

Parental Information Document for Reading in Early Years & Key Stage 1

What is Phonics?

Phonics is a way of teaching children how to read and write. It helps children hear, identify and use different sounds that distinguish one word from another in the English language. Phonics involves matching the sounds of spoken English with individual letters or groups of letters. At Skyswood, we use Read, Write Inc. as our systematic synthetic phonics programme. Synthetic phonics is a method of teaching where words are broken up into the smallest units of sound (phonemes). Children are taught how to break up words or decode them into individual sounds and then blend them back together.

Phonics is a way of teaching children to read quickly and skilfully.

They are taught how to:

- recognise the sounds that each individual letter makes
- identify the sounds that different combinations of letters make - such as sh/ or /oo/
- blend these sounds together from left to right to make a word.

Children can then use this knowledge to decode new words that they hear or see. This is the first important step in learning to read.

Research shows that when phonics is taught in a structured way - starting with the easiest sounds and progressing through to the most complex - it is the most effective way of teaching young children to read.

It is particularly helpful for children aged 4 to 7. Systematic teaching of phonics helps our pupils to learn the skills they need to tackle new words. They can then read any kind of text fluently and confidently and read for enjoyment.

Key terms we use in our teaching:

Phoneme - a single unit of sound

Grapheme - a written letter, or group of letters that represents a sound

Consonants - b, c, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, q, r, s, t, v, w, x, y, z

Vowels - a, e, i, o, u

Blend - to merge the sounds together to make a word (e.g. the sounds c-a-t are blended to the word 'cat')

Segment - to break down the word into individual sounds to spell (e.g. dog can be split into the sounds d-o-g)

Special Friends - special friends are a combination of two or three letters representing one sound (e.g. ck, ay, igh, oa)

Meet Fred



Fred Talk

Fred the Frog helps children read and spell. He can say the sounds in words, but he can't say the whole word, so children have to help him. To help the children read & learn to blend, Fred (the teacher) says the sounds, and then the children say the word.

For example: Fred says c-a-t, children say cat; Fred says l-igh-t, children say light. Teachers are encouraged to use Fred Talk throughout the day, so children learn to blend sounds.

For example, Play Simon Says:

Put your hands on your h-ea-d/ f-oo-t/ kn-ee.

Put on your c-oa-t/ h-a-t/ s-c-ar-f.

Set the table with a b-ow-l/ f-or-k/ s-p-oo-n.

Use pure sounds, not letter names: watch the [How to Say the Sounds Parent Film](#) to see how the sounds are pronounced.

'Fred in your head'

Once children can sound out a word, we teach them to say the sounds silently in their heads.

We show them how to do this by:

1. whispering the sounds and then saying the whole word;
2. mouthing the sounds silently and then saying the entire word;
3. saying the whole word straight away.

Here are two ways you can use Fred Talk at home:

- o play Fred Games together
- o speak like Fred throughout the day e.g. time for l-u-n-ch! Let's p-l-ay!
- o Watch the 'Sound-blending' parent film on <http://www.ruthmiskin.com/en/parents/>

Fred Fingers

The next step is for children to begin sounding out words independently for use in their writing. We teach them to do this by segmenting the word into sounds and putting the sounds onto their 'Fred Fingers'. For example, they would segment the word light into l-igh-t and put each sound onto an individual finger. Click on the video for a full explanation: [Fred Fingers for Spelling](#)

If your child is writing at home and they sound out something phonetically using their Fred Fingers, for example, they spell kite as 'kight' then please do not correct their spelling. It is an important step for them to develop confidence and learn to record their ideas phonetically. Simply say 'well done'. If they have missed out a whole sound, such as the 't' on the end of the word, then encourage them to sound out the word using their Fred Fingers to see if they can identify the missing sound and add it on.

Developing Early Reading

Step 1

Children are taught the following sounds. Set 1 Sounds are taught together with rhymes to help children form the letters correctly and instantly recognise sounds ready for blending.

Set 1 Speed Sounds



Watch the following Ruth Miskin videos to see how to teach Set 1 sounds:

- [Reading Digraphs with Your Child](#)
- [Reading the Stretchy Sounds with Your Child](#)
- [Reading the Bouncy Sounds with Your Child](#)
- Practise reading the Set 1 Speed Sounds at home with your child from the Speed Sounds Book provided. The Reception class teacher will explain how the book should be used once the sounds have been taught.

Set 2 & 3 Speed Sounds

The children are then taught Set 2 Sounds - the long vowels. When they are very confident with sets 1 and 2, children are taught Set 3 Sounds.

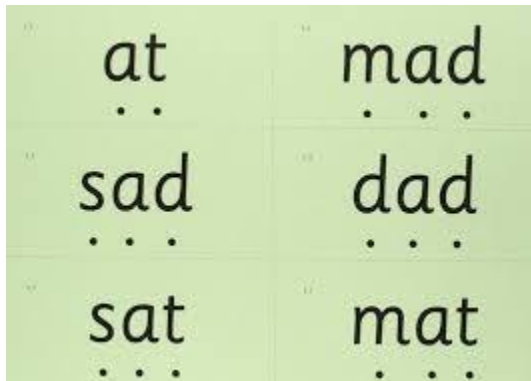


- Practise reading the Set 2&3 Speed Sounds at home with your child from the Speed Sounds Book provided. The Year 1 class teacher will explain how the book should be used once the sounds have been taught.

Step 2

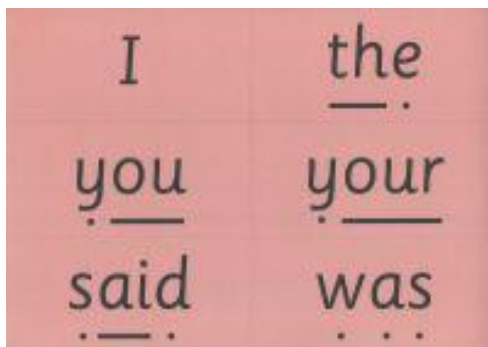
'Ditty books' will be introduced when children successfully begin to read single words; this happens when they have been taught their Set 1 sounds. Children will be taught to blend to read 'green words' and to recognise 'red words'.

Green words are linked to the sounds they have been learning and are easily decodable. They blend the sounds together to form the word.



Red words are words that are not easily decodable. They are also known as common exception or tricky words. They occur in stories regularly (the, said, what, where) but have unusual letter combinations ('ai' in the word 'said' makes the sound 'e' - therefore you cannot sound it out).

Remind your child not to use Fred Talk to read Red Words but instead to 'stop and think'. These words need to be learnt by sight. Tell them the word if you need to.



Alien words (Nonsense words)

Children use their phonic knowledge to decode 'Alien words'; this helps them to practise sounds they have learnt so far. Here are a few examples of our 'Alien words'. As you can see, they are not actual words.



Step 3

Children are then introduced to storybooks. During each lesson, pupils will be given the opportunity to practise reading and will be given the opportunity to develop their comprehension skills. Children will learn how to **'hold, edit or build a sentence'**.

- **'Hold a sentence'** encourages children to remember a whole sentence while focusing on spelling and punctuation. Children are encouraged to orally rehearse the sentence before writing begins.
- **'Build a sentence'** is to give children the opportunity to create and uplevel (improve) their own sentences.
- **'Edit a sentence'** allows the children to critique a sentence using their knowledge of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Parent Information

How can I support my child's reading and writing?

Here are the top five things you can do.

- Practise the Speed Sounds from the Speed Sounds Book provided.
- Use Fred Talk to help your child read and spell words.
- Listen to your child read their *Read Write Inc. Storybook* every day.
- Practise reading the Green and Red Words in the Storybook speedily.
- Read stories to your child every day.

How do I listen to my child read?

It is really important that your child practises their reading at home for a short time every day - we recommend about 10 minutes reading aloud on a daily basis, including discussion about the book.

Your child has a RWI Storybook matched to the sounds and words they know - a decodable book - so they should be able to read all the words.

Please avoid saying, "This book is too easy for you!" but instead say "I love how well you can read this book!"

In addition to this, they will have another reading book which they should find more challenging. They will encounter sounds and Red Words that they may not yet be fully secure with but we want them to grow as readers and have the opportunity to experience a wider range of texts, encourage a love of reading and develop their comprehension skills through higher level texts.

Don't be afraid to model how to read with expression: show your child how to read the story in a storyteller voice and use different voices for different characters.

While reading with your child, pause regularly to discuss the book to make sure your child understands the content.

The questions can be direct questions such as:

'What colour was the witch's hat?'

'Can you give me two reasons that the prince left the castle?'

The questions can also involve inference (where children have to use reasoning to deduce the answer):

'Why do you think the ducks left the pond?'

'How do you know how the boy was feeling from his actions?'

Thank you for working alongside us to support your child's learning and development with their reading. Please do not hesitate to approach your class teacher if you have any questions and we will endeavour to support you in any way we can.

Lisa Spiller, Mia Harvey & Heidi Lewis