

## Ways you can support your children at home: talking and listening

- **Make time to listen to your child talking** – as you meet them from their setting or school, as you walk, or travel home by car, in the supermarket as you shop, at meal times, bath times, bedtimes – any time!
- **Switch off the TV, radio and mobile phones** – and really listen!
- **Show that you are interested in what they are talking about** – look at your child, smile, nod your head, ask a question or make a response to show that you really have been listening.
- **Make a collection of different toy creatures** – for example, a duck, a snake, an alien, say the sound it might make as you play together, for example, ‘quack-quack’, ‘sssssss’, ‘yuk-yuk’, and encourage your child to copy you.
- **Listen at home** – switch off the TV and listen to the sounds, both inside and outside the home. Can your child tell you what sounds they heard, in the order in which they heard them?
- **Play-a-tune** – and follow me! Make or buy some simple shakers, drums and beaters, then play a simple tune and ask your child to copy. Have fun!
- **Use puppets** and toys to make up stories or retell known ones. Record your child telling the story and play it back to them.

## Sounds in spoken language – the beginning of phonics

When children enter the Nursery and Reception classes they 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 their phonic knowledge for reading and writing activities and in their independent play.

The aim of this leaflet is to give you a clear picture of how we approach the teaching of phonics and word recognition and how, as a parent or carer, you can support and encourage your child at home.



## Not all children will learn at the same rate!

Your child should be supported *whatever* their rate of learning. There is a very close link between *difficulty with phonics* and *hearing* so, if your child is making progress more slowly than might be expected, it would be worth having their hearing checked.

From a very early stage, children develop awareness of different sounds in spoken language. 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. 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.

# Letters and Sounds



At Outwood Primary Academy Ledger Lane 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 practice and rapidly 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 or that children have not yet been taught.

**Phase 1 is primarily taught in Nursery and where children are ready Phase 2 is also begun.**

## Phase 1 3 - 4 years old

This paves the way for systematic learning of 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. They read good books to and with the children. This helps to increase the number of words they know – their *vocabulary* – and helps them talk confidently about books.

### 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 practice '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-e-a-d.'

'Simon says – touch your ch-i-n.'

'Simon says – pick up your b-a-g.'

## Phase 2

In this phase children will continue practicing 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 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*.

### Tricky words

They will also learn several tricky words: **the, to, I, go, no**.

Children will still be practicing oral blending and segmenting skills daily. They need plenty of practice at doing this.

### 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.

### 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.

### Writing in lower-case letters

We shall be teaching 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.

## Phase 3

The purpose of this phase is to:

- Teach more graphemes, most of which are made up of two letters, e.g. 'oa' as in boat
- Practice blending and segmenting a wider set of CVC words, e.g. fizz, chip, sheep
- 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**

Here are some examples of words they will be reading. Their confidence from the daily practice and reading and writing will really be paying off!

Tail, week, right, soap, food, park, burn, cord, town, soil

### **Tricky words**

The number of tricky words is getting larger. 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**

Magnetic letters – these can be used on your fridge. Encourage your child to find the letters they have been learning. Have fun making CVC and tricky words.

## Phase 4

In this phase the children will continue to practice the graphemes (letters) and phonemes (sounds) they have already learned. They will also learn how to read and write CVCC words – tent, damp, toast, chimp.

E.g. in the word 'toast', t = consonant, oa = vowel, s = consonant, t = consonant

They will also learn to read and spell CCVC words – swim, plum, sport, cream, spoon.

E.g. 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 makes them feel successful.
- Make up captions and phrases for your child to read and write – e.g. '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 – when they find and read three, give them a treat!
- Look out for words in the environment on food packaging that your child will find easy to read, e.g. lunch, fresh milk, drink, fish and chips, jam.
- Work on reading words together, e.g. a street name like Park Road, captions on buses and lorries, street signs, e.g. bus stop.

## Phase 5 & 6

As your child moves onto phases 5 and 6 they will learn that most sounds can be spelled in more than one way. For example the f sound can be written as f as in fan, ff as in huff or ph as in photo.

This develops their knowledge of spelling choices. They will continue with this spelling work into Year 2 and beyond.

They will learn that most letters and combinations of letters (graphemes) can represent more than one sound. For example, the grapheme ea can be read as /ee/ as in leaf or /e/ as in bread.

### Ways you can support your children at home

- Enjoy and share books together – buy or borrow books that will fire their imagination and interest. Read and re-read those they love best.
- Make time to read with your child throughout their time in school – PLEASE continue reading to your child even when they are reading independently. This is very important – your child needs to practise their reading skills every day, and needs the support of an interested adult. A grandparent, older brother or sister can help.
- Write with your child – ‘think aloud’ so they can hear the decisions you are making as you write. Make sure the writing is for a purpose, e.g. messages on birthday cards, a shopping list, and an address.
- Talk about the words they see in everyday life: food packaging, signs in the supermarkets, captions on buses and lorries, messages on birthday cards and invitations.
- Write a shopping list together.
- Send an email to a family member or friend
- Praise them for their play writing – those early squiggles and marks show that your child is beginning to understand writing.

### What to do if your child is reluctant to read or write at home:

Reading:

- Make sure your child sees you reading
- Read to your child. Show them you like the book.
- Bring stories to life by using loud/soft/scary voices
- Spread books around your house for your child to dip into.
- Let your child choose what they would like to read – books, comics, catalogues.
- Read favourite books over and over again.

Writing:

- Make sure your child sees you writing.
- Compose an email together inviting a friend over to tea.
- Continue to make words together using magnetic letters.
- Leave a message on the fridge door – encourage them to write a reply to you.
- Make up a story together about one of their toys. You write for them, repeating the sentences as you write. When complete they can draw pictures to go with it.