



What is Phonics?

The English language is a rich language consisting of thousands of words. This is a result of the history of the English language and the influence of many languages over many years. The written form of the English language is therefore not straightforward and can be problematic because the relationship between sounds of speech and letters is complicated. The letters act as a 'code' for the sounds of speech. The aim of teaching 'Phonics' is to help children to decode written language.

Our school now uses the No Nonsense Phonics. Our staff have received training from Debbie Hepplewhite, who devised the programme, on how to use the programme to teach the children the alphabetic code and the alphabet, and the skills of reading, spelling and handwriting.

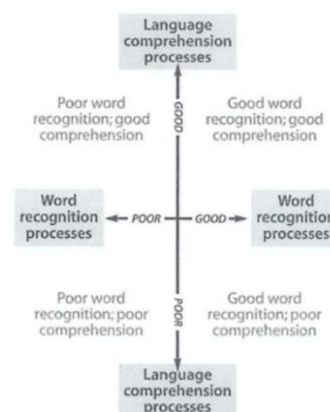
How do we learn phonics?

Children first learn to identify the sounds all-through-the-spoken-word. Then they learn to select the correct letters and letter groups, which are code for the sounds. Early handwriting is taught as part of the multi-sensory approach to phonics teaching. Hear the sound, say the sound, and write the letter shape or letter group.

Learners are taught at 'word level' at first – and then they apply their knowledge and skills to sentences and texts – and reading books and texts, which match the code knowledge, taught to date. The focus is on learning to 'break the code'. Your child will receive decodable reading books, which match the codes they are learning to enable them to practise and embed the code in words and sentences.

Learning to read is tricky!

Simply put, learning to read consists of two main processes – both of which are necessary. We need to teach children how to read (or 'decode') the words they are reading, but they also need to have the understanding of language to know what the words mean (comprehension).



Understanding of language

Therefore, the more spoken language that the children know, the better – as this supports reading. There is nothing better than talk, talk, talk. Please chatter about anything and everything with your children. This will help build up your child's stock of words and knowledge and understanding of the world – talk will improve comprehension and this will help the ability to read.

We firmly believe that the importance of a reading culture both at school and in the home cannot be over-emphasised. Reading with your child and to your child is a fun and

important thing to do to children of all primary ages. Thousands of new words are learned from books to expand our vocabulary. Books also: - entertain, - create interests, - open a window on the world (knowledge, empathy, understanding, morals), - fire up imaginations, etc.

The alphabetic code

Letters and letter groups are the alphabetic code for the sounds in our speech. Decoding the letter symbols into sounds is the basis for reading: the child sees the printed word 'soap', decodes the sounds /s/ /oa/ /p/ (not - /suh/ /oa/ /puh/!) and then blends the sounds to read "soap".

Sometimes letters (graphemes) need to be decoded with different sounds, depending on the actual word e.g. 'a' could be /a/ as in 'apple'; /ar/ as in 'father'; /ai/ as in 'angel'; /o/ as in 'want'.

The alphabetic code is a reversible code, which means that we can start with the sound and encode to print (for spelling/writing) or we start with the print and decode to sound (for reading). In our phonics lessons, we always include both ways.

What can you do to help?

Reading

Please listen to your child read to you daily or as often as you can. Reading books aloud to your child and sharing the reading of books with your child is also important.

Phonics is a lifelong skill

Using phonics for reading and spellings are skills that even adult proficient readers and spellers need to draw on regularly.