

Phonics Teaching at Great Leighs Primary School

Introduction

The teaching of phonics is very important in teaching our children to read, write and spell. As a school we follow the 'Letters and Sounds' programme which is split into six phases which are taught throughout Foundation Stage, Year One and Year Two. The programme is designed to help all children recognise the relationship between reading and spelling from an early stage so they can decode words for reading and encode words for spelling. Generally children secure accurate word reading before they secure comparable accuracy in spelling and so the teaching of spelling is continued throughout the school, using a programme called Searchlights.

Table 1	
Term	Definition
Phoneme	A sound in a word
Grapheme	A letter or sequence of letters that represent a phoneme

Table 1 contains some important words that the children are introduced to during Letters and Sounds. We convert graphemes to phonemes when we are reading aloud when we decode a word.

We convert phonemes to graphemes when we are spelling – encoding words for writing. To do those children need to learn which graphemes correspond to which phonemes and vice versa. In order to read out a word a child must recognise ('sound out') each grapheme not each letter. (e.g. sounding out ship as sh/-i/-p/ not s/-h/-i/-p, and then blend the phonemes together to make a word.

Term	Definition
Segmenting	Breaking words down into their phonemes in order to spell
Grapheme	Building words from their phonemes to read A two-letter grapheme where two letters represent one sound e.g. 'ea' as in seat and 'sh' as in ship A three-letter grapheme where three letters represent one phoneme e.g. 'eau' as in bureau, and 'igh' as in night A word where the digraph has been split e.g. make and take – where 'k' splits the digraph 'ae'. There are 6 split digraphs – a-e, e-e, i-e, o-e, u-e, y-e. These were 'magic 'e' words

Phase 1

This phase recognises the importance of developing speaking and listening skills which enable our children to make a good start on reading and writing. The more words children know and understand before they start on a phonics programme, the better they are to succeed. This phase encourages story reading, storytelling, rhymes, drama and songs to inspire the children's interest. The children are also encouraged to use language from non-fiction as well as fiction books.

Set	Letter Sound
Set 1	s a t p
Set 2	i n m d
Set 3	g o c k
Set 4	ck e u r
Set 5	h b f,ff l,ll ss

Phase 2

In this phase the children are introduced to the first 19 letter sounds. By the end of this phase the children should be able to blend and segment words orally and be able to say rhyming words.

Phase 3

In this phase the children are taught another 25 graphemes, most of them being 2-letter graphemes (digraphs):

Graphemes	Sample word	Graphemes	Sample word
ch	chip	ar	farm
sh	shop	or	for
th	thin	ur	hurt
ng	ring	ow	cow
ai	rain	oi	coin
ee	feet	ear	dear
igh	night	air	fair
oa	boat	ure	sure
oo	boot/look	er	corner

Set	Grapheme
Set 6	j v w x
Set 7	y z,zz qu

By the end of this phase the children should be able to read some vc (vowel, consonant) and cvc (consonant, vowel, consonant) words and to spell them.

Phase 4

The children should know 42 phonemes (sounds). This phase is to help the children become more familiar with the different graphemes for these in reading and spelling and to teach them how to recognise/sound them in longer words. If children can automatically read these words it is not necessary for them to 'sound out' as we are striving for fluent readers.

Some examples of words read and spelt are in the table on the right. Consonant is denoted by a 'c' and a vowel by a 'v'.

Consonant/ Vowel Order	Words
cvcc	punch, lamp bench
ccv	tree
ccvc	frog, spoil
ccvcc	stand, drench
cccvc	scrunch

Phase 5

During this phase the children broaden their knowledge of the variety of graphemes which represent the 42 phonemes, in their reading and spelling. They will learn new graphemes, some of which are outlined below, and will become quicker at recognising them. They will also learn to choose the appropriate graphemes to represent phonemes when spelling words.

Grapheme	Words
ch	church, picture, catch
s	snow, listen, house

Phase 6

During this phase children become fluent readers and increasingly accurate spellers. Spelling usually lags behind reading as it is harder. Children's spelling should be phonetically accurate although may still be unconventional at times. Children should be encouraged to use their knowledge of phonics to sound out unfamiliar words e.g. saying ch/-ar/-ge not c/-h/-a/-r/-g/-e. They will be introduced to suffixes (ed, ing, er, est, ful, ly, y) and will become familiar with identifying the **root** word e.g. shop (root word), shopper, shopped, shopping. This phase leads into Support For Spelling/Searchlights

Tricky Words

From Phase 2 the children are introduced to reading and writing 'Tricky Words' – words that do not fit the phonetic programme. The reading of these words is easier than the spelling. A list of these is attached.

Handwriting

As children are introduced to the different phonemes they are taught how to write them. They are shown how to join letters of the sounds they need to spell.

Teaching the Phases

Generally Phases 1 - 3 are taught in Foundation Stage, Phases 3 – 5 are taught in Year One, consolidated in Year Two and then extended into Phase 6. Children with a solid understanding will move on to Support for Spelling/Searchlights.

A 'Letters and Sounds' session generally takes place daily, where a new phoneme/grapheme is introduced, tricky words are revised and prior learning recapped. The learning takes place through a variety of activities and there are extended sessions weekly to investigate a range of spelling patterns. These sounds are also consolidated during reading sessions.

It is essential that children have an enjoyment for this type of learning and are encouraged to experiment and play with words and spelling. It is useful for them to be shown correct letter formation and joining so they get into good habits and so their writing becomes fluent.