

Jolly Phonics & Letters & Sounds

**Phonic Information for
parents and carers**

Introduction

As you know, the ability to read and write well is a vital skill for all children, paving the way for an enjoyable and successful experience in school and beyond.

Children learn and practise many of the skills that they need for reading and writing from a very early age. They do this through a wide range of activities and experiences at home, in various pre-school settings and at school. They explore and learn through singing and saying rhymes, making and listening to music, talking to others, sharing books with adults and other children, dressing up, experimenting with writing and using puppets and toys to retell and make up stories.

Children's spoken language supports reading and writing.

In order to make a good start in reading and writing children need to have an adult listen to them and talk to them. Speaking and listening are the foundations of reading and writing. Even everyday activities such as preparing meals, tidying up, putting away shopping, hanging out washing 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 the 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 every day conversations appear in books. Children need to have a wide vocabulary to understand the meaning of books, so read aloud and share books together as often as you can. They will enjoy the experience and it will be useful to them when they come across these words in their own reading later on, or inspire them to use them in their own writing.



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

- **Make time to listen to your child talking** - as you meet them from school, as you walk or travel home, 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 respond to show that you really have been listening.
- **Make a collection of different toy creatures** - for example a duck, a snake, an alien and say the sound it might make as you play together e.g. quack - quack, ssssssss, yuk-yuk and encourage your child to copy you.
- **Listen at home** - switch off the TV and listen to the sounds inside and outside. Can your child tell you what they heard and the order that they heard them in?
- **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** - make up stories or retell known ones. Record or film your child telling the story and play it back to them.



Sounds in spoken language – the beginning of phonics

At Nunnery Wood Primary School as soon as children enter the Reception class they take part in high quality phonics sessions every day. These are fun sessions involving lots of speaking, listening and games where children are encouraged to be actively involved. They learn to use their phonic knowledge for reading and writing activities and in their independent play.

The aim of this booklet 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.

Remember – not all children will learn at the same rate!

Your child will be supported whatever their rate of learning. There is a very close link between *difficulty in 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 an awareness of different sounds in the spoken language. They develop their 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 quick and efficient way for most, but not all, 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 children with their spelling.

At Nunnery Wood Primary School we use the *Jolly Phonics* scheme in conjunction with a systematic phonics programme called '*Letters and Sounds*'.

Jolly Phonics introduces children to 44 phonemes commonly found in the English language using songs and actions to accompany each grapheme. Combining the letter/s (*graphemes*) with a catchy song and action really helps children to remember each letter sound (*phoneme*) quickly whilst having lots of fun! Once the children have been introduced to the phonemes and graphemes using *Jolly Phonics* we use the '*Letters and Sounds*' programme to build on these skills. *Jolly Phonics* links into Phase 2 and 3 of *Letters and Sounds*; each phase is explained below.

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 write words. We assess the children's progress regularly and move them onto the next phase of learning when they are ready. Remember that children do not all learn at the same pace and it is important to make sure the skills from each phase are secure before moving to the next.

Phase 1

This paves the way for the systematic learning of phonics and usually starts in nursery or play group.

Teachers plan activities that will help children to listen attentively to sounds around them, such as the sounds of their toys and in spoken language. Teachers teach a wide range of nursery rhymes and songs. They read and share good books to and with the children. This helps to increase the number of words the children know - their vocabulary - and helps them to talk confidently about their books.

Ways to support your child at home:

Play 'What do we have in here?' Put some toys or objects in a bag and pull one out at a time. Emphasise the first sound of the name of the toy or object by repeating it e.g. 'c c c c - car', 'b b b b - box', 'ch ch ch - chip'

Say: 'a tall tin of tomatoes!' 'Tommy, the ticklish teddy!' 'A lovely little lemon!'. This is called alliteration, when words all begin with the same sound. Try using names of your child and their friends or family members e.g. 'Gurpreet gets the giggles', 'Grandma grabs grapes!' 'Ben's black boots'

Teach them tongue twisters such as 'Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.'

Play rhyming games, make up silly rhymes together, find the rhyming word in nursery rhymes.

Learning how to 'sound-talk'

Teachers show children how to do this: c-a-t = cat. The separate sounds (phonemes) are spoken aloud, in order, through the whole word and are then merged together into a whole word. The merging together is called *blending* and this is a vital skill for reading.

Children will also learn how to do this the other way round: cat = c-a-t. The whole word is spoken aloud and then broken up into its individual sounds (phonemes) in order, through the whole word. This is called *segmenting* and is a vital skill for writing and spelling.

This is all oral (spoken). Your child will not be expected to match the letters to sounds at this stage. The emphasis is on helping children to hear the separate sounds in words and create the spoken sounds.

Ways to support your child at home

Sound-talking

Find real objects around your home that have three phonemes (sounds) and practice 'sound talking'. 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'

'Find your s-o-ck - sock'

Simon says - put your hands on your h-ea-d

Simon says - touch your f -ee -t / ch-i-n etc.

Phase 2

In this phase children continue practising what they have learned from phase 1, especially sound talking. They will also be taught the phonemes (sounds) for a number of letters (graphemes) using *Jolly Phonics* actions and songs. They will be taught which sound (phoneme) is represented by which grapheme and that **2 letters can make one sound** (phoneme) e.g. /ll/ as in bell, /ck/ as in sock. Each week your child will bring home a phonics card which has the 6 phonemes taught during the week and the actions for you to practice - we are sure they will teach you the songs!

Saying the Sounds

Your child will be taught how to pronounce the sounds (phonemes) correctly to make blending easier. Sounds should be sustained (e.g. sss, fff, mmm) and, where this is not possible 'uh' sounds after consonant should be reduced to avoid saying e.g. buh,

cuh. Teachers help children to look at different letters and say the right sounds for them.

If you are at all concerned about your child's ability to clearly say any of these sounds or want some clarification yourself please pop in to speak to your child's teacher.

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, it, at) 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 only have 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, plastic 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 with their writing and spelling. These will be simple words made up of two phonemes e.g. am, it, on, or three phonemes, e.g. cat, rug, sun, tick, bell.

Ways you can support your child at home

Magnetic letters: buy a set for your fridge or for use on a tin tray. See if your child can select the letters they have learnt and say the sounds correctly, model this for them if they find it tricky.

Making little words together: Make little words together, e.g. *it, up, am, sit, red, and, pick*. As you select the letters say the sounds and then blend them all together e.g. 'a-m - am', 'm-e-t - met'

Breaking words up: Do it the other way around: read the word, break it up and move the letters away saying e.g. 'met - m-e-t'

Both these activities help children to see the links between reading and spelling.

Make or buy an alphabet poster

Getting ready for writing

Teachers will model how to form letters (graphemes) correctly, so that children can develop 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 to 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 will teach 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.

At Nunnery Wood Primary School we have an agreed hand writing style that is taught; one for right and one for left handed children. Please ask for a copy if you have not had one.

Ways you can support your child at home

Using their whole body - children need to be well co-ordinated through their whole body to succeed in their handwriting, not just their hands and fingers. Games that help this include throwing balls/beanbags at a target, bouncing and catching balls, throwing a Frisbee, picking up pebbles from the beach and throwing them into the sea, using logs, sticks etc to build with.

Hand and finger play - Action rhymes such as 'Incy wincy spider', 'one potato, two potato' & 'Tommy Thumb' are great fun and gets hands and fingers moving. Playing with playdough or clay really helps strengthen little fingers, as does cookery and using simple toolkits.

Hand-Eye Co-ordination - Pouring water into jugs and cups of different sizes, sweeping up with a dustpan & brush, cutting, sticking, tracing, threading beads, completing puzzles, peeling off stickers and putting them in the right place are all types of activities that help hand-eye co-ordination.

Pencil Hold - The 'pincer' movement, or 'froggy fingers'(!) need to be practised. This is really important as it enables children to hold a pencil properly when they write. Let them try to pick up small objects with kitchen tongs. Move on to challenge them to pick up increasingly smaller things e.g. lego cubes, dried pasta, lentils and then get them to try smaller tools e.g. chopsticks and tweezers.

Get children to peg objects on a washing line.

Provide them with plenty of different types of pens, pencils, paintbrushes, chalks etc to make marks with and hold their hand to help them get used to the correct grip.



Phase 3

The purpose of this phase is to:

- Teach more phonemes, most of which are made of two letters, for example 'oa' as in boat. Again we use *Jolly Phonics* for catchy songs and actions to match many of these longer vowel sounds!
- Practise blending and segmenting a wider set of cvc words made of two or more letters, for example, **fizz, chip, sheep, light, tail, week, food, park, soil, burn, town**
- Learn all letter names and begin to form them correctly when writing.
- Read and write words in phrases and sentences
- Begin to make longer words from smaller words that they can already read and write e.g. laptop, sandpit, pondweed,

Ways to support your child at home:

Play I Spy - using letter names as well as sounds

Sing an alphabet song together

Continue to play with **magnetic letters**, using some of the two grapheme (letter) combinations:

r-ai-n = rain blending for reading; *rain = r-ai-n* segmenting for writing

b-oa-t = boat blending for reading; *boat = b-oa-t* segmenting for writing

h-ur-t = hurt blending for reading; *hurt = h-ur-t* segmenting for writing

Play against the clock - set a timer and say a word, get children to either write or find magnetic letters to make the word. See how many they can do and then try to beat it!

Praise your child for trying out words & don't worry if your child makes mistakes. This is an important part of the learning process.

Phase 4

Children continue to practise previously learned graphemes and phonemes and learn how to read and write:

CVCC words: e.g. **tent, damp, toast, chimp**

For example, in the word 'toast' - **t = consonant, oa = vowel, s = consonant, t = consonant**

CCVC words: e.g. **swim, plum, sport, cream, spoon**

For example, in the word 'cream', **c = consonant, r = consonant, ea = vowel, m = consonant**

They will use their skills with increasing confidence to read and write even more words, phrases and sentences using their phonic skills, including longer words that they can use their phonic skills to work out, for example: **teapot, rainbow, starlight, treetop.**

Your child's confidence from their daily experience of practising and applying their phonic knowledge to reading and writing is really paying off.

Ways you can support your child at home:

- Practise reading and writing some **CCVC** and **CVCC** words but continue to play around with **CVC** words. Children like reading and spelling words that they have previously worked with as this helps them to feel successful.
- Make up captions and phrases for your child to read and write linked to a real purpose e.g. clean the pond, put the bins out, clean out the pets. Write some simple messages in sentences for your child to find around the house and read. Give them a treat if they find and read all of them! Make it into a simple treasure hunt.
- Words are everywhere so look out for words in the environment, such as food packaging, that your child will find easy to read e.g. fish and chips, fresh milk, jam, cat food.
- Work on reading words together, for example, a street name such as *Liverpool Road*, captions on buses and lorries, street signs such as *bus stop*, door signs such as *push, pull*

Phonics teaching will continue into Key Stage 1 (Year 1 and Year 2)

As your child enters Key Stage 1 (Year 1) they will continue to take part in daily phonics sessions appropriate to their ability and rate of progress. Children who are ready will move onto **Phases 5 and 6** of *'Letters and Sounds'*.

They will learn that most sounds (phonemes) can be spelled in more than one way for example the **f** sound can be written as **f** as in *fan* or **ff** as in *huff* or **ph** as in *photo*.

They will revisit some of the ways of making vowel sounds using more than one letter (digraphs) and learn other ways of writing these phonemes. For example the /i/ sound can be made by **igh** as in *light*, **ie** as in *tie*, **i** as in *kind*, **y** as in *fly* and split digraph **i-e** as in *kite* (*something you will probably remember as 'magic e'!*)

This work all develops children's 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*. This supports children's reading development in particular.

Good phonics knowledge and skills help your child to read words fluently and to write words with increasingly accurate spellings, but they need to understand what they are reading and the processes and purposes for writing too. Your help with these processes is just as vital.



Ways to Support Early Reading and Writing at Home

Ways you can support your child at home: reading together

Learn lots of nursery rhymes and action rhymes - use CDs to sing along to.

Read simple rhyming books together - leave out a rhyming word now and then, and see if your child can work out the missing word. If not you say it. Julia Donaldson's books are brilliant for this and children love them.

Enjoy and share books together - buy or borrow books that will fire their imagination and interest. Read and reread those that they love best. Visit the library!

Make time to read with your child throughout their time at school - continue reading to and with your child as their independence and fluency grows. Ask your child to attempt unknown words using phonic skills and knowledge making sure that they use their blending skills all through the word. Explain the meaning of words (vocabulary) that your child can read but may not understand. Children's reading develops best when they do a little every day and have the support of an interested adult; grandparents, older siblings, family friends can all help!

Let them see you reading - grown-ups can share their magazines about their favourite sport or hobby.

Talk about the meaning of a story or book - take time to talk about what is happening in the book, or things that they have found really interesting in an information book. Discuss characters and important events. Ask them their views about what a character has done, what they think might happen, why something has made them laugh or feel sad. Provide puppets, toys and dressing up clothes to give them opportunities to act out stories.

Listen to story tapes and CDs - they can be a great alternative to you reading at bedtime sometimes.

Have a quiet or special area with toys and cushions where you and your child can share a book together.

Ways you can support your child at home: writing together

Magic writing boards are great fun for children whether small or large. A great way to practise writing their names!

Write with your child and model thinking out loud so that they can hear the decisions you are making as you write. Make sure that the writing is for a purpose e.g. a shopping list, birthday message, an address.

Talk about words and writing that they see in everyday life - food packaging, signs, messages on cards, invitations, captions on buses and lorries, advertising posters etc.

Send an email to a family member or friend - your child tells you the message and you write it.

Provide your child with a shoe box full of things to write with - writing tools of various sizes and thicknesses: gel pens, glitter pens, rainbow pencils, felt tips, pencils, biro's etc; old cards, coloured paper, lined paper, plain paper, sticky tape & little staplers to make their own books. Rolls of wallpaper can be attached to a table or wall to provide a large canvas for their writing and drawing.

PRAISE YOUR CHILD for any play writing - let them tell you what it 'says', their early marks and squiggles show that your child is beginning to understand and enjoy the purpose of writing.

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

Reading

- Make sure that your child sees you reading
- Read to your child. Show that you like the book. Bring stories to life by using different voices - have fun together!
- Spread books around the house for your child to dip into.
- Let your child choose what **they** want to read - books, comics, catalogues
- Read favourite books over and over again. Enjoy them!

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

- Remember that children do not all start writing at the same time – encourage them to have a go and praise any interest or attempts.
- Make sure that your child sees you writing.
- Continue to make words together using magnetic or soft letters
- Leave a message on the fridge door or write them a message and encourage them to write back to you.
- Compose an email together
- Buy stickers of a favourite television programme or film and make a story book about it.
- Make up a story about one of their toys. You write for them, repeating the sentences as you write. When the story is complete they could draw pictures to go with it.

Useful websites for more information & activities

www.bookstart.co.uk

This website provides information about the national Bookstart scheme and the Bookstart packs that your child will have received as a baby, toddler and at pre-school. It gives useful information about sharing books with your child. You can find out when local libraries are holding Bookstart events which you can attend with your child.

www.phonicsplay.com

An absolutely brilliant site that we use a great deal in school to support phonic learning. It has lots of free games linked to each Phase of Letters and Sounds as well as the opportunity to subscribe to access even more games and activities.

www.nationalliteracytrust.org.uk/familyreading/parents

The Family Reading Campaign website provides a wealth of information to support you and your family. The Family Reading Campaign works to encourage reading in the home. It also offers many links to further websites.

www.read-count.org/index.asp

A website for you and your child to explore together - it will give you some ideas about reading with your child and has online games for young children to play, both with you and on their own. It also has ideas for games to play away from the computer.

www.cbeebies.co.uk

Full of brilliant games and activities from this well loved and award winning TV channel. Look out for those that are linked to programmes that focus on story telling and sequencing, early number and phonic skills such as Numberjacks, Alphablocks, Jackanory Junior, 64 Zoo Lane, Tinga Tinga Tales etc. Play WITH your child and talk to them whilst you are playing.

Words with Tricky Bits

As part of their daily phonics session children will be introduced to words with 'tricky bits': these are words with spellings that are unusual or that children have not yet been taught. Some of these words cannot be worked out using phonic segmenting and blending skills, they just have to be learnt by sight. There are 32 in total.

Starting in Phase 2 each phase of *'Letters and Sounds'* has a number of 'words with tricky bits' in it:

Phase 2: the, to, I, go, no, into

Phase 3: he, she, we, me, be, was, my, you, her, they, all, are

Phase 4: said, so, do, have, like, some, come, were, there, little, one, when, out, what

At Nunnery Wood Primary School the words in Phases 2 and 3 will be sent home in groups of 5 or 6 as your child moves through each phonic phase. Each word is written twice on the card which you and/or your child can then cut into individual word cards and play pairs & snap with. They will love trying to beat you and any other family members that you can rope in! Try putting one set of word cards around the house and give your child one word at a time to find and match.

Children will be given sets of words to learn matched to their levels of development and current reading needs, so not all children will have the same words at the same time.

Remember, each child learns at a different rate and whilst some may remember and read the words almost immediately others may take more time to do this. Some children may take longer to become secure in using their phonic skills to segment and blend words but will remember whole words much more easily and vice versa. For this reason the 'words with tricky bits' that your child brings home to learn may not correspond exactly with the phase of Letters and Sounds that they are working on.