

Phonics Information for Parents

The aim of this booklet is to give you ideas how, as a parent or carer, you can support and encourage your child at home.

At Bushfield Infants we use a systematic phonics programme. The phonic code is broken down into phases and our teaching takes children through it in a logical, sequential and rigorous way.

Sounds in spoken language - the beginning of phonics

Children develop an 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.

Foundations for Phonics

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 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 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**'.

Sound-talk

The separate sounds (phonemes) are spoken aloud, in order, all through the word, and are then merged together into the whole word.

c-a-t = cat.

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.

cat = c-a-t.

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

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**. Each phoneme has an action to help the children remember them.

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**). 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 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**.

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.

Ways you can support your children at home

Magnetic letters

Use magnetic letters on your fridge, or with a tin tray - 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.

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.

Ways you can support your children at home

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

- Call out one word at a time and get your child to spell it using phonics cards.
- Play 'Pairs', turning over two words at a time trying to find a matching pair
- 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, green, spoon**

For example, in the word '**green**', **g** = consonant, **r** = consonant, **ee** = vowel, **n** = consonant.

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.

Phase 5

In Phase 5 Phonics, children learn a new range of graphemes and phonemes for reading.

Some of these graphemes represent phonemes (sounds) that they have already learnt a grapheme for. For example, in Phase 3 children were taught 'ai' as the grapheme for the phoneme /a/ (as in rain).

In Phase 5, children are taught that the phoneme /a/ can also be represented by the graphemes 'ay' (as in play) or 'a-e' (as in make). This variation needs to be taught as it is common in our language system.

Alternative pronunciations for graphemes are also introduced too. Such as 'ea' in 'pea,' 'read' and 'break.

Support your child by helping them to learn and recall the new sounds they are taught. Show a sound and ask your child to tell you what it is, or say a sound and ask them to write it down or to identify it from a set of sounds.

Ways you can support your children at home

Have magnetic letters available for your child to investigate letter strings that make up the sounds they know and to group letters into words. Foam letters could be used in the bathroom or outside with water play. Play games where you ask your child to make a word, or you make a word that they then have to read. It is possible to buy magnetic and foam letters for the 'digraphs' that make up sounds (e.g. 'ay', 'ee', 'ow') as well as individual letters.

Try physical games to remember words - your child could bounce a ball as they spell a word or read sounds you show them. Alternatively, try setting up some cups or buckets with sounds written on them; you say a sound and your child has to try and aim a ball or a crumpled piece of paper into the correct bucket or cup.

Practise building sentences. This is a great way of practising 'tricky' words as well as sounds, and also of thinking about sentence structure. Simply write a selection of words on to small cards or pieces of paper and then use these to build a sentence - the sillier the better! Or challenge your child to make a sentence using as many words as they can containing the same sound.

Read and draw with your child. Simply write a word on a piece of paper containing a sound they know (e.g. bee, book, night) and challenge your child to read the word and draw a picture to match it.