

# What is phonics?

Within phonics, words are made up of small units of sound called 'phonemes'. Phonics helps children to read and spell words by decoding them, using the sounds they have been taught.

## Phonics Screening Check

The children have 40 words to read to their teacher and it only takes a few minutes to complete in total. Some of the words are 'real' words (words the children will have heard of) and some of them are 'alien' words (these are 'non words').

### Phase 1 – this continues through to phase 6

This is split into seven aspects including rhyme, listening to sounds in the environment, body sounds, voice sounds and listening to sounds in words and then blending them to make words. Singing nursery rhymes and spotting rhyme with your children at home will support this phase.

### Phase 2...

In this phase, children learn 19 letters in the alphabet and that sound that goes with these. They sound out words and blend together to make words. Children also begin to read captions using their phase 2 sounds.

### Phase 3...

In phase 3, children learn the last 7 letters of the alphabet and the sound that goes with them. They also begin to learn digraphs (2 letters to make one sound), e.g. 'sh' and 'oo' and trigraphs (3 letters to make one sound), e.g. 'air' and 'igh'. Children begin reading sentences and continue to read captions.

### Phase 4...

In this phase the children don't learn any new sounds. They practise the sounds from phase 2 and 3 and learn blends within words, e.g. 'tree' (where the sounds at the beginning of the word are tricky to hear) and

'think' (where the sounds at the end of the word are tricky to hear).  
Children are beginning to learn longer words in phase 4.

## Phase 5...

Children learn more graphemes (the way the sound is written) within this phase. They learn more digraphs and trigraphs, including some 'split digraphs', e.g. a\_e in snake. The children also learn alternative pronunciations for the sounds they already know, e.g. the 'ow' can be as in 'cow' or 'snow'.

## Phonics Language...

- digraph – 2 letters to make one sound, e.g. sh or ch
- trigraph – 3 letters to make one sound, e.g. igh or air
- phoneme – small unit of sound
- segment – to break down the letters in each word to spell/read a word
- blend – saying each sound in the correct order from left to right to read the word
- sound buttons – we use these under words to help the children read the word and identify individual sounds and digraphs and trigraphs
- grapheme – the written form of the sound (this can be one letter or a number of letters)

Not all words are decodable and we call these 'tricky' words. Your child will receive spellings each week to support their reading and spelling of these and they will also practise them in phonics sessions each day.

Thank you for supporting your child with spelling and reading at home.