



Outwood Primary Academy
Kirkhamgate
Phonics guide for parents

Introduction

At Outwood Primary Academy Kirkhamgate, we know how important it is for teachers and parents to work together to give your child the best start. Reading together at home is one of the easiest but most important ways in which you can help your child. To support your child in becoming an effective and confident reader we hope to work with you to develop their knowledge of phonics (letter sounds) to enable them to decode different words they may come across.

Your child will be engaged in a daily phonics teaching session through Foundation Stage and Key Stage One.

Through this booklet we hope to give you an overview of phonics teaching with your child, and some ideas for how you can support your child at home.

Letters and Sounds

We are following Government guidance with regards to 6 phases of phonics teaching. This six phase teaching programme focuses on high quality phonic work. The intention is to "...equip children who are 5 with the phonic knowledge and skills they need to become fluent readers by the age of 7." By the end of Year Two, children should have completed phase 6. Where necessary, children in key stage Two will still be taught phonics at the level needed. Children are regularly assessed by their teacher to ensure they are working on the correct phase and appropriate teaching is planned for. Below is information about the 6 phases, and the progression between them.

Useful Definitions

Here is a glossary of terms you may come across in this booklet.

blend — to draw individual sounds together to pronounce a word, e.g. s-n-a-p, blended together, reads snap

cluster — two (or three) letters making two (or three) sounds, e.g. the first three letters of 'straight' are a consonant cluster

digraph — two letters making one sound, e.g. sh, ch, th, ph.

vowel digraphs comprise of two vowels which, together, make one sound, e.g. ai, oo, ow

split digraph — two letters, split, making one sound, e.g. a-e as in make or i-e in site

grapheme — a letter or a group of letters representing one sound, e.g. sh, ch, igh, ough (as in 'though')

phoneme — the smallest single identifiable sound, e.g. the letters 'sh' represent just one sound, but 'sp' represents two (/s/ and /p/)

segment (vb) — to split up a word into its individual phonemes in order to spell it, e.g. the word 'cat' has three phonemes: /c/, /a/, /t/

trigraph — three letters making one sound, e.g. igh, ear, air, ure

VC, CVC, CCVC — the abbreviations for vowel-consonant, consonant-vowel-consonant, consonant-consonant-vowel-consonant, which are used to describe the order of letters in words, e.g. am, ham, slam.

A useful definition of a Phoneme and Grapheme. Your child will need to develop knowledge of both.

A letter consists of; a sound, a shape and it has a capital form and a lower case form.

The letter sound is the first thing that children need to recognise.

Only use capital letters for names, and when children are ready at the beginning of sentences.

Use lower case letters for all writing.

Letter shape=grapheme

Letter sound=phoneme

The diagram features a yellow diamond background. At the top left is a yellow crayon with a red eraser and a red tip. A red squiggly line connects it to the text 'The letter sound is the first thing that children need to recognise.' In the center are large black letters 'Aa'. A blue wavy line runs across the bottom, with 'Letter shape=grapheme' on the left and 'Letter sound=phoneme' on the right. A small brown ant is on the right, with a string of 'a' characters below it. A yellow crayon with a blue tip is at the bottom right.

Segmenting and Blending

Children are taught to segment words into the separate sounds they hear within the word. So they may see 'dog' written down and would be expected to identify the three separate sounds of *d-o-g*. Once they have segmented the word (often called 'sounding out') they can then begin to blend it.

Blending is the process of saying the individual sounds in a word and then running them together to make the word. For example, sounding out *d- o- g* and making *dog*. It is a technique every child will need to learn, and it improves with practice. To start with you should sound out the word and see if a child can hear it, giving the answer if necessary.

Some children take longer than others to hear this. The sounds must be said quickly to hear the word. It is easier if the first sound is said slightly louder. Remember that some sounds (digraphs) are represented by two letters, such as *sh*. Children should sound out the digraph (*sh*), not the individual letters (*s - h*). With practice they will be able to blend the digraph as one sound in a word. So, a word like *rain* should be sounded out *r-ai-n*, and *feet* as *f-ee-t*. This is difficult to begin with and takes practice. You will find it helpful to be able to distinguish between a blend (such as *st*) and a digraph such as *sh*). In a blend the two sounds, *s* and *t* can each be heard. In a digraph this is not so.

When sounding out a blend, encourage children to say the two sounds as one unit, so *fl-a-g* not *f-l-a-g*. This will lead to greater fluency when reading.

Eventually your child should be able to read the words without the need to segment or blend. However, some children get into the habit of doing this so please encourage them to read the word if they know it.

Some words in English have an irregular spelling and cannot be read by blending, such as *said*, *was* and *one*. Unfortunately,

many of these are common words. The irregular parts have to be remembered. These are called the 'tricky words'. Children are taught these tricky words alongside their phonics.

Identifying sounds in words

The easiest way to know how to spell a word is to listen for the sounds in that word. Even with the tricky words an understanding of letter sounds can help. Start by having your child listen for the first sound in a word. Games like I-Spy are ideal for this. Next try listening for the end sounds, as the middle sound of a word is the hardest to hear. Begin with simple three-letter words such as *cat* or *hot*. A good idea is to say a word and tap out the sounds. Three taps means three sounds. Say each sound as you tap. Take care with digraphs. The word *fish*, for example, has four letters but only three sounds, *f-i-sh*. Rhyming games and poems also help tune the ears to the sounds in words. Other games to play are:

a) Add a sound: what do I get if I add a *p* to the beginning of *ink*?
Answer: *pink*. Other examples are *m-ice*, *b-us*, etc.

b) Take away a sound: what do I get if I take away *p* from *pink*?
Answer: *ink*. Other examples as above, and *f-lap*, *s-lip*, *c-rib*, *drag*, *p-ant*, *m-end*, *s-top*, *b-end*, *s-t-rip*, etc.

Don't forget to ask your child what phonemes (sounds) they have been doing each day.