

Phonics

Your child will be taught Phonics in school as one of the strategies we use to help them to read and write. This leaflet will be useful in providing you with more information about Phonics: what it is, and how your child is taught, so that you are in a better position to support them develop their reading and writing.

What is Phonics?

Phonics basically involves teaching children about the sounds which make up words. There are 44 different sounds, or “phonemes” in the English language, which are represented either by single letters of the alphabet, or by combinations of letters e.g “ch”, “th”, “igh” as in light, “ai” as in rain.

Why learn Phonics – we never did?

Government research has shown that having a focused, daily, Phonics lesson is the best way to teach children to read. We have certainly seen an impact at St Anne’s, in both reading and spelling since we introduced the new government recommended Phonics scheme, “Letters and Sounds”, four years ago.

How is my child taught?

The scheme is split into 6 phases which spans the 3 years of Reception and Key Stage 1, although depending on the child, it could take longer. The children go into the phase group that matches their ability, and if necessary they will repeat a phase if we feel it is appropriate, to ensure that their knowledge is secure before moving on.

Phase 1 - Children are encouraged to listen for sounds in their environment, and for rhyming words.

Phase 2 – Children begin learning the letters of the alphabet and the sounds they make. They will almost immediately be encouraged to start reading and writing simple words e.g sat, tin. For reading they will sound out each letter individually first then run them altogether to say the word. For writing they are encouraged to listen for each sound they hear in a word and write down the corresponding letter or letters.

Phase 3 – Children complete learning the letters of the alphabet and begin learning sounds made by combinations of letters e.g “sh” is one sound represented by two letters. Children are shown how to look for these combinations of letters in their reading, and are encouraged to say the sound they make together rather than say each individual letter:

th i s = this

b oa t = boat

l igh t = light

In their writing, children at this stage are likely to put the wrong combination of letters for a sound **because they have not yet been taught an alternative and this is to be expected**. E.g babee instead of baby.

Phases 4 & 5 – The English language is complex – and this is the phase where the children learn about all the different ways there are to write a sound. For example the “ay” sound in play, can also be represented as “ai” in train, “eigh” in weigh, “a-e” in cake! This, as you can imagine, is a very long phase and takes the best part of a year to complete!

Phase 6 – This is where children learn specific spelling rules e.g for adding –ing or -ed

Again, due to the complex nature of the English language, there are still a number of words that children need to learn by sight which don’t follow any “rules”, but which they will meet early on in their reading e.g. the, to, I, said. Children are still taught these words as part of their Phonics lessons and will be shown them regularly so that they learn to recognise them – they are referred to as “tricky words”.

How can I help my child at home?

Simply listening to your child read at home on a regular basis will, without question, help your child improve.

If you would like any more help or information about Phonics then please do not hesitate to ask any of the class teachers who will be happy to help.

The Reception Team