

Understanding Phonics

Supporting your child to Read,
Write and Spell.



Horspath C.E. Primary

Understanding Phonics -

At Horspath, all children in Foundation and year 1 take part in high-quality phonics sessions every day. These are fun sessions involving lots of speaking, listening and games, where the emphasis is on children's active participation. They learn to use this phonic knowledge for reading and writing activities.

From Acorn class they develop 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 so if they are not confident with linking the graphemes to the phonemes then they will find it very difficult to progress and learn to read words on the page, fluently and accurately.

I hope you find this booklet both helpful and informative. Your child's phonics development is based on a partnership between you, your child and Horspath School. Please see your class teacher if you require further support.

Chrissie Marshall
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**At Horspath Primary we use a systematic phonics programme called:
Letters and Sounds.**

Letters and Sounds is divided into six phases, with each phase building on the skills and knowledge of previous learning. There are no big leaps in learning. Children have time to practise and expand their ability to read and spell words. They are also taught to read and spell 'tricky words', which are words with spellings that are unusual.

.e.g. the, they, you, are, my said, have, like, all, her, was.....

Phase 1 This paves the way for systematic learning of phonics and usually starts in nursery, at home or playgroup.

Children listen attentively to sounds around them, such as the sounds of their toys and to sounds in spoken language. They are taught a wide range of nursery rhymes and songs.

They have books read to and with them. This helps to increase the number of words they know - their vocabulary - and helps them talk confidently about books.



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', 'sh sh sh - shell'.

Say: 'A tall tin of tomatoes!' 'Tommy, the ticklish teddy!' 'A lovely little lemon!'

This is called alliteration. Use names, for example, 'Gertrude gets the giggles', 'Milo makes music', 'Naheema's nose'.

Teach them 'Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers'. Etc

Learning how to 'sound-talk'

The teacher shows children how to do this - **c-a-t** = **cat**. 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 - **cat** = **c-a-t**. 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 children 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.'

'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'

'Can you guess the word I'm saying ?..... sp - 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**. 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). 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 magnetic or wooden letters together to form words, reading words in games and on the interactive whiteboard and breaking up words into their individual sounds. This will all help their spelling.

Tricky words

They will 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.

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

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'.

Both these activities help children to see that reading and spelling are reversible processes.

Spelling is harder than reading words - praise, don't criticise. Little whiteboards and pens are a good/ fun way for children to try out spellings and practise their handwriting.

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 in making small movements with hands and fingers.

In the early phonic phases children can use letter cards or magnetic letters to demonstrate their knowledge of phonics.

Correct letter formation sheet available

Writing in lower-case letters

We teach 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 children 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, throwing a Frisbee, picking up pebbles from the beach and throwing them into the sea. etc

Hand and finger play

Playing with dough or clay really helps strengthen little fingers, as does lego and using simple toolkits.

Hand-eye co-ordination

Pouring water into jugs and cups of different sizes in the bath, 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 pens and pencils; hold their hand to practise the correct grip.

Phase 3 on completion of this phase children will have learnt the 'simple code' i.e one grapheme for each phoneme in the English language.

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, were, there, little, one.....
- 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 now!

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 children 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

- Make sure your child is confident reading and spelling the word lists learnt in their year group.

All tricky words are available. First 45 words for Foundation. Next 114 words learnt through years 1 and 2. – Ask the class teacher if there are specific words which they need to focus on.

- Call out one word at a time and get your child to spell it on a magic board or a small whiteboard, ask them to check it with your spelling.
- Using a timer how quickly can they read a group of words, can they beat their time?
- Write a word on their back with your finger - can they guess which word it is?

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.**

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 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 boosts confidence.
- 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. A street name such as Park Road, captions on buses and Lorries, street signs such as bus stop etc

Phase 5 Now we move on to the 'complex code' children learn more graphemes for the phonemes which they already know, plus different ways of pronouncing the graphemes they already know.

Rhyming pairs games, poetry, homophone matching games etc can all help in the familiarisation of the different pronunciations.

Phoneme – Grapheme word mats available from class.

Phase 6 children work on spelling patterns including prefixes and suffixes, doubling and dropping letters etc. These patterns extend in their complexity through to year 6.



ONLINE

www.lettersandsounds.com Resources, games and information divided into phases.

www.phonicsplay.co.uk A selection of fun, interactive games for different phases.

Google : Correct articulation of phonemes

Google : Jolly Phonics songs and actions

Year 1 Phonics Screening Check

(DfE 2015 www.gov.co.uk)

The phonics screening check is a short, simple assessment to make sure that all pupils have learned phonic decoding to an appropriate standard by the age of 6. All year 1 pupils must complete the phonics check.

The phonics check will help teachers identify the children who need extra help so they can receive the support they need to improve their reading skills so that it does not become a barrier to their learning.

The check comprises of a list of 40 words and non words which they read on a one- to -one with a teacher.

Examples of words

day

snemp



slide

blurst



nemt

spron



phone

stroft

