

Phonics



Phonics is the first strategy that children at Downs Infant School are taught in helping them to learn to read. We believe your children need to be successful from the very start and we build confidence whilst ongoing teacher assessment enables us to personalise learning. Phonics runs alongside other teaching methods to help children develop vital reading skills. Every class throughout the school has a 15-20 minute phonics session every day.

However, phonics skills are only part of the story in a language as phonetically irregular as English, so from the beginning we encourage children to use a wide range of cues—picture, phonic, contextual and syntactical—to help them decode unfamiliar words.

Phonics is a way of teaching children to read quickly and skilfully. They are taught how to:

- recognise the sounds that each individual letter (phoneme) makes;
- identify the sounds that different combinations of letters (digraph) make - such as 'sh' or 'oo'
- identify the sounds with three letters together which make one sound (trigraph) e.g. igh, ear, air
- blend these sounds together from left to right to make a word.

Children can then use this knowledge to 'de_code' new words that they hear or see. This is the first important step in learning to read. Children first learn their letter sounds and names then apply these to word building. We use both Letters and Sounds and Jolly Phonics as the basis for our teaching of phonics. These are both recognised as synthetic phonic schemes. The children will also learn a variety of other key words by sight. We call these 'wizard words'.

s	a	t	i	p	n	ck
e	h	r	m	d	g	o
u	l	f	b	ai	j	oa
ie	ee or	z	w	ng	v	u
x	oo oo	ch	sh	th th	qu	ou
oi	ue	er	ar	the		

We teach phonics every day in EYFS, Year 1 and Year 2. Daily phonics sessions cover the following:

1. GPCs (grapheme-phoneme correspondences): this simply means that children are taught all of the phonemes (sounds) in the English language and the ways of writing them down (graphemes).
2. Blending: children are taught to blend sounds together by merging the individual sounds until they can hear what the word is. This is a vital reading skill.
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 it up. This is a vital spelling skill.
4. Meaning making: during the phonics sessions, words with focus sounds are also 'built into' sentences so that children are developing an awareness of sentence construction, as well as an understanding of the meaning of a range of words, so developing an ever increasing vocabulary.