PHONICS & EARLY READING

23rd September 2026

Helping your child become a confident, fluent and enthusiastic reader



THE POWER OF A BOOK

"Reading is the one ability that, once set in motion, has the capacity to feed itself..."
— Michael Morpurgo
Our aim: to equip children with the skills to unlock books and develop a lasting love of reading.



READING OPENS DOORS

Reading is one of the most powerful skills a child will ever develop.

Here is why it matters so much:

- Vocabulary & language
- Imagination & creativity
- Access to the curriculum
- Confidence
- Lifelong reading for pleasure

WHAT IS PHONICS?

Phonics is making connections between the sounds of spoken words (phonemes) and the letters (graphemes) that are used to write them down.

Children learn to:
Hear a sound → Recognise the grapheme → Say the sound → Read the word → Write the word.
Examples: m = /m/, sh = /sh/, igh = /igh/

A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in a word.

A grapheme is the letter or letters that represent that sound.

WHAT DOES "SYNTHETIC PHONICS" MEAN?

"Synthetic" means putting sounds together to read words.

Children learn phonemes and graphemes, then blend those sounds to decode words.

For example: c – a – t → cat. This is blending: the key skill for reading.

Segmenting is the reverse: breaking a word into its sounds to spell it.

For example: cat → c – a – t.

OUR PHONICS PROGRAMME: LITTLE WANDLE

Children are taught sounds in a careful sequence, learning to blend sounds to read words and segment words to spell them. Phonics is applied directly to reading through matched decodable books, and learning is regularly revisited to build confidence and fluency.

All staff receive training and use the same resources, ensuring consistency. It is important that parents use the same letter sounds and terminology as school — this helps your child enormously. If you are unsure how to pronounce any sounds, please ask us!



PHASE 1 – GETTING READY TO READ



Phase 1 builds phonological awareness before formal phonics begins. Children listen to environmental sounds, instrumental sounds, body percussion, rhythm, rhyme, alliteration, voice sounds, and practise oral blending and segmenting.

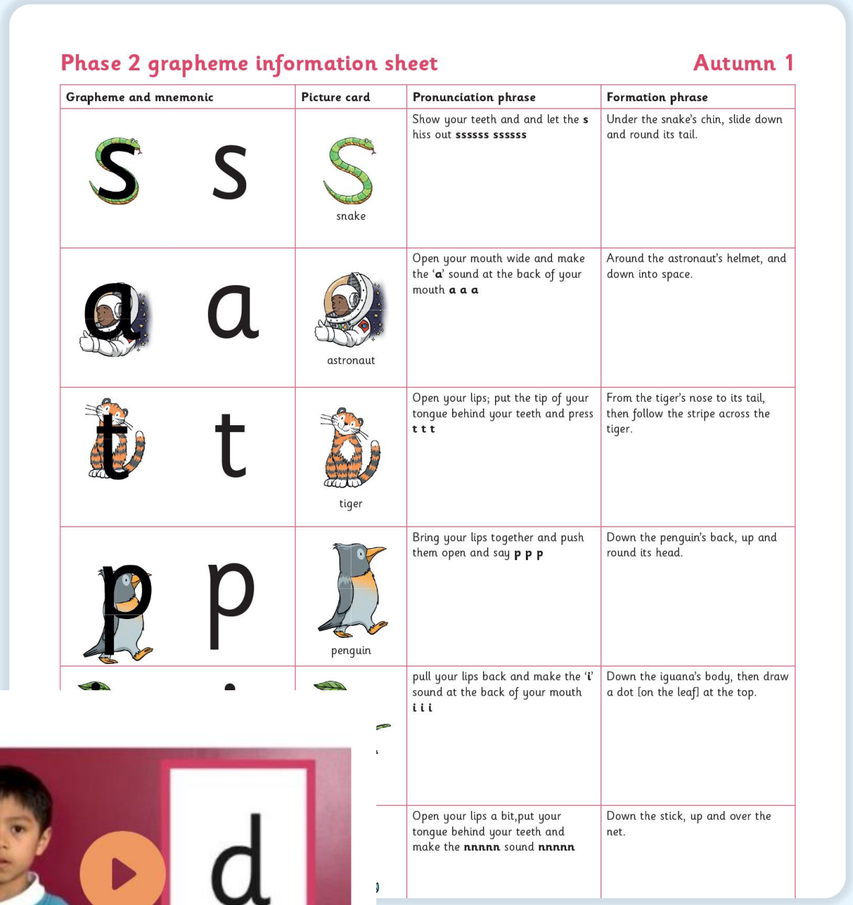
How you can help at home: sing songs and nursery rhymes, share stories daily, clap syllables and rhythms, play rhyming and alliteration games, talk about sounds you hear, and above all — chat, play, and read together!

PHASE 2 – FIRST SOUNDS

Letters and sounds introduced.
Children learn to recognise each grapheme and say the corresponding phoneme.
Blending these sounds together allows children to read simple words such as sat, pin and tap with growing confidence.

Key skills in Phase 2:

- ✓ Recognise the grapheme →
- ✓ Say the phoneme →
- ✓ Blend sounds to read words →
- ✓ Segment words to spell.



Phase 2 grapheme information sheet — **Autumn 1**

Grapheme and mnemonic	Picture card	Pronunciation phrase	Formation phrase
s s	snake	Show your teeth and and let the **s** hiss out **ssssss sssssss**	Under the snake's chin, slide down and round its tail.
a a	astronaut	Open your mouth wide and make the '**a**' sound at the back of your mouth **a a a**	Around the astronaut's helmet, and down into space.
t t	tiger	Open your lips; put the tip of your tongue behind your teeth and press **t t t**	From the tiger's nose to its tail, then follow the stripe across the tiger.
p p	penguin	Bring your lips together and push them open and say **p p p**	Down the penguin's back, up and round its head.
		pull your lips back and make the 'i' sound at the back of your mouth **i i i**	Down the iguana's body, then draw a dot (on the leaf) at the top.
		Open your lips a bit,put your tongue behind your teeth and make the **nnnnn** sound **nnnnn**	Down the stick, up and over the net.



Phase 2 sounds taught in Reception Autumn 1

https://www.littlewandlelettersandsounds.org.uk/resources/for-parents/

Guide on Little Wandle website for parents explains what part of the word is tricky
https://www.littlewandlelettersandsounds.org.uk/resources/for-parents/#tabnametabHowWeTeach

TRICKY WORDS

Some words cannot be fully decoded using phonics alone — we call these "tricky words". They contain parts that do not follow the phoneme–grapheme patterns children have learned yet.
Examples include: the, to, I, no, go, into. As children progress through the phases, their list of tricky words grows and changes.

How to help at home: Please do not ask your child to guess a tricky word or use the pictures as a clue. Instead, help them look closely at the tricky part, say it together, and practise remembering it. Little and often is the key — the more they see it, the more automatic it becomes.

PHASE 3 – EXPANDING THE CODE

- New digraphs and trigraphs are introduced: digraphs include sh, ch, and oa; trigraphs include igh, ear, and air. Children learn that two or three letters can work together to represent a single sound — for example, sh = /sh/, igh = /igh/.
- Little Wandle embeds and extends children's knowledge through continued practice of GPCs, blending to read, segmenting to spell, and applying phonics in reading. Children revisit earlier learning whilst building a wider, more flexible understanding of the alphabetic code.

Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised 2021: Programme progression

Reception and Year 1 overviews

This programme overview shows the progression of GPCs and tricky words that we teach term-by-term. The progression has been organised so that children are taught from the simple to more complex GPCs, as well as taking into account the frequency of their occurrence in the most commonly encountered words. All the graphemes taught are practised in words, sentences, and later on, in fully decodable books. Children review and revise GPCs and words, daily, weekly and across terms and years, in order to move this knowledge into their long term memory.

Children need to learn to read as quickly as reasonably possible, so they can move from learning to read, to reading to learn, giving them access to the treasure house of reading. Our expectations of progression are aspirational yet achievable if schools maintain pace, practice and participation by all children. Children who are not keeping-up with their peers should be given additional practice immediately through keep-up sessions.

Reception

Autumn 1 Phase 2 graphemes	New tricky words
s a t p i n m d g o c k ck e u r h b f l	is I the

Autumn 2 Phase 2 graphemes	New tricky words
ff ll ss j v w x y z zz qu ch sh th ng nk • words with –s /s/ added at the end (hats sits) • words ending –s /z/ (his) and with –s /z/ added at the end (bags)	put* pull* full* as and has his her go no to into she push* he of we me be

*The tricky words 'put', 'pull', 'full' and 'push' may not be tricky in some regional pronunciations; in which case, they should not be treated as such.

Spring 1 Phase 3 graphemes	New tricky words
ai ee igh oa oo **oo** ar or ur ow oi ear air er • words with double letters • longer words	was you they my by all are sure pure

Spring 2 Phase 3 graphemes	No new tricky words
Review Phase 3 • longer words, including those with double letters • words with –s /z/ in the middle • words with –es /z/ at the end • words with –s /s/ and /z/ at the end	Review all taught so far

Summer 1 Phase 4	New tricky words
Short vowels with adjacent consonants • CVCC CCVC CCVCC CCCVC CCCVCC • longer words and compound words • words ending in suffixes: –ing, –ed /t/, –ed /id/ /ed/, –est	said so have like some come love do were here little says there when what one out today

PHASE 3 – READING WORDS PRACTICE

Look at the graphemes in the word, say each sound aloud, then blend the sounds together to read the word.
For example: sh – i – p → ship. Always encourage sounding out, not guessing from pictures.

Practise, practice, practice.
Break each word into its graphemes, say the sounds, and blend smoothly.
Little and often makes a big difference!

Remember: if your child gets stuck, point to each grapheme and say the sound together.
Celebrate every success — confidence grows with every word they decode independently.

PHASE 4 – BECOMING MORE FLUENT

In Phase 4, children consolidate and build on what they already know.

The focus is on reading and spelling words with adjacent consonants — where two or more consonants appear together:
stop • cramp • float • help • spring • chimp

Children practise sounding out and blending these more complex words to build confidence and fluency.

The aim is for reading to feel easier and more automatic.



PHASE 4 – FROM SOUNDING OUT TO FLUENCY

With practice, children move from sounding out every letter to reading whole words automatically.

s – t – r – ee – t → street → automatic reading!

Re-reading the same book helps children build:
- Accuracy
- Confidence
- Fluency
- Expression
- Stamina



PHASE 5 – ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS & PRONUNCIATIONS

One sound can be spelled in different ways.
For example, the /ee/ sound can be written as:

- ee (sheep)
- ea (tea)
- e-e (these)
- or simply e (he).

One grapheme can also represent different sounds depending on the word.
Fr example, **sh** can have different phonemes depending on the word:

- **sh**ell
- **ch**ef
- spe**ci**al
- cap**ti**on
- man**si**on
- pa**ssi**on

PHONICS IS ONLY PART OF BECOMING A READER



Decoding: "Can I work out what the words say?" Phonics gives children the tools to decode written words — sounding out graphemes and blending them together to read. This is the essential first step.

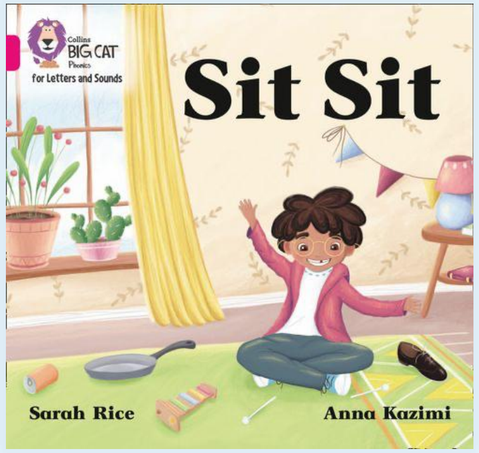
Language Comprehension: "Do I understand the meaning?" Rich conversation, vocabulary, and sharing stories develop understanding and enjoyment. The EEF recommends a balanced approach — phonics for decoding, and language-rich experiences for true reading comprehension.

Reading practice sessions are:

- Timetabled three times a week
- Taught by a trained teacher / learning support assistant
- Taught in small groups







SOME THINGS THAT MAKE A HUGE DIFFERENCE

Read to your child — even when they can read independently.
Sharing stories builds vocabulary, comprehension, and a love of reading.
Listen to your child read and give them time to sound out words; avoid jumping in too quickly.

Read little and often — short, positive sessions no more than 10 minutes daily make a real difference.
Talk about books together: ask questions about the story, characters, meaning, and feelings to deepen understanding.

Let your child see YOU reading — modelling enjoyment shows that reading matters.
Shared reading supports comprehension and vocabulary development.
Keep reading positive, relaxed, and enjoyable at home.

MAKE READING POSITIVE AT HOME

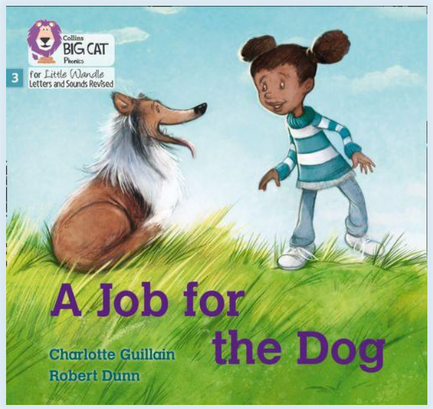
Choose a comfortable time and place — sitting side by side, relaxed and unhurried.
Re-read favourite books, visit your local library, and let your child choose books they enjoy.

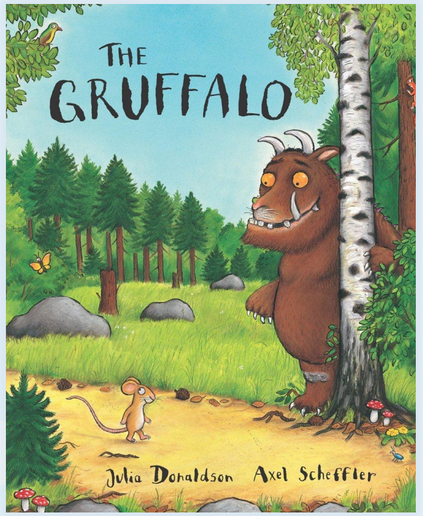
There are two kinds of reading:
• Reading practice — phonics-matched books sent home from school to build skills and confidence.
• Reading for pleasure — any book your child loves, read together for the joy of it.

Both matter. Both help your child grow as a reader.

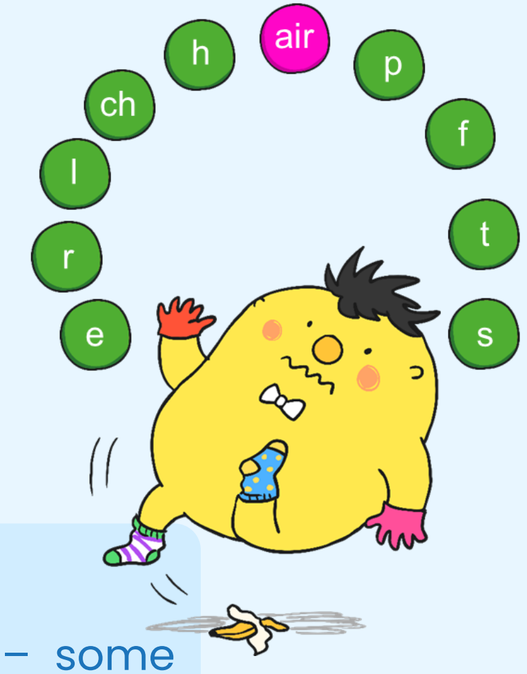


BOOKS GOING HOME





Phonics Screening Check



Mr Whoops is in a real muddle with his juggling. Can you help him to make as many real words as possible using the sounds inside his juggling balls?

Every word must contain the sound inside Mr Whoops' special pink juggling ball.

How many real words can you make?

- Summer term
- Pupils are asked to read 40 words aloud – some words they may know, while others will be completely new
- A mix of real and non-words
- Pupils will attempt the phonics check once in Year One
- If they do not pass the check, they will repeat the check in Year Two

in	ot
at	vap
beg	osk
sum	ect

EVERY CHILD CAN BECOME A READER
Let's make the journey fun!

Help your child with reading

I Spy
Play 'I Spy' games. Can you find words beginning with...? Can you find a picture of a ...? How many ... can you see?

Ask Questions
Ask questions about the story as you read it e.g. What is the story about? Why do you think they made that choice? Was it a good choice? Why did that happen? What do you think will happen next? What was your favourite part of the story? Why?

Make it Fun
Enjoy reading together. Give characters funny voices and engage with the pictures. Make a game out of finding words that rhyme or start with the same sound.

Be Seen
Make sure you are seen reading. Keep books magazines at easy reach.

Get Out
Go to your public library regularly. Find the books you loved as a kid to read together.

Create
Use reading to inspire drawings or new stories.

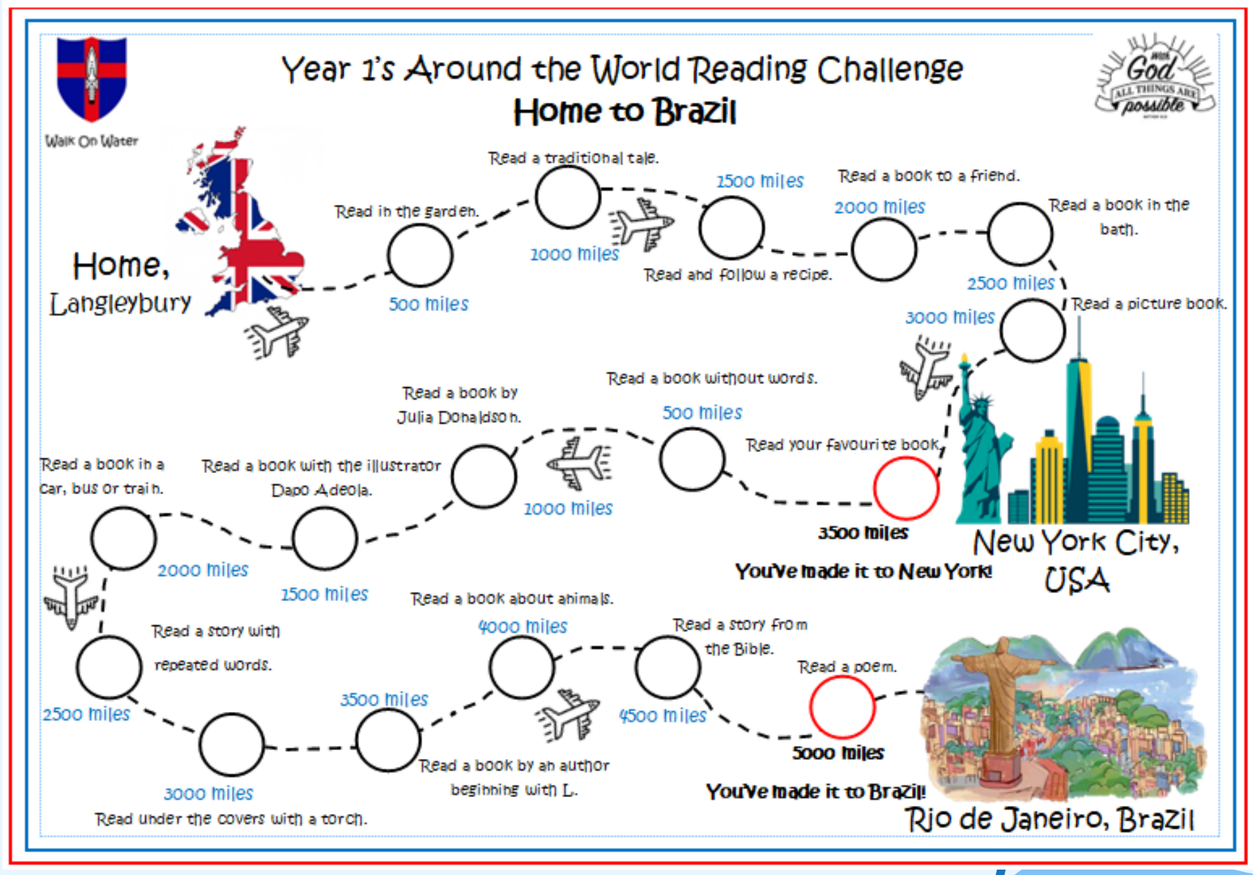
Go Online
Look online & in app stores for appropriate word & spelling games.

Make Space
Have a special place or a certain time when you read together.

Read everything out loud.

Books, poems, nursery rhymes, newspaper & magazine articles, food labels...
anything that is close to hand!

"The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go." — Dr Seuss



THANK YOU

Thank you for your time!

Questions?

