

# **Fantastic Phonics**

**Deciphering phonics and  
discovering ways to  
implement it into the  
curriculum.**

# What is phonics?

- Phonics is a method of teaching people to read by training them to associate letters with their phonetic values.
- Phonics is the science of sound, or of spoken sounds.
- There are 26 letters in the English language.
- There are approximately 44 sounds (phonemes) in our English Language which consist of consonant and vowel sounds.
- There are approximately over 70 ways to spell these sounds which makes learning to read and write in English all the more difficult.

# Why phonics?

- As children learn the sound of a letter, they also learn how to write that letter. This gives the benefit of tying together reading and writing as two sides of the same coin.
- Children taught phonics can sound out any word they encounter by "blending" together the letter sounds.
- Phonics gives children the confidence to independently attempt reading words and writing recognisable letters.

# Making sense of sounds

- Before any solid work with phonics can commence, children need to be able to discriminate between the different sounds that they hear. It would be difficult for a three year old child to be able to dissect the three sounds in the word cat when they are still developing their spoken language.
- It is important to engage your key children to listening to sounds they hear in the environment; larger sounds, before we move onto smaller sounds such as the individual sounds you find in words.

# Practical ideas at home

- Make a game of taking your key children out on a listening walk. For example, take your children outside; ask them to be still, to close their eyes and listen for one minute. See how many different sounds they could hear during that time. Repeated practice of activities such as this will tune their ears for listening and making distinctions between the different sounds that they hear.
- Give your key children something they can use to tap out a rhythm (a wooden spoon and a saucepan, a home-made shaker, clapping). Demonstrate a rhythmic pattern for the child and get them to repeat it for you. Gradually make the pattern harder. You can also do this with names to get children thinking about syllables (Roh-an / Je-si-ca / Ta-ma-ra)

# Rhythm and Rhyme

- Recognising rhyme is a basic component of phonemic awareness and as such we should expose our children to as much rhyme and rhythm as possible.
- Rhythmic and rhyming songs, poems and stories provide a **fun, active, playground for phonemic awareness** (the ability to hear the sounds and distinguish between them in the English language) - a research highlighted predictor of reading success.

# Practical ideas at home

- Seek out books to read to your key children that have repetitive rhyming refrains that allow them to join in. *“Run, run, as fast as you can. You can’t catch me, I’m the Gingerbread Man!”* And another, *“Little Pig, Little Pig, let me come in! Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin!”*
- Make sure that singing and rhyming activities are part of everyday routines. *Itsy, Witsy Spider, I’m a Little Teapot, Hey Diddle Diddle* are good rhymes to use.

# Phonemes and graphemes

- A phoneme is a sound you hear. It is the smallest unit of sound in a word.
- How many phonemes can you hear in the following words:  
cat  
sand  
pencil
- A grapheme is the written representation of the phoneme.
- A grapheme could be one letter, two letters or more.
- Look at the following examples:  
t      ai      igh



# Enunciation

- Teaching phonics requires a technical skill in enunciation.
- Phonemes (sounds) should be articulated clearly and precisely.
- [http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=IwJxlNSineE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=IwJxlNSineE)

Alphablocks

- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/shows/alphablocks>

# Let's get started!

- We begin by slowly introducing the letters, however, we don't go in alphabetical order and there is an important reason for this.
- s      a      t      p      i
- What three letter words can be made from these five initial sounds?

# Let's get started!

- sat, sit, sip, tip, tap, sap, pit, pat
- So you can see that after learning five sounds, children will be able to read and spell eight real words.
- But we are jumping ahead of ourselves here. Let's look at ways that you can introduce phonics to your children and put some of these ideas into practice.

# Sound buttons

- Sound buttons are visual stimulus in order to assist the children see the graphemes and make phonetic attempts to read the words. Be aware that these are just visual cues we can use until children recognise graphemes for themselves.

s t a i n

# Blending and sound buttons

- Blending, as the word suggests, is where we put together the segmented phonemes to make a word.
- Visually, the process of blending is made easier with the use of sound buttons. This helps children recognise the graphemes which can contain more than one letter.
- For example, let's put sound buttons under these letters:

c      a      t

# Blending and sound buttons

- Let's look at some more examples.

s a n d

b r igh t

and how about...

Spain

# Sound buttons

- Here are some examples for you to try by yourself.  
Add sound buttons where you think they are appropriate.
- speed      crayon      slight  
broom      foil      crawl

# PRAISE

- Children always respond to praise. Ensure that any level of success is met with enthusiastic praise. The Ruth Miskin approach suggests fireworks or truck drivers for good work, which are simple and quick methods of praise to let children know they are on the right track.
- Whatever method of praise you use will be good, as long as it's verbal and not an exchange (good work = sweets or a gift).



# Reading

- When children read something independently, using their phonic knowledge without the aid of an adult, they experience a level of success that spurs them on to want to try harder.
- If you give the children a picture story book to read, the likelihood is that they will not be able to decode the words on the page, leading to a frustrated child who doesn't see much worth in reading. In my lessons, I always try to provide children with my own made up sentences that relate to their level of phonetic knowledge.
- For example, "The dog sat on the pig's hat." or "The man and the cat went to the shop."

# High Frequency Words

- There are certain words that your child will need to learn by memory (High Frequency words). These words are sometimes called tricky words, sight words or camera words. In addition to being difficult to sound out, most of the high frequency words have a rather abstract meaning which is hard to explain to a child. It's easy to learn words like "cat" and "house" because they can easily be related to a real object or a picture, but how do you represent the word "the" or "of"?

# Letter formation

- <https://www.rebeccacheetham.newham.sch.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=193&type=pdf>

# Alphablocks

- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/shows/alphablocks>