

Holly



Primary School

Phonics and Reading.

A guide for parents.

Introduction.

At Holly Primary we know how important it is for parents, carers and teachers to work together. This is especially important when it comes to reading. Reading together at home is the best way for your child to develop a lifelong love of books. The gift of reading is like giving children a ticket to all that school and life have to offer.

One of the first ways that we help to develop a child's reading is through the teaching of phonics. Phonics simply means letter sounds, and once your child knows these sounds and applies them to reading and spelling then they are well on their way to becoming a reader and a writer.

Throughout this booklet we hope to give you an overview of phonics teaching, the phonic screening test at Year 1 and how phonics feeds into your child being a fluent and enthusiastic reader and writer. We've included the correct terms used in schools for the different elements of phonics but have also included a definition which will hopefully simplify the jargon.

What is phonics?

The alphabet only has 26 letters but spoken English uses 44 sounds. These sounds are called phonemes. These phonemes are represented by letters and these letters are called graphemes. In other words, a sound can be represented by a single letter (eg. e or p) or by a group of letters (eg. sh or ee).

A letter sound is the first thing that a child needs to recognise, rather than the name of the letter. Initially, the only time we use a capital letter is for the beginning of a child's name. When they are ready, we introduce the idea of a capital letter at the beginning of a sentence. In all other early year's writing we use only lower-case letters.

Letter shape (how it is written) = grapheme

Letter sound (what the letter sound is) = phoneme

Letters and sounds.

Schools follow a government programme of how to teach these letters and sounds. It is a six-phase programme that focuses on daily high-quality phonics work. By the end of Year Two children should have completed phase 6 and be equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to be fluent readers. The teacher assesses which phase the children should be working at and they are placed in the appropriate group. The role of the parent is important when encouraging careful listening and asking the children to talk about what they see, hear and do. We support this in school during our outdoor learning sessions, when the children are away from the bustle of school and the technologies that surround them in every day life.

The six phases.

Phase One.

The aim of Phase One is to develop children's listening and speaking skills in preparation for learning to read and spell with phonics. Children have fun exploring and experimenting with sounds and become familiar with rhyme, rhythm and alliteration.

Phase Two

Phase Two continues the verbal side of phonics but also introduces the grapheme/phoneme correspondence (the link between how a letter looks and the sound it makes). Children begin to learn that words are constructed from phonemes and that the phonemes are represented by graphemes. They begin with a small selection of common vowels and consonants (s, a, t, p, i, n) and begin to put them together to read and spell CVC words (consonant-vowel-consonant).

E.g. c-a-t s-i-t p-a-n

Phase Three

Phase Three teaches children one grapheme for each of the 44 phonemes in order to help them read and spell simple regular words.

Children learn to link sounds to letters, naming and sounding the letters of the alphabet. They hear and say sounds in the order they occur in words and then read simple words by blending the phonemes from left to right. They recognise common digraphs (where one sound is made from two letters e.g sh) and read some high frequency words (the ones we come across the most).

E.g. sh-e-ll b-oa-t t-r-ai-n

Phase Four

Phase Four teaches the children to read and spell words which have adjacent consonants. They move from the simple CVC words (cat, put) to CVCC words (pots) and CCVC words (spot) and then CCVCC words (spots). They then move onto polysyllabic words (words with more than one syllable) e.g. shampoo, helper. If a child is able to blend and segment words, then they can apply this skill when learning to read and spell.

Phase Five

Phase Five teaches children to use alternative ways of pronouncing the graphemes and spelling the phonemes that they have already been taught. For example, they will learn that the phoneme “ai” can be spelt “ai” as in paid, “ay” as in day, “ey” as in hey and “a_e” as in made. They will also learn that “c” can be pronounced as “c” in coat or “c” in city.

Phase Six

The aim of Phase Six is to embed the skills that they have learnt and to use them automatically in their reading and spelling. Once they have these in place they can begin to read for meaning, rather than read mechanically. Their phonic knowledge will mean that they can recognise and spell an increasing number of complex words.

The ultimate aim of a structured phonics programme is that the children can read and spell the majority of words that they will come across and therefore be able to focus on the content and their comprehension of a book, rather than the mechanics of reading, with no understanding of what the text says.

Phonics Screening Test

In 2012 the government introduced a phonics screening test for all children in Year 1. The purpose of this is to check that children are learning how to use phonics to decode words. The test is usually administered by your child's class teacher on a one to one basis. It is not a written test. Your child will be given 40 words to read containing the phonemes that they have learnt. It checks that your child can sound out and blend graphemes to read simple words, that they can work out one and two syllable words, such as sand and windmill, and that they can work out nonsense words, such as phush and snorb. The nonsense words are included to check that your child can decode a word using their phonic skills rather than rely on their memory. The pass mark is generally around 32 out of 40. If your child doesn't pass, then they are required to resit the test in Year 2. The results are sent to the local authority.

Blending for Reading

Throughout the foundation stage and into Key Stage One the children will be learning the phonemes and graphemes that we have looked at. But to be able to read and spell the children must be able to blend these sounds together smoothly. Blending sounds fluidly helps to improve their fluency when reading.

Blending is more difficult to do with longer words so learning how to blend at an early age is very important. Showing your child how to blend is necessary for teachers and parents.

Remember some sounds (digraphs) are represented by 2 letters, such as ee or oi. Children need to recognise this and not try to sound these separately. Some words have trigraphs, which is where 3 letters represent one sound (ear, air).

So, when reading the word “hear”, the child will recognise the sounds h and ear and blend them. This process is reversed when spelling a word. We call this segmenting. In order to be able to spell a word the child has to recognise the sounds that they can hear. Eg. ran r-a-n.

Early games used in the teaching of phonics focus on the child’s ability to hear these sounds. Ispy is ideal for focusing on initial sounds. Once they have this concept they can move on to the middle sound in a word, which is harder to hear. Rhyming games and poems are also helpful when tuning into sounds. It is important to take care with digraphs, for example in the word fish, which has 4 letters but only 3 sounds.

Tricky Words

There are many words that cannot be sounded out so have to be learnt by heart. This is because they don't fit the usual spelling patterns, such as "was", "they" and "one". We call these tricky words and different tricky words are introduced in different year groups.

High Frequency Words

These are the words that are frequently found in many of the books that children read and in their early writing. These would include "to", "and", "the" and "look".

CVC words

CVC stands for consonant-vowel-consonant. There are 5 vowels- a, e, i, o, u. All words in English have a vowel in. The letter y is an exception. It can be used as a vowel, as in cry, or a consonant, as in yellow. All the other letters are called consonants.

The Phonemes/graphemes and tricky words

The phonemes/graphemes taught from Foundation through to Year 2 tend to be taught in the following order.

Phase 2: S, a, t, p, i, n, m, d, g, o, c, k, ck, e, u, r, h, b, f, ff, l, ll, ss

Tricky words: the, to, I, go, into, no

Phase 3: j, v, w, 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

Tricky words: we, me, be, was, no, go, my, you, they, her, all, are

Phase 4: By Phase 4 the children will be able to represent all these sounds with a grapheme. They will blend phonemes to read CVCC words (pots) and CCVC (spot). They will be able to read the tricky words learnt as well as being able to spell some of them.

Tricky words: said, so, she, he, have, like, some, come, were, there, little, one, they, all, are, do, when, out, what, my, her

Phase 5: Children at this phase will be taught new graphemes and alternative pronunciations for the graphemes they already know. They will be learning which grapheme to use when writing. Once they have these they will consolidate all their learning in Phase 6.

New Graphemes: ay day, oy boy, wh when, a_e make, ou out, ir girl, ph photo, e_e these, ie tie, ue blue, ew new, i_e like, ea eat, aw saw, oe toe, o_e home, au Paul, u_e rule

Tricky words: oh, their, people, Mr, Mrs, looked, called, asked, water, where, who, again, thought, through, work, mouse, many, laughed, because, different, any, eyes, friends, once, please