

How we teach phonics at Ullesthorpe CE Primary School

At Ullesthorpe Primary, we aim to teach our pupils to love reading from the moment they start school. We want them to read easily, fluently and with good understanding. We read for information and for pleasure, helping the children to acquire a wide vocabulary and understanding of grammar. We encourage discussion to promote speaking and listening skills, and teach them how to apply their skills competently to writing.

How we achieve this in EYFS:

A consistent and structured approach is used to ensure children acquire the basic phonic skills they will need to become good readers. This is done through daily phonics sessions, which are delivered in small groups of children with a similar ability. Initially, phonics focuses on acquiring the sounds a letter makes (known as **phonemes**), and pupils are shown how the sounds are represented as letters or groups of letters (known as **graphemes**). After these letters and sounds have been acquired, the next step is for children to be able to read the separate letters in a word and **blend** them together to read the word (for example, dog has three sounds; d-o-g) and to **segment** them for spelling by sounding out the individual letters that they can hear in the word.

Each session, we work as a group to practise the sounds we know and introduce a new sound, including the correct letter formation for that sound, which is accompanied by a phrase to help children remember how to write each sound. The sounds are taught in a structured sequence, starting with single letter sounds and progressing to two letter sounds (**digraphs**), for example, sh. This systematic approach to teaching literacy is effective in teaching children to tackle new words, and enabling them to go on to read whatever they choose with confidence and enthusiasm.

When all single letter sounds have been taught, we then revisit them until they are fluent, and begin to build in opportunities for children to practise blending and segmenting through play-based opportunities. This is initially done with plenty of support, but then support is gradually removed until children are confidently able to do this alone. Different abilities are planned for, and opportunities for those children who may need a bit of extra practice are available, discretely throughout the day as well as within the session, either independently or in a smaller, focused group.

Some words in the English language cannot be decoded so the children are also taught to read and spell these words by sight. You may hear these words being referred to as 'irregular', 'tricky' words, or 'common exception' words. The children will come across these words as they read a range of text and so these are introduced separately and practiced daily.

The children are then given reading books or ditties (very short stories) with words or sentences that are phonetically decodable, to provide the opportunity to read independently and at home using sounds they know.

Progression in Key Stage One:

Building on the skills gained in the Early Years Foundation Stage, we use the same consistent and structured approach to ensure a smooth transition to further develop phonics skills and nurture more fluent and confident reading. In Year one, phonics is taught as a whole class through daily, discrete phonics lessons. We revisit the phonemes and graphemes they have already learnt, and practise blending more complex words. The teaching is focused on ensuring sounds are taught in their pure form, for example the letter 'r' must be taught as 'arr' (like a pirate!) not 'ruh', otherwise the sounds can't be blended properly in the words. More information about this is provided below.

Each day we work as a whole class to practise the pronunciation of the sounds we know and introduce a new sound. The sounds are taught in a consistent, incremental sequence, starting with the more simple, familiar sounds and progressing to the most complex, until all 44 sounds have been taught, then we revisit again for increased fluency. Some sounds are the same but are spelt differently, so children are taught rhymes to help them remember which grapheme to use. We keep the sessions fun and light-hearted, using pictures and silly sentences to engage the children.

For those children who need to spend a little longer learning the sounds, there are opportunities for daily, additional practise in both word reading and sentence reading, in small focus groups.

As in EYFS, the children are then given reading books that are phonetically decodable, to provide the opportunity to read, re-read and discuss stories independently. Reading these books is key to applying and securing the phonics skills practised in class - the more they read, the better!

In learning how to recognise and read the different sounds in words, the children are also able to apply this skill to their writing by using the strategy of breaking down new words into the individual sounds and graphemes (**decoding**) thus helping to spell the word. We also show the children how to add different endings to the words such as 'ing' or 'ed' (**suffixes**) or add letters to the beginning of words, e.g. 'un' (**prefixes**). Common exception and tricky words continue to be taught.

All of these Phonics skills are embedded across the curriculum and encouraged as the primary strategy to use when reading or writing new words in any subject.

To ensure the children are making good, consistent progress, they are regularly assessed to identify which sounds they are secure with, and which need revisiting. In addition to this, children in Year 1 are also assessed using a phonics screening check just before the October and February half term. The final Year 1 phonics test takes place in June. The check is designed to confirm whether individual children have learned sufficient phonic decoding and blending skills to an appropriate standard. The test consists of 40 words – it is a combination of 20 real words and 20 pseudo words (nonsense words) for the child to read 1:1 with their teacher. This is carried out by a member of staff who has undertaken the phonics testing

training and who the children are familiar with. Children who do not pass this in Year 1 will be re-assessed in Year 2, in the same manner. The results of this are reported to parents in the summer.

Additional information

This table is displayed in each classroom and shows the 44 sounds and their graphemes:

<i>Consonants: bounce</i>												
b	c	d	g	h	j	p	qu	t	w	x	y	ch
bb	k	dd	gg		g	pp		tt	wh			tch
	ck				ge							
	ch											
<i>Consonants: stretch</i>												
f	l	m	n	r	s	v	z	sh	th	ng		
ff	ll	mm	nn	rr	ss	ve	zz	ti		nk		
ph	le	mb	kn	wr	se		s	ci				
					c							
					ce							
<i>Vowels</i>												
a	e	i	o	u	ay	ee	igh	ow				
	ea				ā-e	y	ī-e	ō-e				
					ai	ea	ie	oa				
						e	i	o				
oo	oo	ar	or	air	ir	ou	oy	ire	ear	ure		
ū-e			oor	are	ur	ow	oi					
ue			ore		er							
ew			aw									
			au									

As mentioned, the sounds must be taught in their pure form. For audio guidance on pure sounds, please visit:

<https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/for-home/reading-owl/find-a-book/read-write-incphonics--1/phonics-pure-sounds-video>

The children are taught the sounds in 3 sets.

Set 1 sounds are taught in the following order:

m, a, s, d, t, i, n, p, g, o, c, k, u, b, f, e, l, h, sh, r, j, v, y, w, th, z, ch, qu, x, ng, nk

These first sounds should all be stretched slightly and we must avoid saying 'uh' after each one.

m - mmmmmmmmmmmountain (keep lips pressed together)

s - ssssssssssssnake (keep teeth together and hiss)

n - nnnnnnnnnnet (keep tongue behind teeth)

f - fffffffffffffffffflower (keep teeth on bottom lip and force air out sharply)

l - lllllleg (keep pointed curled tongue behind teeth)

r - rrrrrrrrobot (say rrrrr as if you are growling)

v - vvvvvvvvvvvvvulture (keep teeth together and make a buzzing sound)

z - zzzzzzzzzzzzzig zzzzzag (keep teeth together and make a buzzing noise)

th - thhhhhthank you (stick out tongue and breathe out sharply)

sh - shhhhhhhh (make a shhh noise as if telling someone to be quiet)

ng - thinnngg on a strinnngg (curl your tongue at the back of your throat)

nk - I think I stink (make a piggy noise without the oi...)

These next sounds need to be as short as possible and not stretched. Avoid the 'uh' at the end:

t- (tick tongue behind teeth)

p - (make distinctive p with the lips)

k - (make sharp click at back of throat)

c - (as above) h - (say h as you breathe sharply out)

ch - (make a short sneezing sound)

x - (say a sharp c and add s)

It's hard to avoid the 'uh' at the end of these sounds:

d - (tap tongue behind teeth)

g - (make soft sound in throat)

b - (make a short, strong b with lips)

j - (push lips forward) y - (keep edges of tongue against teeth)

w - (keep lips tightly pursed)

qu - (keep lips pursed as you say cw)

These short vowels should be kept short and sharp:

a - aaa (open mouth wide as if to bite an apple)

e - eeee (release mouth slightly from a position)

i - iiiii (make a sharp sound at the back of the throat - smile)

o - ooo (push out lips, make the mouth into an o shape)

u - uuu (make a sound in the throat)

Once children have learnt the **set 1** sounds, they move into the **set 2** then **set 3**. The following rhymes are taught to help the children remember the correct phonemes and graphemes:

Long vowel sound	Set 2 Sounds	Set 3 Sounds	
ay	ay: may I play	a-e: make a cake	ai: snail in the rain
ee	ee: what can you see	ea: cup of tea	e: he me we she be
igh	igh: fly high	i-e: nice smile	
ow	ow: blow the snow	o-e: phone home	oa: goat in a boat
oo	oo: poo at the zoo	u-e: huge brute	ew: chew the stew
oo	oo: look at a book		
ar	ar: start the car		
or	or: shut the door	aw: yawn at dawn	
air	air: that's not fair	are: share and care	
ir	ir: whirl and twirl	ur: nurse for a purse	er: a better letter
ou	ou: shout it out	ow: brown cow	
oy	oy: toy for a boy	oi: spoil the boy	
ire		ire: fire fire!	
ear		ear: hear with your ear	
ure		ure: sure it's pure?	