

# Phonics, Reading and Writing in the Early Years

## Why is phonics so important?

An awareness of letter sounds is the foundation upon which all other literacy skills can be built.

This awareness is about:

- linking a letter to a sound
- hearing the letter sound at the **beginning** of a word (initial letter sound).
- hearing the letter sound at the **end** of the word (final letter sound).
- hearing any sound **within** a word ( medial sounds) This is the trickiest one!
- hearing similarities and patterns in words, such as the use of **onset and rime**. (**Cat c=onset at=rime**) – (rime is spelt in this way when referring to this element of phonics)

In our Nursery the children practice their phase 1 listening skills with activities such as listening walks, guess the instrument and gaining an awareness of rhyme and alliteration from stories and games. In term 6 we begin to think about single sounds.

In Reception we aim to teach the children most of their sounds before Christmas, the sounds they learn will be accompanied by actions. The actions are a support mechanism and a multi sensory link. The important part is the **letter sound** and it is very important that **sounds are pronounced correctly. (No 'uh' after the sound)** Once children link the letters and sounds, they can decode words and begin to read. We also teach the letter name as this is important later in the phase when children are spelling tricky words, however the letter 'sound' is more important at first.

# How will the children begin to read?

Early reading occurs in many forms – all equally important.

- **telling** stories and rhymes
- **hearing** stories
- **acting** out stories – role play
- **seeing** print in their environment
- **sharing** books
- **handling** books

It is important for children to handle books regularly and develop a passion for them. This includes a range of both fiction and non-fiction.

You can support reading at home by thinking about the following:

**Discuss the pictures**, make sense of **pictures** in relation to the **text**, tell stories from just the pictures, use a **story voice**, pick out **story language** ( once upon a time....), identify repeated phrases as children love joining in with these.

In term 1 your child will bring home a Reading Record, please try to read with them as often as possible and use the record to let us know how they get on at home. At the front of the reading record will be a sound mat showing the sounds your child is leaning. Supporting your child to spot these sounds in the book is a great idea, as well as all of that valuable story talk. Sharing stories with your child is so important.

In school we use a very successful reading scheme called '**Read Write inc.**' (RWI) This scheme builds upon children's phonic knowledge and ties in with their key word recognition. Please see the parent leaflet that explains this scheme.

## What about writing?

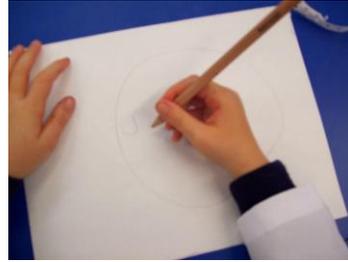
Early writing is initially about making marks. The next step is to know that these marks carry meaning.

Early writing (mark making) is developed through activities that involve making both large and small movements, we call these gross and fine motor skills and they are key to the development of writing.

Making big arm movements with ribbons, hoops, chinks on the playground, large paintings and general play helps develop gross motor skills. These, when your child is ready, develop into fine motor skills through activities such as dough disco, threading small beads, peg boards, small world play, Lego, colouring, painting, cutting and sticking, drawing and writing in sand and other media such as shaving foam! All of these are fun to do at home and so valuable to your child's development.



All of these activities will result in holding a pencil/felt tip pen/paintbrush comfortably and correctly. Many children do not choose a preferred hand until their Reception year, don't worry it will develop when they are ready.



The Read, Write Inc phonics programme links directly to the writing as the scheme is designed to teach the sounds and the formation of the letter together. These are on the sound mat at the front of your child's reading record book.

At home you can encourage your child to form letters and write through simple tasks such as helping you write a shopping list or birthday present list. Remember any form of mark making is going to be of huge benefit to your child.

If you have any questions about any of this, please feel free to pop in and ask a member of the team.

Holly Docherty  
EYFS Lead