



Atherton Sacred Heart RC Primary School

Phonics: Letter and Sounds

Phonics (Letters and Sounds Scheme)

Phonics is taught using the 'Letters and Sounds' scheme.

Letters and Sounds is a phonics resource published by the Department for Education and Skills in 2007. This sets out a detailed and systematic programme for teaching phonics skills for children starting by the age of five, with the aim of them becoming fluent readers by the age of seven.

Phonics is a way of teaching children to read quickly and skilfully. They are taught how to:

- recognise the sounds that each individual letter makes;
- identify the sounds that different combinations of letters make - such as 'sh' or 'oo'; and
- blend these sounds together from left to right to make a word.

Children can then use this knowledge to 'de-code' new words that they hear or see. This is the first important step in learning to read.

Research shows that when phonics is taught in a structured way – starting with the easiest sounds and progressing through to the most complex – it is the most effective way of teaching young children to read. The phonics scheme is set out in six phases.

Phonics is taught daily. Children are taught within the phase that is appropriate to their level of development. They are assessed on a regular basis and grouped accordingly.

Phonic Knowledge and Skills

Phase One (Reception)

Activities are divided into seven aspects, including environmental sounds, instrumental sounds, body sounds, rhythm and rhyme, alliteration, voice sounds and finally oral blending and segmenting.

Phase Two (Reception)

Learning 19 letters of the alphabet and one sound for each. Blending sounds together to make words. Segmenting words into their separate sounds. Beginning to read simple captions.

Phase Three (Reception)

The remaining 7 letters of the alphabet, one sound for each. Graphemes such as ch, oo, th representing the remaining phonemes not covered by single letters. Reading captions, sentences and questions. On completion of this phase, children will have learnt the "simple code", i.e. one grapheme for each phoneme in the English language.

Phase Four (Reception and Year 1)

No new grapheme-phoneme correspondences are taught in this phase. Children learn to blend and segment longer words with adjacent consonants, e.g. swim, clap, jump.

Phase Five (Throughout Year 1)

Now we move on to the "complex code". Children learn more graphemes for the phonemes which they already know, plus different ways of pronouncing the graphemes they already know.

Phase Six (Throughout Year 2 and beyond)

Working on spelling, including prefixes and suffixes, doubling and dropping letters etc.

TRICKY WORDS:

Children are also taught '**tricky words**', whole words that cannot be broken down easily.

COMMON EXCEPTION WORDS:

Each year group also have a list of '**common exception words**'. These are **words** in which the English spelling code works in an unusual or uncommon way. They are not **words** for which phonics 'doesn't work', but they may be **exceptions** to spelling rules, or **words** which use a particular combination of letters to represent sound patterns in a rare or unique way.

Phonics Terminology

Phoneme: The smallest unit of sound in a word, e.g. c/a/t, sh/o/p, t/ea/ch/er.

Grapheme: A letter or group of letter representing one sound, e.g. sh, igh, t.

Clip Phonemes: when teaching sounds ,always clip them short 'mmmm' not 'muh'

Digraph: Two letters which together make one sound, e.g. sh, ch, ee, ph, oa.

Split digraph: Two letters, which work as a pair, split, to represent one sound, e.g. a-e as in cake, or i-e as in kite.

Trigraph: three letters which together make one sound but cannot be separated into smaller phonemes, e.g. igh as in light, ear as in heard, tch as in watch.

Segmentation: means hearing the individual phonemes within a word – for instance the word 'crash' consists of four phonemes: 'c – r – a – sh'. In order to spell this word, a child must segment it into its component phonemes and choose a grapheme to represent each phoneme.

Blending: means merging the individual phonemes together to pronounce a word. In order to read an unfamiliar word, a child must recognise ('sound out') each grapheme, not each letter (e.g. 'th-i-n' not 't-h-i-n'), and then mergethe phonemes together to make the word.

Mnemonics: a device for memorising and recalling something, such as a hand action of a drill to remember the phoneme /d/.

Adjacent consonants: two or three letters with discrete sounds, which are blended together e.g. str, cr, tr, gr. (previously consonant clusters).

Year 1 Phonics Screening Test The phonics screening check is a quick and easy check of your child's phonics knowledge. It helps confirm whether your child has made the expected progress. The test takes place in the summer term.

For further information on the Phonics Screening Test, please read the document

[Year 1 phonics screening guide for parents.pdf](#)

All children are individuals and develop at different rates. The screening check ensures that teachers understand which children need extra help with phonic decoding.