

# Houghton on the Hill C.E. Primary School

## Learning to Read and Write

### Skills for reading and writing

- Speaking and listening are the foundations for reading and writing.
- Even everyday activities such as preparing meals, tidying up, putting shopping away and getting ready to go out offer you the chance to talk to your child, explaining what you are doing. Through these activities, children hear the way language is put together into sentences for a purpose.
- Books are a rich source of new words for your child; words you would not use in everyday conversations appear in books. Children need to have a wide vocabulary to understand the meaning of books, so read aloud and share books as often as you can. They will enjoy it and it will be useful to them when they come across these words in their own reading later on.
- Talk about beginnings and predict endings of books Did it start with 'Once upon a time' / 'One day'? What do you think will happen at the end? Was it a sad/ happy/funny ending? Talk about the characters ( the people or animals in the books) –are they beautiful/ ugly/ magical/ furry/ slimy etc- A chance to give your child a fantastic start to writing with all these new words !!



### 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, and 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. Make up funny voices for the characters.
- Put in lots of **WOW** words (exciting new words) when reading picture books to your child them get them to have a turn at reading the book to you from the picture clues. Repeat each night and listen as their vocabulary develops!

At school as we begin to teach the children the skills that they will need in order to be successful readers and writers, we focus on speaking and listening activities.

We explore body sounds, sounds in the environment, the difference in the sounds of percussion instruments, rhythm and rhyme, voice sounds and alliteration - words that all begin with the same initial sound – ‘sad, Sammy snake’, ‘big, bad bug’.

All the way through we also teach the skills of ‘blending’ and segmenting’.

- Blending

We teach the children how to blend or merge sounds together to read each word, in the right order, to read a word. E.g. c-a-t = cat.

- Segmenting

We teach the children how to segment each word to spell. E.g. cat = c-a-t

The aim is for the children to read the whole word automatically.

These activities are all done orally. 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 or Robot-talking**

Find real objects around your home that have three phonemes (*sounds*) and practise ‘sound talk’. First, just let them listen and say the word for them, 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.’

**Play phonics computer games together** [www.busythings.co.uk](http://www.busythings.co.uk) using our school subscription

**Username: houghton      Password: tangerine**

**Practise the blending bags together that we will be sending home.**

### Phonemes

We teach the children the smallest unit of sound (letter sounds) – called a ‘phoneme’.

**Correct pronunciation is vital ! No ‘er’ sounds on the ends of the letter please.**  
**c not cuh or cee    b not buh or bee    a not ay    ssss not sir    mmm not muh**

Adapted from *The National Strategies/Early Years CLLD Helping your child with speaking, listening, reading and writing*

This is the order in which the 'phonemes' are taught and practiced:

Set 1 letters = s, a, t, p

Set 2 letters = i, n, m, d

Set 3 letters = g, o, c, k

Set 4 letters = ck, e, u, r

Set 5 letters = h, b, f, ff, l, ll, ss

Set 6 letters = j, v, w, x

Set 7 letters = y, z, zz, qu

A phoneme can be represented by more than one letter. E.g. ll as in bell ck as in sock.



### 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, and magic boards, are a good way for children to try out spellings and practise their handwriting.

Your child might be trying to use letters from their name to write; this shows that they know that writing needs real alphabet letters. Make or buy an alphabet poster.

### Getting ready for writing

We 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 stages of phonics children can use letter cards or magnetic letters to demonstrate their knowledge of phonics.

Adapted from *The National Strategies/Early Years CLLD Helping your child with speaking, listening, reading and writing*

## 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. We start our letters from the line in order to help move them onto joined up writing- SEE OUR SHEET FOR CORRECT FORMATION. We also use a mnemonic to help them, remember the formation.



## 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 – also skipping on the spot, throwing a Frisbee, picking up pebbles from the beach and throwing them into the sea. Have fun!

### **Hand and finger play**

Action rhymes such as *'Incy wincy spider'*, *'One potato, two potato'* and *'Tommy Thumb'* are great fun and get their hands and fingers moving. Playing with salt dough or clay really helps strengthen little fingers, as does cookery and using simple toolkits or construction such as lego.

### **Hand-eye co-ordination**

Pouring water into jugs and cups of different sizes, 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 pen and pencil; **even hold their hand to show the correct grip.**

## Tricky words

Once children are confident with the phonemes and blending to read simple words they will then be taught the 'tricky' words – those that cannot be read or spelt using the sounds of the letters. E.g. to, no, the, go. This will be achieved through the use of flash cards and games.

We send a letter explaining more when your child moves onto keyword games and they will be assessed regularly and moved onto harder words as they learn each set.



## Ways you can support your child at home

- Set a timer. Call out one word at a time and get your child to spell it on a magic board or a small whiteboard, against the timer – remember, they can use magnetic letters.
- Play a game – hunt the word - hide words in sand or flour, set a timer, hold up the word that you want them to hunt for, and 'go'! Repeat the word and encourage them to say –'I am looking for the word 'the'.
- Play 'Pairs', turning over two words at a time trying to find a matching pair. This is especially helpful with the tricky words so we send home two of each keyword.
- Find a keyword they are finding tricky in the books they are reading. Play who can point to the word first as you turn each page.
- Don't worry if they get some wrong! These are hard to remember – they need plenty of practice.

As the children progress they will be introduced to other phonemes where 2 or even 3 letters make one sound. E.g. ai, ou, ear

They will still spend a lot of time consolidating the skills of blending and segmenting using these phonemes.

Finally we practice blending and segmenting longer words with more consonants e.g swim, cloud, brains.

### In conclusion

Obviously, the more children are exposed to activities involving letters and sounds, the quicker they will consolidate their newly acquired skills.

Your involvement in this new learning is vital, and we ask that whenever possible you take time to encourage them to use their new knowledge through the activities outlined above.

Thank you for showing your interest and if anything that has been discussed needs more clarification, then please do not hesitate to speak to us.

The Foundation team!

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