

Phonics

A Guide for Parents



In school, we follow the Letters and Sounds programme. Letters and Sounds is a phonics resource published by the Department for Education which consists of six phases.

The Terminology

Phoneme- A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in a word.

Grapheme- A grapheme is a symbol of a phoneme. It is a letter or group of letters representing a sound.

Segmenting- Segmenting consists of breaking words down into phonemes to spell e.g. shark = sh-ar-k

Blending- Blending consists of building words from phonemes to read e.g. k-i-ng = king

Digraph- This is when two letters come together to make a phoneme. For example, /oa/ makes the sound in 'boat' and is also known as a vowel digraph. There are also consonant digraphs, for example, /sh/ and /ch/.

Trigraph- This is when three letters come together to make one phoneme, for example /igh/ in 'night'.

Split digraph- A digraph in which the two letters are not adjacent - e.g. a_e in 'make'

Abbreviations- VC are the respective abbreviations for vowel-consonant, CVC: consonant vowel consonant, CCVC: consonant-consonant-vowel-consonant, and are used to describe the order of graphemes in words (e.g. 'am' (VC), 'Sam' (CVC), 'slam' (CCVC), or 'each' (VC), 'beach' (CVC), 'bleach' (CCVC).

Tricky word (also known as a common exception word)- A word which cannot be sounded out phonetically.

High frequency word- A word which appears often during reading and writing.

Initial sound- First sound in a word.

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 (auditory discrimination)

Listening and remembering sounds (auditory memory and sequencing)

Talking about sounds (developing vocabulary and language comprehension)

The purpose of these different aspects is to develop students' language abilities in the following ways:

- Learning to listen attentively
- Enlarging their vocabulary
- Speaking confidently to adults and other children
- Discriminating between different phonemes
- Reproducing audibly the phonemes they hear
- Using sound-talk to segment words into phonemes

Phase 2

In Phase 2, letters and their sounds are introduced one at a time.

At Shefford Lower School, we teach the sounds in a slightly different sequence to the sets outlined in 'Letters and Sounds', this so that we can closely match our phonics teaching to the order of the sounds in which they appear in our reading scheme.

We teach sounds in the following sequence:

Set 1:	s, a, t, i, m
Set 2:	n, o, p
Set 3:	b, c, g, h
Set 4:	d, e, f, v
Set 5:	k, l, r, u

The children will learn to blend and segment the sounds to help begin reading and spelling. They will practise blending VC and CVC words for reading and segmenting VC and CVC words for spelling.

Alongside this, children are introduced to 'tricky words'. These are the words that are irregular. This means that phonics cannot be applied to the reading and spelling of these words.

The tricky words introduced in Phase 2 are...

I	to	no	the	go	into
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Children will also become more confident with recognising the following high frequency words...

a	as	an	at	if	in	is	it	of
off	on	can	dad	had	back	and	get	big
him	his	not	got	up	mum	but	put	

Phase 3

By the time children reach Phase 3, they will already be able to blend and segment words containing the sounds taught in Phase 2.

In Phase 3, your child will learn the following new sounds...

Set 6:	j, w, x, z, y
Consonant digraphs:	ff, ll, ss, zz, ck, qu, ch, sh, th, ng
Vowel digraphs:	ai, ee, igh, oa, oo, ar, or, ur, ow, oi, ear, air, er, ure

The children will continue to learn to blend and segment words using these sounds, including two syllable words.

The tricky words introduced in Phase 3 are...

he	she	we	me
be	my	you	was
are	all	they	her

Children will also become more confident with recognising the following high frequency words...

will	that	this	then
them	with	see	for
now	down	look	too

Phase 4

Phase 4 consolidates all the children have learnt in the previous phases. They will also learn the blending and segmenting of CVCC and CCVC words. When we see two consonants together, we often refer to them as 'blends'.

Children will learn to blend and segment words with the following initial and/or final blends:

st	nd	mp	nk	nt	ft	sk
lt	lp	tr	gr	dr	cr	br
fr	bl	fl	gl	pl	cl	sl
sp	tw	sm	nch	shr	str	thr

The tricky words introduced in Phase 4 are...

said	have	like	so	do	some	come
little	one	were	there	what	when	out

Children will also become more confident with recognising the following high frequency words...

went	it's	from	children	just	help
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Phase 5

In Phase 5, children will be taught new graphemes (different ways of representing sounds) and alternative pronunciations for these graphemes. They will begin to learn to choose the appropriate grapheme when spelling. They will learn to blend and segment words containing these phonemes, including two and three syllable words.

In Phase 5, your child will learn the following new graphemes:

ay	ou	ie	ea	ey
oy	ue	ir	aw	wh
ph	ew	oe	au	a-e
e-e	i-e	o-e	u-e	

The tricky words introduced in Phase 5 are...

Oh	Mrs	people	their	called
Mr	looked	asked	could	

Children will also become more confident with recognising the following high frequency words...

don't	old	I'm	by	time
house	about	your	day	made
came	make	here	saw	very

Phase 6

In Phase 6, children will be able to read many familiar words automatically. When they come across unfamiliar words they will, in many cases, be able to decode them quickly and quietly using their well-developed sounding and blending skills. With more complex unfamiliar words they will often be able to decode them by sounding them out orally.

Phase 6 focuses on learning spelling rules for word endings (these are known as suffixes). The children will learn how words change when you add certain letters.

Suffixes

- s	es	ing	ed	er	est	y
en	ful	ly	ment	ness	en	

Children will then continue to learn the remaining high frequency words as set out on the following pages.

Remaining high frequency words

water	bear	find	these	live
away	can't	more	began	say
good	again	I'll	boy	soon
want	cat	round	animals	night
over	long	tree	never	narrator
how	things	magic	next	small
did	new	shouted	first	car
man	after	us	work	couldn't
going	wanted	other	lots	three
where	eat	food	need	head
would	everyone	fox	that's	king
or	our	through	baby	town
took	two	way	fish	I've
school	has	been	gave	around
think	yes	stop	mouse	every
home	play	must	something	garden
who	take	red	bed	fast
didn't	thought	door	may	only
ran	dog	right	still	many
know	well	sea	found	laughed

let's	fun	any	better	lived
much	place	under	hot	birds
suddenly	mother	hat	sun	duck
told	sat	snow	across	horse
another	boat	air	gone	rabbit
great	window	trees	hard	white
why	sleep	bad	floppy	coming
cried	feet	tea	really	he's
keep	morning	top	wind	river
room	queen	eyes	wish	liked
last	each	fell	eggs	giant
jumped	book	friends	once	looks
because	its	box	please	use
even	green	dark	thing	along
am	different	grandad	stopped	plants
before	let	there's	ever	dragon
gran	girl	looking	miss	pulled
clothes	which	end	most	we're
tell	inside	than	cold	fly
key	run	best	park	grow

Phonics at home

Tips for supporting your child with phonics at home:

- As we teach new sounds in school, we teach children the British Sign Language (BSL) sign for these sounds as well as the 'jolly phonics song' for our younger children. So practising these at home will also help to embed their learning. Your child's class teacher will also provide updates and resources to support you with helping your child to practise their phonics at home.
- When you talk about letters to your child, remember to use the letter sounds rather than just the alphabet names of the letters. The reason for this is that sounding out words is practically impossible if you use the alphabet names.
- When saying the sounds try to ensure you are pronouncing them accurately. For example, the sound 't' is not pronounced 'ter'. There are some websites on the page below that will show you how to say the sound accurately. (The Oxford Owl website link has a very good audio guide).
- When your child is first learning their letters and sounds, it is important for a child to learn lower case letters. Most early books and games use lower case letters. Nevertheless, we do show the children what the upper case letters look like and we discuss when these are used e.g. for the start of names, at the start of sentences and the tricky word 'I'.

Useful webpages

<https://www.british-sign.co.uk/fingerspelling-alphabet-charts/> (BSL alphabet for finger signing)

<https://vimeo.com/106231366> (Jolly phonics songs)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jPVbJ-IaHIw> (A song the children learn to sign to)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TvMyssfAUx0> (Tricky word song 1)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R087lYrRpgY> (Tricky word song 2)

https://central.espresso.co.uk/espresso/primary_uk/subject/module/sub_modules_index/item72024/graded/index.html (Videos-including

pronunciation of sounds, game and activities)

Username: student4397 Password: sheffield

<http://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/home/reading-owl/expert-help/phonics-made-easy> (includes an audio guide to help the pronunciation of the sounds)

<http://www.phonicsplay.co.uk> Username: march20 Password: home

<http://www.letters-and-sounds.com> (additional information, printable resources and games)

<https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/for-home/reading-owl/library-page> (free eBooks)

If you have any questions or would like any further information, please speak to your child's class teacher, who will be happy to help. 😊