a basket or just in the middle of the room.
- ⦿ Play ‘I spy’ with these items. Start with a few and introduce new sounds as your child grows more confident.



# ACTIVITY 3

## Reading Book

- ⦿ Read a page with your child, breaking up some of the words for them to blend:

Adult: 'I can see a c-a-t'.

Child: 'Cat'.





# ANY QUESTIONS?



**We hope you have found this information useful.**



**Is there anything we haven't covered that you would like information about?**



**Thank you for your time and your continued support.**