Phonics and reading at Alverton School

What is phonics?

- A way of teaching children to read quickly and competently.
- **Systematic synthetic phonics** - teaches 44 **phonemes** (sounds) that letters and combinations of letters make and the different **graphemes** (the way to write the sound) that represent them.
- Graphemes can be **digraphs** which are 2 letters, one sound e.g. **ai** and **trigraphs** which are 3 letters, one sound e.g. **igh**). Guess how many letters make up a quadgraph?!
- **Split digraphs** **(a_e, e_e, i_e, o_e, u_e)** are split by one or more other letters - ride, taste. Used to be "magic e" but not any more!

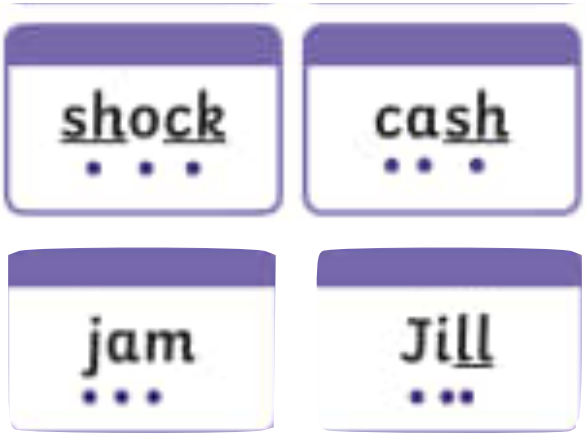
Phonemes & graphemes

Reception

Year 1

What is phonics?

- Children learn **letter names** as well as sounds (e.g. the letter **s** makes the sound sssss; together the letters **s** and **h** make a digraph which makes the shhhh sound). This is important for spelling because…
- Phonemes can be spelled in a variety of different ways (e.g. the graphemes ai/ay/a/a_e all make the same sound). Sound out/spell **place**.
- Children **blend** sounds to read words (c-a-t = cat; b-oa-t = boat; l-igh-t = light) and **segment** them to spell and write (dog = d-o-g; s-n-ai-l = snail; f-air = fair).
- **Sound buttons** help children blend and segment by counting sounds (not letters!) in words.



Phonics at Alverton

- Systematic, progressive daily sessions covering Phases 1-6 taught from N-Y2 (into LKS2 as needed).
- Children taught in whole-class groups (or parallel smaller groups in Reception class where staff ratios are higher). Everyone should "meet" the new learning with gaps addressed **in addition**, otherwise gaps just get bigger!
- Developed our own approach using guidance from LCP planning/Government Letters and Sounds approach with addition from other schemes e.g. Jolly Phonics actions to help aid memory/Phonics Play website
- Clear learning sequence - **intro, revisit/review, teach, practise, apply**.

Phonics teaching sequence

Phase 2

Revisit and review
- Practise previously learned letters
- Practise oral blending and segmentation

Teach
- Teach a new letter
- Teach blending and/or segmentation with letters (weeks 2 and 3)
- Teach one or two tricky words (week 3 onwards)

Practise
- Practise reading and/or spelling words with the new letter

Apply
- Read or write a caption (with the teacher) using one or more high-frequency words and words containing the new letter (week 3 onwards)

Phase 3

Revisit and review
- Practise previously learned letters or graphemes

Teach
- Teach new graphemes
- Teach one or two tricky words

Practise
- Practise blending and reading words with a new GPC
- Practise segmenting and spelling words with a new GPC

Apply
- Read or write a caption or sentence using one or more tricky words and words containing the graphemes

Phase 4

Revisit and review
- Practise previously learned graphemes

Teach
- Teach blending and segmentation of adjacent consonants
- Teach some tricky words

Practise
- Practise blending and reading words with adjacent consonants
- Practise segmentation and spelling words with adjacent consonants

Apply
- Read or write sentences using one or more high-frequency words and words containing adjacent consonants

Phase 5

Revisit and review
- Practise previously learned graphemes
- Practise blending and segmentation

Teach
- Teach new graphemes
- Teach tricky words

Practise
- Practise blending and reading words with the new GPC
- Practise segmenting and spelling words with the new GPC

Apply
- Read or write a sentence using one or more high-frequency words and words containing the new graphemes

Phonics at Alverton

- Variety of interactive resources used during both taught sessions and independent practice (www.phonicsplay.com www.phonicsbloom.com www.spellingplay.co.uk www.ictgames.com www.teachyourmonstertoread.com Mr Thorne Does Phonics - on youtube).
- Regular, effective assessment allows for "plugging the gaps" - short term by class based staff and longer term by specialist phonics intervention TAs (KS1/LKS2).
- High expectations for use of phonics in reading and writing across the curriculum.

Precise (or pure) sounds

- **The key to successful phonic learning!**
- Each phoneme, or sound, should be spoken in a precise way, to help children blend and segment them.
- No **schwa** - unstressed uh sound! (buh - a - tuh doesn't blend easily into bat!)
- http://phonicbooks.wordpress.com/2011/03/13/how-to-say-the-sounds-of-letters-in-synthetic-phonics/

Phonics Screening Check

- Compulsory check of Year 1 children's **decoding** skills (knowing phonemes that correspond to graphemes and blending them into whole words).
- Uses nonsense words as well as real words - lots of opportunities to practise during phonics sessions.
- Takes place in final half term.
- Children who do not achieve in Year 1 receive **targeted intervention** and are retested in Year 2.

Reading and Phonics

- Phonics is statutory and used as the primary method for teaching **decoding** for reading (Big Cat Letters and Sounds scheme https://collins.co.uk/pages/phonics-for-letters-and-sounds)
- Re-reading is key to develop decoding, fluency and comprehension! (Particularly in book bands from pink to turquoise)
- Phonics for decoding works alongside other KS appropriate strategies to develop successful and rounded readers - VIPERS, comprehension, WCR, novel study, 5 stories a day etc.
- Not all words are decodable! **Common exception words** taught discretely by and may include finding ways to remember them (e.g. was - worms are slimy; could/would/should - oh u lucky duck).
- https://bilingualkidspot.com/2018/08/09/reading-same-book-makes-kids-smarter/ https://rrf.org.uk/2017/03/28/an-alternative-to-book-bands-for-beginner-readers/ https://phonicshero.com/how-to-use-decodable-books/ https://educationinspection.blog.gov.uk/2019/11/04/early-reading-and-the-education-inspection-framework/

Reading and Phonics

Phonically Decodable Books and Texts (http://www.dyslexics.org.uk/decodable_books.htm)

2019 The 'Ofsted School Inspection Handbook': Inspectors will look to see that, "the sequence of reading books shows a cumulative progression in phonics knowledge that is matched closely to the school's phonics programme. **Teachers give pupils sufficient practice in reading and re-reading books that match the grapheme-phoneme correspondences they know, both at school and at home**"

2021 The DfE's new *Essential Core Criteria* that phonics programmes to be used in England's schools must meet, includes the following note re. texts and books in KS1: "**The texts and books children are asked to read independently should be fully decodable for them at every stage of the programme.** This means they must be composed almost entirely of words made up of grapheme-phoneme correspondences that a child has learned up to that point. The only exceptions should be a small number of common exception words that the child has learned as part of the programme up to that point. In the early stages, even these should be kept to a minimum. **Practising with such decodable texts will help to make sure children experience success and learn to rely on phonic strategies**"

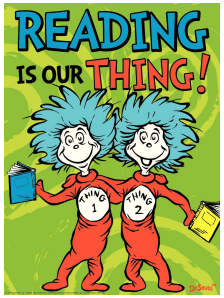
Please note, it's a myth that classrooms that teach using high quality phonics exclude so-called real books; **phonics for decoding is taught discretely as part of a broad and balanced, language-rich curriculum.** Beginning readers, in classrooms where high quality phonics is taught, will have plenty of access to real books (fiction and non-fiction). When doing shared reading of a 'real' book, the teacher (or parent if it is a home book) takes responsibility for reading any as yet untaught GPCs or words with tricky spellings so no multi-cueing (guessing) or whole word memorisation is necessary.

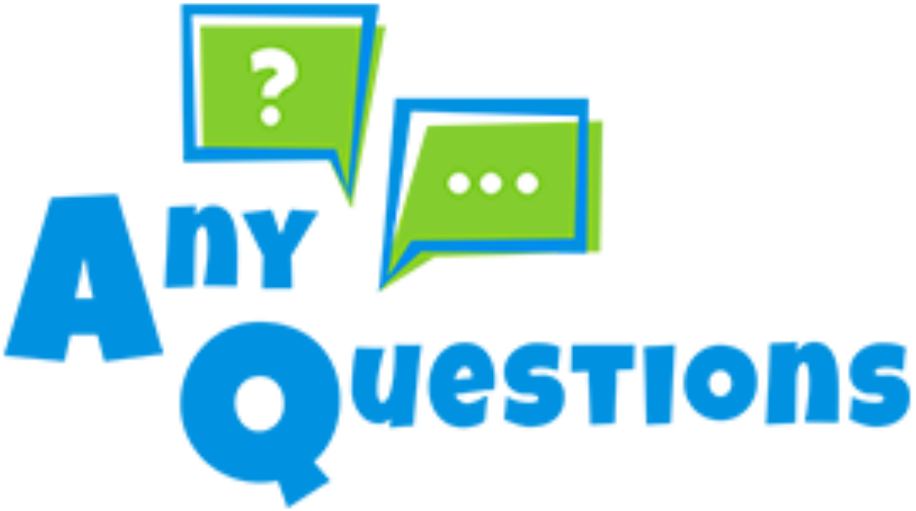
When phonics isn't working?

- Assess where the gaps are (GPC/blending) and use targeted intervention to address them.
- Use regular assessment to move children on quickly if/when identified gaps have been filled.
- If phonics isn't working full stop for a particular child? (KS1/LKS2) Unfortunately there's no "one size fits all" solution which give an alternative option to teach successful decoding.
- Consult with SENDCo re. dyslexia screening; precision teaching of key words; use picture cues; repetitive reading to learn by sight. Don't give up!
- https://www.readwithphonics.com/when-phonics-doesnt-work https://www.phonicsbloom.com/uk/article/when-phonics-doesnt-work https://applefortheteacher.co.uk/creating-resources/when-phonics-doesnt-work-for-all-children-try-a-different-approach/

What can I do at home?

- Read with your child every day because **"kids who read, succeed"!** Build it into your routine and "make reading your thing"!
- Repeat school reading books for maximum opportunities to develop decoding skills, comprehension and fluency with a familiar text.




Any
Questions