

# Learning to Read and Write – Guidance for Parents

## Skills for reading and writing

**Speaking and listening are the foundations for reading and writing.**

- Even everyday activities such as preparing meals, tidying up, putting shopping away and getting ready to go out offer you the chance to talk to your child, explaining what you are doing. Through these activities, children hear the way language is put together into sentences for a purpose.
- Books are a rich source of new words for your child; words you would not use in everyday conversations appear in books. Children need to have a wide vocabulary to understand the meaning of books, so read aloud and share books as often as you can. They will enjoy it and it will be useful to them when they come across these words in their own reading later on.



## Ways you can support your children at home: talking and listening

- **Make time to listen to your child talking** – as you meet them from their setting or school, as you walk, or travel home by car, in the supermarket as you shop, at meal times, bath times, and bedtimes – any time!
- **Switch off the TV, radio and mobile phones** – and really listen!
- **Show that you are interested in what they are talking about** – look at your child, smile, nod your head, ask a question or make a response to show that you really have been listening.
- **Make a collection of different toy creatures** – for example, a duck, a snake, an alien, say the sound it might make as you play together, for example, ‘quack-quack’, ‘sssssss’, ‘yuk-yuk’, and encourage your child to copy you.
- **Listen at home** – switch off the TV and listen to the sounds, both inside and outside the home. Can your child tell you what sounds they heard, in the order in which they heard them?
- **Play-a-tune** – and follow me! Make or buy some simple shakers, drums and beaters, then play a simple tune and ask your child to copy. Have fun!
- **Use puppets** and toys to make up stories or retell known ones. Record your child telling the story and play it back to them.

**As we begin to teach the children the skills that they will need in order to be successful readers and writers, we focus on speaking and listening activities.**

## **Phonics Teaching in School – Read Write Inc ‘Speed Sounds’**

‘**Phonics**’ is the name given in school to the process of teaching all the individual sounds to enable children to read and write.

Spoken words are formed by articulating groups of speech sounds. Although in English there are 26 letters in the alphabet there are 44 speech sounds – and each sound can often be written down in more than one way! For example:

The speech sound ‘ay’ is spelt ay, ai, a-e, aigh, eigh, eig and ei!

This is a complex code. **Read Write Inc Phonics** begins with a simple code where children learn each of the 44 speech sounds. Although this limits texts to those 44 spellings, they can write any word they can speak, albeit in a simple code eg: day, dreem, mayk. These are known as the **Set 1 sounds**.

They then go on to read and write the other letters or groups of letters which represent those same 44 speech sounds. These are referred to as **Set 2 and Set 3 sounds**.

### **Decoding**

When we read, each letter or letter group (known as a grapheme) represents a speech sound. These speech sounds are then blended into a spoken word. This is known as ‘decoding’.

The more we decode a word, the more we begin to recognise it by sight and we add it to our visual memory list. The more we do this, the quicker we can read, which frees up our mind and energy for comprehension. If we learn a new word, see it frequently, say it lots and understand its meaning our vocabulary increases. The bigger our vocabulary the more we understand. This often means we enjoy reading more as we receive meaning without the effort of decoding. This is the aim for all readers: quick and easy decoding to arrive at deep understanding!

### **Encoding**

When we write, we begin with the spoken word. We then break up (or segment) the word into speech sounds and write the corresponding letters (graphemes) for each sound. This is known as encoding.

The teaching of phonics is built upon the principle of decoding and encoding – the ability to reverse the alphabetic code from speech to writing and writing back to speech. When we read we decode graphemes into sounds and we encode sounds into graphemes when we spell.

**Set 1, 2 and 3 sounds are known as the Speed Sounds** to learn. All the way through we teach the skills of ‘blending’ and ‘segmenting’.

- **Blending**

We teach the children how to blend or merge sounds together to read each word, in the right order, to read a word. E.g. c-a-t = cat.

- **Segmenting**

We teach the children how to segment each word to spell. E.g. cat = c-a-t

The aim is for the children to read the whole word automatically.

In Read Write Inc we call this **Fred Talk!** Fred is a Frog who can only speak in individual sounds. This helps children learn to segment and blend.



### **Speed Sounds Set 1**

m a s d t

l n p g o

c k u b

f e l h sh

r j b y w

th z ch q x ng nk

### **Speed Sounds Set 2**

ay ee igh ow oo (moon) oo (foot) ar or air ir ou oy

### **Speed Sounds Set 3**

ea oi a-e i-e o-e u-e aw are ur er ow ai oa ew ire ear ure

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### **Getting ready for writing**

We will model how to form letters (*graphemes*) correctly, so that children can eventually acquire a fluent and legible handwriting style. These skills develop over a long period of time. A child's ability to form a letter correctly is a separate skill from phonics. Holding a pen or pencil needs considerable co-ordination and practice in making small movements with hands and fingers.

In the early stages of phonics children can use letter cards or magnetic letters to demonstrate their knowledge of phonics.

### **Writing in lower-case letters**

We shall be teaching lower-case letters, as well as capital letters. As most writing will be in lower-case letters it is useful if you can use these at home. A good start is



for your child to write their name correctly, starting with a capital letter followed by lower-case letters.

Children will move towards a fully cursive handwriting script.

## **Extending Learning**

**The Read Write Inc programme begins in Reception and extends into Year 2.** As the children progress, the Speed Sounds element of learning to read becomes just one part of a more complex approach to teaching reading comprehension and writing. Each lesson combines elements of phonics, reading storybooks linked to each set of Speed Sounds and writing - applying all the phonic knowledge they have learnt.

Read Write Inc isn't just phonics. It progresses children to a level of reading and writing competency, which allows them to embark on the next journey – **Literacy and Language!** This programme combines reading comprehension, writing and grammar from **Year 2 to Year 6**.

## **Ways you can support your children at home with segmenting and blending**

### **Sound-talking (Fred Talk)**

Find real objects around your home that have three sounds and practise Fred Talk. First, just let them listen, then see if they will join in, for example, saying:

‘I spy a p-e-g – peg.’

‘I spy a c-u-p – cup.’

‘Where’s your other s-o-ck – sock?’

‘Simon says – put your hands on your h-ea-d.’

‘Simon says – touch your ch-i-n.’

You may see your child **Fred-talking**, using their ‘**Fred Fingers**’ to perform the sound-talking action. This is purely a physical way to segment and blend what we do together at school. The physical action helps the children to actively learn and remember the sounds.

### **Magnetic letters**

Buy magnetic letters for your fridge, or for use with a tin tray. Find out which letters have been taught – have fun finding these with your child and place them on the magnetic surface.

### **Making little words together**

Make little words together, for example, it, up, am, and, top, dig, run, met, pick. As you select the letters, say them aloud: ‘a-m – am’, ‘m-e-t – met’.

### **Breaking words up**

Now do it the other way around: read the word, break the word up and move the letters away, saying: ‘met – m-e-t’.

Both these activities help children to see that reading and spelling are reversible processes.

**Don't forget the writing box** – with lots of pencils, pens and paper to start writing!

Spelling is harder than reading words – praise, don't criticise. Little whiteboards and pens, and magic boards, are a good way for children to try out spellings and practise their handwriting.

## **Ways you can help develop your child's fine motor skills for writing**

### **Using their whole body**

For handwriting children need to be well co-ordinated through their whole body, not just their hands and fingers. Games that help co-ordination include throwing balls at a target, under-arm and over-arm, and bouncing balls – also skipping on the spot, throwing a Frisbee, picking up pebbles from the beach and throwing them into the sea.

### **Hand and finger play**

Action rhymes such as *'Incy wincy spider'*, *'One potato, two potato'* and *'Tommy Thumb'* are great fun and get their hands and fingers moving. Playing with salt dough or clay really helps strengthen little fingers, as does cookery and using simple toolkits.

### **Hand-eye co-ordination**

Pouring water into jugs and cups of different sizes, sweeping up with a dustpan and brush, cutting, sticking, tracing, threading beads, completing puzzles, peeling off stickers and sticking them in the right place – these all help hand-eye co-ordination.

### **Pencil hold**

The 'pincer' movement needs to be practised. This is important as it enables children to hold a pencil properly as they write. Provide them with kitchen tongs and see if they can pick up small objects. Move on to challenging them to pick up smaller things, for example, little cubes, sugar lumps, dried peas, lentils, first with chopsticks, then with tweezers.

Provide plenty of different types of pens and pencils; hold their hand to practise the correct grip.

## **Fun ways to help develop your child's word recognition**

- Set a timer. Call out one word at a time and get your child to spell it on a magic board or a small whiteboard, against the timer – remember, they can use magnetic letters.
- Play a game – hunt the word - hide words in sand or flour, set a timer, hold up the word that you want them to hunt for, and 'go'! Repeat the word and encourage them to say –'I am looking for the word 'the'.
- Play **'Pairs'**, turning over two words at a time trying to find a matching pair. This is especially helpful with the tricky words: **the the, to to, no no, go go, I I**
- Don't worry if they get some wrong! These are hard to remember – they need plenty of practice.

## **Parents' Support**

**Your involvement in your child's learning is vital** and we ask that, whenever possible, you take time to encourage them to use their new knowledge through the activities outlined above.

### **National Assessment – the Phonics Screening Check**

**Speed Sound Phonics is taught as a discreet element in all Literacy lessons in Reception, Year 1 and at the beginning of Year 2.** In the summer of Year 1 there is a national '**Phonics Screening Check**' which measures the progress of all Year 1 children. Parents are informed whether their child is currently working at the expected level for their age. Children who are working below the expected measure are 'checked' again in Year 2. These children are targeted for additional support.

### **The Importance of Reading**

The best readers become the best writers. Why? Because having had the experience of reading so many books, they have the vocabulary, 'turn of phrase' and creative ideas which are essential for us to produce our own writing.

**We want you to read RELENTLESSLY to your children.** Our reading scheme offers the opportunity for us to send home books, graded by ability, for you to **share** with your children. It's not about racing through. It's not about teaching, but more about practice. We want you to **share** books with your children beyond their reading age; to talk about and discuss the stories to widen their vocabulary and comprehension.

Language is the key to unlocking the door to all successful learning.....

***Thank you for showing your interest.***

***If you require more clarification, please do not hesitate to speak your child's class teacher.***





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