Phonics Support and guidance

Phonics is a strategy that is used with children to help them develop their reading skills and ultimately to help them learn to read. It works with other teaching strategies and methods to help them develop key skills and ensure that they are leaving Key Stage one confident, articulate, enthusiastic and keen readers.

What is phonics?
Phonics is a method that is used to teach the children to read using the sounds of letters. This is something that might be unfamiliar to parents and carers, but is an effective method to teach the children.

Words are made up of small units of sounds, and these are called **phonemes.** This method of teaching allows the children to listen and identify the different **phonemes** that make up different words. This then helps the children learn to read the words, as well as spell them correctly.

The children are taught GPC (grapheme phoneme correspondence). This means that they are taught all the phonemes in the English language and how to write them down.

The first sounds that the children master are; s, a, t, p. Once they understand these sounds they then move onto more challenging phonemes.

What is blending?
This is where the children sound out the individual sounds in a word then 'blend' them together to be able to hear what word is being made with the sounds. This is a key skill for the children to learn when they are using phonics to learn to read.

What is segmenting?
This is the opposite of blending. This is where the child breaks up the word into its corresponding sounds and uses this knowledge to spell the words. This is also a vital skill that the children need to learn.

Phonics phases
Phonics is broken up into six different phases. Although there is no strict rule between one phase and the next, they can be adapted and tailored to suit the needs of the children.

Phase 1 – Supports the development of speaking and listening skills and for the children to start recognising initial phonemes.

Phase 2 – The children will start to write the letters that match a particular phoneme, segmenting phonemes 'sounding out' and then blending the sounds together (blending the phonemes).

Phase 3 – Children should know the alphabet, blending (putting sounds back together) and segmenting of CVC (consonant vowel consonant) words, reading 2 syllable words.

Phase 4 – Reading and spelling longer words with more than 1 syllable.

Phase 5 – Broadening knowledge of letters and sounds, learning new pronunciation of letters.

Phase 6 – Investigating and exploring spellings, spelling suffixes, prefixes and different tenses.

Phonics terminology - a guide

Phoneme – the smallest unit of sound

Grapheme – a letter or sequence of letters that represent a phoneme

Digraph – 2 letters that represent 1 phoneme e.g. ee, ai, ow, ar

Trigraph – 3 letters that represent 1 phoneme e.g. air, ear, igh,

Split digraph – 2 letters that represent 1 phoneme but they are split in a word e.g. a-e, in 'cake', or o-e in 'hole'.

Segment – ability to hear individual phonemes

Blend – ability to merge the individual phonemes to pronounce a word

CVC Word – consonant vowel consonant word e.g. cat, dog, hat

CCVC Word – consonant consonant vowel consonant word e.g. clip, drop

CVCC Word – consonant vowel consonant consonant word e.g. milk, lift

Syllables – a beat in a word

Monosyllabic – word with 1 syllable

Polysyllabic – word with 2 or more syllables

Suffix – something that is added to the end of a word e.g. -er, -ing, -ly

Prefix – something that is added to the beginning of a word e.g. dis- (disobey), un- (unwell)

How to help with phonics at home
- Help your child learn the alphabet in alphabetical order.
- Help them recognise the difference between letter names and the phoneme (sound).
- In the early stages at school help them to sing and recite songs and nursery rhymes so they have the opportunity to identify sound patterns and rhymes orally.
- When spelling encourage them to think about the phonemes but when writing down attempted spellings help them to refer to letter names.
- Encourage children to say the phonemes correctly especially tricky ones like 'f' 'th' 'wh'.
- Help them to think about where the sound is made and the position of the lips, teeth or tongue.
- Some children will make very sensible attempts at spellings and may use letters that can represent a phoneme but they might not use the correct one e.g. 'sean' instead of 'seen'. Always praise attempts and where appropriate select some to sensitively correct.

Some further ideas for activities - keep them short, fun and try to vary them.
- I- Spy
- Making and playing pairs games
- Making and playing bingo games
- Hangman
- Odd one out – children identify a word which doesn't share the same phoneme/grapheme
- Word searches
- Sorting words
- Countdown – give them phonemes they know and see if can make words.
- Hide and seek – write words/phonemes on cards which relate to particular phoneme or words you want them to practice, hide words and children have to find them and read them. They could also play this game where they have to spell the words and them hide them for someone else to find.

Useful websites and online activities
We have a school approach to teaching phonics, but there are alternatives online and more support to be found. Below are a selection of websites that are available for the children to continue to develop their phonics skills and knowledge;

www.gb.education.com/games/phonological-awareness/

www.jollylearning.co.uk/

www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/grownups/the-alphablocks-guide-to-phonics

www.phonicsplay.co.uk/freeIndex.htm

www.topmarks.co.uk/english-games/5-7-years/letters-and-sounds

www.kizphonics.com/materials/phonics-games/

www.familylearning.org.uk/phonics_games.html

www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/ks1/literacy

www.teachyourmonstertoread.com

Please always be vigilant when using the internet and ICT with young children.