



---

Friday 10<sup>th</sup> September

Dear Parents,

Next week the children will be starting their daily phonics sessions and we will be starting to send home books for you to read and share at home. This letter explains what phonics is, how we teach it in school and how you can help your child at home.

### What is phonics?

We use the Letters and Sounds framework to teach phonics in school and the children have daily phonics sessions. Letters and Sounds aims to build children's speaking and listening skills as well as prepare children for learning to read by developing their phonic knowledge. We have set out a detailed and systematic programme for teaching phonic skills for children starting in Foundation, with the aim of them becoming fluent readers by age seven.

There are 6 Phases to the programme. During your child's Foundation year they will focus on Phases 1 - 3, moving on to Phase 4 in the summer term once the children are confident with what they have learned so far. If we feel that some children are ready we move them on to Phase 5.

**Phase 1** - This helps children to be aware of sounds all around them and is split into 7 aspects:

- Environmental sounds
- Instrumental sounds
- Body sounds
- Rhythm and rhyme
- Alliteration
- Voice sounds
- Oral blending and segmenting.

Your children will have covered most of these areas during Pre-school or Nursery but at the beginning of the year we like to recap these areas as they form the foundations to learning phonics. The last aspect is particularly important as this is a vital skill in being able to distinguish sounds in words, in particular initial sounds eg. **S**ock, **C**at. Children need this skill in order to learn which letters make which sounds.

To help with the explanation of phonics and the terminology used I have included a definition of what is meant by the words 'phoneme' and 'grapheme':



---

"A **grapheme** is a written symbol that represents a sound (**phoneme**). This can be a single letter, or could be a sequence of letters, such as ai, sh, igh, tch etc. So when a child says the sound /t/ this is a **phoneme**, but when they write the letter 't' this is a **grapheme**"

**Phase 2** - We teach the children 19 letters of the alphabet and one sound for each. They will learn 4 sounds each week during our 20 minute phonics session each day and during activities throughout the day. They will then learn how to blend these sounds together to make words by segmenting words into their separate sounds eg. C-a-t

On the class page of the school website I have posted some links to videos that explain how these sounds should be pronounced in order for the children to successfully segment and blend, the first stage of learning to read.

Once the children become confident with segmenting and blending they will begin to read simple captions in their phonics readers and also with adults in the class. This helps to build up their fluency in reading.

#### Phase 2 sounds

**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

**Phase 3** - During this phase the children will learn the remaining 7 letters of the alphabet, one sound for each and the sessions are increasingly longer, working up to 30 mins. They will then start to look at graphemes such as ch, oo, th representing the remaining sounds (phonemes) not covered by single letters. As they have learned the majority of sounds that letters can make they will now be given more challenging phonics readers with longer captions, sentences and questions. They will also have opportunities to use their phonic knowledge in writing as well. Children will be asked to sound out words as they write. At this stage it doesn't matter about the correct spelling of words, the emphasis is on children learning to write independently and using the knowledge and skills they have learned so far. On completion of this phase, children will have learned the "simple code", i.e. one grapheme for each phoneme in the English language.

#### Phase 3 sounds

**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



---

**Phase 4** - No new grapheme-phoneme correspondences (each letter or 2 letters making their own sound) are taught in this phase. Children learn to blend and segment longer words with adjacent consonants, e.g. **swim**, **clap**, **jump**. Children will only be moved onto this stage when they are confident with what they have learned so far and are segmenting and blending competently. This stage is meant to improve a child's fluency in reading, which in turn helps their understanding of what they are reading.

**Phase 5** - If we feel that some of the children are reading and writing confidently using their phonics we will start to look at this phase with them. They will learn more graphemes and phonemes. For example, they already know **ai** as in **rain**, but they will be introduced to **ay** as in **day** and **a-e** as in **make**.

**Tricky words** - As the English language doesn't always follow phonetic rules, there are some words that the children learn by recognising some phonetic rules but understanding that there are some letters that make different sounds, we call these the tricky words. Each phase has its own set of words for them to learn.

Phase 2 - **no, go** and **I**. Phase 3 - **he, she, we, me, be, was, you, they, all, are, my, her**

Phase 4 - **said, have, like, so, do, some, come, were, there, little, one, when, out, what**

### What books will my child read at home?

The best way for a child to learn their sounds is to practise them, orally and written. Ask your child what sounds they have learned at school: can they write them for you or find them in text?

As a school we do ask that children are read with 5 times a week and each child has a reading record in which you can write which books you have read and what sounds they have practised etc. In their book bag they will have:

- A bookmark which will have the sounds they need to practise and they may also have a tricky words bookmark. These are usually the sounds they are learning that week.
- A story book for you to read with your child. This is so important as when you read with your child you are modelling to them how to read. It also helps to embed a love of reading. Unfortunately because phonics reading books are designed to help children to learn to read they don't always comprehend what they are reading until they become more fluent.



---

This means that reading to them is just as important as sounding out letters and words. When you read to them they also learn that reading can be enjoyable and fun. Children will be able to pick their own story books to take home so they can choose something they like. Children will also be encouraged to take home information books. Some children prefer these to stories and it is also important for them to learn they can retrieve information from books.

- Phonics reader - The children are constantly assessed to see what level they are at with their phonics. This is to ensure that your child has the correct book for their stage of learning. Some may pick up their sounds quicker than others. I do encourage you not to compare your child with others. Every child is different and they all learn at their own pace. Your child will be read with each week so we can ensure that they are on the right level for them.

Books will be changed when your child is read with, or if you feel they need a new book please do ask us. Either catch us in the morning or write a note in their reading record.

#### Phonics reader levels

Lilac - These books are wordless to encourage storytelling and looking for clues in the pictures.

Pink - These books include the first sounds they learn in Phase 2. Parents read some pages and share the book together

Red - Phase 3 sounds

Yellow - Phase 4 sounds

Blue - Phase 5 sounds

Green - more Phase 5 sounds

Orange - Phase 5 revision

Turquoise - Fluent readers



All books are labelled so you can see which sounds they are using in the book and what level they are reading at.

I hope you haven't found all this information too overwhelming. If you have any questions please do ask either via email through the school office or you can arrange to see me at an appropriate time.

Please do look at the videos on the website and ask your children about what they have learned so far. We are aiming to send reading records and books home with your child W/B 13th September. We will be assessing them all before books are sent home so please do bear with us if your child doesn't bring one home straight away.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Johnson