

Data Sheet – Phonics and early reading in the Reception Year



The aim of this data sheet is to provide additional information for families supporting their child's early reading development in the Reception Year.

- There are two sets of processes involved in learning to read; **word recognition and language comprehension**. Each will flourish with the right kind of help and support from both home and school.
- Your child needs to develop both sets of processes as neither is sufficient on their own. There is lots of information given on the Reading Development Wheel itself that will help you to support your child's **language comprehension skills** (understanding of what they have read including vocabulary and meaning).

Word Recognition – Recognising the printed words (Phonics to automatic recognition)

- All children in maintained schools are now taught how to read the printed words using a systematic synthetic phonics programme as set out in the Government's School White Paper: The Importance of Teaching (2010). You can find out more information about the chosen phonics programme at your child's school by speaking to your child's class teacher
- Whichever programme your child's school uses the following information should help you to understand the processes involved in applying phonic knowledge to read:

Terminology your child/ school might use:

- ◆ **Phoneme** – The smallest unit of sound in a word e.g. the word mat has 3 separate units of sound (phonemes) /m/ /a/ /t/
- ◆ **Grapheme** – The letter or group of letters that represent a phoneme e.g. the phoneme /c/ can be represented by the letter C or the phoneme /sh/ as in ship
- ◆ **Blending** – Merging phonemes together to pronounce a word so c-a-t says cat. Understanding how to merge phonemes together supports reading.
- ◆ **Segmenting** - Hearing individual phonemes within a word. Understanding how to segment a word into its component phonemes supports spelling.
- ◆ **Digraph** – A grapheme where two letters represent one sound (phoneme) e.g. /ch/ as in chair or /ee/ as in bee
- ◆ **Trigraph** - A grapheme where three letters represent one sound (phoneme) e.g. /air/ as in hair or /ear/ as in hear.
- ◆ **Phoneme** – Grapheme correspondence – Knowing the phoneme (sound) that corresponds with each grapheme they see in a word. It is the phonemes (sounds) in words that help us to read NOT the letter names.

- When children are ready (usually by the age of five but not always), they will begin to learn how to read words by:
 - ✓ Learning the phonemes that correspond with the graphemes they are taught (ask your child's teacher for information about the sequence they will use to introduce these)
 - ✓ saying and blending together phonemes (sounds) in order from left to right in order to identify a word orally and then in writing
- Your child should bring home phoned reading books from school to practice their phonics skills.
- However, lots of additional practise and repetition through games and reading as part of their play is key to ensure that your child can recognise phonemes in words instantly (even the digraphs and trigraphs that hide within words!). If your child can recognise each phoneme instantly in an unfamiliar word it makes it easier for them to hook the sounds together as they say them in sequence and hear the word accurately.

Games you could play at home:

- **What's in the box** – Hide a selection of objects like a tin, pen, toy dog or cat in a small box, you can make your selections depending on the phonemes you know your child is currently learning at school. Ask your child to listen carefully as you blend the individual phonemes in one word... Can they guess the object? E.g. /p/ /e/ /n/ blend it to say pen. Repeat for each of the hidden objects.
- **Play an adapted version of I spy...** I spy with my little eye a /c/ /u/ /p/ can your child blend the phonemes to say / read what you have spied? Can they take a turn saying the phonemes they hear in the word/ object they have chosen?
- **Snap** – Write labels on post-it notes and ask your child to blend to read each word before sticking the label on the correct object or toy around the house. If you have a timer...challenge them to see how many labels they can read in 1 minute. (Include only words that contain phoneme – grapheme correspondences that they have already been taught at school).
- **Simon Says** – Say the final word in each command as separate phonemes for them to blend e.g. Simon says touch your /h/ /air/ ...hair.
- **Messages** – Use the magnetic letters on the fridge to write simple messages for your child to read e.g. I am hot.
- **Lists** – Create simple lists for children to read as part of their daily routines e.g. a list of things to take to Grandma's house, a list of items to buy at the supermarket...the possibilities are endless!
- **Phoneme Hunt-** Encourage your child to be a phoneme (sound) detective as you share books, magazines, the newspaper etc. Can they find / highlight the grapheme that represents the phoneme /sh/? Make a collection of words containing that phoneme or cut out examples you find in leaflets or magazines. (Adapt to focus on phoneme-grapheme correspondences they have just learned or those that they struggle to remember).

These are just a few possibilities to get you started...involve your child in creating new games that link with their interests as this will make learning motivating and FUN!