

At St John’s Primary School we use a systematic phonics programme called ‘*Letters and*

*Sounds’* alongside Oxford Reading tree’s - ‘Floppy Phonics’ and Pearson Book’s - ‘Phonics Bug’ which link to our reading scheme.

*Letters and Sounds* is divided into six phases, with each phase building on the skills and knowledge of previous learning. There are no big leaps in learning. Children have time to practise and rapidly expand their ability to read and spell words. They are also taught to read and spell ‘tricky words’, which are words with spellings that are unusual or that children have not yet been taught.

**Phase 1 (3 - 4 years old)**

This paves the way for systematic learning of phonics and usually starts in nursery or

playgroup. Teachers plan activities that will help children to listen attentively to sounds around them, such as the sounds of their toys and to sounds in spoken language. Teachers teach a wide range of nursery rhymes and songs. They read good books to and with the children. This helps to increase the number of words they know – their *vocabulary* – and helps them talk confidently about books.

**Learning how to *‘sound-talk’***

The teacher shows children how to do this – **c-a-t = cat**. The separate

sounds (*phonemes*) are spoken aloud, in order, all through the word, and

are then merged together into the whole word. The merging together is

called *blending* and is a vital skill for reading.

Children will also learn to do this the other way around – **cat = c-a-t**. The whole word is

spoken aloud and then broken up into its sounds (*phonemes*) in order, all through the word.

This is called *segmenting* and is a vital skill for spelling.

This is all oral (*spoken*). Your child will not be expected to match the letter to the sound at

this stage. The emphasis is on helping children to hear the separate sounds in words and to

create spoken sounds.

**Ways you can support your children at home**

**Sound-talking**

Find real objects around your home that have three phonemes (*sounds*) and practise ‘sound talk’. First, just let them listen, then see if they will join in, for example, saying:

‘I spy a p-e-g – peg.’

‘I spy a c-u-p – cup.’

‘Where’s your other s-o-ck – sock?’

‘Simon says – put your hands on your h-ea-d.’

‘Simon says – touch your ch-i-n.’

‘Simon says – pick up your b-a-g.’

**Phase 2 (4 – 5 years old)**

In this phase children will continue practising what they have learned from phase 1, including

‘sound-talk’. They will also be taught the phonemes (*sounds*) for a number of letters

(*graphemes*), which phoneme is represented by which grapheme and that a phoneme can

be represented by **more than one letter,** for example, **‘ll’** as in **b-e-ll**. They may be using

pictures or hand movements to help them remember these.

**VC and CVC words**

C and V are abbreviations for ‘consonant’ and ‘vowel’. VC words are words

consisting of a vowel then a consonant (e.g. *am, at, it)* and CVC words are words

consisting of a consonant then a vowel then a consonant (e.g. *cat, rug, sun*).

Words such as *tick* and *bell* also count as CVC words – although they have four letters, they

have only three sounds. For example, in the word *bell*, **b** = consonant, **e** = vowel, **ll** =

consonant.

Now the children will be *seeing* letters and words, as well as hearing them. They will be

shown how to make whole words by pushing magnetic or wooden letters together to form

little words, reading little words on the interactive whiteboard and breaking up words into

individual sounds, which will help their spelling. These will be simple words made up of two

phonemes, for example, *am*, *at*, *it*, or three phonemes, for example, *cat*, *rug*, *sun*, *tick*, *bell*.

**Tricky words**

They will also learn several tricky words: **the**, **to**, **I**, **go**, **no**.

Children will still be practising oral blending and segmenting skills daily. They need plenty of

practice at doing this.

**Saying the sounds**

Your child will be taught how to pronounce the sounds (*phonemes*) correctly to make blending easier. Teachers help children to look at different letters and say the right sounds for them. (Please see the link on the school website to help you with using the correct pronunciation).

**Getting ready for writing**

Teachers will model how to form letters (*graphemes*) correctly, so that children can

eventually acquire a fluent and legible handwriting style. These skills develop over a long

period of time. A child’s ability to form a letter correctly is a separate skill from phonics.

Holding a pen or pencil needs considerable co-ordination and practice in making small

movements with hands and fingers.

In the early phonic phases children can use letter cards or magnetic letters to demonstrate

their knowledge of phonics.

**Writing in lower-case letters**

We shall be teaching lower-case letters, as well as capital letters. As most writing will be in

lower-case letters it is useful if you can use these at home. A good start is for your child to

write their name correctly, starting with a capital letter followed by lower-case letters. (Please

see the attached letter formation sheet for the schools style of hand writing that is taught).

**Phase 3 (4 – 5 years olds)**

The purpose of this phase is to:

* teach more graphemes, most of which are made of two letters, for example,

‘**oa**’ as in **boat**

* practise blending and segmenting a wider set of CVC words, for example,

**fizz**, **chip**, **sheep**, **light, rain, coat**

* learn all **letter names** and begin to form them correctly
* read more tricky words and begin to spell some of them
* read and write words in phrases and sentences.

Here are some examples of words your children will be reading:

**tail**, **week**, **right**, **soap**, **food**, **park**, **burn**, **cord**, **town**, **soil**

**Tricky words**

The number of tricky words is growing. These are so important for reading and spelling:

**he**, **she**, **we**, **me**, **be**, **was**, **my**, **you**, **her, they, are, all**.

**Phase 4 (5 – 6 years olds)**

Children continue to practise previously learned graphemes and phonemes and learn how to

read and write:

**CVCC** words: **tent, damp, toast, chimp**

For example, in the word **‘toast’, t = consonant, oa = vowel, s = consonant, t = consonant.**

and **CCVC** words: **swim, plum, sport, cream, spoon**

For example, in the word **‘green’, g = consonant, r = consonant, ee = vowel, n =**

**consonant.**

They will also be learning more tricky words and continuing to read and write sentences together.

**Tricky words**

**said, so, do, have, like, some, come, were, there, little, one, when, out, what**

**Phase 5 (6 – 7 years olds)**

In phase 5 children will:

* Be taught further graphemes for reading.
* Be taught alternative pronunciations for graphemes.
* Be taught alternative spellings for phonemes.
* Recognise graphemes in reading words.
* Practice reading and spelling of high-frequency (common) words.
* Practice reading and spelling two-syllable and three-syllable words.
* Practice reading and writing sentences.

Children entering Phase Five are able to read and spell words containing adjacent

consonants **(e.g green, crunch)** and some polysyllabic words **(chimpanzee – chim-pan-zee)**.

The purpose of this phase is for children to broaden their knowledge of graphemes and

phonemes for use in reading and spelling. They will learn new graphemes and alternative pronunciations for these and graphemes they already know. Some of the alternatives will already have been encountered in the high-frequency words that have been taught. Children become quicker at recognising graphemes of more than one letter in words and at blending the phonemes they represent. When spelling words they will learn to choose the appropriate graphemes to represent phonemes and begin to build word-specific knowledge of the spellings of words.

**Tricky words**

Children will learn to read the 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.**

Children will learn to spell the words; **said, so, have, like, some, come, were, there, little, one, do, when, what, out, oh, their, people, Mr, Mrs, looked, called, asked.**

**Phase 6 (6 - 7 years olds)**

In phase 6 children will:

* Be introduced to and taught the past tense.
* Investigate and learn how to add suffixes.
* Be taught how to spell long words.
* Be taught how to find and learn the difficult bits in words.
* Learn and practice spellings.

To reinforce understanding and application of the **-ed** suffix for the past tense (e.g. **rounded,**

**helped, turned, begged, hissed, wanted, sorted, hummed, waded, washed, hated,**

**greased, lived)**

**The following spelling strategies will also be taught**

1. Syllables - To learn my word I can listen to how many syllables there are so

I can break it into smaller bits to remember (e.g. Sep-tem-ber,

ba-by)

2. Base words - To learn my word I can find its base word (e.g. Smiling – base

smile +ing, e.g. women = wo + men)

3. Analogy - To learn my word I can use words that I already know to help

me (e.g. could: would, should)

4. Mnemonics - To learn my word I can make up a sentence to help me

remember it (e.g. could – O U Lucky Duck; people – people eat orange peel like elephants)