

The teaching of phonics and early reading at Northwood School.

Phonic Teaching: At Northwood Primary School, we follow the structure of *Letters and Sounds: Principles and Practice of High Quality Phonics* released by the *Primary National Strategy* in 2007. *Letters and Sounds* is structured into Phases, from Phase 1 to 6. These Phases are taught from the child's time in their Pre-school, through to Year 2.

- Phase 1 - Pre-school
- Phases 2,3,4 - Early Years Foundation Stage
- Phase 5 - Year 1
- Phase 6 - Year 2.

Children learn at different speeds so the teaching of these Phases is flexible, to match the child. Therefore, Phase 1 is continued into Year1; Phases 2, 3 & 4 are continued into Year1, and so on.

Phase 2 sees the introduction of letters from the alphabet. However the emphasis is on the pure sounds each letter makes – *s*: sssss, *a*: a a a, *m*: mmm; some sounds being long and some short. Once a few sounds have been learned, children move onto 'blending' the sounds together to make words as in '*s-a-t*', '*p-i-n*'. At this stage, it is essential the pure sounds are used – sssss, not *suh*. This continues through all the letters of the alphabet in a structured way.

Alongside this phonetic approach, *high-frequency words* are taught, including words that cannot be 'sounded out'. There are an initial *First 100 high-frequency words*, followed by the *Next 200 high-frequency words*. These too, are split into the Phases to match the progression of the phonics being taught.

After all the single letters are taught, the many combinations of two-letter and three-letter combinations are taught. Some of these are consonant – *ch, sh, th, ng*, and many are vowel based – *ai, ee, igh, oa, ow, air, ear* and *ure*. The first stage of teaching these digraphs is the 'reading' of them, followed by the 'spelling' of them. Phonics are taught daily in Foundation Stage, Y 1 and Y 2. The teaching follows a 4-part approach:

1. *Review* - what we learned previously,
2. *Teach* - a new phoneme [sound],
3. *Practice* - practice reading and spelling words with the new sound,
4. *Apply* - children apply their new knowledge in some way, e.g. sentence writing.

The teaching of phonics has many approaches e.g. games, cards, pictures, writing, tracing, whole class, small group, one-to-one. Assessments take place in classes every 6 weeks.

Phase 4 does not introduce any new sounds, but concentrates on *blending* known sounds, as *b - l: bl* as in black, *t - r: tr* as in train. The learning of this

Phase 4 can often be quite fast as the child latches on to the 'bending' skill. Phase 5 continues with more digraphs and the alternative spellings of sounds.

The National Phonic Screening takes place in June. This involves each Year 1 child reading approximately 40 words, some of which are made-up, pseudo or *Alien* words. This is to ensure that the child has mastered the skill of 'blending' sounds together. Any gaps are noted and used in the teacher's planning.

Phase 6 is taught in Year 2 and includes many suffixes, plurals, past tenses and prefixes, used in the English language. More alternative spellings are also taught. E.g. the sound *ai* [as in nail], is spelt in many ways – ai, ay, a_e, a, eigh, etc. Sometimes a child can spell a word *phonetically* correct. But it may not be the right spelling, e.g. *raylwai* for *railway*.

Applying phonic skills in reading at Northwood School.

Children apply their phonic knowledge through reading simple 'banded' books that match their current reading skill. These books are 'colour-banded' and are available in the baskets around the library. We have many series and publications and do not follow one series. Many of the later publications now match the *Letters and Sounds* order of teaching and it is these that we recommend. However, in Year 2, the children pick their own books.

It is recognised and recommended that child will indeed read their own choice of books at home alongside their school books. A parent's interest in reading will help the child as they pick up the habit from family members.

Reading at home will often mean making a special time for it. There will be times to read at bed-time as a way of settling down to sleep. There may be times to encourage reading school books in a special time of 10 minutes, before or after tea or dinner, before watching television, playing games, depending on the routine of the family. Other family members are often involved, e.g. grandad, nan, big brother or sister, as well as mum or dad. Reading a favourite book over

and over often happens especially if lots of expression, repetition, character voices and involvement by the child, takes place.

It is recommended that children read their banded reading book more than once, so that they end up reading the majority of it themselves. As they read, they will call on many methods to help them, including

- phonics – sounding out letters and blending them together [as above]
- talking about or referring to the pictures,
- self-correcting unknown words so they ‘make sense’ in the story,
- simply recognising high-frequency words
- new words taught them by the adult or older reader.

The books available at Northwood include many of the best banded books available and we often have opportunities to purchase more up-to-date books thanks to our PTA who raise money for books. The publications include

• Oxford Reading Tree [ORT]	• Phonic Bug Club
• Big Cat [Collins]	• Rigby Star
• Project X [ORT]	• Discovery World
• Ladybird	• Songbirds [ORT]
• Literacy Links	• Floppy’s Phonics [ORT]
• Blue Bananas	• Yellow Bananas
• Book Project	• Start Reading
• Jets	• Flying Foxes
• Fireflies [ORT]	• Sprinters
• Treetops [ORT]	• Young Hippos
• Happy Families	• Young Puffin
• Jumbo Jets	• Orchard Crunchies
• Story Chest	and many more.

As the child’s reading skills improve, the reading books available for them include many books by top authors, including Dick King-Smith, Janet Ahlberg and Louis Spilsbury. Banded books are still available after Year 2, enabling the child to enjoy reading at a level that matches them. After successfully progressing through banded books, children, as independent readers, have the full range of books in our library.