**Phonics**

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

**The Terminology**

**Phoneme**

A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in a word. It is generally accepted that most varieties of spoken English use about 44 phonemes.

# Graphemes

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

**Segmenting and blending**

Segmenting consists of breaking words down into phonemes to spell. Blending consists of building words from phonemes to read. Both skills are important.

**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/.

**Split digraph**

A digraph in which the two letters are not adjacent – e.g. m**a**k**e**

## Abbreviations

VC, CVC, and CCVC are the respective abbreviations for vowel-consonant, consonantvowel-consonant, 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).

**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)

**Phase 2**

In Phase 2, letters and their sounds are introduced one at a time. A set of letters is taught each week, in the following sequence:

**Set 1**: s, a, t, p

**Set 2**: i, n, m, d

**Set 3**: g, o, c, k

**Set 4**: ck, e, u, r

**Set 5**: h, b, f, ff, l, ll, ss

The children will begin to learn to blend and segment to help begin reading and spelling. This

will begin with simple words.

**Words using set 1:**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| at | sat | pat | sat | sap |

**Words using set 1 and 2:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **(+i)**  |  **(+n)**  |  **(+m)**  |  **(+d)** |
| itissitpitpipsiptip | aninnippanpintannaptin | ammanmatmapPamTimSam | dadsaddimdindidSidanddip |

**Words using set 1-3:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **(+g)**  |  **(+o)**  |  **(+c)**  |  **(+k)** |
| taggaggiggapnagsaggaspigdig | gotonnotpottopdogtotpopmog | cancotcopcapcatcod | kidkitKimKen |

**Words using set 1-4:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **(+ck)** | **(+e)** | **(+u)** | **(+r)** |
| kick sock sack dock pick sick pack tuck  | getpettennetpenpegmetmen | upmumrunmugcupsunmud | rimripramratragrugrot |

**Words using set 1-5:**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **(+h)** | **(+b)** | **(+f and ff)** | **(+l and ll)** | **(+ss)** |
| had him his hot hut hophum hit hat has hack  | butbigbackbetbadbagbedbudbegbugbun | ofifofffitfinfunfigfogpuffhuffcuff | lapletleglotlitbellfilldolltellsellBill | lesshissmassmessbossfusshisspasskissTess |

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:**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| to | the | no | go | I |

**Phase 3**

By the time children reach Phase 3, they will already be able to blend and segment words

containing the 19 letters taught in Phase 2. Over the twelve weeks which Phase 3 is expected

to last, twenty-five new graphemes are introduced (one at a time).

**Set 6:** j, v, w, x

**Set 7**: y, z, zz, qu

**Consonant digraphs**: ch, sh, th, ng

**Vowel digraphs**: ai, ee, igh, oa, oo, ar, or, ur, ow, oi, ear, air, ure, er

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Sounds** | **Word example** |
| **j** | jam |
| **v** | vet |
| **w** | win |
| **x** | box |
| **y** | yes |
| **z** | zip |
| **zz** | buzz |
| **qu** | quick |
| **ch** | chop |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Sounds** | **Word example** |
| **oo (short)** | cook |
| **ow** | now |
| **ar** | star |
| **air** | hair |
| **ear** | hear |
| **er** | term |
| **ur** | curl |
| **or** | fork |
| **ure** | pure |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Sounds** | **Word example** |
| **sh** | shin |
| **th** | thick |
| **ng** | song |
| **ai** | train |
| **igh** | sight |
| **oa** | boat |
| **oi** | coil |
| **oo (long)** | boot |
| **ee** | tree |

**Tricky words:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| we | me | be | was | no | go |
| my | you | they | her | all | are |

**Phase 4**

By Phase 4, children will be able to represent each of 42 phonemes with a grapheme. They will blend phonemes to read CVC words and segment CVC words for spelling. They will also be able to read two syllable words that are simple. They will be able to read all the tricky words learnt so far and will be able to spell some of them. This phase consolidates all the children have learnt in the previous phases

**Tricky words:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| said | so | she | he | have | like |
| some | come | were | there | little | one |
| they | all | are | do | when | out |
| what | my | her |  |  |  |

**Phase 5**

Children will be taught new graphemes and alternative pronunciations for these graphemes, as well as graphemes they already know. They will begin to learn to choose the appropriate grapheme when spelling.

**New graphemes for reading:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Sound** | **Word example** |  | **Sound** | **Word example** |  | **Sound** | **Word example** |  | **Sound** | **Word example** |
| **ay** | day |  | **oy** | boy |  | **wh** | when |  | **a\_e** | make |
| **ou** | out |  | **ir** | girl |  | **ph** | photo |  | **e\_e** | these |
| **ie** | tie |  | **ue** | blue |  | **ew** | new |  | **i\_e** | like |
| **ea** | eat |  | **aw** | saw |  | **oe** | toe |  | **o\_e** | home |
|  | **au** | Paul |  | **u\_e** | rule |

**Tricky words:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| oh  | their | people | Mr | Mrs | looked |
| called | asked | water | where | who | again |
| thought | through | work | mouse | many | laughed |
| because | different | any | eyes | friends | once |
| please |  |  |  |  |  |

**Phase 6**

In phase 6, the focus is on learning spelling rules for word endings (these are known as suffixes). The children will learn how words change when you add certain letters. There are 12 different suffixes taught:

**-s -es -ing -ed**

**-er -est -y -en**

**-ful -ly -ment -ness**

**Phonics at home**

**Tips for teaching your child the sounds:**

* It is important for a child to learn lower case or small letters rather than capital letters at first. Most early books and games use lower case letters and your child will learn these first at school. Obviously you should use a capital letter when required, such as at the beginning of the child's name, eg. **Paul**.
* When you talk about letters to your child, remember to use the letter sounds: **a buh cuh duh e ...** rather than the alphabet names of the letters: **ay bee see dee ee** . The reason for this is that sounding out words is practically impossible if you use the alphabet names. **eg. cat, would sound like: see  ay  tee**
* When saying the sounds of **b**, **d**, **g**, **j** and **w** you will notice the 'uh' sound which follows each, for example buh, duh... You cannot say the sound without it, however, try to emphasise the main letter sound.

**Useful webpages**

<http://www.letters-and-sounds.com>

<http://www.phonicsplay.co.uk>