

Glossary of Terms

Phonemes – A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in a word. There are about 44 phonemes in the English Language and each phoneme is represented by a grapheme.

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

GPCs – We convert graphemes to phonemes when we are reading and we convert phonemes to graphemes when we are writing. To do this children need to learn which grapheme corresponds to which phoneme.

Segmenting – Segmenting consists of breaking words down into the individual phonemes in order to spell

Blending – Blending consists of building a word by blending the individual phonemes together in order to spell.

Digraph – A digraph is a two-letter grapheme where two letters represent one phoneme such as 'ea' in seat and 'sh' in ship.

Trigraph – A trigraph is a three-letter grapheme where three letters represent one phoneme such as 'igh' in night and 'air' in flair

Adjacent consonants – These are words that contain two consonants next to each other in a word (CCVC or CVCC words). As the consonants sit next to each other it becomes tricky to separate each sound when segmenting and blending e.g. s/t/o/p

Split digraph – A split digraph has a letter that splits i.e. comes between, the two letters in the digraph as in 'a-e' in make and take, where the 'k' separates the digraph 'a-e', which in both words represents the phoneme /ai/.

Phonics

Information for Parents



Ridgewell
C of E VA Primary School

January 2016

There has been a huge shift in the past few year in how we teach reading in UK schools. Phonics is recommended as the first strategy that children should be taught in helping them learn to read.

So what is phonics?

Words are made up from small units of sound called **phonemes**. Phonics teaches children to be able to listen carefully and identify the phonemes that make up each word. This helps children to learn to read words and to spell words

During phonics teaching the children are taught 3 main things:

1. **GPCs** - This stands for **grapheme-phoneme correspondences**. This simply means that they are taught all the phonemes in the English language and ways of writing them down (the letters that represent the sound).
2. **Blending** - This is when children say the sounds that make up a word and are able to merge the sounds together until they can hear what the word is. This skill is vital in learning to read. **E.g. h/a/t – hat.**
3. **Segmenting** - This is the opposite of blending. Children are able to say a word and then break it up into the phonemes that make the word. This skill is vital in being able to spell words. **E.g. hat – h/a/t.**

How can I help my child at home? (Continued)

- Playing flashcard games such as snap, pairs or a memory game with the sounds that children have learnt so far will encourage the children to internalise the GPCs and be able to recognise them by sight. Make it more challenging? Use words containing the GPCs the children are learning.
- When giving the children instructions; for example when getting ready to go out for the day, give the child the instruction but segment the key word. The child then has to blend the word to complete the instruction. **E.g. Can you put on you h-a-t?**
- Playing car games such as 'I Spy' using phonetic sounds instead of letter names will encourage the children to think about the initial sounds of words. **E.g. I spy with my little eye something beginning with /h/**
- Look for letters and words in your house or the local area (environmental print). Point out and talk about the letters you see and the sounds they make as you read words on signs, labels, menus, and the TV.
- There are several websites that allow the children to practice their skills through phonics games. Just remember to select the phase the children are currently working on. If the children are working at Phase 3 they may struggle with the Phase 5 games. Here is a list of some useful websites:
 1. www.phonicsplay.co.uk
 2. www.familylearning.org.uk
 3. www.letters-and-sounds.com
 4. www.education.com
 5. www.oxfordowl.co.uk

Do the children just learn phonics during the session?

Phonics is not an isolated skill the children will explicitly learn during the phonics session. Outside of the phonics session children will be given lots of opportunities to apply the new skills that they have learned in all the lessons that they do. The more opportunities they are given the sooner they will become confident with these skills. In school the children will use their phonics skills during whole carpet session, Literacy lessons for reading and for writing, Shared Writing, Shared Reading, Story Time, Guided Reading, Individual Reading and in topic based activities. Children will also practice their new skills within their play; writing to support role play, play word games, playing with sounds, making up their own sounds, making up their own words.

How can I help my child at home?

We have established that Phonics is an important part of children's learning and development in reading and writing. Whilst there are a lot of activities the children do within school to help them practice the skills they learn, there are also things that you can do at home to help your child develop in this area of learning. Here are some suggestions:

- Listening to your child read at home on a regular basis – children will practice their segmenting and decoding skills
- Word Workshop cards are specifically designed to help the children practice their phonics skills. There is a Word Workshop card for Phase 2, 3, 4 and 5.

What makes Phonics tricky?

In some languages learning phonics is easy because each phoneme has just one **grapheme** to represent it. The English language is a bit more complicated than this. English only has around **44 phonemes** (units of sound) but there are around **120 graphemes** (letters that represent the sound). We only have **26 letters** in the alphabet so some graphemes are made up from more than one letter.

- Phonemes that are represented by two letters are called **digraphs**. E.g. **ch th oo ay**
- Phonemes that are represented by three letters are called **trigraphs**. E.g. **igh, air, ear**

Another tricky problem is that some graphemes can represent **more than one** phoneme. For example, **ch** makes very different sounds in these three words: **chip, school, chef**. Some phonemes are also represented using different graphemes e.g. **ai, ay, a-e** (**tail, tray and take**)

It is important to remember that not all words in the English language can be segmented and blended for reading or writing. Some words are '**tricky words**' and just have to be taught and learnt by sight e.g. **the, to, no, go, into**. Each phase in phonics will have a new set of tricky words to learn.

What are Phonic Phases?

Due to the complexity of the English Language, systematic synthetic phonics is broken down into phases.

Phase 1 (Nursery/Reception)	<i>Pre-reading Activities</i> ; within Phase 1 activities are divided into seven aspects, including environmental sounds, instrumental sounds, body sounds, rhythm and rhyme, alliteration, voice sounds and finally oral blending and segmenting.
Phase 2 (Reception)	Learning the first 6 sets of phonemes, 19 in total. Children begin to learn to segment and blend simple words and captions within Phase 2
Phase 3 (Reception)	Within Phase 3, the final 7 singular phonemes are taught. Digraph and trigraph phonemes are then introduced. The children will continue to segment and blend with these sounds.
Phase 4 (Reception)	There are no new GPCs taught in this phase. Children learn to spell and read longer words, including words with Adjacent Consonants E.g. s/t/o/p, s/t/a/n/d,
Phase 5 (Year 1)	In Phase 5 children learn Alternative GPCs . The Split Digraph is also introduced as an alternative GPC. E.g. a-e in make, take, shake
Phase 6 (Year 2)	Children begin to move into spelling patterns in this phase. They learn about suffixes, prefixes, doubling and dropping letters.

As within all aspects of learning, children are individuals and develop at different rates. Some children may struggle with a certain area of phonics and additional activities may be put in place to support the individual child.

What will Phonics actually look like in practice?

As a school we have adopted the systematic-synthetic phonics program, Letter and Sounds. This program of phonics has been published by the government.

Children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 will receive a 20-25 minute daily phonics session. The session should be fast, fun and multisensory. Each session will follow a clear sequence as outlined below.

Introduction - The teacher will explain to the children what they will be learning today and get them enthusiastic and motivated for the session.

Revisit and review - The children will play a quick-fire game to practise something they have learned before and help build their confidence.

Teach - The children will be taught a new phoneme/grapheme or a new skill - this will be taught in a fun multisensory way and may well involve: songs, actions, pictures, puppets, writing giant letters in the air.



Practise - The children play fast, fun games to practise the new thing they have just learned. Many of the games on this site will be used in this section of the session.



Apply - The children will have a quick go at reading or writing sentences that involve the new thing they have just learned.