



Phonics at St. Chads

What is phonics?

Phonics is a way of teaching children to read quickly and skilfully. They are taught how to

- recognise the sounds that each individual letter makes;
- identify the sounds that different combinations of letters make - such as 'sh' or 'oo'; and
- blend these sounds together from left to right to make a word.

Children can then use this knowledge to 'de-code' new words that they hear or see. This is the first important step in learning to read. At St. Chad's we follow the phases set out in Letters and Sounds, a document published by the DFE which enables children to progress through a structured phonics program starting with the easiest sounds and progressing through to the most complex – it is the most effective way of teaching young children to read. It is particularly helpful for children aged 5–7.

Almost all children who receive good teaching of phonics will learn the skills they need to tackle new words. They can then go on to read any kind of text fluently and confidently, and to read for enjoyment. Children who have been taught phonics also tend to read more accurately than those taught using other methods, such as 'look and say'. This includes children who find learning to read difficult, for example those who have dyslexia.

If you would like to find out more about phonics, visit www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/pedagogy/phonics or search for 'phonics' on the Department for Education website at www.education.gov.uk.

What is the phonics screening check?

The phonics screening check is a quick and easy check of your child's phonics knowledge. It helps your school confirm whether your child has made the expected progress in Year 1. In 2016 the check will take place during the week commencing Monday 13th June.

How does the check work?

- Your child will sit with a teacher he or she knows and be asked to read 40 words aloud.
- Your child may have read some of the words before, while others will be completely new.

- The check normally takes just a few minutes to complete and there is no time limit.

The check is carefully designed not to be stressful for your child. What are 'non-words'? The check will contain a mix of real words and 'nonsense words' (or 'pseudo words'). Children cannot read the nonsense by using their memory or vocabulary; they have to use their decoding skills.

After the check we will tell you about your child's progress in phonics and how he or she has done in the screening check in the last half-term of Year 1. If your child has found the check difficult, we will also tell you what support we have put in place to help him or her improve. The screening check helps us to understand which children need extra help with phonic decoding.

How can you help at home?

Helping your child with phonics works best when children are given plenty of encouragement and learn to enjoy reading. Parents play a very important part in helping with this. Some simple steps to help your child learn to read through phonics:

- With all books, encourage your child to 'sound out' unfamiliar words and then blend the sounds together from left to right rather than looking at the pictures to guess. Once your child has read an unfamiliar word you can talk about what it means and help him or her to follow the story.
- Try to make time to read with your child every day. Grandparents and older brothers or sisters can help, too. Encourage your child to blend the sounds all the way through a word.
- Word games like 'I-spy' can also be an enjoyable way of teaching children about sounds and letters.
- You can also encourage your child to read words from your shopping list or road signs to practise phonics.
- Fill in your child's reading record, to communicate about what children have read.