



Phonics and Reading



What is phonics?

Phonics is the system of 'blending' sounds together to read and 'segmenting' sounds to spell. They are both complimentary and interlinking skills that are taught together.

A phoneme

Is the smallest unit of sound that we use in the English language. A phoneme can be made up of one letter as in the alphabet sounds – s, a, t, p, i, n etc, or two letters (a digraph) as in sh, ch, th, ay, ar, or three letters (trigraphs) as in air, ear, ure. Phonemes can not be broken down into separate sounds.

A grapheme

Is the way we spell a phoneme. A phoneme may have only one grapheme for example 'b'. Or may have several different spellings, for example **or** can be spelt 'or' in torn, 'aw' in claw, 'au' in naughty or one in more. The children will initially be introduced to one common grapheme for each phoneme, but as they progress through the school they will be taught the less common spelling alternatives and encouraged to try and choose the correct grapheme for a particular word they are trying to spell.

Consonant blends

Are made up of two or three phonemes blended together quite quickly as we learn to read. Examples are sc, sm, bl, pr, str

Short vowel sounds

Are the vowels saying their sound as 'a' in cat

Long vowel sounds

Are the vowels saying their name as 'ay' in day, 'oa' in boat or 'igh' in night

How do we teach phonics in our school?

Phonics lessons are taught daily in every class for 20-30 minutes. We use a mixture of different resources and teaching styles to engage and motivate the children, including magnetic boards and letters, whiteboards and pens, games, flashcards and Phonics Bug in F2 and KS1 on our interactive whiteboards. We have phonic based guided reading books for teachers to use with groups when teaching reading and there are some phonic based home readers in all book boxes.

How can you help your child?

Children working in F2 are taught phonemes from phase 1 to 3 to help them identify the correct spelling patterns (graphemes) when writing. During year 1 and 2 they will move onto phase 4 to 6 which shows them an increased range of different spelling patterns for each sound. It will be useful to revise the phonemes that your child has learnt that week at school and also later to go over some from previous weeks to reinforce their learning. It is also very beneficial to point out some phonemes when reading at home with your child, particularly those recently learnt. Key words will be sent home in F2 classes, KS 1 will be sent home as spellings. Please help your child practise recognition of these as this is another important skill to master. Your children will also learn to write key words independently.

Useful websites

[Phonic Books](#)

[Phonics Play](#)

[Topmarks - Key Stage 1 Literacy](#)

[Letters and Sounds](#)

Reading

Reading is obviously recognised as an essential element of all learning. We aim to teach the skills of reading and to foster a lifelong love of language. Children bring books home from their earliest days in school. We view the education of children as a partnership with parents and ask them to read with their children as often as possible. Early reading books are levelled carefully and children work systematically through each level at their own pace.

Working alongside phonic groups, our reading is structured as one to one reading or reading in guided reading groups according to ability using the children's levelled targets (small groups of 4-6). We use a variety of reading schemes to accommodate children's different reading styles eg. Phonics, Look and Say, Oxford Reading Tree, Big Cat Collins.

We promote a love of reading throughout the school with a selection of our Creative Curriculum topics being book based eg. Children of Winter Y3/4 and Carrie's War Y5/6. We have reading project links with Heswall library, where we encourage reading as much as possible throughout the year, with a particular focus in the summer holidays. Children are provided with a wide selection of reading materials, which are restocked regularly by our Parent's Association.

Higher order skills in reading are obtained through a variety of literacy activities on a daily basis, as well as our guided reading sessions. The morning is extended to provide an extra half an hour of dedicated reading time which focuses on phonics, reading comprehension, vocabulary building, dictionary work, skimming and scanning skills and spelling patterns.