

How we teach Phonics at St. Mary's CP School

At our school we use a systematic phonics programme - Letters and Sounds with all children as soon as they enter the Foundation Stage.

Letters and Sounds is divided into six phases, with each one building on the skills and knowledge of previous 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' - words with spellings which are unusual or which children have not yet been taught.

In our school children are taught phonic skills in groups alongside other children who are working within the same phonics phase. These groups all have their own specific adult who is very familiar with what is expected to be taught at each phase and what skills each child should be competent in before they move into the next phonics phase. These groups are named after different jungle animals rather than the phases. As the children move year groups they remain within the phase they were previously working in to enable them to continue to develop their phonic abilities without any gaps or set backs.

Phase 1 - *The Cheeky Monkeys Group:*

This paves the way for systematic phonics learning.

The phase leader plans 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. The phase leader teaches a wide range of 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. The children are also introduced to blending and segmenting words through "sound talk".

Phase 2 - *The Little Lions group*

In this group children will continue practising what they have learned with the Cheeky Monkey's, 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**,

e.g. /ll/ as in b-e-ll. They will be using pictures or hand movements to help them remember these.

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 or wooden 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, e.g. *am, at, it*, or three phonemes, e.g. *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 on a daily basis.

Getting ready for writing

Teachers will model how to form letters (graphemes) correctly in order 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 correctly form a letter 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 phonics knowledge.

Writing in lower case letters

We will be teaching lower case letters, as well as capital letters. As most writing will be in lower case letters (at our school we teach the non cursive form of writing - starting at the top and finishing with a "flick").

Phase 3 - *The Tigers group*

The purpose of activities in this group is to:

- teach more graphemes, most of which are made of two letters
- practise blending and segmenting a wider set of CVC words
- learn all letter names and begin to form them correctly
- read more tricky words and begin to spell some of them
- read and write words in phrases and sentences.

Tricky words

The number of tricky words is expanding. These are so important for reading and spelling: **he, she, we, me, be, was, my, you, her, they, all.**

Phase 4 - *The Elephants group*

Children continue to practise previously learnt graphemes and phonemes and learn how to read and write **CVCC** words and **CCVC** words

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

Tricky words

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

Phase 5 - *The Hippos*

As children move into these groups they will continue to take part in daily phonics sessions. They will learn that most sounds (phonemes) can be spelled in more than one way. For example the **f** sound can be written as **f** as in fan or **ff** as in puff or **ph** as in photo.

This develops their knowledge of spelling choices. They will continue with this spelling work throughout their school career.

They will learn that most letters and combinations of letters (graphemes) can represent more than one sound. For example, the grapheme **ea** can be read as /ee/ as in leaf or /e/ as in bread. This supports their reading development.

Phase 6 - *The Giraffes*

As the children work their way through phase 6 they are provided with opportunities to develop & fine tune their skills as independent readers and writers, still taught through the daily phonics session.

By the end of phase 6 we aim to provide children with the ability to read at an increased pace - developing automaticity - aloud & silent. Children are taught to cross check pronunciation within the context of the sentence they are reading. We

want children to read for enjoyment, not simply to learn the mechanics of reading and so comprehension strategies are also a key focus at this stage as well as encouraging children to gain reading stamina through the opportunity of reading longer texts.

Throughout phase 6 writing skills are enhanced through teaching the knowledge and use of past tense as well as the rules for adding *ing*, *-ed*, *-er*, *-est*, *-ful*, *-ly*, & *-y*. Children spell longer words using prefixes and suffixes and learn high frequency words. Children are also taught to project specific words and identify potentially "tricky bits" of words. Children learn and practice spellings, developing familiarity with different strategies to memorise high frequency words and project subject specific words. As well as this children are encouraged to proof read their work to become self correcting.

Assessment

Each class teacher keeps a record of which phase the children in their class are working in and which half term they move into the next phase through the "Phonics Progress Tracking sheet" - updated half termly.

Each class teacher completes a "Next Steps" recording sheet to identify the progress the children have made to date and their next steps to inform future planning. This is updated at the end of each half term. For phases 1-4 children are colour coded (green, amber & red) to enable teachers to clearly see how quickly children are making progress through the phases. This is linked to the length of time children are expected to take to complete each phonics phase. For Phases 5 and 6 it is recorded how quickly the children make progress within the phase as these phases are expected to last over the course of an academic year.

Each class teacher also completes a "Class Data Tracking" sheet which compares children's progress alongside their peers and shows information such as date of birth, free school meals, special educational needs etc.

These sheets are also given to the Phonics Leader for data analysis. This enables the Phonics Leader to identify children who may need specific intervention, areas where children are not making expected progress as well as areas where children are performing well. This information informs the Phonics Leaders annual action plan.