

Phonics in Nursery

Understanding and Supporting
your child through Phase 1 Phonics



What is phonics?

Phonics is a method for teaching reading and writing.

It develops phonemic awareness – the ability to hear, recognise and use the sounds within words.

Learners are also taught the correspondence between sounds and the graphemes (spelling patterns) that represent them.

Phonics is currently the main way in which children in British primary schools are taught to read in their earliest years.



Why are children taught phonics?

Phonics, taught in a structured way, is generally accepted to be the most effective way to teach reading and writing.

Children learn to hear and recognise sounds in words and spell them correctly.

This assists with their confidence, accuracy and fluency.

Phonics should not be taught in isolation — children also need to learn other reading and comprehension skills alongside phonic knowledge.



How do we teach phonics at Fairfields?

We follow the “Little Wandle” phonics programme from Nursery onwards.

In Nursery we teach phase 1 and follow Little Wandle’s “Foundation for Phonics” programme.



Little Wandle

Foundation for Phonics (Phase 1)

Foundations for Phonics contributes to the provision for 'Communication and language' and 'Literacy' (DfE, 2022)¹ ; it sits alongside our stimulating language-rich Nursery provision.

Foundations for Phonics sets out the provision that should be in place to ensure children are well prepared to begin grapheme–phoneme correspondence and blending at the start of Reception.

In Nursery we;

- Share high-quality stories and poems with children
- Learn a range of nursery rhymes and action rhymes
- Participate in activities that develop focused listening and attention, including oral blending
- Pay attention to the use of high-quality language in interactions with children



Little Wandle

Foundation for Phonics (Phase 1)

Little Wandle's Foundation for Phonics programme is split into two parts:

- Progression of Sounds
- Oral Blending Focus

We focus on both of these elements every day in a consistent and repetitive manner to help the children secure their knowledge and skills. Our daily phonic sessions are teacher led and planned progressively.



Little Wandle

Foundation for Phonics; Progression of Sounds

In the Progression of Sounds section of Foundation for Phonics we teach the children to hear, identify, distinguish and articulate specific sounds for names and words of objects.

This is done through a range of games and activities suggested by Little Wandle such as;

- Play with sounds
- Bertha the bus goes to the zoo
- Name play
- Voice sounds
- What's in the box?

We also investigate the different sounds that we can make with our voices.

Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
No individual sounds taught	s, a, t, p, i, n	m, d, g, o, c, k, e	u, r, h, f, b, l, j	v, w, y, z, qu, ch,	ck, x, sh, th, ng, nk



Little Wandle

Foundation for Phonics; Oral Blending

In the Oral blending section of the programme we teach children to break down words into phonemes (the smallest units of sound).

This helps children identify and hear phonemes in words and blend them together to read a word.

It is important that children have plenty of experience of listening to adults modelling oral blending and joining in with oral blending activities before they are introduced to grapheme–phoneme correspondence.

This ensures they are ‘tuned into’ sounds when they begin Phase 2.



Storytime In Nursery

In Nursery, the children have lots of opportunities to engage with books that will fire their imagination and interest, as well as immerse them in language they would not otherwise be exposed to.

The children hear at least one story per day, however it is often two or more.

We always finish the Nursery day with a story from our collection of the children's favourite books.

These books have lots of rhyme, rhythm, alliteration and/or voice sounds and actions and support developing speaking and listening skills.



Storytimes at home



Reading at home will really support your child's development.

Read lots of stories together and whenever you can! Encourage your child to join in wherever possible making noises or reading in different voices to bring the story alive.

Children love to hear the same story again and again so get comfy with them, and enjoy watching them confidently telling you what will happen on the next page!

If your child wants to, let them tell you the story, turning the pages as they go. Give them lots of smiles and encouragement.



Nursery Rhymes

Nursery rhymes are fantastic vocabulary boosters. They often feature simple repetitive phrases that young children find easy to remember and repeat.

In order to develop their phonological awareness, children need to be repeatedly exposed to spoken language and nursery rhymes provide the perfect way to do this.

“Experts in literacy and child development have discovered that if children know eight nursery rhymes by heart by the time they're four years old, they're usually among the best readers by the time they're eight.”



Nursery Rhymes

Nursery rhymes provide bite-sized learning opportunities for young children to develop key developmental skills and can often be the trigger for hours of creative and open-ended play.

They are a powerful learning source in early literacy and enable children to become interested in the rhythm and patterns of language.

Consider the alliteration in “A Sailor Went to Sea Sea Sea”, or the rhyme in “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star”. Many nursery rhymes are also repetitive which can support the development of memory and kick-start the practice of listening and speaking.



How can I help my child at home?

- Encourage quiet time at home. Switch off the television and listen. Can your child tell you what sounds they can hear? Which sounds are the loudest? Follow a sound and work out where it is coming from.
- Investigate sound makers at home: bunch of keys, a jar of rice, a packet of crisps, a squeaky pet toy etc. Discuss and describe the sounds with your child.
- Play sound lotto games together.
- Make shakers together: fill plastic eggs with household objects such as rice, pasta, buttons etc. Discuss the sounds they make.
- Add sound effects to stories i.e. bang toy bricks together for “trip trap” in The Three Billy Goats Gruff.
- Sing songs and nursery rhymes



How can I help my child at home?

- Allow your child to investigate what sounds they can make using kitchen pots and pans and a range of wooden and serving spoons.
- Read rhyming stories.
- Play rhyming I-Spy: “I spy with my little eye, something that rhymes with...”
- Clap syllables i.e. 1 clap for ‘ant’, 2 claps for ‘bee-tle’, 3 claps for ‘butt-er-fly’ etc.
- Practise alliteration by adding an adjective to names in your family i.e. Marvellous Mummy, Delightful Daddy, Naughty Nanny, Grumpy Grandad etc.
- Read simple tongue twisters such as “She sells sea shells on the seashore”
- Make different voice sounds: a bouncy ball (boing, boing), hiss like a snake (ssssss), Be a steam train (chchchchch), Buzz like a bee (zzzzzzz), Be a clock (tick tock).



We are here to help you and your child

Do not hesitate to contact Nursery if there is anything at all that we can help you with this year.

And, please don't forget that all children develop and progress at different rates and it is not helpful to compare them to each other.

Remember...

"There's no comparison between the sun and the moon. They shine when it is their time".

