

Phonics

What is phonics?

Phonics is a way of teaching children how to read and write. It helps children hear, identify and use different sounds that distinguish one word from another in the English language. Knowing the sounds of individual letters and how those letters sound when they're combined will help children decode words as they read. Understanding phonics will also help children know which letters to use when they are writing words.

Phonics involves matching the sounds of spoken English with individual letters or groups of letters. For example, the sound *k* can be spelled as *c*, *k*, *ck* or *ch*. Teaching children to blend the sounds of letters together helps them decode unfamiliar or unknown words by sounding them out. For example, when a child is taught the sounds for the letters *t*, *p*, *a* and *s*, they can start to build up the words: "tap", "taps", "pat", "pats" and "sat". During pre-school we focus on tuning into environmental and speech sounds and begin to identify the different sounds we can hear.

Phase 1 Phonics

We follow Letters and Sounds and largely focus on Phase 1. Phase One of Letters and Sounds concentrates on developing children's speaking and listening skills and lays the foundations for the phonic work which starts in Phase 2. The emphasis during Phase 1 is to get children attuned to the sounds around them and ready to begin developing oral blending and segmenting skills.

Phase 1 is divided into seven aspects. Each aspect contains three strands: Tuning in to sounds, listening and remembering sounds and talking about sounds. These aspects are vital building blocks to get ready to read.

Aspect 1 - General sound discrimination - environmental

The aim of this aspect is to raise children's awareness of the sounds around them and to develop their listening skills. Activities suggested in the guidance include going on a listening walk, drumming on different items outside and comparing the sounds, playing a sounds lotto game and making shakers.

Aspect 2 - General sound discrimination - instrumental sounds

This aspect aims to develop children's awareness of sounds made by various instruments and noise makers. Activities include comparing and matching sound makers, playing instruments alongside a story and making loud and quiet sounds.

Aspect 3 - General sound discrimination - body percussion

The aim of this aspect is to develop children's awareness of sounds and rhythms. Activities include singing songs and action rhymes, listening to music and developing a sounds vocabulary.

Aspect 4 - Rhythm and rhyme

This aspect aims to develop children's appreciation and experiences of rhythm and rhyme in speech. Activities include rhyming stories, rhyming bingo, clapping out the syllables in words and odd one out.

Aspect 5 - Alliteration

The focus is on initial sounds of words, with activities including I-Spy type games and matching objects which begin with the same sound.

Aspect 6 - Voice sounds

The aim is to distinguish between different vocal sounds and to begin oral blending and segmenting. Activities include Metal Mike, where children feed pictures of objects into a toy robot's mouth and the teacher sounds out the name of the object in a robot voice - /c/-/u/-/p/ cup, with the children joining in.

Aspect 7 - Oral blending and segmenting (after all other aspects are secure)

In this aspect, the main aim is to develop oral blending and segmenting skills.

To practise oral blending, the teacher could say some sounds, such as /c/-/u/-/p/ and see whether the children can pick out a cup from a group of objects. For segmenting practise, the teacher could hold up an object such as a sock and ask the children which sounds they can hear in the word sock.

The activities introduced in Phase 1 are intended to continue throughout the following phases, as lots of practice is needed before children will become confident in their phonic knowledge and skills.

FUN ACTIVITIES AT HOME

- Look for rhymes in stories, poems or songs
- Play with rhyming words, they can be completely made up - the sillier the better!
- Clap out syllables in each other's names, foods and anything you like!
- Explore rhythm through creating music using body percussion such as clapping and stomping.
- Silly soup, gather some objects starting with the same sound and a few different ones for good measure! Get a big bowl, spoon, bag and sing the following to the tune of 'pop goes the weasel' *We are making silly soup, we're making soup that's silly, we're going to put it in the fridge to make it nice a chilly! In goes a...* the child picks an item out of the bag, what is it and the initial sound? Pop it in the bowl and give it a stir!
- Sounding out words, *can you put your hands on your h-ea-d, l-e-g, kn-ee, f-oo-t etc.*
- Have a look on youtube and search for Jolly Phonics A-Z, it will give you an idea of how to say the different sounds and a catchy tune and action to you help remember it!