**Phonics**

In school we follow the Letters and Sounds programme. Letters and Sounds is a phonics resource published by the Department for Education and Skills which consists of six phases.

**The Terminology**

**Phoneme**

A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in a word. It is generally accepted that most varieties of spoken English use about 44 phonemes.

# Grapheme

A grapheme is a symbol of a phoneme. It is a letter or group of letters representing a sound.

**Segmenting and Blending**

Segmenting consists of breaking words down into phonemes to spell. Blending consists of building words from phonemes to read. Both skills are equally important.

**Digraph**

This is when two letters come together to make a phoneme. For example ‘oa’ makes the sound in ‘boat’ and is also known as a **vowel digraph.** There are also **consonant digraphs**, for example ‘sh’ and ‘ch’.

**Trigraph**

This is when three letters come together to make one phoneme, for example ‘igh’.

**Split Digraph**

A digraph in which the two letters are not adjacent – e.g. m-**a-**k-**e**.

## Abbreviations

VC, CVC, and CCVC are the respective abbreviations for vowel-consonant, consonant-vowel-consonant, consonant-consonant-vowel-consonant and are used to describe the order of graphemes in words, e.g. *am* (VC), *Sam* (CVC), *slam* (CCVC), or *each* (VC), *beach* (CVC), *bleach* (CCVC).

**Phase 1**

Phase One of ‘Letters and Sounds’ concentrates on developing children's speaking and listening skills and lays the foundations for the phonic work which starts in Phase 2. The emphasis during Phase 1 is to get children attuned to the sounds around them and ready to begin developing oral blending and segmenting skills. Phase 1 is divided into seven aspects.

Each aspect contains three strands:

* Tuning in to sounds (auditory discrimination)
* Listening and remembering sounds (auditory memory and sequencing)
* Talking about sounds (developing vocabulary and language comprehension)

**Phase 2**

In Phase 2, letters and their sounds are introduced one at a time. A set of letters is taught each week, in the following sequence:

**Set 1**: s, a, t, p

**Set 2**: i, n, m, d

**Set 3**: g, o, c, k

**Set 4**: ck, e, u, r

**Set 5**: h, b, f, ff, l, ll, ss

The children will begin to learn to blend and segment to help begin reading and spelling. This

will begin with simple words.

**Words using set 1:**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| at | sat | pat | sat | sap |

**Words using set 1 and 2:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **(+i)** | **(+n)** | **(+m)** | **(+d)** |
| it  is  sit  pit  pip  sip  tip | an  in  nip  pan  pin  tan  nap  tin | am  man  mat  map  Pam  Tim  Sam | dad  sad  dim  din  did  Sid  and  dip |

**Words using set 1-3:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **(+g)** | **(+o)** | **(+c)** | **(+k)** |
| tag  gag  gig  gap  nag  sag  gas  pig  dig | got  on  not  pot  top  dog  tot  pop  mog | can  cot  cop  cap  cat  cod | kid  kit  Kim  Ken |

**Words using set 1-4:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **(+ck)** | **(+e)** | **(+u)** | **(+r)** |
| kick  sock  sack  dock  pick  sick  pack  tuck | get  pet  ten  net  pen  peg  met  men | up  mum  run  mug  cup  sun  mud | rim  rip  ram  rat  rag  rug  rot |

**Words using set 1-5:**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **(+h)** | **(+b)** | **(+f and ff)** | **(+l and ll)** | **(+ss)** |
| had  him  his  hot  hut  hop  hum  hit  hat  has  hack | but  big  back  bet  bad  bag  bed  bud  beg  bug  bun | of  if  off  fit  fin  fun  fig  fog  puff  huff  cuff | lap  let  leg  lot  lit  bell  fill  doll  tell  sell  Bill | less  hiss  mass  mess  boss  fuss  hiss  pass  kiss  Tess |

Alongside this, children are introduced to tricky words. These are the words that are irregular. This means that phonics cannot be applied to the reading and spelling of these words.

**The tricky words introduced in phase 2 are:**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| to | the | no | go | I |

**Phase 3**

By the time children reach Phase 3, they will already be able to blend and segment words

containing the 19 letters taught in Phase 2. Over the twelve weeks which Phase 3 is expected

to last, twenty-five new graphemes are introduced (one at a time).

**Set 6:** j, v, w, x

**Set 7**: 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

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Sounds** | **Word example** |
| **j** | jam |
| **v** | vet |
| **w** | win |
| **x** | box |
| **y** | yes |
| **z** | zip |
| **zz** | buzz |
| **qu** | quick |
| **ch** | chop |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Sounds** | **Word example** |
| **oo (short)** | cook |
| **ow** | now |
| **ar** | star |
| **air** | hair |
| **ear** | hear |
| **er** | term |
| **ur** | curl |
| **or** | fork |
| **ure** | pure |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Sounds** | **Word example** |
| **sh** | shin |
| **th** | thick |
| **ng** | song |
| **ai** | train |
| **igh** | sight |
| **oa** | boat |
| **oi** | coil |
| **oo (long)** | boot |
| **ee** | tree |

**Tricky words:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| we | me | be | was | no | go |
| my | you | they | her | all | are |

**Phase 4**

By Phase 4, children will be able to represent each of 42 phonemes with a grapheme. They will blend phonemes to read CVC words and segment CVC words for spelling. They will also be able to read two syllable words that are simple. They will be able to read all the tricky words learnt so far and will be able to spell some of them. This phase consolidates all the children have learnt in the previous phases

**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 will be taught new graphemes and alternative pronunciations for these graphemes, as well as graphemes they already know. They will begin to learn to choose the appropriate grapheme when spelling.

**New graphemes for reading:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Sound** | **Word example** |  | **Sound** | **Word example** |  | **Sound** | **Word example** |  | **Sound** | **Word example** |
| **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 |  |  |  |  |  |

**Phase 6**

In phase 6, the focus is on learning spelling rules for word endings (these are known as suffixes). The children will learn how words change when you add certain letters. There are 12 different suffixes taught:

**-s -es -ing -ed**

**-er -est -y -en**

**-ful -ly -ment -ness**

**Phonics at Home**

**Tips for teaching your child the sounds:**

* It is important for a child to learn lower case or small letters rather than capital letters at first. Most early books and games use lower case letters and your child will learn these first at school. Obviously you should use a capital letter when required, such as at the beginning of the child's name, eg. **Paul**.
* When you talk about phonemes/sounds to your child, remember to use the unvoiced/soft letter sounds e.g. **fff…sss...zzz** rather than the **‘f-uh’ ‘s-uh’ ‘z-uh’** sounds that you may have been taught. When learning that alphabet also use the corresponding alphabet names: **a-y…b-ee…s-ee…d-ee…e-ee** etc and show your child the grapheme – letter shape.
* When sounding out words to spell is almost impossible if you try to use the alphabet names. **eg. cat, would sound like: see  ay  tee.** However, your child does also need to recognise and know the grapheme name and letter shape, in order to know which letter to choose to spell accurately with.

**Useful webpages**

* <http://www.twinkl.co.uk/> – useful resources, e.g. phoneme and word cards and mats
* <http://www.phonicsplay.co.uk> – fun games which link to Letters and Sounds
* <http://www.starfall.com/> - phonic stories to share
* <http://ictgames.com/literacy.html>
* <http://www.letters-and-sounds.com>