

# Teaching Synthetic Phonics through 'Letters and Sounds'



This booklet is to help parents understand the progression within 'Letters and Sounds', the programme used to teach systematic synthetic phonics at Lee Brigg Infant and Nursery School. It contains the learning outcomes for each phase, information on how phonics is taught in school and a helpful glossary. There are also links to carefully selected advice pages and resources to support phonics learning at home. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

## **Why teach systematic synthetic phonics?**

A solid foundation in reading is critical to a child's success - a child who can read can learn. Now, whilst we know that there is far more to teaching reading than just the teaching of phonics, there is also a weight of evidence that shows systematic synthetic phonics taught in the first years of a child's education gives them the key building blocks they need to understand and read words. It underpins children's attainment of a good standard of reading and can inspire a lifelong love of reading.

Phonics focuses on sounds. Through a programme of synthetic phonics teaching children start reading by sequencing the individual sounds in words with an emphasis on blending them together. The synthetic part comes from the word 'synthesis' meaning to assemble or blend together.

Children who learn synthetic phonics are equipped from a very early stage of development with the tools to have a go at reading. They are motivated to attack new words working from learned sounds.

At Lee Brigg Infant School we follow a programme of systematic synthetic phonics called 'Letters and Sounds'. This booklet is intended to guide parents through the phases of the programme and to provide a brief overview of the teaching framework. This will help parents to understand how well their child is learning phonics in relation to age related milestones and will help with next steps.

## **The Phonics Lesson**

Knowledge of letters and sounds begins once children enter the nursery. Children take part in a differentiated daily taught phonics sessions focusing the letter/sound of the week.

A pacy phonics lesson is taught in each class from the reception year to Year 2 every day - starting promptly at 9:00am and lasting for approximately 20 minutes. Each session begins with a brief reteach to address any misconceptions from the previous day identified by the teacher, before new learning is taught, practised and applied in sentence reading and writing.

From time to time children may experience difficulties or have misconception. In such situations extra sessions are taught as an intervention to enable children to catch up and keep up with their peers. Similarly, some children learn

better after a short pre-teach session and so these are planned as and when required to support individual needs.

### **Phase 1 - Begins at birth and never finishes.**

Phase 1 of Letters and Sounds concentrates on developing children's speaking and listening skills and lays the foundations for the phonic work which starts in Phase 2. The emphasis during Phase 1 is on getting children attuned to the sounds around them and ready to begin developing oral blending and segmenting skills.

Phase 1 is divided into seven aspects. Each aspect contains three strands: Tuning in to sounds (auditory discrimination), Listening and remembering sounds (auditory memory and sequencing) and Talking about sounds (developing vocabulary and language comprehension).

It is intended that each of the first six aspects should be dipped into, rather than going through them in any order, with a balance of activities. Aspect 7 will usually come later, when children have had plenty of opportunity to develop their sound discrimination skills.

#### **Aspect 1 - General sound discrimination - environmental**

- ⑤ The aim of this aspect is to raise children's awareness of the sounds around them and to develop their listening skills. Activities suggested in the guidance include going on a listening walk, drumming on different items outside and comparing the sounds, playing a sounds lotto game and making shakers.

#### **Aspect 2 - General sound discrimination - instrumental sounds**

- ⑤ This aspect aims to develop children's awareness of sounds made by various instruments and noise makers. Activities include comparing and matching sound makers, playing instruments alongside a story and making loud and quiet sounds.

#### **Aspect 3 - General sound discrimination - body percussion**

- ⑤ The aim of this aspect is to develop children's awareness of sounds and rhythms. Activities include singing songs and action rhymes, listening to music and developing a sounds vocabulary.

#### **Aspect 4 - Rhythm and rhyme**

- ⑤ This aspect aims to develop children's appreciation and experiences of rhythm and rhyme in speech. Activities include rhyming stories, rhyming bingo, clapping out the syllables in words and odd one out.

### Aspect 5 - Alliteration

- ⑤ The focus is on initial sounds of words, with activities including I-Spy type games and matching objects which begin with the same sound.

### Aspect 6 - Voice sounds

- ⑤ The aim is to distinguish between different vocal sounds and to begin oral blending and segmenting. Activities include Metal Mike, where children feed pictures of objects into a toy robot's mouth and the teacher sounds out the name of the object in a robot voice - /c/-/u/-/p/ cup, with the children joining in.

### Aspect 7 - Oral blending and segmenting

- ⑤ In this aspect, the main aim is to develop oral blending and segmenting skills. To practise oral blending, the teacher could say some sounds, such as /c/-/u/-/p/ and see whether the children can pick out a cup from a group of objects. Teachers will often incorporate this into daily instructions, for example, 'collect your c/oa/t from the cloakroom' or 'stand up t/all, now touch your t/oe/s' etc. For segmenting practise, the teacher could hold up an object such as a sock and ask the children to 'sound talk' or say which sounds they can hear in the word sock.

The activities introduced in Phase 1 are intended to continue throughout the following phases, as lots of practice is needed before children will become confident in their phonic knowledge and skills.

## Phase 2

Children entering Phase 2 will have experienced a wealth of listening activities, including songs, stories and rhymes. They will be able to distinguish between speech sounds and many will be able to blend and segment words orally. Some will also be able to recognise spoken words which rhyme and will be able to say a string of words which rhyme.

The purpose of Phase 2 is to teach at least 19 letters and move children on from oral blending and segmenting to blending and segmenting with letters. By the end of the phase children will be able to read some VC and CVC words and to

spell them using magnetic letters or by writing. During the phase they will be introduced to reading two-syllable words and simple captions. They will also learn to read the tricky words: **the, to, go, no, I**.

**Letter Progression** (one set per week taught in this order)

**Set 1:** s, a, t, p

**Set 2:** i, n, m, d

**Set 3:** g, o, c, k

**Set 4:** ck, e, u, r

**Set 5:** h, b, f, ff, l, ll, ss

**Set 1:** In Set 1 the first four letters are introduced and seven words can be made by segmenting and blending:

**s, a, t, p** at, a, sat, pat, tap, sap, as

**Set 2:** Set 2 includes four letters and the following new words can be made:

**i** it, is, sit, sat, pit, tip, pip, sip

**n** an, in, nip, pan, pin, tin, tan, nap

**m** am, man, mam, mat, map, Pam, Tim, Sam

**d** dad, and, sad, dim, dip, din, did, Sid

**Set 3:** Set 3 introduces four new letters (graphemes) with 28 new decodable words suggested:

**g** tag, gag, gig, gap, nag, sag, gas, pig, dig

**o** got, on, not, pot, top, dog, pop, God, Mog

**c** can, cot, cop, cap, cat, cod

**k** kid, kit, Kim, Ken

**Set 4:** Set 4 introduces four new graphemes, with 36 new decodable words suggested. For the first time some of the suggested words contain two syllables, such as pocket, sunset etc. At this point two tricky words **the** & **to** are taught.

**ck** kick, sock, sack, dock, pick, sick, pack, ticket, pocket

**e** get, pet, ten, net, pen, peg, met, men, neck

**u** up, mum, run, mug, cup, sun, tuck, mud, sunset

**r** rim, rip, ram, rat, rag, rug, rot, rocket, carrot

**Set 5:** Set 5 introduces seven graphemes (three of which have two letters), with 69 new decodable words suggested. New 'tricky words': **no**, **go** and **I** are taught.

**h** had, him, his, hot, hut, hop, hum, hit, hat, has, hack, hug

**b** but, big, back, bet, bad, bag, bed, bud, beg, bug, bun, bus, Ben, bat, bit, bucket, beckon, rabbit

**f, ff** of, if, off, fit, fin, fun, fig, fog, puff, huff, cuff, fan, fat

**l, ll** lap, let, leg, lot, lit, bell, fill, doll, tell, sell, Bill, Nell, dull, laptop

**ss** ass, less, hiss, mass, mess, boss, fuss, hiss, pass, kiss, Tess, fusspot

**Writing in phase 2** children's capacity to write letters will depend on their physical maturity and the teaching approach taken to teach letter formation. Some children will be able to write all the letters in pencil, correctly formed but not all. It is reasonable for children to use magnetic letters at this stage to spell words.

### **Phase 3**

Children entering Phase 3 will know around 19 letters and will be able to blend phonemes to read VC words and segment VC words to spell. They will also be able to blend and segment CVC words orally.

Over the course of Phase 3 we teach another 25 graphemes, most of them comprising of 2 letters. Children will continue to practise CVC blending and segmenting and will apply this to reading and spelling two syllable words and captions. Children will learn to read 12 more tricky words and will begin to spell some tricky words.

**Set 6:** j, v, w, x

**Set 7:** y, z, zz, qu

**Consonant digraphs:** ch, sh, th, ng

**Vowel digraphs and trigraphs:** ai, ee, igh, oa, oo, ar, or, ur, ow, oi, ear, air, ure, er

During Phase 3, the following **tricky words** are taught.

he	she	we	me	be	was
you	they	all	are	my	her

### **Age Related Expectations**

It is our expectation that most children will be secure at Phase 3 by the end of the reception year.

This is the age related expectation for the end of the reception year. Children who reach this milestone are described as being 'school ready' in terms of their phonics knowledge and understanding.

### **Phase 4**

In Phase 4, no new graphemes are introduced. The main aim of this phase is to consolidate the children's knowledge and to help them learn to read and spell words which have adjacent consonants, such as trap, string and milk.

Children working at Phase 4 will be able to give the sound when shown any Phase 2 and Phase 3 grapheme. They will be able to blend and read, and segment and spell words containing adjacent consonants. They will be able to read the 32 tricky words and will be able to spell most.

During Phase 4, the following tricky words are taught:

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

## Phase 5

In phase 5 children will broaden their knowledge of graphemes and phonemes for reading and spelling extensively. They will learn new graphemes and alternative pronunciations for these and graphemes they already know (where relevant). Some of the alternatives have, at this stage, already been encountered in the high frequency words taught. They will learn to choose the appropriate grapheme for accurate spelling and beginning to build word specific knowledge of the spelling rules.

Children will learn new graphemes for example:

ay (day)	oy (boy)	wh (when)	ou (out)	a-e (make)	u-e (rule)
ph (photo)	ie (tie)	ue (blue)	ew (new)	e-e (these)	
aw (saw)	oe (toe)	au (Paul)	ea (eat)	i-e (like)	
ir (girl)				o-e (home)	

Children will learn common alternative pronunciations for example:

i (fin, find)	g (got, giant)	a (hat, what)
o (hot, cold)	ow (cow, blow)	ch (chin, school, chef)
c (cat cent)	ea (eat, bread)	y (yes, by, very)
ou (out, shoulder, could, you)		

Children will learn alternative spellings for example:



ar (half, father, calm)	air (there, everywhere, care)	oo (could, pudding, book)
igh (pie, by, ripe, decide)	oa (show, Joe, goes)	

During phase 5 these tricky words are taught:

oh	their	people	their	Mr	Mrs
looked	called	asked	could	would	should

### Age Related Expectations

It is our expectation that most children will be secure at Phase 5 by the end of Year 1. This is described as the age related expectation for the end of Year 1 and forms the content for the Phonics Screening test in the summer term.

### Glossary

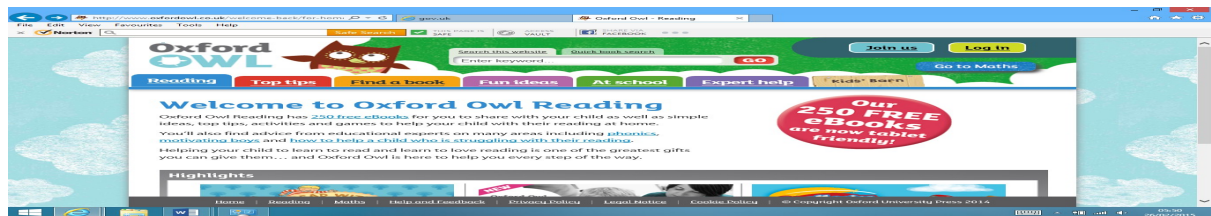
Term	Guidance	Example
<b>phoneme</b>	The smallest unit of <b>sound</b> in a word. There are around 44 phonemes in English. The exact number depends on regional accents. A single phoneme may be represented in writing by one, two, three or four letters.	cat has three phonemes c/a/t  boat has three phonemes b/oa/t  night has three phonemes n/igh/t
<b>grapheme</b>	A <b>letter</b> , or <b>groups of letters</b> , that corresponds to a single phoneme within a word.	
<b>digraph</b>	A type of grapheme where two letters make just one phoneme (sound). Sometimes these letters are not next to one another, this is called a split digraph.	ph, ch, th. ph boat b/oa/t tree t/r/ee flower f/l/ow/er split i-e in line split a-e in cake
<b>trigraph</b>	A type of grapheme where three letters make just one phoneme (sound).	night n/igh/t pure p/ure patch p/a/tch hedge h/e dge
<b>grapheme - phoneme correspondences (GPCs)</b>	The links between letters, or groups of letters, and the	

	<b>speech sounds</b> they represent.	
<b>blending</b>	To say the individual sounds that make up a word and blend them together to hear the whole word. <b>This is the basis of reading.</b>	s/a/t becomes sat f/l/ow/er becomes flower
<b>oral blending</b>	This involves hearing phonemes and being able to blend them together orally to make a word. Children need to develop this skill well before being able to blend written words.	
<b>VC</b>	The abbreviation for vowel-consonant words. Describes the order of phonemes in a word.	i/t ou/t i/s a/t
<b>CVC</b>	The abbreviation for consonant-vowel-consonant words. Describes the order of phonemes in a word.	c/a/t n/igh/t h/i/ss
<b>segmenting</b>	To split a word into its individual phones for spelling.	

## Helpful reading links

[www.oxfordowl.co.uk](http://www.oxfordowl.co.uk)

This tab takes you to a very worthwhile bank of resources and videos.



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Laura Sharp's Ten FAQs about the Y1 phonics screening check

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Say the sounds

There are 26 letters of the alphabet but they... sounds would you like to hear spoken aloud... [Letter to making sounds into words](#)

Sounds A-E Sounds E-N Sounds O-S Sounds T-Z Making sounds into words

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