

How we teach phonics, reading and writing at Sacred Heart RC Primary

Phonics is a way of teaching children to read and write. It is the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate sounds and understand the link between the sound (phoneme) and the way it is written (grapheme).

At Sacred Heart RC Primary school we follow the **Letters and Sounds programme**. This is a phonics programme in which individual letters or letter sounds are 'blended' to form groups of letters or sounds, and those groups are then blended to form complete words.

Children throughout Nursery, Reception and Key Stage 1 take part in a daily phonics session. These focus on developing reading, writing and speaking and listening skills. The 'Letters and Sounds' programme is divided into six phases, with each phase building on the skills and knowledge of previous learning.

Children are also taught to read and spell 'tricky words' – words with spellings that are unusual. These include the words 'to', 'was', 'said' and 'the'. 'Tricky words' are ones that we can't sound – so these words just need to be remembered.

Here are some of the terms you may come across in our phonics work

vowels – the open sounds / letters of the alphabet: a,e,i,o and u

consonants – sounds/ letters of the alphabet that are not vowels.

blend – to merge individual sounds together to pronounce a word, e.g. s-n-a-p, blended together, reads snap

cluster – two (or three) letters making two (or three) sounds, e.g. the first three letters of 'straight' are a consonant cluster

digraph – two letters making one sound, e.g. sh, ch, th, ph.

vowel digraphs – two vowels which, together, make one sound, e.g. ai, oo, ow

split digraph – two letters, split, making one sound, e.g. a-e as in make or i-e in site

grapheme – letter or a group of letters representing one sound, e.g. sh, ch, igh, ough (as in 'though')

mnemonic — a device for memorising and recalling something, such as a snake shaped like the letter 'S'

phoneme — the smallest single identifiable sound, e.g. the letters 'sh' represent just one sound, but 'sp' represents two (/s/ and /p/)

segment (vb) — to split up a word into its individual phonemes in order to spell it, e.g. the word 'cat' has three phonemes: /c/, /a/, /t/

Helping with phonics at home - Hints and Tips

- Try to say the short sound of the letter, not the letter name. This will help children when they come to blend words together. E.g. the letter names dee-oh-gee don't blend together to make 'dog'.
- Read regularly with your child - Encourage children to recognise sounds and as they grow more confident, encourage them to blend the sounds together and to read sentences independently.
- When you are reading to your child, emphasise the rhyming words and ask what is special about them.
- Initial letter sound hunt – Say a sound to your child and see if they can find something in their house that starts with that letter. This also works well with 'I spy' but remember to use the letter sound and not its name.

Songs – Sing nursery rhymes and traditional songs with your child and talk to them about the patterns that they notice in the words.

Reading

At Sacred Heart RC we aim to immerse children in a rich reading environment and give them the opportunity to explore a wide range of quality texts. This supports word recognition, comprehension and vocabulary development.

This year we are working together to become an 'Outstanding Reading School' and this will include developing the whole school's curriculum around literature.

Reading has a high profile at Sacred Heart RC, as it is the key to effective learning. We aim to foster pleasure in reading, which will remain with the children for life. Children are encouraged to love books and read independently for progress and pleasure.

Guided Reading takes place in classes daily through a carousel of Reading activities to further develop word recognition and comprehension skills. Key questions are focused on specific texts that challenge children's ideas and develop their ability to infer, deduce and speculate on the reasons for authors' choices.

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Writing

We support our Literacy teaching by interpreting the revised framework of the National Literacy Strategy. Children are given the skills to write confidently and expressively for different purposes including to inform, to persuade and to entertain. As well as teaching children the different genres, teachers give guidance and instruction to children so they know how to become better writers. We put a huge emphasis on grammar and model how to use punctuation accurately. We strive to involve pupils in their own learning by sharing our assessments with them, agreeing individual targets, encouraging self-assessment and sharing success criteria.

Spelling patterns are taught frequently and the children have the opportunity to practise and improve their handwriting weekly.