

# Letters and Sounds

## November 2013



# Introduction

- Children learn a great deal from other people.
- As parents and carers, you are your child's first teachers. You have a powerful influence on your child's early learning.



# The spoken language

- From a very early age, children develop an awareness of the different sounds in our spoken language(s).
- They learn how to use their voices:
  - to make contact with you
  - to let you know what they need
  - to show how they are feeling
- As parents and carers, you best understand your child's communications; you are key in helping them to develop their speaking and listening skills.



# How can you help?

- Provide your child with lots of different opportunities to speak and listen with others:
  - Preparing meals
  - Tidying up
  - Putting shopping away
  - Getting ready to go out
- Switch off the TV, radio and mobile phones
- Show you are interested in their conversation
- Read stories
- Use puppets and toys



# The importance of speech sounds

- As children grow older, they will begin to understand the different sounds in languages, and join in with stories, songs, rhymes by clapping, stamping and skipping.
- This is an important stage, as the ears are beginning to tune into the important sounds they can hear, and discriminate.
- Over time, your child will begin to distinguish between different speech sounds (phonemes), and they will match sounds to letters (graphemes). This is called phonic knowledge.



# Phase 1

- Your child will be learning to:
  - Have fun with sounds
  - Listen carefully
  - Develop their vocabulary
  - Speak confidently to you, other adults and children
  - Tune into sounds
  - Listen and remember sounds
  - Talk about sounds
  - Understand that spoken words are made up of different sounds



# Phase 1

- Phase 1 is made up of 7 different areas:
  - Environmental sounds
  - Instrumental sounds
  - Body percussion
  - Rhythm and rhyme
  - Alliteration (words that begin with the same sound)
  - Voice sounds
  - Oral blending and segmenting



# Phase 2

- This is begun in the Reception year
- Children begin to formally learn the sounds in the English language
- Phonics sessions are fun sessions involving lots of speaking, listening and games





# Not all children will learn at the same rate!

- Your child should be supported *whatever* their rate of learning
- There is a very close link between *difficulty with phonics* and *hearing*, so if your child is making progress more slowly than expected, it is worth having their hearing checked.



# Sound talk

- The separate sounds (phonemes) are spoken aloud, in order, all through the word, and are then merged together into the whole word.
- The merging is called **blending**, and is a vital skill for reading.
- Eg: c-a-t = cat



# Sound talk

- Children will also learn to do this the other way round. Eg: cat = c-a-t
- The whole word is spoken aloud and then broken up into its sounds (phonemes) in order, through the word.
- This is called **segmenting**, and is a vital skill for spelling.



# Learning the phonemes

- Children will learn the phonemes (sounds) for a number of letters (graphemes)
- They will also learn that some phonemes are made up of more than one letter,  
eg: /ll/ as in b-e-ll
- We use actions to help to remember the phonemes



# Saying the sounds

- Your child will be taught how to pronounce the sounds (phonemes) correctly to make blending easier
- Sounds should be sustained where possible (eg, sss, mmm, fff)
- If not, 'uh' sounds after consonants should be reduced where possible (eg, try to avoid saying 'b-uh', 'c-uh')



# VC and CVC words

- C = consonant, V = vowel
- VC words are those consisting of a vowel and then a consonant, eg: *at, in, up*
- CVC words follow the pattern consonant, vowel, consonant, eg: *cat, dog, pet*
- Words such as *tick* or *bell* also count as CVC words; although they contain four letters, they only have three sounds



# Making words

- Now the children will be *seeing* letters and words, as well as hearing them
- They will be shown how to make whole words by:
  - pushing magnetic letters together to form little words
  - Reading little words on the board
  - Breaking up words into individual sounds



# Tricky words

- Your child will also learn several tricky words; those that cannot be sounded out
- Eg: **the, to, I, go, no**





# Phase 3

- The main individual letter phonemes have now been learnt, and children are reading CVC words independently
- Phase 3 teaches children to learn the graphemes (written sounds), made up of more than one letter, eg: **'oa' as in boat**
- Your child will also learn all the letter names in the alphabet and how to form them correctly



# Phase 3

- Read more tricky words and begin to spell some of them
- Read and write words in phrases and sentences



# How can I help?

- Sing an alphabet song together
- Play 'I spy'
- Continue to play with magnetic letters, using some two-grapheme (letter) combinations, eg: *r-ai-n = rain* blending for reading  
*rain = r-ai-n* segmenting for spelling
- Praise your child for trying out words
- Ask for a list of tricky words
- Create phonic games with a timer
- Play pairs



Don't worry if they get some wrong!

These sounds and words are hard to remember and need plenty of practice.

