

Phonics Information Leaflet

St. Mary's CE Academy

'Letters and Sounds'

A Guide for
Parents



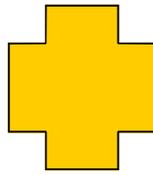
Being able to read is the most important skill children learn during their early schooling and has far-reaching implications for lifelong learning, confidence and well-being. High quality phonic teaching is the prime means by which we teach children how to read and spell words.

At St Mary's, we follow the 'Letters and Sounds' phonics programme and this guide is designed to help you, as parents, understand 'Letters and Sounds' so that you can support your child at home.

Phonics at a glance

Phonics is

Skills of
segmentation
and blending



Knowledge of
the alphabetical
code

Phonics consists of:

- Identifying sounds in spoken words;
- Recognising the common spellings of each phoneme (sound);
- Blending phonemes into words for reading;
- Segmenting words into phonemes for spelling.

Help!!! (Some terminology explained):

Phoneme: a sound in a word

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

Segmenting: means breaking words down into their phonemes (sounds) ch/a/t

Blending: is the reverse of segmenting! You are building words from their phonemes to read.

Segmenting

When reading the word **light** in phonics, we break the word down into **l – igh – t**.

This is known as **segmenting**, as we are splitting the word up to make it easier to read (just like we'd break an orange into segments, in order to make it easier to eat!).

Although there are 5 letters in the word light (**l,i,g,h,t**), there are only 3 sounds (**l-igh-t**). It is the sounds we think about and say when segmenting in phonics, not each individual letter! Once we have learnt which letters together make which sounds, segmenting a word becomes easier! It just takes a little practice!

Blending

Once we have broken up the word we wish to read, we then **blend** it back together.

This means that after we have segmented a word (also known as 'sounding out') we say the word correctly/ read the word!

In order for children to be able to say the word they have broken up, they must be able to hear it first. For example, it is easy for most grown-ups to hear each sound in the word **chick**. Segmented, the word becomes **ch-i-ck** (3 sounds). If we say each sound slowly, it is almost like saying the broken down word in slow motion. The more quickly we say each sound, the closer we are to hearing the word in its full form!

For children, it is important that each sound is pronounced properly, so that they can properly hear the different segments of the word! The challenge for children is to then piece it back together (in the right order), otherwise known as **blending!** This might sound tricky, but once blending clicks with a child, it really clicks...and then your little geniuses are well on their way to reading words!

1	2	3
c	a	t
b	ir	d
f	i	sh
l	igh	t

The words in the chart have already been segmented for you. Have a go at saying each sound in the word separately, then say the word!

For example c – a – t.....cat!

If you can say each sound and then the word, you have successfully segmented and blended! Practising this over and over with your child, so that they are saying each part of the word out loud is key to success!

Some more information (to make you sound like a phonics expert!):

Grapheme Key Vocabulary:

Digraph: 2 letters making 1 sound (ai, ee, oo, ch, th)

Trigraph: 3 letters making 1 sound (igh, ure)

Something to think about – Phonetically Plausible Words:

In Reception, if a child spells the word play with ai (plai) instead of the correct ay (play), this is still fabulous for their age! It is still using a version of the ay sound, and is known as being **phonetically plausible**...because it can still be read!

All of the alternative sounds are learnt in Year 1. However, exposing children to all of the different variations at a young age (through phonics, reading books, looking at text in the environment, phonics games etc) is crucial, so that eventually - when they are writing fluently further up school- they will choose the correct sound...and therefore spell words accurately!

Wouldn't it be great if your child was getting top marks in their spellings test each week in Year 1! So, although your Reception children are still young, everything you do now, and everything you expose them to, makes a difference! The more support and opportunities they have to practice their 'Letters and Sounds', the better!

'Letters and Sounds' Progression (the Phases explained)

In Phonics, children are taught different phonics 'phases', starting at Phase 1 and progressing to Phase 6. At St Mary's, our children are assessed regularly in Phonics to ensure that their needs are being met. It is important that each child is secure within a phase before moving too quickly onto the next phase.

Here is a brief summary of each phase:

Phase 1 (First Few Weeks in Reception)

Listening for sounds

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.



Ways you can support your child 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 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. 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. 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 child 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.'

'Simon says – put your hands on your f-ee-t.'

'Simon says – touch your ch-i-n.'

Phase 2 (Term 1 of Reception)

In this phase children will be taught the sounds (*phonemes*) for a number of letters (*graphemes*) and learn which phoneme is represented by which grapheme. 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'.

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*).

Now the children will be *seeing* letters and words, as well as hearing them. They will learn to read and spell simple words made up of two phonemes, for example, *am, at, it*, or three phonemes, for example, *cat, rug, sun, tick, bell*.

Tricky words

Tricky words cannot be 'sounded out'. They will also learn several tricky words: **the, to, I, go, no**.

Saying the sounds

Your child will be taught how to pronounce the sounds (*phonemes*) correctly to make blending easier. Teachers help children to look at different letters and say the right sounds for them.



Ways you can support your child 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*’.

There are lots of websites and apps that develop these skills. Please see your child’s teacher if you would like some more information on this.

Getting ready for writing

Teachers will model how to form letters (*graphemes*) correctly, so that children can eventually acquire a fluent and legible handwriting style. These skills develop over a long period of time. A child’s ability to form a letter correctly is a separate skill from phonics. Holding a pen or pencil needs considerable co-ordination and practice.

Writing in lower-case letters

We shall be teaching lower-case letters, as well as capital letters. As most writing will be in lower-case letters it is useful if you can use these at home. A good start is for your child to write their name correctly, starting with a capital letter followed by lower-case letters.



Ways you can support your child at home

Using their whole body

For handwriting children need to be well co-ordinated through their whole body, not just their hands and fingers. Games that help co-ordination include throwing balls at a target, under-arm and over-arm, and bouncing balls – also skipping on the spot, throwing a Frisbee, picking up pebbles from the beach and throwing them into the sea. Have fun!

Hand and finger play

Action rhymes such as ‘*Incy wincy spider*’, ‘*One potato, two potato*’ and ‘*Tommy Thumb*’ are great fun and get their hands and fingers moving. Playing with salt dough or clay really helps strengthen little fingers, as does cookery and using simple toolkits.

Hand–eye co-ordination

Pouring water into jugs and cups of different sizes, sweeping up with a dustpan and brush, cutting, sticking, tracing, threading beads, completing puzzles, peeling off stickers and sticking them in the right place – these all help hand–eye co-ordination.

Pencil hold

The 'pincer' movement needs to be practised. This is important as it enables children to hold a pencil properly as they write. Provide them with kitchen tongs and see if they can pick up small objects. Move on to challenging them to pick up smaller things, for example, little cubes, sugar lumps, dried peas, lentils, first with chopsticks, then with tweezers.

Ask children to peg objects to a washing line.

Provide plenty of different types of pen and pencil; hold their hand to practise the correct grip.

Phase 3 (End of Term 1 and Term 2 of Reception)

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 child 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, to, no, go, I and into**.
- Don't worry if they get some wrong! These are hard to remember – they need plenty of practice.
- Encourage your child to write simple notes and lists and read them to you.

Phase 4 (Term 3 of Reception)

Words with 4 sounds

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

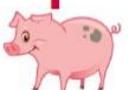
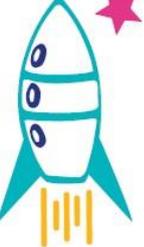


you can support your child at home

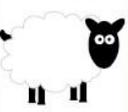
- Practise reading and spelling some CVCC and CCVC words but continue to play around with CVC words. Children like reading and spelling words that they have previously worked with, as this makes them feel successful.
- Make up captions and phrases for your child to read and write, for example, *a silver 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*.

Phase 2 and 3 Sound Mats

Phase 2 Phonics sound mat

s  strawberry	a  ant	t  teddy	p  pig	i  igloo	n  nose	m  mouse	d  dog
g  gate	o  orange	c  cat	k  kite	ck  duck	e  egg	u  umbrella	r  robot
h  heart	b  balloon	f  fish	ff  blast off	l  lolly	ll  ball	ss  cross	

Phase 3 Phonics sound mat

ai  train	air  hair	ar  car	ch  chair	ear  beard	ee  sheep	er  rubber	igh  night	j  jelly
ng  ring	oa  goat	oi  coin	oo  moon	oo  book	or  horn	ow  cow	qu  queen	sh  shower
th  thumb	ur  nurse	ure  cure	v  violin	w  witch	x  x-ray	y  yellow	z  zebra	zz  buzz

Handwriting Jingles

Curly caterpillar family <i>(anticlockwise movements)</i>	
c	Curl around the caterpillar.
o	All around the orange.
a	Round the apple, down the leaf.
d	Round the dinosaur's back, up his neck and down to his feet.
q	Round the queen's head, up to her crown, down her hair and curl.
s	Slide around the snake.
f	Down the stem and draw the leaves.
e	Slice into the egg, go over the top then under the egg.
g	Round the girl's face, down her hair and give her a curl.
One armed robot family <i>(down, up and over movements)</i>	
r	Down the robot's back, then up and curl.
n	Down Nobby and over the net.
m	Down Maisie then over the two mountains. Maisie, mountain, mountain.
h	Down the horse's head to the hooves and over his back.
b	Down the laces, over the toe and touch the heel.
p	Down the plait, up and over the pirate's face.
k	Down the Kangaroo's body, tail and leg.
Long ladder family <i>(mainly down and round movements)</i>	
l	Down the long leg.
i	Down the insect's body, dot for the head.
t	Down the tower, across the tower.
j	Down his body, curl and dot.
u	Down and under the umbrella, up to the top and down to the puddle.
y	Down a horn, up a horn and under the yak's head.
Zig zag monster <i>(diagonal movements)</i>	
v	Down a wing, up a wing.
w	Down, up, down and up the worm.
x	Cross down the arm and leg and cross the other way.
z	Zig-zag-zig, down the zip.

Websites and Apps for Reading, Writing and Phonics

Guide to Your Child's First Year at School

download from ...

<http://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/for-home/starting-school>

Websites

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/curations/alphablocks-stage-1>

<https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/for-home/>

www.familylearning.org.uk/phonics_games.html

<http://www.starfall.com/>

Also search for 'Mr Thorne does Phonics' on YouTube for many video clips of introduction and use of different sounds

To see good articulation of phonemes look at the video on our school website.

Apps (for ipad unless otherwise specified)

Many apps also have a free version that can be downloaded.



Hairy Letters: £2.99

<https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/hairy-letters/id410276288?mt=8>



Forest Phonics: £2.99

<https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/forest-phonics/id581746397?mt=8>



Ladybird: I'm Ready for Phonics with Captain Comet: £1.99

<https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/ladybird-im-ready-for-phonics/id547616940?mt=8>



Pirate Phonics 1: £2.99

<https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/pirate-phonics-1-kids-learn/id586978856?mt=8>