

Parent Phonics Support

Phonics is a method of teaching children to read by linking sounds (**phonemes**) and the symbols that represent them (**graphemes**). At The Baird Primary Academy we follow the DfE's phonics resource – **Letters and Sounds**.

'Letters and Sounds' is broken into six phases as follows:

Phase 1 – is usually covered in Nursery and 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:

1. General sound discrimination – environmental
2. General sound discrimination – instrumental sounds
3. General sound discrimination – body percussion
4. Rhythm and rhyme
5. Alliteration
6. Voice Sounds
7. Oral blending and segmenting

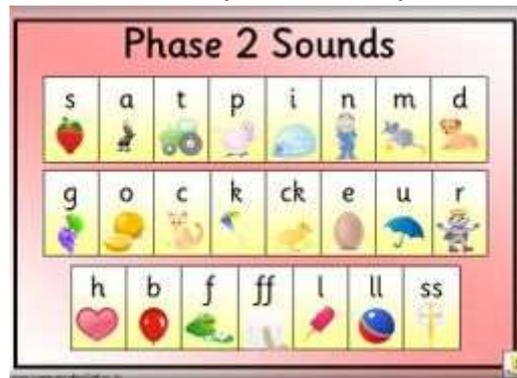
These aspects each have 3 strands:

- Tuning in to sounds (auditory discrimination)
- Listening and remembering sounds (auditory memory and sequencing)
- Talking about sounds (developing vocabulary and language comprehension).

Phase 2 – children are taught letter sounds in Reception but some may have already experienced phase 2 while in nursery. This involves thinking about what sound a word starts with, saying it out loud and then recognising how that sound is represented by a letter.

The aim is for children to be able to see a letter and then say its sound. Gradually they will be able to **decode** words by saying each letter in a word and then **blending** them together. We start with CVC words when blending (consonant – vowel – consonant).

Phase 3 – by the time children reach Phase 3, they are able to blend and **segment** words containing the 19 letters taught in Phase 2 (segmenting is breaking down the word to support spelling). During Phase 3, the children learn the remaining letters, **consonant digraphs** (a combination of two consonants that make a new sound when combined) and **vowel**



digraphs. They also learn the letter names using the alphabet and some **tricky words** (words which cannot yet be decoded).

Phase 4 – by the time children reach Phase 4, they will know a grapheme (symbol) for each of the 42 phonemes (sounds). They will be able to blend phonemes to read CVC words and segment in order to spell them. They will be able to read straightforward two-syllable words and simple captions, as well as reading and spelling some tricky words.

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** (blending two letters which continue to make independent sounds st, bl, gr), in words such as trap, string and milk. In Phase 4, more tricky words are introduced.

Phase 5 – children start Phase 5 in Year 1 and will already be able to read and spell words containing the 42 phonemes that they have learned, words with adjacent consonants, a range of tricky words and some polysyllabic words.

In Phase 5, they will learn more graphemes and phonemes, and will start to see that alternative graphemes represent the same phoneme, i.e. **rain**, **cake**, **day**. They will also start to learn alternative pronunciations for the same grapheme, i.e. **head**, **tea** and **break**.

In phase 5, the children should begin to gain speed at recognising and segmenting / blending graphemes. They will also learn more tricky words.

NB – The Phonics Screening Check is designed to cover phases 2 – 5.



Phase 6 – children start Phase 6 in Year 2 and have now learned the most frequently used **GPCs** (Grapheme–Phoneme Correspondences) by this stage. They will now be able to read familiar words automatically without the need for overt blending. When they come across unfamiliar words, they will be able to decode them quickly using their phonics knowledge. In Phase 6, children continue to develop their spelling, reading, punctuation and grammar so that they become more fluent readers and accurate spellers.

Phonics Screening Check

The Phonics Screening Check (PSC) is taken individually by all children in Year 1 and is designed to give teachers and parents information on how the child is progressing in phonics. It helps to identify whether children need additional support at this stage so that they don't fall behind in this vital early reading skill.

All schools and academies in England have to take part in the PSC unless they are an independent school. The school can decide to withdraw children with special Educational Needs but this would be discussed with the parents prior to any decisions being made, and happens very rarely.

The PSC is a compulsory test but it is carried out in a 1-1 situation, in a comfortable and safe environment with the class teacher. In my experience, children enjoy this special 1-1 time with their teacher and we make every effort to praise them throughout the test and reward their efforts.

The PSC checks that a child can:

- Sound out and blend graphemes in order to read simple words
- Read phonetically decodable one-syllable and two-syllable words (i.e cat, stand, cobweb)
- Read a selection of **pseudo words** (we like to call these 'alien words' and the children respond well to this)

At the beginning of the PSC, the children complete a few practice words so that they understand the activity and then they continue with the PSC. The test is split into two sections and there are 40 words in total with 4 on each page; it usually takes about 5-10 minutes to complete.

The pass mark for the PSC is usually around 32/40 but it should not be seen as a pass or fail test, it is a check and it is important to understand the difference. By checking the child at this point we are able to direct additional support to the correct children. Children that don't reach the pass mark in year 1, will retake the test in Year 2. Any child who is still below the pass mark at the end of Year 2 will continue to be monitored and supported by the English team and, if necessary, the SEN team.

The results from the PSC are shared with parents and the local authority at the end of the year but they are not published in a league table.

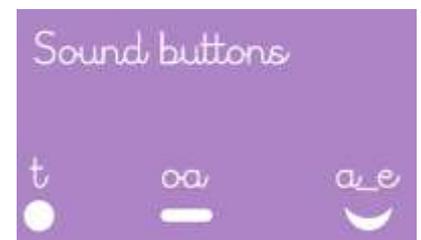
Pseudo-words – a lot of parents are often concerned and confused by the pseudo words. These words make up half of the PSC and are intended to measure whether the child is using their phonics knowledge to decode or just their memory of sight words. Next to each pseudo word in the PSC is a colourful monster and the children particularly enjoy 'reading the name' of this monster. In class, we have aliens, which the children name as part of the practice of these skills – your children could do the same with their soft toys at home.

Helping your child with phonics

- Check your pronunciation of the phonemes if you are unsure (there are some great videos on line for this <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EYx1CyDMZSc> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwJx1NSineE> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPJ_ZEBh1Bk)
- Print off the word-banks for the different phases (see above) and practice at home
- Read with and to your child **every day**
- Always be positive and give lots of praise and engagement

Sound Buttons – at the Baird Primary Academy, we like to use sound buttons to support the children in phonics:

- If a letter makes a sound on its own (**grapheme**), we put one dot under it
- If two letter joined make a sound (**digraph**), we put a line under it
- If the two vowels make a sound together, but are split by a consonant, (**split digraph** – you may know this as 'magic 'e'') we put a loop from one to the other under the consonant

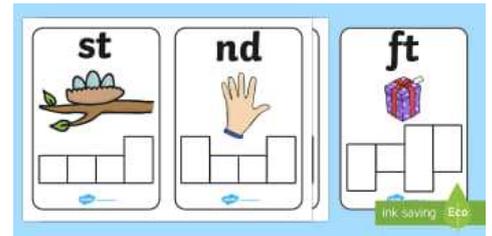


Blending:

- Put the sound buttons under the words, looking out for digraphs within the word
- Say each sound left to write
- blend the word by pointing to each grapheme and then running your finger under the word as you blend them together

Segmenting

- say the word and count the phonemes on your fingers, i.e s-m-a-sh = 4 phonemes
- use a phoneme frame to write down the corresponding grapheme to the phonemes (examples are on the right, you could just draw boxes on scrap paper)
- check by blending the word left to right



If you want to know anything else about phonics, the English Subject Lead, Mrs Auer, holds **yearly phonics workshops** which you are welcome to join, or you could catch her or your class teacher for a chat – we are always happy to share knowledge and resources which will support your child.

Some good websites for supporting your child with phonics are:

- www.letters-and-sounds.com
- www.theschoolrun.com/phonics-teaching-step-by-step
- www.oxfordowl.co.uk/for-home/at-school/assessment-at-primary-school/phonics-screening-check/
- <http://www.oxfordphonicschecksupport.co.uk/> (this website allows you to build trial PSCs to work through with your child)
- www.ictgames.com (also has great maths and literacy games)

Some good apps for supporting your child with phonics:

- Teach Your Monster to read
- Mr Thorne Does Phonics: Letters and Sounds

Some good videos to help your child with phonics:

- Mr Thorne Does Phonics (with Geraldine the Giraffe)
- Jolly Phonics Sounds and Actions <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yVyry9jpVjl>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ei0iFs5uF6w>

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