



How we teach phonics and early reading at Blewbury

What is phonics?

Phonics is a way of teaching children to read and write. It makes it easier and simpler. This helps to increase a child's confidence and instill a love of reading from an early age. Rather than memorising thousands of words individually, children are taught a phonics code. English is made up of 44 different sounds. Like all languages, English has an agreed code for how we write these sounds down. A sound can be made up of one or more letters. Many letters, or groups of letters, represent different sounds in different words. When we know which sounds the letters represent we can read them and put them together to read the whole word.

In the UK, phonics is an important feature of the curriculum and is used as the primary method for teaching children to read.

What is Rocket Phonics and how do we use it at Blewbury?



Every school in England is required to choose a validated systematic, synthetic phonics programme to deliver their phonics teaching. At Blewbury, we use Rocket Phonics. It provides the school with everything that is needed to teach children to read and write through a combination of digital and printed resources. These are used within the phonics lesson but also for reading in small groups and one to one. Children use books, flashcards, sound mats, sound friezes and written workbooks to receive a consistent and holistic approach to their phonics learning. Adults in school model clear sounds, blending and segmenting. Phonics is not just taught in the phonics lesson but at many times of the day. Phonics lessons are taught on a daily basis in Reception and Year 1 and when required in Year 2 and above. In addition to phonics teaching, we work with children on understanding the words they are reading by asking questions and discussing books. We also have daily story times to allow children to enjoy listening to books that they would not yet be able to read themselves.

Why is reading so important?

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

Dr Seuss

Evidence suggests that children who read for enjoyment every day not only perform better in reading tests than those who don't, but also develop a broader vocabulary, increased general knowledge and a better understanding of other cultures. Reading is the foundation of all education. When children can read, other subjects then become available to them and independent learning can begin. Those who are unable to read well find themselves at a constant disadvantage throughout their education. Reading doesn't only have educational benefits but social ones as well. Reading with your child can be one of the most exciting, memorable and special times for you as a parent. Phonics forms the basis of this early reading and gives children the start that they need.

What are common exception words and how are they taught?

Common exception words (also known as high-frequency words or key words) are words with an unusual letter-sound correspondence, e.g. one, their, because. Unfortunately not all words are spelt phonetically and these words need to be learnt in another way. Using Rocket Phonics, these words are taught by decoding the familiar part and pointing out the unusual part. They are then revisited on many occasions using flashcards and books until the child recognises the word without needing to sound it out. The words are split into sets and introduced a few at a time.

Phonics glossary

Phoneme	A sound
Grapheme	One or more letters which represent a sound.
Digraph	Two letters which represent one sound (ee in sheep, ay in day)
Trigraph	Three letters which represent one sound (igh in light, air in fairy)
Split digraph	Two letters which represent a phoneme but do not sit together in a word (e.g. snake)
Blend (decode)	Reading each grapheme and putting them together to make a word (d-o-g = dog, sh-o-p= shop)
Segment (encode)	Splitting a word up into phonemes and matching it to graphemes for spelling.
Pure sounds	Saying the sound without an 'uh' sound on the end (mmmm not muh)

How to help your child with phonics and early reading

Parents are by far the most important educator's in a child's life. When parents read regularly with their children at home, the benefits are immense. Children make greater reading progress, they are more confident readers and, in many cases, develop a lifelong love of reading.

Play games at home and out and about involving sounds and words. *I spy, word bingo with common exception words, pairs, singing songs, hiding words around your home to hunt, using magnets on the fridge, make rhyming strings...*

Learning to read is about listening and understanding as well as working out print. Share stories and non-fiction with your child at home choosing books that they show interest in. Pick a quiet and appropriate time to read and create a relaxed environment. Talk about the story and what is happening, make predictions about what might be coming up and link it to your own experiences. Through hearing other people read, children are exposed to a rich and wide vocabulary. Even if they don't understand every word, they will hear new words and phrases which they can then try out, copying what they have heard.

When reading your child's own reading book (provided by school) allow the child time to look and sound out words. By not rushing them, you can give them time to practise the skill of reading by sounding out and blending it back together. Be patient here, it is not uncommon for a child to read a word correctly on one page and not recognise it on the next. Work through the process again. In time, they will remember it. Use the phonics videos on the school website to help if you are unsure of the sounds yourself and remember to use sounds and not letter names. Identify tricky words before you start reading. Once you read regularly, you will learn which these words are. By reading the words together before you start reading, you will give your child confidence when they see that word in the story.

Read yourself– children who see adults reading, and enjoying reading, are much more likely to want to read themselves. Visit the library together and make books a part of everyday life.

Don't forget to praise your child for effort with reading, listening and discussing books.

Reading for pleasure is the single biggest factor for success later in life, outside of an education. Study after study has shown that those children who read for pleasure are the ones who are most likely to fulfil their ambitions. If your child reads, they will succeed– it's that simple.

Bali Rai

If you would like any more information or support about how we teach phonics at Blewbury please contact...

Your child's class teacher

The English coordinator on office.3248@blewbury.oxon.sch.uk

Or visit our website <https://blewbury.oxon.sch.uk/information/curriculum-information/english-curriculum/> where you will find our phonics flashcards pronunciation videos.

