

The Teaching of Reading and Phonics

In EYFS and KS1 children are taught phonics using the 'Letters and Sounds' programme. This is a phased programme of synthetic phonics where children are taught to 'synthesise' (i.e. put together or build up) pronunciations for unfamiliar written words by translating letters into sounds and blending the sounds together ('blending = 'synthesising'). Synthetic phonics is most appropriate at the very beginning of children's schooling, when virtually all written words are unfamiliar and the children need a simple and clear introduction to the underlying principle of alphabetic writing: written symbols represent individual speech-sounds.

In both EYFS and KS1 phonics is taught as a whole class session. In some cases a teaching assistant may work with a small group of children to reinforce a particular phoneme (sound), developing their confidence and understanding. The class teacher will lead a variety of activities that develop the children's knowledge of a particular phoneme pattern.

The 'Letter and Sounds' programme contains six phases. By phase six (usually year 2) children will be becoming fluent readers and should be able to spell HFW (high frequency words).

Children are encouraged to choose an appropriate level school reading book to take home and share with an adult. We have a large selection of books, including the Oxford Reading Tree and New Way scheme, these are supplemented with a selection of both non-fiction and fiction books from other schemes. All books are 'book banded' and your child will be aware of which colour level they can choose from.

Teachers and other adults hear children read regularly, in both individual and group sessions. Group reading is called 'Guided Reading', where an adult (usually the teacher) will hear a group of children read and discuss a shared text. Guided Reading focuses on developing a range of skills, not just 'reading aloud' and the texts chosen may contain a higher degree of challenge than your child's individual reading book.

Reading should be an enjoyable activity and this is something we actively encourage in our children; be it through author visits, Book Day events, older children 'buddying up' with younger children or adult modelling. Please help your child develop this love of reading at home by sharing a range of books.