

St Philip's Marsh  
Nursery School  
Cashmore Early  
Years Centre



Helping your child at home:  
Phonics skills for  
Reading and Writing.

## Introduction

This booklet contains advice and ideas to help you to support your child with learning phonics, for reading and writing.

Primary Schools teach reading and writing through a structured program of **synthetic phonics**. Different schools follow different programs, but all programs are similar to the government program, *Letters and Sounds*. You can find more information online if you search for "Letters and sounds gov.uk". There are seven phases in the *Letters and Sounds* program. In Nursery School we focus on Phase 1.

Young children's ears and hearing are still not fully developed. Children need to hear all the different sounds in a word before they can say the word and before they can read and write the word.

Phase 1 supports children to develop skills to listen, hear, remember and understand all the sounds and sound-patterns in language. These skills are important for children to be able to succeed in the later phases.

Phase 1 is divided into seven areas

- Environmental sounds
- Instrumental sounds
- Body percussion
- Rhythm and rhyme
- Alliteration
- Voice sounds
- Oral blending and segmenting



## Ways to help your child

### Environmental Sounds

- Go on a listening walk - when walking down the road make a point of listening to different sounds: cars revving, people talking, birds singing, dogs barking. When you get home try and remember all the sounds you heard.
- Make sounds using a range of props such as running a stick along a fence and tapping on the bin lid.
- Invent a secret family 'knock' for entering rooms.
- Play sound lotto. Commercial sound lotto can be purchased from many children's toy stores but making your own from your sound walk would be far more rewarding.



### Instrumental sounds

- Make your own musical instruments using cardboard rolls, tins, dried peas, beans, stones. Shake these loudly, softly, as you are marching, skipping or stomping. Play 'guess what's inside the instrument'.
- Sing known songs loudly and then softly, stretch words in known songs and add new words or sounds.
- Listen to a range of music with your child from rap to classical. Encourage your child to move in response to the variety of musical styles and moods.



## Body Percussion

- Learn some action rhymes such as 'Wind the bobbin up'.
- Play some commercially produced tapes and CDs. Clap along with familiar rhymes and learn new ones.
- Listen to the sounds your feet make when walking/running/skipping: slowly, softly, fast, stomping hard, in flip flops, boots, high heels.
- Try different types of claps: clap your hands softly, fast and make a pattern for your child to follow. Do the same clapping your thighs or stomping with your feet. Tap your fingers. Click your tongue.



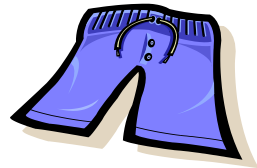
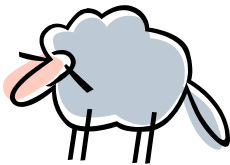
## Rhyme and Rhythm

- Get into the rhythm of our language: bounce your child on your knee to the rhythm of a song or nursery rhyme, march or clap to a chant or poem.
- Help your child move to the rhythm of a song or rhyme.
- Read or say poems, songs, nursery songs and rhyming stories as often as you can, try to use gestures, tap regular beats and pauses to emphasise the rhythm of the piece.
- Add percussion to mark the beats using your hands, feet or instruments.
- Try out some rhythmic chanting such as 'Two, four, six, eight, hurry up or we'll be late' or 'Bip bop boo, who are you?'



## Alliteration

- Play around with familiar songs to emphasise alliteration such as 'Old MacDonald had some sheep, shoes, shorts, with a sh sh here and a sh sh there'.
- Identify the odd one out, e.g. cat, cup, boy, car.
- Make up little nonsense stories together using lots of alliteration.
- Collect items from the park, the garden and around the house that start with the same sound.
- When shopping think about items you are buying and say 'A tall tin of tomatoes', 'A lovely little lemon'. "A bendy banana." Make obvious mistakes to emphasise what you are doing—"a red round rapple!" Encourage your child to do the same.



## Voice Sounds

- Say words in different ways (fast, slowly, high, low, using a funny voice).
- 'Sing' known songs using only sounds, e.g. 'la, la, la', and ask your child to guess the song.
- Vary your tempo and pitch when reading stories.
- Make voices for characters when reading stories.
- Read or tell sound stories. Your local library or book store will be able to point out some very good books that encourage sound making as you read the story. This is fun and can involve all the family.



## Oral Segmenting and Blending

This is about helping children to hear all the separate sounds in words.

Segmenting is breaking a whole word into separate sounds. Sometimes this is described as 'sounding out' a word, or 'sound talk' or 'robot talk'

For example you would sound out the word **mum** by making three separate sounds **m - u - m**.

Blending is the opposite process, being able to hear and remember the separate sounds **m - u - m** and to be able to put the sounds together to say the word **mum**.

These skills are more easily learned first with short words that have three sounds.

- Play a simple "I spy " game at home, for example, "I spy a **s o ck**" ("It's a sock!")
- Play "Simon says put your finger on your ... " with words like head, nose, cheek, chin, for example "**ch i n**"

## Remember

Make it fun, small children have a short attention span. If you can make it fun and exciting for them, it is more likely they will want to participate.

You do not need to carry out formal activities. You can take these ideas and approaches and weave them into the way you talk and play with your child throughout your normal day, and make them relevant to your child's interests.

Little but often is the key, any activities should not last for more than 5-10 minutes.



We hope that you find the information contained useful, but if you have any more questions please see your child's class teacher or key person.

