

Reading and Phonics Our curriculum

English is taught daily with work appropriately differentiated to match all abilities. We aim to nurture in the children a love of literature and language and the confidence to continue reading and writing throughout their lives.

With parental support, we want our children to:

- speak clearly and confidently in any situation.
- listen actively and respond appropriately, developing knowledge and opinion.
- read fluently for both pleasure and information.
- write clearly and with confidence in any given genre.
- use spelling rules, phonics and grammar accurately.
- be able to proofread their own work and make amendments and improvements.

What is phonics?

There has been a big shift in the past few years in how we teach reading in school. Phonics is recommended as the first strategy that children should be taught in helping them learn to read. Phonics runs alongside other teaching methods to help children develop vital reading skills and give them a real love of reading for life.

Phoneme? Grapheme?

Words are made up from small units of sound (phonemes) and phonics teaches children to listen carefully and identify the phonemes that make up each word. This helps them learn to read and spell words.

In phonics lessons children are taught three main things:

1 GPCs (grapheme phoneme correspondences)

GPCs simply means that children are taught all the phonemes in the English language and ways of writing them down.

2 Blending

Children are taught to blend sounds together by merging the individual sounds together until they can hear what the word is. This is a vital reading skill.

3 Segmenting

Segmenting is the opposite of blending! Children are able to say a word and then break it up into the phonemes that make it up. This is a vital spelling skill.

Why is phonics so tricky?

The English language is very complicated! England has been invaded so many times throughout its history and each set of invaders brought new words and new sounds with them. As a result, English only has around 44 phonemes but there are around 120 graphemes or ways of writing down those 44 phonemes. Plus, we only have 26 letters in the alphabet so some graphemes are made up from more than one letter.

ch th oo ay (these are digraphs – graphemes with two letters)

There are other graphemes that are trigraphs (made up of 3 letters) and a very few made from 4 letters.

Some graphemes can represent more than one phoneme, ie, ch can make different sounds, chip, school, chef
Learning to read is like cracking a code so teaching phonics is a way of teaching children to crack the code. As reading is the key to learning it is important that we teach phonics clearly and systematically learning easy bits first then progressing to trickier bits! We offer phonics information sessions to parents.

Reading and phonics are taught in accordance with the National Curriculum using the progression from Letters and Sounds as our guide. We are passionate about teaching children to read. Reading enriches children's vocabulary, their writing and their spelling. They have access to the wider curriculum and their self-esteem is enhanced because they realise they are succeeding.

A key element to our phonics teaching is that practice across the school is consistent. All staff in school have received phonic training and have a shared understanding of how to teach children to read and write. Each child's reading journey begins in EYFS where phonics is introduced. As children progress through school and their phonetic awareness develops, reading books from phonic schemes suitable for EYFS and KS1 are introduced from a variety of up to date schemes within school.

The children decode by learning 44 sounds and matching letters/ letter groups; by learning to blend sounds to read words and by reading specially written books that include only the sounds that the children have been learning and therefore ensuring success as the children are never given anything that they can't read. The English language has 44 phonemes (letter sounds), but more than 150 graphemes (the way the sound is written down) so therefore is a very complex code.

The Oxford Owl site is a FREE website built to support you with your child's learning. Click this link to find free books to read at home:

<http://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/>

To help you along the way, you will find age-specific reading tips and activities, FREE eBooks, and many fun ideas. You will also find support and advice on a range of questions you may have – including helping your child with their phonics and motivating them to read.



Teaching and learning:

Reading

The alphabet is taught first and firmly embedded. The children rapidly learn sounds and the letter or groups of letters they need to represent those sounds. Simple and enjoyable mnemonics help all children to grasp this quickly, especially those who are at risk of making slower progress or those who are new to learning English. This learning is taught and consolidated every day. High-frequency words that are not phonically regular are taught as 'tricky' words and practised frequently. Well-written, lively phonic books are closely matched to children's increasing knowledge of phonics and 'tricky' words, so that, early on, they experience plenty of success. Repeated readings of the texts support their increasingly fluent decoding. Discussion of each story helps children both to understand what they are reading and to build up their knowledge of how texts work.

Children also participate shared reading sessions where they can apply their phonic and reading skills to a variety of fiction and non-fiction texts. This moves to a whole class reading lessons by Year 1 through to Year 6. Guided sessions may continue for those that need intervention.

Writing

As with reading, the alphabetic code is embedded first, so that children can write simple consonant-vowel- consonant words early on and build on their success. The children write every day, rehearsing what they want to say orally and composing, sentence by sentence, until they are confident to write independently. They write at the level of their spelling knowledge, that is, they use their knowledge of the alphabetic code and the 'tricky' words they have learnt. In every lesson, they are rapidly building up their knowledge, so that they are soon able to spell more complex words confidently, accurately and fluently. The children can use adventurous vocabulary in their writing because they have encountered such language in their reading and they have talked about what the words mean.

The teaching of reading comprehension and writing skills is also integrated into our weekly planning. Grammar, vocabulary and spelling sessions are taught each week.

