



Phonics for Parents - an introduction

Everything starts with reading and writing:

'Being able to read is the most important skill children will learn during their early schooling and has far reaching implications for life long confidence and well being.'

(Letters and sounds: Principles and Practise of High quality Phonics)

At Gorse Hall Primary and Nursery School we use the 'Letters and Sounds' 6 phase phonics teaching programme to teach early reading and writing skills.

What is phonics?

Phonics is the link between letters and the sounds they make and is taught using a highly structured programme through which children are taught:

1. The relationship between letters and sounds
2. To hear separate sounds in words (segmenting)
3. To blend sounds together. (Oral blending)
4. To recognise and read sets of tricky words that cannot be sounded out.
5. To use all the above 1,2,3 skills to read and write words.

1. **We must emphasise that initially we teach the children the sound the letter makes and not its name, for example:**

the letter **s** - its name is 'es' but it makes the sss sound.

the letter **d** - its name is 'dee' but it makes the sound 'duh'

The complicated part of the English language is that although there are 26 letters in the alphabet, there are more than 40 sounds and there are sounds which can be represented by more than one letter eg 'sh' 'ch' 'igh' 'ng' 'ai' - to name a few. Through working through the 6 phases children build up their knowledge of all these variations and then use this knowledge to help them read and write.

We will send home the letter sounds covered by your child's Letters and sounds group each week so that you can help your child at home too. It is very important that young children

continually revisit and explore the sounds they have learnt and use and apply their new skills in lots of different and meaningful ways

Ideas to help at home:

- Look for objects around the house that begin with the letter sound you are focusing on at home, for example 'g' for gate, goal, garage, garden, glasses, gloves, grandma etc..
- Play I spy games using the letter sounds covered so far.
- Look for the letter in books, on posters at the supermarket, on car registration plates etc
- Look for words with these letter sounds in them
- Use a set of magnetic letters on the fridge. Ask your child to find different sounds for you.
- Practise writing the letter
- Whose name in our family begins with this letter sound?

2. Hearing separate sounds in words(segmenting)

We do lots of work on helping children to hear the separate sounds in words; asking the children to 'sound talk' words. This is to help them realise that words are made up of letter sounds.

Once they realise that sounds can be written down and understood by others they are really starting on their writing journey!

In class we practise this daily in different ways and starting with simple words. One example is we hold up picture cards, eg, a pig, a van, a net and then ask the children to sound talk the word, identifying all the sounds p-i-g v-a-n n-e-t.

In shared writing tasks, we ask the children to sound out the word they want to write and record all the sounds they hear in the order they hear them. So if they want to write 'sit' they would be encouraged to say the word and then identify the sounds they can hear 's-i-t'.

Ideas to help at home

Find real objects around the home that have 3 sounds and ask your child to identify all the sounds in the word.

Ask them to write a simple word, eg net/vet/jet/pin/tin by firstly sounding the word out and then writing down the letter sounds to write the word.

3. Blending sounds together - Oral blending

This involves hearing a series of spoken sounds and merging (blending) them together to make a spoken word. So when the teacher calls out b-u-s, the child can say 'bus'

In class we sound talk words in instructions, so we might say

'go and get your c-oa-t' or 'put you hand on your l-e-g' or 'give yourself a t-a-p on the h-ea-d.' Children have to listen carefully. We also write down words and ask the children to identify each letter sound and then blend (squash) the sounds together to identify the word. We put sound buttons under each letter and the children say the sound as they press the imaginary sound button.

m a p

f i t

c a n

Ideas to help at home

Start to sound talk at home....it can be fun to talk like a robot! Give an instruction breaking down one or two words into their sounds eg 'time to go to b - e - d' 'Put on your c - oa - t' We can go to the sh - o - p'. 'I spy a c-up' Where is the s-o-ck. Make it fun and see if they can blend the sounds to identify the word you have said.

Magnetic letters on the fridge work well for this too. Ask your child to find all the letters to make a simple word eg pig, net, van

4. Reading 'tricky' words that cannot be sounded out (sight words)

Once children can identify a good majority of the letter sounds we start to gradually introduce the children to a list of high frequency/tricky words. These are words that they will need when we start to build on their letter sound knowledge to begin to read and write simple sentences. We call them 'tricky' or sight words because they cannot be sounded out - they are not phonetic. Words in this list include 'the' 'said' 'go' 'no', to name just a few. Children need to practise instantly recognising these. We ask the children to take photographs of these words and put them in their head (they love this idea). We also send home flash cards with these words on them for you to practise with your child

Ideas to help at home

Use the flash cards regularly to help your children instantly recognise the words.

Find the words in books/signs and point them out.

Ask your child to practise writing them.

Writing in Reception

At the beginning of the Reception year we focus on developing children's pencil control by daily writing of their names (self-registration). Holding a pencil or pen needs considerable co-ordination and lots of practise. When

letter sounds are covered we also practise writing/forming these letters - in the air, then on paper. The next stage is to then encourage the children to write down simple words (words with three sounds) and practise writing the tricky words we have been practising. Finally this knowledge is then used to start to write simple sentences.

Ideas to help at home

Encourage your child to explore mark making/writing regularly. Have a box of assorted and fancy pens and felt pens etc with a variety of different papers, note books, envelopes etc.

Let them see you writing in a variety of different situations so they see a purpose for writing.

Ask them to 'write' shopping lists for you - recording initial sounds in the names of objects or recording more or all sounds (according to their stage of writing development)

Suggest they write notes for grandparents or label their own pictures.

These are the reading and writing statements that we are working towards by the end of the Reception year. To achieve a good level of development children need to:

Reading:

Read and understand simple sentences.

Use their phonic knowledge to decode regular words and read them aloud accurately.

Read some 'tricky' irregular words

Demonstrate understanding when talking with others about what they have read (comprehension skills)

Writing:

Use their phonic knowledge to write words in ways which match their spoken sounds.

Write some 'tricky' irregular words.

Write simple sentences that can be read back by themselves and read by others. Some words are spelt correctly and others are phonetically plausible.

If you need any further information on any of the above please do not hesitate to ask a member of the Foundation team.