



Hook Infant School



Letters and Sounds

**A guide for parents
about phonics**

What is phonics?

Phonics is a fun and interactive way to support children in learning how to read and write. At Hook Infant School we use Letters and Sounds to teach phonics. Phonics is used because in English, the alphabet contains only 26 letters, but spoken English uses about 44 sounds. These sounds are represented by either single letters (e.g. s, t, h) or a groups of letters (e.g. th, ai, igh).

What is Letters and Sounds?

Letters and Sounds is a government programme for teaching phonics and high frequency words. It is split into 6 phases with the different phases being covered throughout Early Years and Key Stage 1. Phase 1 begins in pre-school or nursery, Phases 2, 3 and 4 are taught in the Early Years, Phase 5 is taught in Year 1 and Phase 6 is taught in Year 2.

What is a phoneme?

A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound.

What is a grapheme?

A grapheme is a letter or number of letters that represent a sound (phoneme) in a word.

What is a digraph?

A digraph is when two letters come together to make a sound (phoneme) e.g. 'oa' make the sound in 'boat' or 'sh' make the sound in 'shop'.

What is blending?

Blending is the process of putting sounds together to make a word. This is how individual sounds e.g. c – a – t make the word cat. To learn to read well children must be able to blend sounds together smoothly. Blending fluidly helps to improve fluency when reading.

What is segmenting?

Segmenting is a skill used in spelling. In order to spell the word cat, it is necessary to break the word into its three individual sounds: c-a-t.

What are tricky words?

Tricky words are words that do not follow all of the phonic rules – hence being tricky. They cannot be sounded out and need to be learned off by heart. They also do not fit usual spelling patterns e.g. 'the', 'to' 'was'.

What are high frequency words?

High frequency words (also known as common words) are words that occur frequently in much of the material that young children need to read and write. For a child to become more fluent in reading and writing, it is expected that children are able to read and spell these words accurately independently.

What are CVC words?

CVC stands for consonant-vowel-consonant, so a word such as 'map' or 'dog' is a CVC. In Phase 4, children begin to learn CCVC words which are consonant-consonant-vowel-consonant words such as 'clip' or 'stop'.

Letters and Sounds Overview

Phase 1

Phase 1 concentrates on developing speaking and listening skills and lays the foundations for learning letter sounds. This prepares the children to begin developing their oral blending and segmenting skills. The sounds are: s, a, t, p, i, n, m, d, g, o, c, k, ck, e, u, r, h, b, f, ff, l, ll, ss. Children will also be able to read 5 tricky words: the, to, I, no, go.

Phase 2

Phase 2 teaches the first 19 most common letters from the alphabet. These letters have one sound and children learn to blend and segment using these sounds. Children working in Phase 2 will be able to read simple captions and CVC words.

Phase 3

Phase 3 teaches another 25 graphemes (sounds), these include the remaining alphabet sounds in addition to a selection of digraphs (two letters making one sound) e.g. sh, ch, th, oa. Children will apply these to their reading and writing. The sounds are: j, v, w, x, y, z, zz, qu, ch, sh, th, ng, ai, ee, igh, oa, oo, ar, or, ur, ow, oi, ear, air, ure, er. Children will be able to read the following tricky words: he, she, we, me, be, was, my, you, her, they, all, are.

Phase 4

Phase 4 is a consolidation unit. No new graphemes/phonemes are taught during this phase however there is a large focus upon applying the sounds to different situations. Children will begin to read longer words using the sounds e.g. CVCC words, CCVC words and CVCCC words. They will read the following tricky words: some, come, one, said, do, so, were, when, have, there, out, like, little, what.

Phase 5

Phase 5 is when children learn more new graphemes for the phonemes they already know. This is essentially where the children learn that there are alternative ways sounds are made. For example the 'igh' sound can be made with the 'i-e' split digraph, 'ie' or with 'igh'. Children also look at different ways of pronouncing phonemes they already know e.g. ow can be the sound in cow or snow. The sounds taught are: ay, oy, wh, ou, ir, ph, ie, ue, ew, ea, aw, oe, au, a_e, e_e, i_e, o_e, u_e. Children at this stage should be able to read and write the first 100 high frequency words.

Phase 6

Phase 6 focuses on spelling rules and suffixes. Children at this stage should be able to read and write the next 200 common words.