

# Phonics information for parents and carers



Where you see the  symbol you will find some suggested activities that will support your child in their learning.

## **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, in settings and in school. They explore and learn through singing and saying rhymes, making and listening to music, talking with others, sharing books with adults and other children, dressing up, experimenting with writing and using puppets and toys to retell and make up stories.

### **Children's spoken language supports reading and writing**

In order to make a good start in reading and writing, children need to have an adult listen to them and talk to them.

Speaking and listening are the foundations for reading and writing. Even everyday activities such as preparing meals, tidying up, putting shopping away and getting ready to go out offer you the chance to talk to your child, explaining what you are doing. Through these activities, children hear the way language is put together into sentences for a purpose.

Books are a rich source of new words for your child; words you would not use in everyday conversations appear in books. Children need to have a wide vocabulary to understand the meaning of books, so read aloud and share books as often as you can. They will enjoy it and it will be useful to them when they come across these words in their own reading later on.



## Ways you can support your children at home: talking and listening

- **Make time to listen to your child talking** - as you meet them from their setting or school, as you walk, or travel home by car, in the supermarket as you shop, at meal times, bath times, bedtimes - any time!
- **Switch off the TV, radio and mobile phones** - and really listen!



- **Make a collection of different toy creatures** - for example, a duck, a snake, an alien, say the sound it might make as you play together, for example, 'quack-quack', 'sssssss', 'yuk-yuk', and encourage your child to copy you.
- **Show that you are interested in what they are talking about** - look at your child, smile, nod your head, ask a question or make a response to show that you really have been listening.



- **Listen at home** - switch off the TV and listen to the sounds, both inside and outside the home. Can your child tell you what sounds they heard, in the order in which they heard them?
- **Play-a-tune** - and follow me! Make or buy some simple shakers, drums and beaters, then play a simple tune and ask your child to copy. Have fun!



- **Use puppets** and toys to make up stories or retell known ones. Record your child telling the story and play it back to them.

## Sounds in spoken language – the beginning of phonics

At Immanuel and St Andrew 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.

### **Not all children will learn at the same rate!**

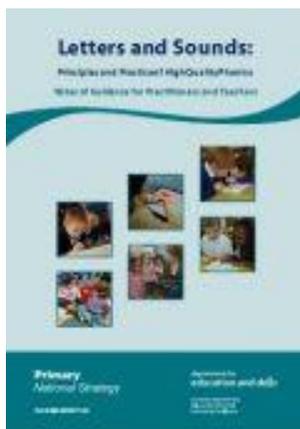
Your child should be supported *whatever* their rate of learning. There is a very close link between *difficulty with phonics* and *hearing so*, if your child is making progress more slowly than might be expected, it would be worth having their hearing checked.

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'.

Children use this phonic knowledge when they are reading and writing. This approach has been shown to provide a quick and

efficient way for most young children to learn to read words on the page, fluently and accurately. We want children to develop this skill so that it becomes automatic. This also greatly helps them with their spelling.

**We use a systematic phonics programme called *Letters and Sounds*.**



*Letters and Sounds* is divided into six phases, with each phase building on the skills and knowledge of previous learning. There are no big leaps in 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', which are words with spellings that are unusual or that children have not yet been taught.

## Phase 1

This paves the way for systematic learning of phonics and usually starts in nursery or playgroup.

Teachers plan activities that will help children to listen attentively to sounds around them, such as the sounds of their toys and to sounds in spoken language. Teachers teach a wide range of nursery rhymes and songs. They read good books to and with the children. This helps to increase the number of words they know - their *vocabulary* - and helps them talk confidently about books.



### Ways you can support your children at home

Play '**What do we have in here?**' Put some toys or objects in a bag and pull one out at a time. Emphasise the first sound of the name of the toy or object by repeating it, for example, 'c c c - car', 'b b b b - box', 'ch ch ch ch - chip'.

Say: 'A tall tin of tomatoes!' 'Tommy, the ticklish teddy!' 'A lovely little lemon!' This is called alliteration. Use names, for example, '**Gurpreet gets the giggles**', '**Milo makes music**', '**Naheema's nose**'.

Teach them '*Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers*'.

### Learning how to '*sound-talk*'

The teacher shows children how to do this - **c-a-t** = **cat**. The separate sounds (*phonemes*) are spoken aloud, in order, all

through the word, and are then merged together into the whole word. The merging together is called *blending* and is a vital skill for reading.

Children will also learn to do this the other way around - **cat** = **c-a-t**. The whole word is spoken aloud and then broken up into its sounds (*phonemes*) in order, all through the word. This is called *segmenting* and is a vital skill for spelling.

This is all oral (*spoken*). Your child will not be expected to match the letter to the sound at this stage. The emphasis is on helping children to hear the separate sounds in words and to create spoken sounds.



## Ways you can support your children at home

### Sound-talking

Find real objects around your home that have three phonemes (*sounds*) and practise 'sound talk'. First, just let them listen, then see if they will join in, for example, saying:

'I spy a p-e-g - peg.'

'I spy a c-u-p - cup.'

'Where's your other s-o-ck - sock?'

'Simon says - put your hands on your h-ea-d.'

'Simon says - touch your ch-i-n.'

## Phase 2

In this phase children will continue practising what they have learned from phase 1, including 'sound-talk'. They will also be taught the phonemes (*sounds*) for a number of letters (*graphemes*), which phoneme is represented by which grapheme and that a phoneme can be represented by **more than one letter**, for example, /ll/ as in **b-e-ll**. They may be using pictures or hand movements to help them remember these.

### VC and CVC words

C and V are abbreviations for 'consonant' and 'vowel' sounds. VC words are words consisting of a vowel then a consonant (e.g. *am, at, it*) and CVC words are words consisting of a consonant then a vowel then a consonant (e.g. *cat, rug, sun*). Words such as *tick* and *bell* also count as CVC words - although they have four letters, they have only three sounds. For example, in the word *bell*, **b** = consonant, **e** = vowel, **ll** = consonant.

Now 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*.

## Tricky words

They will also learn several tricky words: **the, to, I, go, no.**

Children will still be practising oral blending and segmenting skills daily. They need plenty of practice at doing this.

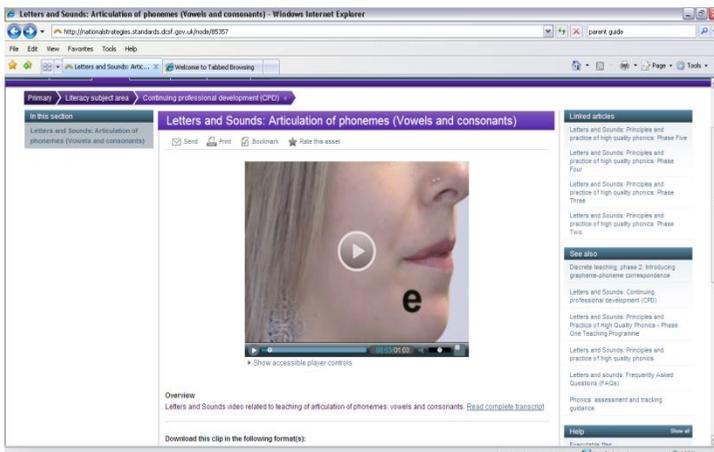
## Saying the sounds

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 help children to look at different letters and say the right sounds for them.

**Weblink to the articulation of the 44 phonemes:**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bSYdCzsoqXA&safe=active>



A, E, I, O, U, AI, EE, IGH, OA, OO, OO, AR, OR, UR, OW,  
OI, AIR, EAR, ER. B, C, D, F, G, H, J, L, M, N, P, QU, R, S,  
T, V, W, X, Y, Z. SH, CH, TH, TH, NG.



## Ways you can support your children at home

### **Magnetic letters**

Buy magnetic letters for your fridge, or for use with a tin tray. Find out which letters have been taught - have fun finding these with your child and place them on the magnetic surface.

### **Making little words together**

Make little words together, for example, *it, up, am, and, top, dig, run, met, pick*. As you select the letters, say them aloud: '*a-m - am*', '*m-e-t - met*'.

### **Breaking words up**

Now do it the other way around: read the word, break the word up and move the letters away, saying: '*met - m-e-t*'.

**Both these activities help children to see that reading and spelling are reversible processes.**

### **Don't forget the writing box!**

Spelling is harder than reading words - praise, don't criticise. Little whiteboards and pens, and magic boards, are a good way for children to try out spellings and practise their handwriting.

Your child might be trying to use letters from their name to write; this shows that they know that writing needs real alphabet letters.

Make or buy an alphabet poster.

## Phase 3

The purpose of this phase is to:

- teach more graphemes, most of which are made of two letters, for example, 'oa' as in **boat**
- 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.

### **CVC words containing graphemes made of two or more letters**

Here are some examples of words your children will be reading: **tail, week, right, soap, food, park, burn, cord, town, soil**

Their confidence from the daily experience of practising and applying their phonic knowledge to reading and writing is really paying off!

### **Tricky words**

The number of tricky words is growing. These are so important for reading and spelling: **he, she, we, me, be, was, my, you, her, they, all.**



## Ways you can support your children at home

- Sing an alphabet song together.
- Play '**I spy**', using letter names as well as sounds.
- Continue to play with magnetic letters, using some of the two grapheme (*letter*) combinations:

*r-ai-n = rain* blending for reading    *rain = r-ai-n-*  
segmenting for spelling

*b-oa-t = boat* blending for reading    *boat = b-oa-t-*  
segmenting for spelling

*h-ur-t = hurt* blending for reading    *hurt = h-ur-t-*  
segmenting for spelling

- Praise your child for trying out words.
- Ask teachers for a list of the tricky words.
- Set a timer. Call out one word at a time and get your child to spell it on a magic board or a small whiteboard, against the timer - remember, they can use magnetic letters.
- Play '**Pairs**', turning over two words at a time trying to find a matching pair. This is especially helpful with the tricky words: **the the, to to, no no, go go, I I**
- Don't worry if they get some wrong! These are hard to remember - they need plenty of practice.

## Phase 4

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.

### Tricky words

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



### Ways you can support your children at home

- Practise reading and spelling some *CVCC* and *CCVC* words but continue to play around with *CVC* words. Children like reading and spelling words that they have previously worked with, as this makes them feel successful.
- Make up captions and phrases for your child to read and write, for example, *a silver star, clear the pond, crunch crisps*. Write some simple sentences and leave them around the house for your child to find and read. After they have found and read three, give them a treat!

- Look out for words in the environment, such as on food packaging, which your child will find easy to read, for example, *lunch, fresh milk, drink, fish and chips, jam.*
- Work on reading words together, for example, a street name such as *Park Road*, captions on buses and lorries, street signs such as *bus stop.*

## **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 (*phonemes*) can be spelled in more than one way. For example, the **f** sound can be written as **f** as in *fan* or **ff** as in *puff* or **ph** as in *photo*.

This develops their knowledge of spelling choices. They will continue with this spelling work into 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 /e/ as in *bread*.

This supports their reading development.

Good phonics knowledge and skills help your child to read words fluently and spell words, but they need to understand what they are reading and understand the processes and purposes for writing too. Your help is vital here.

## Useful websites for more information and phonic games



[www.wordsforlife.org.uk/](http://www.wordsforlife.org.uk/)

[www.educationcity.com](http://www.educationcity.com)

[http://www.familylearning.org.uk/phonics\\_games.html](http://www.familylearning.org.uk/phonics_games.html)

### Phonics - Glossary of Terms

<b>grapheme</b>	A letter or group of letters representing one sound, eg., sh, ch, igh, ough (as in though).
<b>phoneme</b>	The smallest single identifiable sound, eg., the letters 'sh' represent just one sound, but 'sp' represents two (s and p).
<b>blend</b>	To draw individual sounds together to pronounce a word, eg., s-n-a-p, blended together reads 'snap'
<b>digraph</b>	Two letters making one sound, eg., sh, ch, th, ph. Vowel digraphs comprise two vowels, which together make one sound, eg., ai, oo, ow
<b>segment</b>	To split up a word into its individual phonemes in order to spell it, eg., the word 'cat' has three phonemes - c-a-t.