



Letters and Sounds

Phonics information for Parents and Carers

Introduction

As you know, the ability to read and write well is a vital skill for all children, paving the way for an enjoyable and successful school experience.

Children learn and practise many of the skills that they need for reading and writing from a very early age. They do this through a wide range of activities and experiences, at home, in settings and in school. They explore and learn through singing and saying rhymes, making and listening to music, talking with others, sharing books with adults and other children, dressing up, experimenting with writing and using puppets and toys to retell and make up stories.

Children's spoken language supports reading and writing

In order to make a good start in reading and writing, children need to have an adult listen to them and talk to them. Speaking and listening are the foundations for reading and writing. Even everyday activities such as preparing meals, tidying up, putting shopping away and getting ready to go out offer you the chance to talk to your child, explaining what you are doing. Through these activities, children hear the way language is put together into sentences for a purpose.

Books are a rich source of new words for your child; words you would not use in everyday conversations appear in books. Children need to have a wide vocabulary to understand the meaning of books, so read aloud and share books as often as you can. They will enjoy it and it will be useful to them when they come across these words in their own reading later on.

Ways you can support your child at home: talking and listening

- **Make time to listen to your child talking** - as you meet them from school, as you walk, or travel home by car, in the supermarket as you shop, at meal times, bath times, bedtimes - any time!
- **Switch off the TV, radio and mobile phones** - and really listen!
- **Show that you are interested in what they are talking about** - look at your child, smile, nod your head, ask a question or make a response to show that you really have been listening.
- **Make a collection of different toy creatures** - for example, a duck, a snake, an alien, say the sound it might make as you play together, for example, 'quack-quack', 'sssssss', 'yuk-yuk', and encourage your child to copy you.
- **Listen at home** - switch off the TV and listen to the sounds, both inside and outside the home. Can your child tell you what sounds they heard, in the order in which they heard them?
- **Play-a-tune** - and follow me! Make or buy some simple shakers, drums and beaters, then play a simple tune and ask your child to copy. Have fun!
- **Use puppets** and toys to make up stories or retell known ones. Record your child telling the story and play it back to them.

Phonic teaching at Urmston Infant School

All of our children take part in high-quality phonics sessions every day. These are fun sessions involving lots of speaking, listening and games, where the emphasis is on children's active participation. They learn to use their phonic knowledge for reading and writing activities and in their independent play.

The aim of this booklet is to give you a clear picture of how we approach the teaching of phonics and word recognition and how, as a parent or carer, you can support and encourage your child at home.

Not all children will learn at the same pace!

Your child should be supported whatever their rate of learning. There is a very close link between difficulty with phonics and hearing so, if your child is making progress more slowly than might be expected, it would be worth having their hearing checked.

From a very early stage, children develop awareness of different sounds in spoken language. They develop understanding that spoken words are made up of different sounds (phonemes) and they learn to match these phonemes to letters (graphemes). Phonics is about children knowing how letters link to sounds (graphemes to phonemes), for example, **c** as in 'cat', **ll** as in 'fell', **ee** as in 'sheep'.

Children use this phonic knowledge when they are reading and writing. This approach has been shown to provide a quick and efficient way for most young children to learn to read words on the page, fluently and accurately. We want children to develop this skill so that it becomes automatic. This also greatly helps them with their spelling. At Urmston Infant School we use a systematic phonics programme called Letters and Sounds alongside the actions of Jolly Phonics.

Letters and Sounds

'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 the children have not yet been taught.

Year group	Letters and Sounds phases taught
Nursery	Phase 1
Reception	Phases 2,3 and 4
Year 1	Phase 5
Year 2	Phase 6

Phase 1

This paves the way for systematic learning of phonics and usually starts in Nursery or at other pre-school settings.

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.

Ways you can support your child at home

- Play '**What do we have in here?**' Put some toys or objects in a bag and pull one out at a time. Emphasise the first sound of the name of the toy or object by repeating it, for example, 'c c c c - car', 'b b b b - box', 'ch ch ch ch - chip'.
- Say: '**A tall tin of tomatoes!** '**Tommy, the ticklish teddy!** '**A lovely little lemon!**' This is called alliteration. Use names, for example, '**Gurpreet gets the giggles**', '**Milo makes music**', '**Naheema's nose**'.
- Teach them '**Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers**'.

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 child 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.'

Phase 2

In this phase, the 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, hand movements, songs and rhymes 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 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.

Sounds should be sustained where possible (e.g. sss, fff, mmm) and, where this is not possible, 'uh' sounds after consonants should be reduced as far as possible (e.g. try to avoid saying 'buh', 'cuh'). Teachers help children to look at different letters and say the right sounds for them.

Ways you can support your child at home

- **Talk about the words they see in everyday life** - food packaging, signs in the supermarkets, captions on buses and lorries, messages on birthday cards and invitations.
- **Magnetic letters**
Display magnetic letters on your fridge, or use with a tin tray. Find out which letters have been taught - have fun finding these with your child and place them on the magnetic surface.
- **Making little words together**
Make little words together, for example, it, up, am, and, top, dig, run, met, pick. As you select the letters, say them aloud: 'a-m - am', 'm-e-t - met'.
- **Breaking words up**
Now do it the other way around: read the word, break the word up and move the letters away, saying: 'met - m-e-t'.

Both these activities help children to see that reading and spelling are reversible processes.

Spelling is harder than reading words - praise, don't criticise. Little whiteboards and pens, and magic boards, are a good way for children to try out spellings and practise their handwriting.

- **Write with your child** - 'think aloud' so they can hear the decisions you are making as you write. Make sure the writing is for a purpose, for example, a birthday message, a shopping list, an address.
- **Provide your child with a shoe box full of things to write with** - writing tools of various sizes and thicknesses: gel pens, crayons, glitter pens, rainbow pencils, old birthday cards, coloured paper, sticky tape to make little books. Rolls of wallpaper can be attached to a table or wall to provide a large canvas for their writing and drawing.

- **Praise them for their play writing** - those early squiggles and marks show that your child is beginning to understand writing. Your child might be trying to use letters from their name to write; this is emergent writing and shows that shows they know that writing needs real alphabet letters.

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.

Your child's teacher can advise on the handwriting style that is taught and how you can help at home.

Ways you can support your child at home

- **Using their whole body**
For handwriting children need to be well co-ordinated through their whole body, not just their hands and fingers. Games that help co-ordination include throwing balls at a target, under-arm and over-arm, and bouncing balls - also skipping on the spot, throwing a Frisbee, picking up pebbles from the beach and throwing them into the sea. Have fun!
- **Hand and finger play**
Action rhymes such as 'Incy wincy spider', 'One potato, two potato' and 'Tommy Thumb' are great fun and get their hands and fingers moving. Playing with salt dough or clay really helps strengthen little fingers, as does cookery and using simple toolkits.
- **Hand-eye co-ordination**
Pouring water into jugs and cups of different sizes, sweeping up with a dustpan and brush, cutting, sticking, tracing, threading beads, completing puzzles, peeling off stickers and sticking them in the right place - these all help hand-eye co-ordination.
- **Pencil hold**
The 'pincer' movement needs to be practised. This is important as it enables children to hold a pencil properly as they write. Provide them with kitchen tongs and see if they can pick up small objects. Move on to challenging them to pick up

smaller things, for example, little cubes, sugar lumps, dried peas, lentils, first with chopsticks, then with tweezers. Ask children to peg objects to a washing line. Provide plenty or different types of pen and pencil; hold their hand to practise the correct grip.

Phase 3

The purpose of this phase is to:

- teach more graphemes, most of which are made of two letters (digraphs), for example, 'oa' as in **boat**, and some with three (trigraphs) such as 'igh' as in **night**.
- practise blending and segmenting a wider set of CVC words, for example, **fizz, chip, sheep, light**
- learn all **letter names** and begin to form them correctly
- read more high frequency and tricky words and begin to spell some of them
- read and write words in phrases and sentences.

CVC words containing graphemes made of two or more letters

Here are some examples of words your children will be reading: **tail, week, right, soap, food, park, burn, cord, town, soil.**

Their confidence from the daily experience of practising and applying their phonic knowledge to reading and writing is really paying off!

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, all.**

Ways you can support your child at home

- Sing an alphabet song together.
- Play 'I spy', using letter names as well as sounds.
- Continue to play with magnetic letters, using some of the two grapheme (letter) combinations:

r-ai-n = rain blending for reading **rain = r-ai-n** - segmenting for spelling

b-oa-t = boat blending for reading **boat = b-oa-t** - segmenting for spelling

h-ur-t = hurt blending for reading **hurt = h-ur-t** - segmenting for spelling

- Praise your child for trying out words.
- Ask teachers for a list of the tricky words.
- Set a timer. Call out one word at a time and get your child to spell it on a magic board or a small whiteboard, against the timer - remember, they can use magnetic letters.
- Play 'Pairs', turning over two words at a time trying to find a matching pair. This is especially helpful with the tricky words: **the the, to to, no no, go go, I**
- Play 'Word bingo'. This is a great game to play if your child has older brothers or sisters. Make a few bingo boards by writing out 5 or 6 words on a page. Call out words for the players to cross off as they find them or use counters to place over the words. You could even ask your child to make their own bingo board by choosing words from a list and writing them down.
- You could even stick tricky words on post it notes on doorways around the house. Tell your child that this is the password to enter the room.

Don't worry if your child makes mistakes! These words are hard to remember - they need plenty of practice.

Phase 4

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.**

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

For example, in the word 'cream', **c = consonant, r = consonant, ea = vowel, m = consonant.**

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

Tricky words

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

Ways you can support your child at home

- Practise reading and spelling some CVCC and CCVC words but continue to play around with CVC words. Children like reading and spelling words that they have previously worked with, as this makes them feel successful.
- Make up captions and phrases for your child to read and write, for example, a silver star, clear the pond, crunch crisps. Write some simple sentences and leave

them around the house for your child to find and read. After they have found and read three, give them a treat!

- Look out for words in the environment, such as on food packaging, which your child will find easy to read, for example, lunch, fresh milk, drink, fish and chips, jam.
- Work on reading words together, for example, a street name such as Park Road, captions on buses and lorries, street signs such as 'bus stop'.

Phase 5

Phase 5 teaching usually begins in Year 1, where the children will learn:

- further graphemes for reading, e.g. wh, ph and /zh/ as in 'pleasure' and 'television'
- alternative pronunciations for the graphemes they already know.
For example, the grapheme **ea** can be read as /ee/ as in leaf or /e/ as in bread.
- alternative spellings for phonemes they already know,
For example **fair, care, bear, where**.
- to read and spell further high frequency and tricky words.

The children will also continue to practise reading and spelling two-syllable and three-syllable words and reading and writing sentences.

By this point, the children will be automatically decoding a large number of words for reading. They should be reading words fluently and no longer be blending and segmenting **familiar** words. 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

Oh, there, people, Mr, Mrs, looked, called, asked, could

Good phonics knowledge and skills help your child to read words fluently and spell words, but they need to understand what they are reading and understand the processes and purposes for writing too. Your help is vital here.

Ways you can support your child at home (Phase 5 and 6)

Reading

- **Read to** your child. Even when your child can read independently. Show you like the book. Bring stories to life by using loud/soft/scary voices - let yourself go!
- Talk about what is happening in the story. How do the characters feel? Why do events happen? What do they think will happen next? What would they do in

the same situation? Can they think of a different way the story could have ended?

- Discuss new vocabulary. Look up unusual words in a dictionary.
- Spread books around your house for your child to dip into.
- Let your child choose what **they** would like to read - books, comics, catalogues.
- Read favourite books over and over again. Enjoy!

Writing

- Compose an email together, inviting a friend over to tea.
- Continue to make words together, using magnetic letters.
- Leave a message on the fridge door and encourage them to write a reply to you.
- Make up a story together about one of their toys. You write for them, repeating the sentences as you write. When the story is complete they can draw pictures to go with it.
- Buy stickers of a favourite film or TV programme and make a book about it.

Phonics Screening Check

At the end of Year 1 a statutory assessment known as the 'Phonics screening check' is carried out in order to assess the children's phonics skills and knowledge learned through Reception and Year 1. This is done by asking the children to read 40 decodable one and two syllable words.

More information will be given to the parents of Year 1 children prior to this check taking place. You will also find some useful information for parents on the following webpage:

<http://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/home/reading-owl/expert-help/the-year-1-phonics-screening-check>

Phase 6

At the start of Phase 6 the children will know all of the sounds from the first 5 phases and will be able to read hundreds of words and read books with understanding and fluency. At this point children are now reading to learn and reading for **pleasure**.

In this phase there is much work on spelling which will help the children understand the structure of words. There is a focus on grammar rules and practising spelling common words. The children will gain confidence in using sounds to help them spell unfamiliar words.

The children will learn the following spelling rules:

Adding s to make a word a plural	cat	cats	Leave base word same
Adding es to make a word a plural	bush	bushes	Leave base word same
Adding ing to a verb	hop	hopping	Double the consonant
	hope	hoping	Cross off the e
	show	showing	Leave base word same
Adding ed to a verb	hop	hopped	Double the consonant
	hope	hoped	Cross off the e
	show	showed	Leave base word same
Adding ful to a noun	care	Careful	Leave base word same
Adding er to a verb	run	Runner	Double the consonant
	read	reader	Leave base word same
	write	writer	Cross off the e
Adding er to an adjective	big	bigger	Double the consonant
	slow	slower	Leave base word same
	nice	nicer	Cross off the e
	happy	happier	Change y to an i
Adding est to an adjective	big	biggest	Double the consonant
	slow	slowest	Leave base word same
	nice	nicest	Cross off the e
	happy	happiest	Change y to an i

(The rules in bold are now taught in Year 1.)

Adding ly to an adjective	sad	sadly	Leave base word same
	happy	happily	Change y to an i
	late	lately	Cross off the e
Adding ment to a verb	pay	payment	Leave base word same
	merry	merriment	Change y to an i
Adding ness to an adjective	dark	Darkness	Leave base word same
	happy	Happiness	Change y to an i
Adding y to a noun	fun	Funny	Double the consonant
	smoke	Smoky	Cross off the e

What to do if your child is reluctant to read or write at home

Relax! Make sure your child sees you reading. Make sure your child sees you writing. Demonstrate real life purposes for reading and writing and try to involve them, for example you could read or write an e-mail together, ask your child to make their own mini shopping list of items to collect at the supermarket or write out a list for them to read and use.

Avoid times of tiredness and try not to turn it into an onerous task. We want the children to develop a love for reading and writing and not view it as a chore, so please make it fun and purposeful!

Useful websites and leaflets for more information

We recommend that you choose English websites over American sites to help children with their pronunciation of sounds.

www.phonicsplay.co.uk

A selection of interactive games can be played for all phonic phases at no cost. To access all of the content, a subscription fee is required.

www.busythings.co.uk

This is a website we use in school to cover the whole curriculum. This is very popular with the children and has a good selection of phonics games- a subscription fee is required.

www.letters-and-sounds.com

Phases 1-6 games and resources

www.ictgames.com/literacy.html

a great selection of games that link well with games in Letters and Sounds.

www.bbc.co.uk/schools/wordsandpictures/phonics/

mix of very good interactive games and worksheets covering most phonic phases. Recommend Sandcastle quiz for phase 3 and 5.

www.bbc.co.uk/schools/ks1bitesize/literacy/

very good selection of interactive games focusing on phonics and sentence construction. Each is split into medium/hard/really hard - short and fun.

http://www.familylearning.org.uk/phonics_games.html

Has links to useful activities on other websites- good selection.

<http://www.topmarks.co.uk/english-games/3-5-years/letters-and-sounds>

Has links to useful activities on other websites- good selection.

<http://www.topmarks.co.uk/english-games/5-7-years/letters-and-sounds>

Has links to useful activities on other websites- good selection.

Tried and tested app

Ladybird: I'm Ready for Phonics with Captain Comet £2.99

Available from itunes.

You can download 'Learning Together' leaflets - 'The road to reading' and 'Making their mark - children's early writing' (and other leaflets covering a range of topics) from the website: www.early-education.org.uk

High Frequency Words

Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5
a	will	went	don't
an	that	it's	old
as	this	from	I'm
at	then	children	time
if	them	just	by
in	with	help	house
is	see	said	about
it	for	have	your
of	now	like	day
off	down	so	made
on	look	do	came
can	too	some	make
dad	he	come	here
had	me	were	saw
back	she	there	very
and	we	little	put
get	be	one	oh
big	was	when	their
him	you	out	people
his	they	what	Mr
not	all		Mrs
got	are		looked
up	my		called
mum	her		asked
but			could
put			
the			
to			
I			
no			
go			
into			

(Tricky words in bold)

Phoneme/graphemes taught in each phase

Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 5
s	j	ay (say)
a	v	ou (loud)
t	w	ie (tie)
p	x	ea (leaf)
i	y	oy (boy)
n	z	ue (blue)
m	zz	ir (girl)
d	qu	aw (saw)
g	ch	a-e (make)
o	sh	i-e (like)
c	th/th (soft/hard)	o-e (home)
k	ng	u-e (rule)
ck	ai	e-e (these)
e	ee	wh (when)
u	igh	ph (photo)
r	oa	ew (new)
h	oo/oo (long/short)	au (Paul)
b	ar	ey (monkey)
f	or	
ff	ur	
l	ow	
ll	oi	
ss	ear	
	air	
	ure	
	er	

Phase 5 alternative pronunciations

i as in fin, find	ow as in cow, blow	a as in hat, what	er as in farmer, her
g as in got, giant	ou as in out, shoulder, could, you	ea as in eat, bread	c as in cat, cent
ch as in chin, school, chef	ie as in tie, field	o as in hot, cold	y as in yes, by, very

