

Doverly Down Lower School

Parent's Guide to Phonics



A guide to how phonics will help your child read and spell.

At Doverly we use 'Letters and Sounds'. This is a phonics resource published by the Department for Education and Skills in 2007. It aims to build children's speaking and listening skills in their own right as well as prepare children for learning to read by developing their phonic knowledge and skills. It sets out a detailed and systematic programme for teaching phonic skills for children starting by the age of five, with the aim of them becoming fluent readers by age seven.

Due to the National Curriculum being updated September 2014, Year 1 and 2 are now expected to teach spelling rules and patterns as well as the original phonics phases.

The alphabet contains only 26 letters. Spoken English uses around 44 sounds (phonemes). These phonemes are represented by letters (graphemes). In other words, a sound can be represented by a letter (e.g. 's' or 'h') or a group of letters (e.g. 'th' or 'ear').

Once children begin to learn sounds, they are used quickly to read and spell words. This leaflet provides an overview of the teaching of letters and sounds at Dover, to help you support your child.

There are six phases of letters and sounds taught from Pre-school to Year 2. In the National Curriculum they are now referred, for Years 1 and 2, as 'Spelling', where we have a list of expectations that need to be taught in each year group. It follows the same phases as Letters and Sounds but are now just referred to as 'spelling'.

Phase 1 begins in Pre-school, phases, 2, 3, 4 are taught in Reception and consolidated in Year 1. Children are then taught phase 5 in Year 1 along with starting to apply spelling patterns such as suffixes. Year 2 briefly recap on phase 5 and quickly progress onto spelling rules and patterns (phase 6 previously).

What do all the technical words mean?

What is a phoneme?

It is the smallest unit of sound that the children are taught to use in Phonics. At first it will equate with a letter sound but later on will include digraphs. For example 'rain' has three phonemes, /r/ai/n.

What is a grapheme?

A grapheme is a letter or a number of letters that represent a sound (phoneme) in a word. Another way to explain it is to say that a grapheme is a letter or letters that spell a sound in a word. E.g. /ee/, /ea/, /ey/ all make that same phoneme but are spelt differently.

What is a digraph?

This is when two or more letters come together to make a phoneme. /oa/ makes the 'O' sound in boat.

What is blending?

Blending is the process that is involved in bringing sounds together to make a word or syllable and is how /c/ /a/ /t/ becomes cat. To learn to read well children must be able to smoothly blend sounds together. Blending sounds fluidly helps to improve fluency when reading. Blending is more difficult to do with longer words so learning how to blend accurately from an early age is imperative. Showing your child how to blend is important. Model how to ‘push’ sounds smoothly together without stopping at each individual sound.

What is segmenting?

Segmenting is a skill used in reading and spelling. In order to spell the word cat, it is necessary to segment the word into its constituent sounds c-a-t.

Children often understand segmenting as ‘sounding out’ a word. Before writing a word young children need time to think about it, say the word several times, ‘sound out’ the word and then write it. Once children have written the same word several times they won’t need to use segmenting as frequently. Children will enjoy reading and spelling if it feels like fun and if they feel good about themselves as readers and spellers. We need, therefore, to be playful and positive in our approach – noticing and praising what children **can** do as well as helping them correct their mistakes.

What are tricky words?

Tricky words are words that cannot be ‘sounded-out’ but need to be learned by heart. They don’t fit into the usual spelling patterns. In order to read simple sentences, it is necessary for children to know some words that have unusual or untaught spellings. It should be noted that, when teaching these words, it is important to always start with sounds already known to the word, then focus on the ‘tricky’ part.

What are common exception words?

These are also known as 'high frequency words' and are words that recur frequently in written material young children read and that they need when they write.

What are CVC words?

CVC stands for consonant – vowel – consonant, so words such as map and cat are CVC. In phase 4 we talk about CCVC words such as clip and stop.

Phonic Phases (Known as 'spelling' from Year 1)

Phase 1

Phase 1 of Letter and Sounds concentrates on developing children's speaking and listening skills and lays the foundations for the phonic work which starts in Phase 2. The emphasis during Phase 1 is to get children attuned to the sounds around them and ready to begin developing oral blending and segmenting skills.

Phase 2

In Phase 2, letter and their sounds are introduced one at a time. A set of letters is taught each week, in the following sequence:

Set 1: s, a, t, p

Set 2: l, n, m, d

Set 3: g, o, c, k

Set 4: ck, e, u, r

Set 5: h, b, f, ff, l, ll, ss

The children will begin to learn to blend and segment to begin reading and spelling. This will begin with simple words.

Tricky words are introduced in Phase 2

the	to	l
go	into	no

Phase 3

By the time the children reach Phase 3, they will already be able to segment and blend words containing 19 letters taught in Phase 2.

Over the 12 weeks that Phase 3 is expected to last, twenty-five new graphemes are introduced (one at a time).

Set 6: j, v, w, x

Set 7: y, z, zz, qu

Consonant digraphs: ch, sh, th, ng

Vowel digraphs: ai, ee, igh, oa, oo, ar, or, ur, ow, oi, ear, air, ure, er

Tricky words introduced in Phase 3

we	me	be	was	no	go
my	you	they	her	all	are

Phase 4

By Phase 4 children will be able to represent each of the 42 phonemes with a grapheme. They will blend phonemes to read CCVC and CVCC words and segment these words for spelling. They will also be able to read two syllable words that are simple. They will be able to read all the tricky words learnt so far and will be able to spell some of them.

This phase consolidates all the children have learnt in the previous phases.

Tricky words introduced in Phase 4

said	so	she	he	have	like
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some	come	were	there	little	one
they	all	are	do	when	out
what	my	her			

By this point children would be expected to be reading CVC words at speed along with tricky words from the previous phases. It is important that children are taught that blending is only used when a word is unfamiliar.

Phase 5

Children will be taught new graphemes and alternative pronunciations for these graphemes and graphemes they already know. They will begin to learn to choose the appropriate grapheme for spelling. The children will be automatically decoding a large number of words for reading at this point.

Tricky words introduced in Phase 5

oh	their	people	Mr	Mrs	looked
called	asked	who	again	thought	through
water	where	many	laughed	because	different
work	mouse	friends	once	please	any
eyes					

New graphemes for reading

ay day	oy boy	wh when	a-e make
ou out	ir girl	ph photo	e-e these
ie tie	ue blue	ew new	i-e like
ea eat	aw saw	oe toe	o-e home
		au Paul	u-e rule

During this stage children will begin reading words fluently and no longer be segmenting and blending familiar words.

The real focus throughout the phase is not only learn the new graphemes for reading but also to learn to read words with alternative pronunciations. Children will also need to learn alternative spellings for each phoneme.

After Phase 5

Once the children are secure in Phase 5 the children will be reading longer and less familiar texts. It is also important at this stage that comprehension strategies are developed so that children can clarify meaning, ask and answer questions about the texts they are reading, construct mental images during reading and summarise what they have read.

In spelling the children are introduced to adding of suffixes and how to spell longer words. Throughout this stage they are taught and encouraged to develop strategies for learning spellings by learning spelling rules and patterns.

Strategy	Explanation
Syllables	To learn a word by listening to how many syllables there are so it can be broken into smaller bits. (Sep-tem-ber)
Root words	To learn a word by finding its root word. (jumping – root word jump+ing)
Analogy	To learn a word using a word that is already learnt. (could, would, should)
Mnemonics	To learn a word by making up a sentence to help remember

	them. (because – big, elephants, can, always, understand, small, elephants)
Homophones	These are words that sound the same but have different spellings/meanings. (sail/sale, see/sea)

What can I do at home?

A great way to engage children at home with phonics is to play games. Matching pairs, snap, sorting words or letters can all be ways to help teach or support your children.

If you have a computer at home then below is a list of websites that have fun interactive games for the children to play.

<http://www.letters-and-sounds.com>

<http://www.phonicsplay.co.uk>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/wordsandpictures/>

http://www.ictgames.com/phonemeFlop_v4.html

<http://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/welcome/home/reading-owl/fun-ideas>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/ks1/literacy/phonics/play/popup.shtml>

We hope you have found this information useful. Please ask your class teacher if you have any further questions.