St Gregory's Catholic Primary School- Nursery

Monster Phonics

Phonics information for parents and carers with children in Nursery

Helping your child with speaking, listening, reading and writing.

Where you see symbol, you will find some suggested activities that will support your child in their Phonics learning.

Introduction

Children learn a lot from other people and as parents and carers, you are your child's first teachers. You have a powerful influence on your child's early learning.

From an early age your child will need to experience a wide range of activities and experiences with you to develop their early reading and writing skills, for example singing and rhyming, making and listening to music, listening to your child and joining in conversations, painting and pretend play. These activities will help your child take the first important steps towards reading and writing.

At St Gregory's Catholic Primary school, our Pre-School children take part in a high-quality Monster Phonics programme designed to promote your child's learning through the seven aspects of Phase 1 phonics.

To support the teaching of communication, language and literacy, the children learn through lots of play and activities and are encouraged to use their increasing phonics knowledge in freely chosen activities.

If you can be involved in helping your child, we know it can make a big difference to your child's learning.

This booklet will give you further information about the best ways to help your child's phonics learning at home. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to ask any member of the Early Years Foundation Stage team, who will help with suggestions of ways that you can further support your child.

<u>Learning to read and write in the Early Years Foundation Stage</u>

Children's spoken language supports reading and writing

From a very early stage, children develop an awareness of the different sounds in our spoken language. They learn to use their voices to contact you and to let people know what they need and how they are feeling. As parents and carers, you best understand your young child's communication; you are key people in helping them develop their speaking and listening skills.

Children need lots of opportunities to talk with others as they develop and practise their speaking and listening skills. This helps to build their confidence and improves their ability to communicate with other people. This is a really important part of learning to socialise and will help your child feel confident when the time comes to make friends.

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

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 and explain what you are doing. They hear the way language is put together into sentences for a purpose.

Books are an extremely rich source of new words for your child – words you might not use in every day conversations often appear in books. Children need to have a wide stock of words (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 extremely 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 – anytime!
- **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 have really been listening.
- **Make a collection of different toy creatures –** e.g. a duck, snake, an alien – say the sound it might make as your play together, e.g. 'quack quack' 'sssssssss' and encourage your child to copy you.
- **Listen at home –** switch off the TV and listen to the sounds both inside and outside your home. Can your child tell you what thy heard, in the order in which they heard it?
- **Play a tune –** and follow me! Make or buy some simple shakers, drums, beaters – play a simple tune and ask your child to copy. Have fun!
- **Use puppets and toys –** make up stories or retell known ones. Record your child telling the story and play it back to them.

The importance of speech sounds

As children grow older they begin to understand more about the sounds of our language and they are able to join in with rhymes, songs and stories by clapping, stamping and skipping. This is an important stage as the children's ears are learning to tune into all the different sounds around them. Playing with sounds and tuning your child's ears into sounds will develop phonological awareness, that is the ability to distinguish different sounds. Over time this will help your child develop an understanding that words are made up of different sounds (phonemes) and they will be able to hear the different sounds in a word. Gradually, they will learn to match sounds to letters (graphemes). This is phonic knowledge. They use this knowledge when they are reading and writing.

Please feel free to talk to any member of the Early Years Foundation Stage team to find out about phonics and how to say the sounds correctly with your child.

Ways you can support your children at home: Sound talk

Here is a very supportive activity to play at home with your child:

Try breaking down simple words when you are giving instructions or asking questions such as “Can you find your h-a-t hat?” “Where is the c-a-t cat?” “Sit on the s-ea-t seat” “Eat your f-oo-d food.” It is really important to say the sounds (phonemes) aloud, in order, all through the word.

Speaking and listening are the foundations for reading and writing

Phase 1 consists of seven interlinking parts:

- Environmental sounds
- Instrumental sounds
- Body percussion
- Rhythm and rhyme
- Alliteration (words the begin with the same sound)
- Voice sounds
- Oral blending and segmenting

You can help your child develop in each of these by trying some of the ideas below. Remember that all of these activities should be fun and interactive. Give your child lots of encouragement as you play alongside each other. Smiles and praise will help develop a sense of achievement and confidence.

This is all oral (spoken) – your child will not yet be expected to match the letter to the sound. The emphasis is on developing the ability to distinguish sounds and create sounds.

Ways you can support your children at home: Environmental sounds

- Go on a listening walk – when walking down the road listen to different sounds, cars revving, people talking, birds singing. When you get home try and recall all of the sounds that you heard. You could even try reproducing the sounds using your voice or instruments!
- Make sounds using a range of props such as running a stick along the fence and tapping on the bin lid
- Invent a secret family ‘knock’ for entering rooms
- Play sound lotto – using sounds you have heard in/out of your home

Ways you can support your children at home: Instrumental sounds

- Make your own musical instruments using cardboard rolls, tins, dried peas, beans, stones etc. Shake these loudly, softly, as you are marching, skipping or stomping. Play 'guess what's inside the instrument'.
- Sing known songs loudly and then softly, stretch words in known songs and add new words or sounds.
- Listen to a range of music with your child from rap to classical. Encourage your child to move in response to the variety of musical styles.

Ways you can support your children at home: Body percussion

- Learn some action rhymes such as 'Wind the bobbin up'.
- Play some tapes and CDs. Clap along with familiar rhymes and learn new ones.
- Listen to the sounds your feet make when walking/running/skipping: slowly, softly, fast, stomping, in flip flops, boots, etc.
- Try different types of claps – clap your hands softly, fast and make a pattern for your child to follow and repeat. Do the same again, clapping your thighs or stomping with your feet, tap your fingers, click your tongue and so on!

Ways you can support your children at home: Rhythm and rhyme

- Get into the rhythm of our language – bounce your child on your knee to the rhythm of a nursery rhyme, march or clap to a chant or song.
- Help your child move to the rhythm of a song or a rhyme.
- Read or say poems, songs, nursery rhymes and stories as often as you can, try to use gestures, tap regular beats and pauses to emphasise the rhythm of the piece.
- Add percussion to mark the beats using your hands, feet or instruments.
- Try out some rhythmic chanting such as "two, four, six, eight, hurry up or we'll be late".

Ways you can support your children at home: Alliteration (words that begin with the same sound)

- Alliteration is a lot of fun to play around with. Your child's name can be a good place to start. E.g. Say "George gets the giggles" "Milly makes music" "Corey caught a cat" "Jolly Jessica jumped". Encourage other family members to have a go too!
- Emphasise alliteration in songs and stories, e.g. 'Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers'.
- Play around with familiar songs to emphasise alliteration such as 'Old Macdonald had some sheep, shoes, shorts, with a sh sh here and a sh sh there'.
- Identify the odd one out e.g. cat, cup, boy, car.
- Make up little nonsense stories together using alliteration.
- Collect items from the part, the garden and around the house that start with the same sound.
- When shopping, think about some items you are buying and say "A tall tin of tomatoes", "A lovely little lemon". Encourage your child to repeat them and think of some of their own.

Ways you can support your children at home: Voice sounds

- Make fun noises or nonsense words.
- Say words in different ways (fast, slowly, high, low, using a funny voice etc.)
- 'Sing' known songs using only sounds e.g. 'la la la' and ask your child to guess the song.
- Vary your tempo and pitch when reading stories
- Make voices for characters when reading stories

Ways you can support your children at home: Oral blending and segmenting

This is all oral (spoken). You 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.

Oral blending and segmenting is a later skill that will be important when it is time to read and write. Being able to hear the separate sounds within a word and then blend them together to understand that word is a really important skill.

Blending is a vital skill for reading. The separate sounds (phonemes) of the word are spoken aloud, in order, all through the word, and are then merged together into the whole word. This merging together is called blending. For example, the adult would say **c-a-t = cat**.

Segmenting is a vital skill for spelling. The whole word is spoken aloud, then broken up into its separate sounds (phonemes) in order, all through the word. For example, the adult would say **cat = c-a-t.**

The importance of mark making

Your child will notice the adults around them reading and writing and they will want to copy them. Mark making is the first step towards writing. Mark making in the early stages is closely linked to physical development. The more opportunities your child has to develop large and small movement in their arms, hands and fingers the easier it will be to make marks with a variety of tools. Activities such as digging, 'painting' outdoor surfaces with water and a large brush, sweeping, and swishing a scarf through the air in different shapes will help to develop large motor movements. Small or fine motor movement will be needed to hold pencils and pens correctly. Hanging out the washing and playing with pegs, using a peg board, and picking up grains of rice with fingers and tweezers will help develop the pincher grip needed for writing.

In the early stages of learning to write, your child will like to experiment making marks on paper with a variety of writing tools such as brushes, pens, pencils, markers etc. They will often include drawings with their writing. Sometimes you will write for them. It is a good idea at this stage to use lower case letters when your write for your child, introducing capitals only for names.

Ways you can support your children at home: Other things to do at home

- **Read every day** to your child.
- Set up a place where your child can experiment with mark making, both outside and inside – using water, gloop, paint, pens, stamps, stencils etc. on a variety of surfaces such as paper, cardboard, the ground outdoors and so on.
- Collect a variety of pencils and pens and keep them handy for your child to use.
- Create a special writing bag to keep little writing tools in for travelling in the car or visiting other places. Change the contents regularly.

Ways you can support your children at home: What to do if your child is reluctant to read or write at home

It is important not to worry if your child shows no desire to write at home; the important thing is to keep on sharing books and talking together.

Reading

- Read to your child – show them that you like the book. Bring stories to life by using loud/soft/funny voices. **Read favourite books over and over again!**
- Spread books around your house for your child to dip in to!
- Let your child **choose** what they would like to read – books, comics, catalogues etc.

Writing

- Compose an email/message together to communicate with a family member.
- Make up a story together about one of their toys. You write it for them, repeating the sentences as your write. When complete, your child can draw pictures to go with it.
- Provide opportunities for mark making in sand, glitter, slime, flour etc.