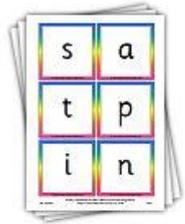


# Synthetic Phonics



A Parent's guide



## **What is Synthetic Phonics?**

When your child is learning to read there are two crucial things they need to learn:

- the sounds represented by written letters
- how to blend the sounds together to make words

Synthetic phonics, is a method of teaching reading which first teaches the letter sounds and then builds up to “blending” these sounds together to achieve full pronunciation of whole words. To begin with children will learn what are known as “phonemes” and “graphemes”. Phonemes are the smallest unit of sounds within a word. Graphemes are letters which correspond to the phonemes. Once letter sounds have been learnt, children then “blend” the sound in order to pronounce and write a specific word. In order to do this properly, children will also learn about and use “digraphs” and “trigraphs” (see Glossary of Terms for further information). Synthetic phonics are taught in different phases and are regularly assessed, all of which will be discussed in more detail later in this booklet.

## **Why Synthetic Phonics?**

In 2005, the Government commissioned consultant and ex-inspector Jim Rose to carry out a review of the teaching of early reading. The findings of this report became known as the “Rose Report”. In March 2006, the final report was published, in which it was recommended that a) securing reading is an entitlement for every child, and b) that synthetic phonics is an essential part (although not the whole picture) of becoming a skilled reader.

The Rose Report said Synthetic phonics should be used as a first strategy for reading, which in turn will influence writing. The report also spoke of “Quality phonic work” relying on the “expertise, understanding and commitment of those who teach it.”

Recommendations within the report:

- High quality, systematic phonics work should start by the age of 5
- Systematic phonics teaching should “capture children’s interest, sustain motivation and reinforce learning”.
- Phonics teaching should be set within a “broad and rich language curriculum”, in order to expose children to a vast vocabulary.
- It should be multi-sensory and interactive.

## **How we use synthetic phonics to help children learn to read at Stoke Mandeville Combined School**

Every day children are provided with:

- An interactive, multi-sensory phonics session, led by a teaching staff, where children are given opportunities to practice sounds, blend sounds together to make words, and apply their new learning



- Opportunities throughout the day engage and encourage independence in speaking, listening, reading and writing activities across the curriculum
- Exposure to listen to a wide selection of stories, poems, rhymes and non-fiction
- Exposure to modelled speaking, reading and writing demonstrated in a purposeful context
- Focused guided, shared, independent reading and writing tasks followed by a variety of discussions on these tasks.

### **Visual (synthetic) Phonics**

At Stoke Mandeville Combined School, we also use Visual phonics to assist the children in their learning and understanding of reading and writing. It is a system of 46 hand-shapes with corresponding movements which are called “cues”. It is used notably by teachers of the deaf and Speech and Language therapists. As we have a Hearing Impaired Department at Stoke Mandeville Combined School, we use visual phonics to greatly assist the children within the department with their learning. However, we also use Visual Phonics with children outside the department as we wholeheartedly believe all children learn through physical, kinaesthetic activities as well as other forms of activities. Teaching and using visual phonics with all children supports our vision for an inclusive school.



### **How is synthetic phonics tested at Stoke Mandeville Combined School?**

Daily phonics sessions take place in Reception and in Key Stage 1 (Years 1 and 2). These continue into Key Stage 2 (Years 3, 4, 5 and 6) as and where needed for children’s individual learning needs. Synthetic phonics is taught in 6 “phases”. Each phase contains different aspects of learning involving blending and segmenting sounds and letters through activities taught by a member of the teaching staff. Children progress through the phases from phase 1 to phase 6. A timetable for learning phonemes, graphemes, segmenting and blending within these phases is used. This gives teaching staff an overview of how the majority of children should be able to progress.

If required, children may also be part of specific intervention groups, in which we address any concerns or gaps in their phonetic learning.

Staff in Year 1 also carry out the “Phonics Screening Check. The phonics screening check is a government test which assesses all children individually towards the end of Year 1. It is a test that is carried out in all schools in England and been carried out in schools since June 2012. It is designed to give teachers and parents’ information on how children are progressing in phonics. It helps to identify which children are meeting the learning criteria in systematic phonics and which children need additional support at this stage so that they do not fall behind vital early reading skills. Results (which do not give details of individual children) are published nationally and given to parents.

### **How you can help your children in using Synthetic phonics?**

Helping your child with Synthetic phonics at home will help reinforce their learning at school and help them to become more accomplished readers.

In order to help assist their synthetic phonics learning you can:

- Read with your children as often as possible
- Assist your children in segmenting and sounding out letters in words (including digraphs and trigraphs).
- Read a variety of books with you children and encourage them to read age-appropriate texts. Progress onto more challenging texts once children are more competent.
- Model good speaking, listening, reading and writing skills.
- Correct children if they incorrectly pronounce a word or if there are errors with the segmenting and blending. Always praise and encourage your children and foster enthusiasm with what they are learning.

## **Glossary of Terms: Phonic Terminology**

### Synthetic Phonics

An approach to teaching reading in which the phonemes (sounds) associated with graphemes (letters) are pronounced firstly in “isolation” and then blended together.

### Phoneme

A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in a word. The 26 letters of the alphabet contain 44 phonemes (please ask if you would like a comprehensive list)

### Grapheme

A grapheme is the letter(s) representing each phoneme such as “t”, “ai” and “igh”

### Blending

Once the letter sounds have been learnt, blending them in order to pronounce and write a certain word.

### Segmenting

Identifying the individual sounds in a spoken word, e.g. h-i-m and then blending/writing down each sound to form the word.

### Digraph

Two letters which make one sound i.e. sh

### Trigraph

Three letters which make one sound i.e. igh

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