



Phonics

How We Teach Phonics at The Free School Norwich and How You Can Help Your Child at Home

Pre-phonics skills

There are many pre-phonics skills that children acquire in their everyday lives and nurseries before starting school. These important skills lay the foundation for effective learning in Reception, and continue to be an important aspect of learning through the Reception year.

These are:

- Tuning in to sounds / Sound discrimination in the environment and with musical instruments
- Rhythm and Rhyme
- Alliteration
- Noticing vocal sounds and simple oral blending and segmenting
- Talking about sound
- Speaking and listening

Other important foundations:

- Developing a love of books and desire to read and write
- Exposure to stories, songs and a wide vocabulary
- Noticing text in the environment and understanding its purpose
- Understanding what a word is in both written and spoken form
- Knowing that written words are representations of spoken words and vice versa

Phonics terminology explained

You may come across some unfamiliar terminology in this presentation. Your child may even use terms you have not come across, so here is guide to the vocabulary we use.

- **Phoneme:** This refers to the smallest unit of sound within a word. Such as /c/ in cat – in other words, what the letter sounds like. Children use the word 'sound'.
- **Grapheme:** This refers to the way this phoneme is written or what it looks like – what the letter looks like. Children use the word 'letter'.
- **Segmenting:** This is the process of hearing a spoken word, and breaking it down by listening carefully for its constituent sounds. This is necessary for writing.
- **Blending:** This is the process of looking at a written word, saying the separate phonemes, and then blending them together to read the whole word.
- **Initial, Medial and Final Sounds:** Refer to the first, middle and last sound in a simple word.
- **Digraph:** This is when two letters go together make one sound, such as /sh/ or /ff/. "Two letters, one sound!"
- **Trigraph:** This is when three letters go together to make one sound, such as /ear/ or /air/. "Three letters, one sound!"
- **Decodable words:** These are words that can be segmented and written or blended and read in the usual fashion as described above, also known as decoding.
- **Non-decodable words, or Tricky Words** are words that cannot be decoded, such 'the' or 'go', which when sounded out would not sound like the intended word! The spelling for such words need to be memorised.
- **GPC:** Grapheme-Phoneme Correspondence

- For example, children see a word, cat, and break it down into its individual letters (graphemes) and say the corresponding sounds (phonemes) for each letter in turn: /c/ /a/ /t/.
- Then they blend the separate sounds together to form the word. This is called blending, also known as reading!



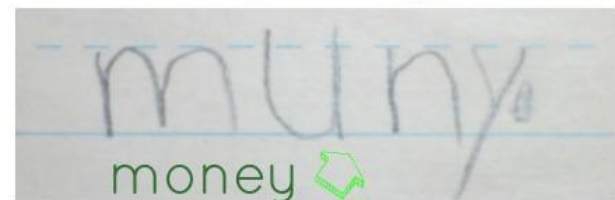
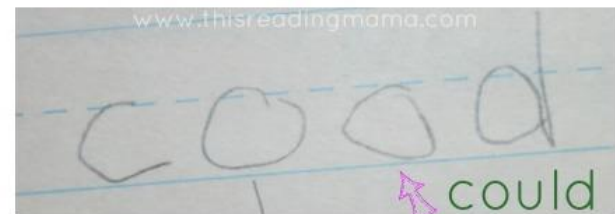
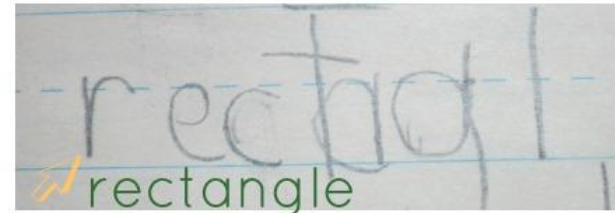
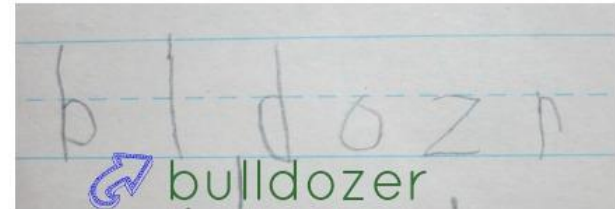
Phonics in Reception



In Reception at the Free school Norwich we teach synthetic phonics using an interactive scheme called 'Phonics Bug'.

In synthetic phonics the graphemes and corresponding phonemes are taught just before the introduction of words that contain these letters.

- By reversing this blending process, children can learn to write a spoken or heard word by breaking a spoken word down into the sounds it is made up of.
- For example: Children hear the word 'cat' and say it. They hear the first phoneme, /c/ and write it down. Now they say the word slowly again and listen out for the other sounds they can hear, writing the corresponding graphemes as they go. Often, children will develop the skills to hear the initial sound first, then the final. With practise, children will learn to hear medial sounds too.
- At this stage, we do not correct children for 'incorrect' spelling when segmenting a decodable word as we are focusing on the ability to hear the sounds within the word. Therefore, if a child can only hear the /c/ and /t/ in the word cat, they may write 'ct' and this is fine!





What is Phonics Bug?

Phonics Bug is an interactive programme, mainly delivered via an interactive whiteboard. It is called Phonics Bug because the star of the show is 'Bug', a child friendly and funny character who appears throughout in the activities and games.

In Reception, Phonics Bug teaches a new grapheme and corresponding phoneme in every Phoneme Session. This equates to around 2 or 3 new GPCs per week. This means that the basic 40+ phonemes are acquired quickly, and early reading and writing skills develop rapidly.

The order of grapheme introduction matches that recommended by the DfES in Letters and Sounds (2007) and ensures that children are able to start reading and spelling as soon as possible.

The GPCs are introduced in the following order, in stages known as Units:

- Unit 1: s a t p
- Unit 2: i n m d
- Unit 3: g o c k to
- Unit 4: ck e u r the, no, go
- Unit 5: h b f, ff l, ll ss l, into
- Unit 6: v w x me, be
- Unit 7: y z, zz qu he, my, by
- Unit 8: ch sh th ng they, she
- Unit 9: ai ee igh oa oo (long) oo (short) we, are
- Unit 10: ar or ur ow oi you, her
- Unit 11: ear air ure er all, was
- Unit 12: Adjacent consonants (cvcc, ccvc, ccvcc, cccvc, cccvcc) and tricky words: do, some, come, were, and tricky there, little, one, when, out, what, said, have, like, so.

By the end of our first few full week of school we will learn the graphemes and corresponding phonemes for: **s a t p i n m d** – and then we have the knowledge to be able read and write many words!

How many words can you make with these letters?

How does a phonics session work?

Revision

- We start the session with the much loved Alphabet song, where we are reminded of the letter names. Although children are introduced to the letter names, the main focus is on 'the sound they make' (phoneme) rather than what they are called.
- Then we have some quick-fire practice of previously taught sounds "If you know the sound, say the sound". Some sounds are bouncy (a,t,d) and some are stretchy (s,n,m)
- We have a go at reading and writing words using previously taught GPCs.

Lesson

- Children are introduced the new grapheme with corresponding phoneme. We see what the grapheme looks like and practise letter formation in the air using the rhymes to help us. They spot the letters in written words.
- We have a go at reading words containing the new grapheme by blending the phonemes.
- We have a go at segmenting spoken words in order to write them down on mini whiteboards.
- Then we practise writing the newly taught grapheme using correct letter formation. Correct letter formation is necessary to enable joined writing further up the school.
- Later in the school year, children are exposed to 'tricky words'; these are words that cannot be decoded and must be memorised, such as **the, no, I, go, into**. These are regularly practised in a quick fire fashion!

Follow up

- Children are introduced to guided independent work, consolidating any teaching from the lesson. This is carried out during topic lessons where we use our phonics skills to write for a purpose, as well as during independent choosing time activities.
- In phonics sessions where a new GPC is not being taught, children will have the chance to consolidate and apply their previous knowledge.

Useful tools we use...

FSN Handwriting

Rhymes for Letter Formation

- s - Slither down the sunny snake
- a - Around the apple and down the leaf
- t - Down the tap and across the tap
- p - Down the handle and around the pan
- i - Down the igloo and dot at the top
- n - Down the nest and over the nest
- m - Down the mat, step and step
- d - Round the dog's bottom, up his neck and down to his toes
- g - Round the goat's face, down his long beard and curl
 - o - All around the octopus
 - c - curl around the cat's tail
 - K - down the key, click and lock
- e - Across the elephant's face and around his trunk.
- u - Down the umbrella, up the umbrella and draw a puddle
- r - Down the rat's tail and over his head
- h - Down the feather and over the hat
- b - Down the strap and around the bag
- f - Down the fan and across the top
 - l - down the long leg
- j - Down and under the jam jar and dot for the lid
- v - Down a hill and up a hill
- w - down up down up
 - x - Cross fox
- y - Down the mouth, up the mouth and under the chin
 - z - zip, zap, zip
- q - Around the queen's face, down her long dress and flick

Phase 2

Sound Mat



s	ss	a	t	p	i	n	m	d
g	o	c	k	ck	e	u	r	
h	b	f	ff	l	ll			



Phase 3

Sound Mat



j	v	w	x	y	z	zz	qu	ch
sh	th	ng	ai	ee	igh	oa	oo	oo
ar	or	ur	er	ow	oi	ear	air	ure



Jam, Van, Web, Fox, Yell, Zip, Buzz, Queen, Chips, Shell, Moth, King, Snail, Sheep, Night, Boat, Spoon, Book, Star, Fork, Surf, Ladder, Owl, Coins, Ear, Chair, Manure

Helpful tips

- When reading and writing at home, use the sound rather than the letter name when supporting your child. It is fine to mention the letter name, but the emphasis should be on the sound. You can use phrases like this to help: "This letter is called S (ess) and it makes the 'sssss' sound."
- Say the sound 'purely'; some are bouncy and some are stretchy. For example, 'm' is 'mmm' not 'muh'.

Consonants: stretchy

f	l	m	n	r	s	v	z	sh	th	ng
										nk

Consonants: bouncy

b	c	d	g	h	j	p	qu	t	w	x	y	ch
k												

Vowels: bouncy

Vowels: stretchy

a	e	i	o	u	ay	ee	igh	ow
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Vowels: stretchy

oo	oo	ar	or	air	ir	ou	oy
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- It is more useful for your child to learn to write and recognise the lower case versions of letters rather than the upper case. Like letter names, upper case can be introduced and used when needed as in the start of a name, but focus should be on lower case recognition and formation.
- Reading is so much more than decoding! Reading should not be laborious; too much emphasis on decoding and not enough emphasis on enjoying the story and comprehension could put your child off.



- Writing does not have to be done with a pencil! Magnetic letters, whiteboards or sand can take away the element of fine motor skills so that the focus is on segmenting rather than on holding a pencil.
- The physical dexterity to hold and use a pencil is however an important skill we practise in Reception. You can help your child with this by modelling it. We use the phrase “Birdies beak” to describe the thumb and fingers pincer position. Finger strength can be developed by using clothes pegs, threading and using tools such as scissors for example.





Bug Club Reading Scheme

After the October break, your child will start the reading scheme. A letter will be sent home explaining more, including a guide to the book colour bands that relate to difficulty level.

A reading book will be chosen for your child every Monday, which will be sent home at the end of the day in their reading folder. You will need to keep the reading folder and book in your child's book bag and they will need to bring it back to school every day so we can read with them too.

We will read 1:1 with your child once a week, and we recommend you read with your child at least 2-3 times a week. Included with your reading book will be a small Reading Record book, for you to write down a short dated note saying how your child did. We will do the same for you when we read with your child at school.

Please feel free to browse the selection of reading books!