

Learning to Read - Information for Parents

As your child is beginning to learn to read, we would like to help you understand how we teach phonics and to share some ideas to help you support your child at home.

Here are a few basic points:

- A letter consists of; a sound (phoneme), a shape (grapheme) and it has a capital form and a lower case form.
- The phoneme is the first thing that children need to recognise.
- A **phoneme** is the smallest unit of sound.
- A **grapheme** is a letter shape.
- A **digraph** is when two or more letters come together to make a phoneme, eg, 'sh' in fish.
- **Blending** is the process used in reading that brings the sounds together to make a word, eg, c/a/t/ becomes cat.
- **Segmenting** is the process used in spelling that breaks down words into individual sounds, eg, cat is c/a/t/.
- At this stage, we will learn to read and write lower and upper case letters, using capital letters for names, dates and at the beginning of sentences.
- Children learn each letter by its sound **and its name**. For example, "**This is the letter 'a'** [as in aim] and **the sound it makes is 'a'** [as in ant]" and "**sh is made using the letters s and h** ['ess' and 'aitch']"

Letters and Sounds

We use 'Letters and Sounds,' which is a government produced phonic teaching programme, which consists of a 6 phase teaching programme focusing on high quality phonic work. See the other sheet to see how these relate to reading books.

Phase 1 and 2 are generally taught in Nursery. Phases 2, 3 and 4 are generally covered in Reception. In Year 1 we recap Phase 3 and 4 and usually move onto Phase 5 before Christmas and lasts until the end of the year. Phase 6 is covered in Year 2.

A few tips on helping your child to blend

Blending is the process of saying the individual phonemes in a word and then running them together to make the word. It is a technique every child will need to learn, and it improves with practice. To start with you should 'sound out' the word and see if a child can hear it. The phonemes must be said quickly to hear the word. Some children take longer than others to hear this.

Remember that some sounds (digraphs) are represented by two letters, such as sh. Children should sound out the digraph (sh), not the individual letters (s/h). With practice they will be able to blend the digraph as one sound in a word. So, a word like ship should be sounded out sh/i/p.

Tricky Words

Some words in English have an irregular spelling and cannot be read by blending, such as said, was and one. Unfortunately, many of these are common words. The irregular parts have to be remembered. These are called the '**tricky words**'. In Phase 2 the tricky words are the/to/I/no/go/into.

High Frequency Words

These are a mixture of phonically decodable words and tricky words that are most commonly used.

A few tips on helping your child to segment

The easiest way to know how to spell a word is to listen for the sounds in that word. Start by having your child listen for the first sound in a word. Games like 'I Spy' are ideal for this. Next try listening for the end sounds, as the middle sound of a word is the hardest to hear. Begin with simple three-letter words such as cat or hot. A good idea is to say a word and tap out the sounds. Three taps means three sounds. Say each sound as you tap.

****What will you child need to do at home?****

Individual Reading books

Your child will bring home their individual reading book in their book bag. Please could you use the back of their homework book to record the date and title of each book they bring home. We will look at this every Friday. Each child is responsible for changing their own reading book when it has been read. They will do this as soon as they come into school in the morning. This can be done once a week or every day, depending on how often they read and how long or challenging the book is. Try to read for a few minutes each day. Pick a quiet time when your child isn't tired and most importantly, have fun!

High Frequency Word Mats

Your child has a Phase 2 High Frequency Word Mat in their homework book. This is for you to keep at home and does not need to be returned to school. We would like you to practise reading these words as often as you can. When your child can read all the words on the sheet in less than 1 minute they can request the next sheet in school.

Spellings

Each Friday your child will have spellings to practise at home. Each week we will suggest a new way in which you can support your child to learn their spellings. A small spelling test will take place the following Friday. Spelling books will be marked and sent home so you can see their score and help review any words that might need more practice. House points will be awarded for full marks or an improvement on their score from the week before.

We look forward to supporting your child through their reading journey.

If you would like to discuss any of the above, please catch us at the end of the day for a quick chat.

Mrs Mitchell, Mrs Oldfield and Mrs Jennings.