

Bushey Heath Primary School Parent Support for Phonics



On this page you will find lots of information about the development of language, the teaching of phonics and the development of reading. There are things you can do at home at each stage of your child's development including the very early years. There are 6 phonics phases currently being taught in school. Ask your child (or their teacher!) to tell you which phonics phase they are learning so that you can match your home activities to that phase and maximise their learning.

First things first!

Ready, Steady ... Talk! Language Development Milestones from 0-3 Years

The first three years of life are considered to be a critical period for language development. Children are especially prewired during this time of life to absorb and learn from the language models they hear in their environment. It is a rapid growth period for communication development and never again in life will a person learn so much about language in such a short time. Within three years, children grow from beings whose main language is crying to little persons who can debate with their parents!

Language development in the first three years can be divided in three stages.

Precursors to Language: 0-11 months

During this time, your baby communicates constantly, but not with words. The ability to communicate develops sequentially; and more advanced skills build onto a foundation of earlier skills, just as motor development does. These precursors need to be in place before children can say their first words. Language development milestones in the first year include:

Age	Language Development Milestones
From birth	Eye contact and visual preference for faces Differentiated crying - has different cries for different needs Shows preference for mother's voice
4-6 weeks	First smile
7-9 weeks	First vocalizations of vowel-like sounds
3-6 months	Vocalizes to caregiver's smile and talk Makes throaty consonant sounds (h, k, g)
6-9 months	Locates source of sound Babbles to gain attention and uses more consonants (f,v,s,z, m,n)
9-11 months	Imitates tongue clicks and kisses Babbles two syllables (da-da, mi-mi) Understands and carries out simple commands

From Babbling to Words: 12-21 months

Around a year old, the magical moment occurs when your child says her first word. The language precursors laid the foundation, and now the time is here to start using real words. During the next six months, you can expect the following language development milestones:

Age	Language Development Milestones
12-15 months	Uses one or two common words meaningfully Understands key words in familiar situations
15-18 months	Babbles short sentences with inflection Points to familiar persons, animals, or toys on request
18-21 months	Uses 6-20 recognizable words Points to own nose, eye, mouth, and hair

From Words to Sentences: 24-36 months

During this time, your child starts to string words together into sentences, and speech intelligibility increases. By the end of this phase, your child will be able to relate short stories or tell briefly what she experienced. Language milestones during this phase include:

Age	Language Development Milestones
21-24 months	Understands simple explanations, like: "First eat your food, and then you can have some juice." Start using two-word sentences, like: "Daddy bye-bye."
24-27 months	Will follow a short series of related commands. Start using three-word sentences, like "Mummy book read?"
27-30 months	Enjoys hearing stories about familiar people and experiences Gives name upon request
30-33 months	Can name the use of an object Enjoys being read to from picture books
33-36 months	Points to six body parts Uses 200 or more words, but speech sounds may still not be pronounced correctly and grammar errors are common.

Remember that the age brackets of these stages are approximate. Some children are natural talkers and speak more and sooner than others. You can consider professional help if language milestones are three to six months, or more, delayed in an otherwise healthy child. Also, make sure that your child's hearing is professionally examined before the age of two, whether or not a speech and language delay is present. Speak to your GP or Health Visitor if you have any concerns.

Moving on

Children's spoken language supports reading and writing

In order to make a good start in reading and writing, children need to have an adult listen to them and talk to them. 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, 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.

Phase 1

Ways you can support your children at home

Play '**What do we have in here?**' Put some toys or objects in a bag and pull one out at a time. Emphasise the first sound of the name of the toy or object by repeating it, for example, 'c c c c - car', 'b b b b - box', 'ch ch ch ch - chip'.

Say: 'A tall tin of tomatoes!' 'Tommy, the ticklish teddy!' 'A lovely little lemon!' This is called alliteration. Use names, for example, '**Gurpreet gets the giggles**', '**Milo makes music**', '**Naheema's nose**'.

Teach them '*Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers*'.

Learning how to '*sound-talk*'

The teacher shows children how to do this - **c-a-t** = **cat**. The separate sounds (*phonemes*) are spoken aloud, in order, all through the word, and are then merged together into the whole word. The merging together is called *blending* and is a vital skill for reading.

Children will also learn to do this the other way around - **cat** = **c-a-t**. The whole word is spoken aloud and then broken up into its sounds (*phonemes*) in order, all through the word. This is called *segmenting* and is a vital skill for spelling.

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.

Sound-talking

Find real objects around your home that have three phonemes (*sounds*) and practise 'sound 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.'

Phase 2

Ways you can support your children at home

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!

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.

Your child might be trying to use letters from their name to write; this shows that they know that writing needs real alphabet letters.

Make or buy an alphabet poster.

Getting ready for writing

Teachers 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 phonic phases 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.

Your child's teacher can advise on the handwriting style that is taught and how you can help at home.

Ways you can support your children at home

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. Have fun!

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.

Ask children to peg objects to a washing line.

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

Phase 3

Ways you can support your children at home

- Sing an alphabet song together.
- Play 'I spy', using letter names as well as sounds.
- Continue to play with magnetic letters, using some of the two grapheme (*letter*) combinations:
 - r-ai-n* = *rain* blending for reading *rain* = *r-ai-n* - segmenting for spelling
 - b-oa-t* = *boat* blending for reading *boat* = *b-oa-t* - segmenting for spelling
 - h-ur-t* = *hurt* blending for reading *hurt* = *h-ur-t* - segmenting for spelling
- Praise your child for trying out words.
- Ask teachers for a list of the tricky words.
- 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 '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.

Phase 4

Ways you can support your children at home

- Practise reading and spelling some *CVCC* and *CCVC* words but continue to play around with *CVC* words. Children like reading and spelling words that they have previously worked with, as this makes them feel successful.
- Make up captions and phrases for your child to read and write, for example, *a silver star, clear the pond, crunch crisps*. Write some simple sentences and leave them around the house for your child to find and read. After they have found and read three, give them a treat!
- Look out for words in the environment, such as on food packaging, which your child will find easy to read, for example, *lunch, fresh milk, drink, fish and chips, jam*.
- Work on reading words together, for example, a street name such as *Park Road*, captions on buses and lorries, street signs such as *bus stop*.

Phase 5

Phonics teaching will continue into Key Stage 1 (Year 1 and Year 2)

As your child enters Key Stage 1 (Year 1) they will continue to take part in daily sessions on phonics.

They will learn that most sounds (*phonemes*) can be spelled in more than one way. For example, the **f** sound can be written as **f** as in *fan* or **ff** as in *puff* or **ph** as in *photo*.

This develops their knowledge of spelling choices. They will continue with this spelling work into Year 2 and beyond.

They will learn that most letters and combinations of letters (*graphemes*) can represent more than one sound. For example, the grapheme **ea** can be read as /ee/ as in *leaf* or /e/ as in *bread*.

This supports their reading development.

Phase 6

Phonics teaching continues into Key Stage 2 (Year 4 onwards)

In this phase the children begin to develop spelling strategies by following spelling rules which build on previously learnt phonics. They also learn about prefixes and suffixes and past tense. Adding ing, -ed, -er, -est, -ful, -ly and -y,

They are taught how to spell long words using a variety of methods including ways to learn the difficult bit in words, mnemonics, (Big Elephants Can Always Understand Small Elephants) analogy (Knowing would helps to know should and could) and breaking words into syllables.

Reading is developed to include longer texts which extends comprehension and increases understanding.

A bit extra

Listen to the letter sounds being perfectly formed on this site www.oxfordowl.co.uk

Click on Reading, click on Get reading, click on Skill up, Click on Not sure how to say the sound?, Click on Say the sounds

You will also find lots of information and games to support you and your child from phonics to listening to your child read. There are also interactive books for you to enjoy together.

www.phonicsplay.co.uk

There are some free interactive resources at each phase for you and your child to enjoy together including:

Buried Treasure which allows your child to drag the correct word coin into a treasure chest and an incorrect word into the bin. The pirate dances a jig if you are correct which is fun!

Picnic on Pluto is very similar but Obb and Bob the aliens help with the sorting activity.

www.familylearning.org.uk/phonics_games

Lots of free interactive phonics games on different sites from phase 2 onwards including:

Wild West Phonics: Choose from three levels - Medium, Hard or Really Hard. Listen to the word and choose the correct sound to fill the gap.

Phonic Fighter: A letter appears on an alien spaceship and you have to click the picture beginning with that letter. If you get it right, your fighter will shoot the alien. If you get it wrong, the alien will shoot your fighter.