



Parents Guide to Phonics

We're teaching
every child to
read with



A complete SSP validated by
the Department for Education

A guide to how phonics will help your child to read and write.

Little Wandle is a multi-component, systematic, synthetic phonics programme. It uses clear mantras and routines to support children in learning how to read and write. It is a teacher-led programme, which provides fast paced and interactive learning experiences to ensure all children achieve in phonics.

The alphabet contains only 26 letters; however, spoken English uses about 44 sounds (phonemes). These phonemes are represented by letters (graphemes). In other words, a sound can be represented by a letter (e.g. 's' or 'h') or a group of letters (e.g. 'th' or 'ear'). It is of utmost importance that each sound (phoneme) is pronounced accurately so that your child can use them for reading and writing. It is sometimes common to add an 'uh' to the end of a sound e.g t not tuh and l not luh and this makes it more difficult for children to then blend to read and segment to spell. Please watch this video to hear the pure sounds to help better support your child at home. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UCI2mu7URBc>

Once children begin learning sounds, they are used quickly to read and spell words. This leaflet provides an overview of the teaching of Little Wandle at our school, to help you support your child.

“What do all the technical words mean?”

What is a phoneme?

A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound. At first it will equate with a letter sound but later on will include the digraphs. For example, 'rain' has three phonemes, / r / ai / n.

What is a grapheme?

A grapheme is what the phoneme looks like. It is a letter or a number of letters that represent a sound (phoneme) in a word. Another way to explain it is to say that a grapheme is a letter or letters that spell a sound in a word. e.g. / ee /, / ea /, / ey / all make the same phoneme but are spelt differently.

What is a digraph?

This is when two or more letters come together to make a phoneme, / sh / makes the sound in shop. There are also **vowel digraphs**; when two vowels together make one sound— /oa/ in boat.

What is a split digraph?

This is two letters, split, making one sound / a-e / as in 'make' or / i-e / as in 'kite'.

What is a trigraph?

This is where three graphemes (letters) make one sound. For example igh, air, are, ure, ear, eer.

What is blending?

Blending is the process that is involved in bringing the sounds together to make a word or a syllable and is how / c // a // t / becomes cat.

To learn to read well children must be able to smoothly blend sounds together. Blending sounds fluidly helps to improve fluency with reading. Blending is more difficult to do with longer words, so we teach children to chunk up the word into syllables.

Showing your child how to blend is important. Model how to 'push' sounds smoothly together without stopping at each individual sound.

What is segmenting?

Segmenting is the skill to break a word into individual sounds to spell. To begin to write independently children must be able to hear the individual phonemes in words to write the corresponding grapheme. In order to spell the word cat, it is necessary to segment the word into its individual sounds; c-a-t.

Before writing a word young children need time to think about it, say the word several times, count the sounds and then write it. Once children have written the same word several times they won't need to use these four steps as frequently.

Children will enjoy spelling if it feels like fun and if they feel good about themselves as spellers. We need, therefore, to be playful and positive in our approach—noticing and praising what children **can** do as well as helping them to correct their mistakes. For children in Reception and Year 1 we actively encourage them to write phonetically. This may mean it is not always accurate but can be read by 'sounding out'.

What are tricky words?

Tricky words are words that are often called common exception words. This means they don't follow the usual rules of phonics and spelling patterns taught so far. In order to read simple sentences, it is necessary for children to know some words that have unusual or untaught spellings. It should be noted that, when teaching these words, it is important to always start with sounds already known in the word, then focus on the 'tricky' part. When reading at home and your child meets one of these words encourage them to look for the parts they know. We revise these words regularly so that children can eventually read them fluently when they come across them.

What are CVC words?

CVC stands for consonant-vowel-consonant and words such as map/cat are CVC.

CCVC stands for consonant-consonant-vowel-consonant and words such as slam/from are CCVC.

How can I help my child at home?

A great way to engage children at home with phonics is to play games. Matching pairs, snap, sorting words or letters, I spy the sound, and phonics hopscotch can all be ways to help teach your child.

If you have a computer at home then you can try some of the interactive games listed below.

Useful websites you can access at home for more information and games.

<https://www.phonicsplay.co.uk/>

<https://www.ictgames.com/phonicsPop/index.html>

<http://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/welcome/home/reading-owl/fun-ideas>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/grownups/the-alphablocks-guide-to-phonics>

There are many resources on the Little Wandle website for parents.

<https://www.littlewandlelettersandsounds.org.uk/resources/for-parents/>