



Letters and Sounds

Phonics information for parents and carers with children in Reception classes

In school your child will be taught how to read and writing using phonics. They will be taught

- how to listen for sounds in words
- which letters match which sounds
- how to break the words down into separate sounds when reading
- how to blend those sounds for writing

Many parents are nervous about teaching their children phonics especially if their first language is not English. This document will give you a brief explanation of how you can support your child at home to learn how to use letter sounds to help them to read.

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, all through the word, and are then merged together into the whole word. This 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 in order, all through the word. This is called *segmenting* and is a vital skill for spelling. It is important to help children to hear the separate sounds in words.

Ways you can support your children at home

Sound-talking - You can do this in your home language or in English. 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 c-u-p – cup.'

'Where's your other s-o-ck – sock?'

Matching sounds with Letters

Children will also be taught the sounds for letters, which sound is represented by which letter and that a sound can be represented by **more than one letter**, for example, /ll/ as in **b-e-ll**. 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 and breaking up words into individual sounds.

Saying the sounds

Your child will be taught how to pronounce the sounds correctly to make blending easier. Ask the class teacher for the **enunciation video** so that you can practice how to make the sounds correctly in English and help your child at home.

Ways you can support your children at home



Magnetic letters

Buy magnetic letters for your fridge, or for 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'. You could do this in your home language too.



Getting ready for writing

Teachers will model how to form letters correctly. Holding a pencil needs considerable co-ordination and practice in making small movements with hands and fingers.

Writing in lower-case letters

Children will be taught how to write using 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.

Ways you can support your children 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.

Hand and finger play: Playing with play 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. Provide plenty of different types of pen and pencil; hold their hand to practise the correct grip.