

PHONICS

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Why Phonics?

A review by the government was conducted on the teaching of early reading and concluded that for most children phonics was the best method for teaching reading. This runs alongside guided and shared reading.

A written language is basically a kind of a code. Teaching phonics is teaching children to crack the code in a systematic way.

What is Phonics?

Definition: *A method of teaching people to read by correlating sounds with letters or groups of letters in an alphabetic writing system.*

A way of teaching children to read quickly and skilfully.

They are taught to:-

- ❖ Recognise the sounds that each individual letter makes.
- ❖ Identify the sounds that different combinations of letters make - such as sh, ch, th, oo
- ❖ Blend these sounds together from left to right to make a word. Children can use this knowledge to 'de-code' new words that they hear or see.

Children are taught three main things:-

Grapheme Phoneme Correspondence - This simply means they are taught all the sounds in the English language and ways to write them down.

These sounds are taught in a particular order, called phases. There are six phases.

Phase 1 is the listening phase and runs throughout all the phases. Phases 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 are progressive and therefore taught systematically. Children are assessed during and at the end of each phase.

Blending - this skill is for reading. This is when children say the sounds that make up a word and are able to merge the sounds together until they hear what word it is.

Segmenting - this skill is for spelling. The opposite of blending. Children are able to say a word and then break it up with the phonemes that make it up.

What Makes Phonics Tricky?

The English language has 44 phonemes but there are around 120 graphemes or ways of writing down those 44 phonemes. We only have 26 letters of the alphabet so some graphemes are made up from more than 1 letter.

e.g. ch, sh, th, oo, ay. Some have three and four.

Another problem is that some graphemes can represent more than one phoneme, e.g. *ch* makes very different sounds in the words *chip*, *school*, *chef*.

How is Phonics Taught in School?

Phonics is taught for 15 to 20 minutes every day in small groups. The sessions are made up from songs and actions, and games. The children always begin the lesson by revising what has already been taught, learn a new sound, practise it and then apply it to their reading or writing.

? Phonics Test in Year 1 (Phonics Screening Test)?

This is to help confirm whether your child has made expected progress.

This takes place in June for Year 1 children.

It is a mix of 40 real words and non-words.

It is carefully designed and administrated not to be stressful for your child.

? How Can You Help Your Child? ?

- ❖ Play lots of listening games, including *I spy* and *I'm thinking of a*
- ❖ Make the correct pronunciation of the phoneme.
- ❖ Say the sound and its name.
- ❖ Talk to your child about the homework they bring home. This is what they have been learning in school that week. Use this to help them apply it to their reading and writing.
- ❖ Don't let your child become over reliant on sounding every word out. There are lots of words you can't sound out.

For more information on phonics search for phonics on the Department of Education Website www.education.gov.uk