



## **Phase 1 Letters and Sounds: Information for Parents**

Children learn a great deal from other people. As parents and carers you are your child's first teachers. You have a powerful influence on your child's early learning. From a very early age your child will need to experience a wide range of activities and experiences (for example, singing and saying rhymes, making and listening to music, listening to them and joining in conversations, painting and pretend play) to develop their early reading and writing skills. These activities will help your child take the first important steps towards reading and writing.

**Phase 1** of a teaching programme called **Letters and Sounds** is used to support the teaching of Language and Literacy, before moving onto the **Read Write Inc** programme.

Our children learn through lots of play and activities and are encouraged to use their increasing phonics knowledge in freely chosen activities. If you can be involved in helping your child, we know it can make a big difference to your child's learning. Below is further information about **Phase 1 of the Letters and Sounds programme** and the best ways to support your child's learning at home.

### **Letters and Sounds – Phase 1**

In this ongoing phase, your child will be learning to:

- have fun with sounds
- listen carefully
- develop their vocabulary
- speak confidently to you, other adults and other children
- tune into sounds
- listen and remember sounds
- talk about sounds
- understand that spoken words are made up of different sounds.

### **Phase 1 consists of seven interlinking parts:**

- environmental sounds
- instrumental sounds
- body percussion
- rhythm and rhyme
- alliteration (words that begin with the same sound)
- voice sounds
- oral blending and segmenting

You can help your child develop in each of these by trying some of the ideas below. Remember that all these activities should be fun and interactive. Give your child lots of encouragement and cuddles as you play together. Smiles and praise will help develop a sense of achievement and build confidence. The emphasis is on developing the ability to distinguish sounds and create sounds.

#### **Ways to support your children at home: 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 to remember all the sounds you heard. You could try taping the sounds, to listen to them again, or try reproducing them yourselves, using your voices or instruments.
- Make sounds, using a range of props, such as running a stick along a fence or tapping the bin lid.
- Invent a secret family 'knock' for entering rooms.
- Play 'sound lotto'. A commercial version of this can be purchased from many children's toy shops, but making your own, from your sound walk, would be far more rewarding.

#### **Ways to support your children at home: 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.

#### **Ways to support your children at home: body percussion.**

- Learn some action rhymes, such as 'Wind the bobbin up'.
- Play some commercially produced CDs. Clap along with familiar rhymes and learn new ones.
- Listen to the sounds your feet make when walking, running or skipping: slowly, softly, fast, stomping hard, in flipflops, boots, high heels.
- Try different types of clapping: clap your hands softly, quickly and make a pattern for your child to follow. Do the same clapping your thighs or stamping your feet. Tap your fingers. Click your tongue.
- Invent a special family clap routine for when someone does something really well.

#### **Ways to support your children at home: rhythm and rhyme.**

- Get into the rhythm of 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 pause 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?'

#### **Ways to support your children at home: alliteration (words that begin with the same sound).**

- Alliteration is a lot of fun to play around with. Your child's name can be a good place to start, for example, say: 'Gurpeet get the giggles', 'Carl caught a cat', 'Jolly Jessie jumped'. Encourage other family members to have a go, for example: 'Mummy munches muffins', 'Daddy is doing the dishes'.
- Emphasise alliteration in songs and stories, for example: 'Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers'. → Play around with familiar song, such as 'Old MacDonald had some sheep, shoes, shorts, with a sh sh here and and sh sh there', to emphasise alliteration.
- Identify the odd one out, for example, cat, cup, boy, car. → Make up little nonsense stories together using lots of alliteration → Collect items that start with the same sound from the park, the garden and around the house. → When shopping, think about items you are buying and say: 'a tall tin of tomatoes', 'a lovely little lemon'. Encourage your child to do the same.

### **Ways to support your children at home: voice sounds.**

- Repeat your child's vocalisations.
- Make fun noises and nonsense words.
- Say words in different ways (fast, slowly, high, low, using a funny voice)
- 'Sing' known songs using only sounds (for example, 'la, la, la') and ask your child to guess the song.
- Vary your tempo and pitch when reading stories.

### **Ways to support your children at home: oral blending and segmenting.**

This is all oral (spoken). Your child will not be expected to match the letter to the sound at this stage. The emphasis is on helping children to hear the separate sounds in words and to create spoken sounds.

Oral blending and segmenting is a later skill that will be important when the time comes for your child to read and write. Being able to hear the separate sounds within a word and then blend them together to understand that word is really important.

**Blending is a vital skill for reading.** The separate sounds (phonemes) of the word are spoken aloud, in order, all through the word and are then merged together into the whole word. This merging is called blending. For example, the adult would say c-a-t = cat.

**Segmenting is a vital skill for spelling.** The whole word is spoken aloud, then broken up into its separate sounds (phonemes) in order, all through the word. For example, the adult would say cat = c-a-t.

I hope this provides some useful information and ways in which you can support your child in his or her exciting journey along the road to reading and writing.