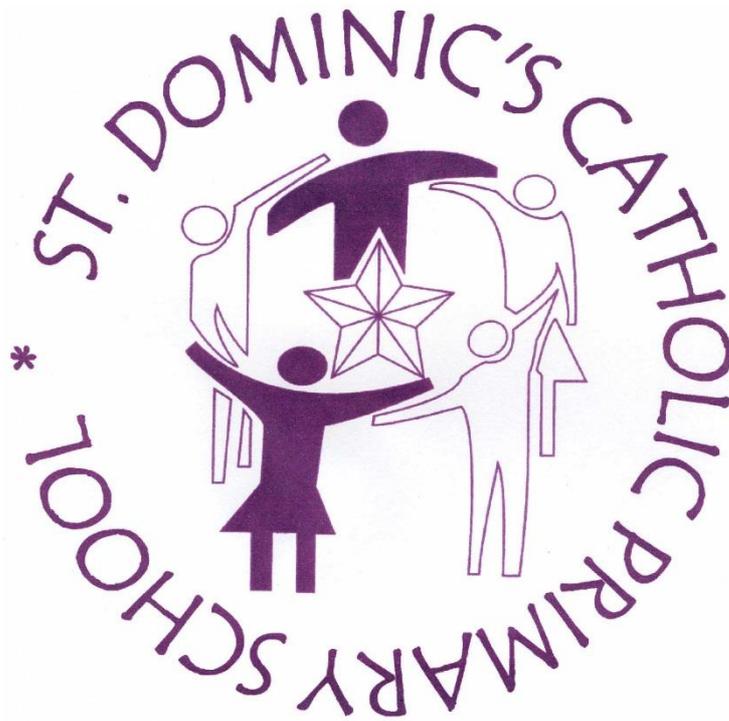


Phonics:  
**‘Letters and Sounds’**  
A Guide for  
Parents



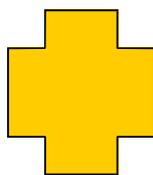
Being able to read is the most important skill children learn during their early schooling and has far-reaching implications for lifelong learning, confidence and well-being. High quality phonic teaching is the prime means by which we teach children how to read and spell words.

At St. Dominic's, we follow the 'Letters and Sounds' phonics programme and this guide is designed to help you, as parents, understand 'Letters and Sounds' so that you can support your child at home.

## Phonics at a Glance

Phonics is .....

**Skills of  
segmentation and  
blending**



**Knowledge of  
the alphabetical  
code**

### Phonics consists of:

- Identifying sounds in spoken words;
- Recognising the common spellings of each phoneme (sound);
- Blending phonemes into words for reading;
- Segmenting words into phonemes for spelling.

### Help!!! (Some terminology explained):

**Phoneme:** a sound in a word

**Grapheme:** a letter or sequence of letters that represent a phoneme

**Segmenting:** means breaking words down into their phonemes (sounds) ch/a/t

**Blending:** is the reverse of segmenting! You are building words from their phonemes to read.

### Segmenting

When reading the word **light** in phonics, we break the word down into **l – igh – t**.

This is known as **segmenting**, as we are splitting the word up to make it easier to read (just like we'd break an orange into segments, in order to make it easier to eat!).

Although there are 5 letters in the word light (**l,i,g,h,t**), there are only 3 sounds (**l-igh-t**). It is the sounds we think about and say when segmenting in phonics, not each individual letter!

Once we have learnt which letters together make which sounds, segmenting a word becomes easier! It just takes a little practice!

## Blending

Once we have broken up the word we wish to read, we then **blend** it back together. This basically means that after we have segmented a word (also known as 'sounding out') we say the word correctly/ read the word!

In order for children to be able to say the word they have broken up, they must be able to hear it first. For example, it is easy for most grown-ups to hear each sound in the word **chick**. Segmented, the word becomes **ch-i-ck** (3 sounds). If we say each sound slowly, it is almost like saying the broken down word in slow motion. The more quickly we say each sound, the closer we are to hearing the word in its full form!

For children, it is important that each sound is pronounced properly, so that they can properly hear the different segments of the word! The challenge for children is to then piece it back together (in the right order), otherwise known as **blending!** This might sound tricky, but once blending clicks with a child, it really clicks...and then your little geniuses are well on their way to reading words!

1	2	3
c	a	t
b	ir	d
f	i	sh
l	igh	t

The words in the chart have already been segmented for you. Have a go at saying each sound in the word separately, then say the word!

For example c – a – t.....cat!

If you can say each sound and then the word, you have successfully segmented and blended! Practising this over and over with your child, so that they are saying each part of the word out loud is key to success!

## Some more information (to make you sound like a phonics expert!):

### Grapheme Key Vocabulary:

**Digraph: 2 letters making 1 sound (ai, ee, oo, ch, th)**

**Trigraph: 3 letters making 1 sound (igh, ure)**

## **Something to think about – Phonetically Plausible Words:**

In Reception, if a child spells the word play with ai (plai) instead of the correct ay (play), this is still fabulous for their age! It is still using a version of the ay sound, and is known as being **phonetically plausible**...because it can still be read! All of the alternative sounds are learnt in Year 1. However, exposing children to all of the different variations at a young age (through phonics, reading books, looking at text in the environment, phonics games etc) is crucial, so that eventually - when they are writing fully further up school- they will choose the correct sound...and therefore spell words accurately!

Wouldn't it be great if your child was getting top marks in their spellings test each week in Year 1! So, although your Reception children are still young, everything you do now, and everything you expose them to, makes a difference! The more support and opportunities they have to practice their 'Letters and Sounds', the better!

### **'Letters and Sounds' Progression (the Phases explained)**

In Phonics, children are taught different phonics 'phases', starting at Phase 1 and progressing to Phase 6.

At St. Dominic's, our children are assessed regularly in Phonics to ensure that their needs are being met. It is important that each child is secure within a phase before moving too quickly onto the next phase.

Here is a brief summary of each phase:

#### **Phase 1 (pre-school)**

Children should learn to:

- show an awareness of rhyme and alliteration;
- distinguish between sounds in the environment/phonemes;
- explore and experiment with sounds and words;
- discriminate speech in words

#### **Phase 2 (Reception)**

Children should learn to:

- use common consonants and vowels;
- be able to blend and segment to read/ spell simple c-v-c words;
- begin to learn 'tricky words' that cannot be segmented;
- understand that words are constructed from phonemes and that phonemes are represented by graphemes.

### Phase 3 (Reception)

Children should learn to:

- know at least one grapheme for each of the 44 phonemes (there are approximately 44 phonemes in the English language!);
- read and spell a wide range of c-v-c words;
- use all letters and less frequent consonant digraphs and some long vowel phonemes;
- continue to learn 'tricky words'.

### Phase 4 (Reception/Year 1)

This is a consolidation unit. There are no new graphemes to learn. Instead, children learn to:

- read and spell more 'tricky words';
- segment adjacent consonants in words and apply this to spelling;
- blend adjacent consonants in words and apply this skill when reading unfamiliar texts.

Phases 5 and 6 are taught in Key Stage One, along with Support for Spelling.

### **Letters and Sounds: Progression**

In Reception, a child's attendance and punctuality becomes ever so more important – attending Phonics (taught first thing in the morning) is crucial for their understanding and progression!

You can also help your child really get to grips with their phonics by spending some time with them going over what they have learnt that day or week in phonics. A quick, fun 5-10 minutes is all it takes, as often as you can.

Thank you for taking the time to read this **Letters and Sounds Guide**. We hope it has been useful. Remember, YOU are the most important aspect of your child's life. Everything YOU do with your child really matters, no matter how small! Give a little time to your child; help them with their phonics, mix it up with love, fun and praise, and you will see what a difference YOU make!