



Vicarage Park CE
Primary School
Letters and Sounds



At Vicarage Park C of E Primary School, we have high expectations of all children and the aim of our phonics teaching is to ensure they have a firm foundation on which to build reading skills.

The teaching of phonics is systematic, it follows a carefully structured programme building on previous learning to secure children's progress. It is taught daily at a brisk pace with children working in groups on the phase that they need next. There are opportunities to apply phonic knowledge and skills across the curriculum and in activities such as whole class and guided reading, as well as reading independently. The children's progress in developing and applying their phonic knowledge is carefully assessed and monitored.

Phonics sessions are taught daily at Vicarage Park from the beginning of Foundation Stage to the end of Year 2.

What is synthetic phonics?

The synthetic part refers to synthesizing or blending sounds to make a word. Phonics is a method of teaching children how spoken words are composed of sounds, called phonemes and how the letters in words correspond to those phonemes. One of the processes of reading involves decoding or 'breaking' words into separate phonemes, so that meaning can be gained. English is essentially a code that can be encoded (written) and decoded (read). Children are taught that we can make a word from the sounds and then break it apart again when we want to spell it. Spelling and reading are taught together but children may be better at reading before spelling or vice versa. Written English is recognised as being a complex language. We have 26 letters but 44 phonemes in the spoken language. There are a huge number of letter combinations needed to make these 44 phonemes (a phoneme is the technical name for the smallest unit of sound).

Letters and Sounds

Letters and Sounds is a government produced synthetic phonic teaching programme. There are six phases in which the children are introduced to all 44 phonemes and corresponding graphemes starting with the most familiar grapheme for each phoneme first, eg s,a,t,p,i,n. Synthetic phonics starts with

'phonemic awareness' which is hearing the different sounds in a word and the matching of these phonemes to single letters. At the same time it shows how these phonemes (sounds) can be 'blended' to produce words and the words can be 'segmented' to write.

Your child will learn simple letter to sound correspondence. This is when a phoneme is represented by a single letter as in the word /c/ /a/ /t/. When that's mastered your child will learn that sometimes one phoneme is represented by two letters (digraph); as in the word /ch/ /o/ /p/ ; where /ch/ is only one phoneme (sound).

After that, even though at first it may sound confusing, your child will learn that sometimes a single phoneme can be represented many different ways like the sound /ay/ in play. Your child will eventually learn that this phoneme can be written; /ay/ as in the word play /a-e/ as in the word spade /ea/ as in the word break /ey/ as in the word hey.

Finally your child will learn that sometimes a single (or more) letter may represent more than one phoneme; for example, the 'o' in /most/ and the 'o' in /hot/ or the 'ow' in /wow/ and the 'ow' in /tow/. This can be confusing but with the structure and regularity of letters and sounds almost all children will pick this up.

What do all these technical words mean?

What is a phoneme? It is the smallest unit of sound and a piece of terminology that children like to use and should be taught. At first it will equate with a letter sound but later on will include the digraphs.

What is a digraph? This is when two or more letters come together to make a phoneme. /oa/ makes the sound in boat.

What is blending? Blending is the process that is involved in bringing the sounds together to make a word or a syllable and is how /c/ /a/ /t / becomes cat.

Phase 1

Phase One 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 to get 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).

Useful website for phase 1 games:

<http://www.letters-and-sounds.com/phase-1-games.html>

Phase 2

In Phase 2, letters and their sounds are introduced one at a time. A set of letters is taught each week, in the following sequence:

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

The children will begin to learn to blend and segment to begin reading and spelling. This will begin with simple words e.g. at, pat, sat, pin, tin, tap.

Alongside this children are introduced to tricky words. These are the words that are irregular words. That means that phonics cannot be applied to the reading and spelling of these words.

The **tricky words** introduced in phase 2 are:

to	the	no	go	I	into
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Phase 3

By the time children reach Phase 3, children will already be able to blend and segment words containing the 19 letters taught in Phase 2.

Over the twelve weeks (which Phase 3 is expected to last), twenty-five new graphemes are introduced (one at a time).

Set 6: j, v, w, x

Set 7: y, z, zz, qu

Consonant digraphs: ch, sh, th, ng

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

Tricky words:

we	me	be	was	my	you
they	her	all	are		

Phase 4

By Phase 4 children will be able to represent each of 42 phonemes with a grapheme. They will blend phonemes to read CVC words and segment CVC words for spelling. They will also be able to read two syllable words that are simple. They will be able to read all the tricky words learnt so far and will be able to spell some of them. This phase consolidates all the children have learnt in the previous phases.

Tricky words:

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

By this point children would be expected to be reading CVC words at speed along with the tricky words from the previous phases. It is important that children are taught that blending is only used when a word is unfamiliar.

Phase 5

Children will be taught new graphemes and alternative pronunciations for these graphemes and graphemes they already know. They will begin to learn to choose the appropriate grapheme when spelling.

The children will be automatically decoding a large number of words for reading by this point.

Tricky words:

oh	Mr	Mrs	called	people
their	looked	asked	could	

New graphemes for reading:

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

By this phase children should be reading words fluently and no longer be blending and segmenting familiar words.

The real focus throughout the phase is to not only learn the new graphemes for reading but also to learn to read words with alternative pronunciations. Children also will need to learn alternative spellings for each phoneme.

Phase 6

In phase 6 children will be reading longer and less familiar texts independently and fluently. It is crucial that at this point children are now reading to learn and reading for pleasure.

Children should be able to read the 300 high frequency words. At this point it is important that comprehension strategies are developed so that children clarify

meaning, ask and answer questions about the texts they are reading, construct mental images during reading and summarise what they have read.

In Phase 6 children learn to recognise phonic irregularities and become more secure with less common grapheme-phoneme correspondences. They apply their phonic skills and knowledge to recognise and spell an increasing number of complex words. In addition to this children are taught to recognise and use the past tense. They begin to investigate spelling patterns and learn how to add suffixes e.g. -ed to words. They break down longer words to help with their spelling and apply strategies to enable them to become independent spellers e.g. by finding and learning the difficult bits in words.