


# Letters and Sounds Phonics information for parents and carers in Reception Classes

Where you see the  symbol you will find some suggested activities that will support your child in their learning.

## 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 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

Speaking and listening are the foundations for reading and writing. Everyday activities such as preparing meals, tidying up and getting ready to go out, offer you the chance to talk to your child. 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.



#### Ways you can support your children at home: talking and listening

- **Make time to listen to your child talking.**
- **Make a collection of different toy creatures** – for example, a duck, a snake, an alien, say the sound it might make, for example, 'quack-quack', 'sssssss' 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. **Play-a-tune** – and follow me!
- **Use puppets** and toys to make up stories or retell known ones.
- **Read stories** and books with and to your child

## Sounds in spoken language – the beginning of phonics

When children enter the Reception class they take part in high-quality phonics sessions. These are fun sessions involving lots of speaking, listening and games, where the emphasis is on children's active participation.

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 and they learn to match these to letters. Phonics is about children knowing how letters link to sounds.

We use a systematic phonics programme called *Letters and Sounds*, which is taught through the songs and actions of '**Jolly Phonics**'.

**They are also taught to read and spell 'tricky words'**, which are words with spellings that are unusual, cannot be sounded out or with spelling patterns that the children haven't yet learned, such as: **the, to, no**.

## Phase 1

This paves the way for systematic learning of phonics.

Children are encouraged to listen attentively to sounds around them and in spoken language. Teachers teach a wide range of nursery rhymes and songs. They play rhyming games. Teachers read stories and books to and with the children.



### Ways you can support your children 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'

Say: '**Tommy, the ticklish teddy!**' '**A lovely little lemon!**' This is called alliteration. Use names, for example, '**Gary gets the giggles**', '**Millie makes music**'.

### Learning how to 'sound-talk'

The teacher shows children how to do this – **c-a-t = cat**. The separate sounds are spoken aloud, in order, and are then merged together into the whole word.

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

This is all oral (*spoken*). 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?'

## Phase 2

In this phase children will continue practising 'sound-talk'. They will also be taught the sounds for a number of letters and that a sound 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.

### Saying the sounds

Sounds should be sustained where possible (e.g. sss, fff, mmm), '**uh**' sounds after consonants should be reduced as far as possible (e.g. try to avoid saying 'buh', 'cuh').



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

**Magnetic letters** - Buy magnetic letters for your fridge, or for use with a tin tray.

#### **Making little words together**

Make little words together: *it, am, dig, met*. Say them aloud: 'a-m – am', 'm-e-t – met'.

Read the word, break the word up and move the letters away, saying: 'met – m-e-t'.

Your child might be trying to use letters from their name to write

Make or buy an alphabet poster.

### Getting ready for writing

Teachers will model how to form letters correctly. Holding a pen or pencil needs considerable co-ordination and practice in making small movements with hands and fingers, so in the early stages children can use letter cards or magnetic letters.

### 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. Encourage them to write their name correctly, starting with a capital letter followed by lower-case letters.



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

**Using their whole body** - Children need to be well co-ordinated through their whole body. Games that help co-ordination include throwing balls at a target, picking up pebbles from the beach

**Hand and finger play** - Action rhymes such as 'Incy wincy spider' and 'Tommy Thumb' get their fingers moving.

**Hand-eye co-ordination** - Pouring water into jugs, sweeping up with a dustpan and brush, cutting, sticking, tracing, threading beads and completing puzzles – all help hand-eye co-ordination.

**Pencil hold** - The 'pincer' movement needs to be practised. Let them use kitchen tongs to pick up small objects. Move on to pick up smaller things, for example, little cubes, sugar lumps or dried peas.

Provide plenty of different types of pen and pencil; hold their hand to practise the correct grip.