

# Letters and Sounds



## A Guide for Parents

Letters and Sounds is a fun and interactive way to support children in learning how to read and write. Initially, for the children to learn their sounds we use a programme called *Jolly Phonics*. Jolly Phonics represents each sound with an action helping children to remember both more easily. An explanation of each action will be sent home as the new sounds are introduced.

The alphabet contains only 26 letters. Spoken English uses about 42 sounds (phonemes). These phonemes are represented by letters (graphemes). In other words, a sound can be represented by a letter (e.g. 's' or 'h') or a group of letters (e.g. 'th' or 'ear')



Once children begin learning sounds, they are used quickly to read and spell words. Children can then see the purpose of learning sounds. For this reason, the first six letters that are taught are 's', 'a', 't', 'p', 'i', 'n'. These can immediately be used to make a number of words such as 'sat', 'pin', 'pat', 'tap', 'nap'

***As a parent, your involvement in supporting your child's learning will be a vital factor in determining their success in learning to read.***

## Blending—for reading



To learn to read well children must be able to smoothly blend sounds together. Blending sounds fluidly helps to improve fluency when reading. Blending is more difficult to do with longer words so learning how to blend accurately from an early age is imperative.

Showing your child how to blend is important. Model how to 'push' sounds smoothly together without stopping at each individual sound.

It is also recommended to talk to your child about what blending is so they understand what they are trying to achieve.

## Segmenting—for spelling



Segmenting is a skill used in spelling. In order to spell the word cat, it is necessary to segment the word into its constituent sounds; c-a-t.

Children often understand segmenting as 'chopping' a word. Before writing a word young children need time to think about it, say the word several times, 'chop' the word and then write it. Once children have written the same word several times they won't need to use these four steps as frequently.

Children will enjoy spelling if it feels like fun and if they feel good about themselves as spellers. We need, therefore, to be playful and positive in our approach - noticing and praising what children **can** do as well as helping them to correct their mistakes.

## Websites

Interactive websites at home to support your child's learning:

[www.phonicsplay.co.uk](http://www.phonicsplay.co.uk)

[www.letters-and-sounds.com](http://www.letters-and-sounds.com)

*And finally...*

*If you would like further guidance or have any questions please ask your child's class teacher or myself.*

*Mrs S Hathaway*

### Looking at the pictures

- Pictures are an important part of a story so spending time looking at them, talking about them and asking questions will help your child's understanding.
- Some books have no words at all; they help to develop the very important skill of storytelling, so make up your own story together, adding as much detail as possible.
- Some books have very few words and you need to use the pictures to add detail; encouraging your child to gain as much meaning from 'reading' the pictures as possible.



### Having fun with rhymes

- An ability to hear and use rhyme is a vital part of developing children's reading skills.
- Enjoy singing together and reciting nursery rhymes.
- Play around with rhymes; change the endings to make up new ones of your own.
- Look for stories that are told in rhyme and encourage your child to predict the rhyming words when you are reading.
- Look for children's poetry books and learn some of the short poems by heart.
- Share the poems that your child brings home from school in their poetry scrap book.

### Building confidence

- Short frequent reading sessions are best.
- Don't rush to correct because often your child will self correct if given time to do so.
- Don't worry if your child appears to be choosing books that are too easy or repeatedly choosing the same books — this may be their way of building confidence.
- Give plenty of praise and encouragement.

### The phases

Letters and Sounds is split into 6 phases. Below is an overview what is included in each phase.

#### Phase One (Nursery / Pre-school)

The aim of this phase is to foster children's speaking and listening skills as preparation for learning to read with phonics. ***Parents can play a vital role in helping their children develop these skills, by encouraging their children to listen carefully and talk extensively about what they hear, see and do.***

#### Phase Two - Four (Reception)

Phase Two is when systematic, high quality phonic work begins. During Phase Two to Four, children learn:

- \* How to represent each of the 42 sounds by a letter or sequence of letters.
- \*How to blend sounds together for reading and how to segment (split) words for spelling.
- \*Letter names
- \*How to read and spell some high frequency 'tricky' words containing sounds not yet learnt (e.g. they, my, her, you).

The Letters and Sounds Programme progresses from the simple to the more complex aspects of phonics at a pace that is suitable for the children who are learning.

#### Phase Five (Year 1)

Children learn new ways of representing the sounds and practise blending for reading and segmenting for spelling.

#### Phase Six (Year 2)

During this phase, children become fluent readers and increasingly accurate spellers.

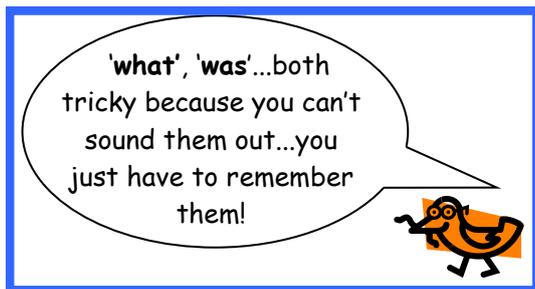


## Tips and Definitions

Talk to children about Letters and Sounds - "These are letters. A letter can make a sound. Sometimes letters are stuck together and they make a new sound. Letters together can make words. If we can read those words we can read; labels, signs, notes, comics, books and lots of other things all around us."

### Tricky words

Tricky words are words that cannot be 'sounded-out' but need to be learned by heart. They don't fit into the usual spelling patterns. In order to read simple sentences, it is necessary for children to know some words that have unusual or untaught spellings. It should be noted that, when teaching these words, it is important to always start with sounds already known in the word, then focus on the 'tricky' part. Tricky words will be sent home once they have been introduced.



### High frequency Words

High frequency (common) are words that recur frequently in much of the written material young children read and that they need when they write. High frequency words will be sent home as they are introduced.

## Knowing how books work

It is helpful if you can talk about aspects of books that we take for granted to make sure your child can:

1. Find the front and the back of the book and hold it the right way up.
2. Turn the pages one by one.
3. Show you where the story starts.
4. Show you the top and bottom of the page.
5. Show you where to start reading, and that words are different from pictures.

### Enjoying books together

- Begin by looking at the cover and discuss what the story might be about; look through the book and talk about the pictures.
- Talk about the story; ask why something happened or what might happen next; take it in turns to re-tell parts of it, or ask questions about what happened; talk about whether the book was enjoyable.
- If your child is reluctant to read you may like to read the book aloud first running your finger under the words as you read, and encouraging your child to join in if they can, especially if there is lots of repetition.
- See if your child can predict what is going to happen next at various points in the story; even if your child is not right, a sensible idea has value and may be a starting point for discussion.
- Show that we read from left to right and top to bottom by sliding your finger under the words as you read.
- Help your child to understand that one written word corresponds to one spoken word, and that a word is made up of several letters.

### Developing and Keeping their interest

- Continue to read to your child for a short time each day.
- Make use of the local library.
- Let your child see you reading for a range of purposes.
- Make books together about family events.