

At St. Martin's Catholic Primary School we believe that the teaching of phonics is vital in order for children to become competent readers and writers.

All phonics in EYFS and KS1 is taught following 'The Bug Club Phonics Programme' alongside the Letters and Sounds document. We have adopted the daily 4 part teaching sequence of:

Revisit and Review, Teach, Practise, Apply and Assess

Phonics is taught in short, briskly paced sessions and then applied to reading and writing in a meaningful context. All activities are well matched to the children's abilities and interests, and all classroom environments have an age appropriate display concentrating on both sounds and key words. At St Martin's we provide ample opportunities to reinforce and apply acquired phonic knowledge and skills across the curriculum and in such activities as shared and guided reading and writing.

What is phonics?

Phonics is a method of teaching children to read by linking sounds and the symbols that represent them. Phonics is the learning-to-read method used in primary schools in the UK today. The alphabet contains only 26 letters. 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 'ch'). There are six phases of letters and sounds taught from Nursery to Year 2. Phase 1 begins in Nursery, phases 2, 3 and 4 are taught in Reception and consolidated in Year 1. Children are then taught phase 5 in Year 1 and phase 6 in Year 2.

What do all the technical words mean?

What is a phoneme?

It is the smallest unit of sound and a piece of terminology that children like to use and should be taught. For example 'dog' has three phonemes / d / o / g.

What is a grapheme?

A grapheme 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 as in tree/, ea as in beat, ey as in monkey. They all make the same sound (phoneme) but are spelt differently.

What is a digraph?

This is when two or more letters come together to make a phoneme. For example /oa/ in boat.

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 when reading. Blending is more difficult to do with longer words, so learning how to blend accurately from an early age is really important.

What is segmenting?

Segmenting is a skill used in spelling. In order to spell the word cat, it is necessary to segment the word into its constituent sounds: c-a-t. Children often understand segmenting as 'chopping' a word. Before writing a word young children need time to think about it, say the word several times, 'chop' the word 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.

What are tricky words?

Tricky words are words that cannot be 'sounded-out' but need to be learned by heart. They don't fit into the usual spelling patterns. Examples of these words are attached under each phase. 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.

The Phases of Letters and Sounds Phase 1 (started in Nursery) Phase 1 of Letters and Sounds concentrates on developing children's speaking and listening skills and lays the foundations for the phonic work which starts in Phase 2. The emphasis during Phase 1 is to get children attuned to the sounds around them and ready to begin developing oral blending and segmenting skills.

Phase 2 (started in Reception)

In Phase 2, letters and their sounds are introduced one at a time. A set of letters is taught each week, in the following sequence:

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

The children will begin to learn to blend and segment to begin reading and spelling. This will begin with simple words.

Tricky words introduced in Phase 2: the, to, l, go, into, no

Phase 3 (Reception and Year 1)

By the time they reach Phase 3, children will already be able to blend and segment words containing the 19 letters taught in Phase 2. Over the twelve weeks which Phase 3 is expected to last, twenty-five new graphemes are introduced (one at a time).

Set 6 : j,v,w,x Set 7: y,z,zz,qu Consonant digraphs: ch, sh, th, ng Vowel digraphs: ai, ee, igh, oa, oo, ar, or, ur, ow, oi, ear, air, ure, er

Tricky words introduced in Phase 3: we, me, be, was, no, go, my, you, they, her, all, are

Phase 4 (Reception and Year 1)

By Phase 4 children will be able to represent each of 42 phonemes with a grapheme. They will blend phonemes to read CCVC and CVCC words and segment these words for spelling. They will also be able to read two syllable words that are simple. They will be able to read all the tricky words learnt so far and will be able to spell some of them. This phase consolidates all that the children have learnt in the previous phases.

Tricky words introduced in Phase 4: said, so, she, he, have, like, some, come, were, there, little, one, they, all, are, do, when, out, what, my, her

Phase 5 (Year 1)

Children will be taught new graphemes and alternative pronunciations for these graphemes and graphemes they already know. They will begin to learn to choose the appropriate grapheme when spelling. The children will be automatically decoding a large number of words for reading by this point.

Tricky words introduced in Phase 5: oh, their, people, Mr, Mrs, looked, called, asked, water, where, who, again, thought, through, work, mouse, many, laughed, because, different, any, eyes, friends, once, please

New graphemes for reading: ay as in day, oy as in boy, wh as in when, a-e as in make, ou as in out, ir as in girl, ph as in photo, e-e as in these, ie as in tie, ue as in blue, ew as in new, i-e as in like, ea as in eat, aw as in saw, oe as in toe, o-e as in home, au as in Paul, u-e as in rule

During this phase children will begin reading words fluently and no longer be blending and segmenting familiar words. The real focus throughout the phase is to not only learn the new graphemes for reading but also to learn to read words with alternative pronunciations. Children also will need to learn alternative spellings for each phoneme.

Phase 6 (Year 2)

In phase 6 children will be reading longer and less familiar texts independently and fluently. It is crucial that at this point children are now reading to learn and reading for pleasure. At this point it is important that comprehension strategies are developed so that children clarify meaning, ask and answer questions about the texts they are reading, construct mental images during reading and summarise what they have read. Throughout the phase children are encouraged to develop strategies for learning spellings.