

Letters and Sounds

Letters and Sounds is a six-phase teaching programme designed to help practitioners and teachers teach children how the alphabet works ready for reading and spelling.

Phase One is a completely oral programme of activities that concentrate on developing children's speaking and listening skills, phonological awareness and oral blending and segmenting. These activities are intended to be used as part of a broad and rich language curriculum that has speaking and listening at its centre, links language with physical and practical experiences, and provides an environment rich in print and abundant in opportunities to engage with books. The activities introduced in Phase One are intended to continue throughout the phases, as lots of practice is needed before children will become confident in their phonic knowledge and skills. Worksheets are not part of the programme and do not benefit the children in any way.

Phase One activities pave the way for children to make a good start in reading and writing. In order to enhance children's learning further. We take part in a phonics teaching programme called 'Letters and Sounds' which supports children in their reading and writing.

The ideas provided will also give you an insight into the sorts of activities your child will be involved in at Nursery.

The Structure of the programme

**Phase One is started in nursery and underpins Phase Two in Reception Class
In this phase your child will learn to:**

- ✓ Have fun with sounds
- ✓ Listen carefully
- ✓ Develop their vocabulary
- ✓ Speak confidently to adults and other children
- ✓ Tune into sounds
- ✓ Listen and remember sounds
- ✓ Understand that spoken words are made up of different sounds



Phase One of the programme consists of seven interlinking aspects that help the children tune into sounds. These are:

1. Environmental sounds
2. Instrumental sounds
3. Body percussion
4. Rhythm and rhyme
5. Alliteration (words that begin with the same sound)
6. Voice sounds
7. Oral blending and segmenting



Each aspect contains three strands:

- Tuning in to sounds (auditory discrimination)
- Listening and remembering sounds (auditory memory and sequencing)
- Talking about sounds (developing vocabulary and language comprehension).

It is intended that each of the first six aspects should be dipped into, rather than going through them in any order, with a balance of activities. Aspect 7 will usually come later, when children have had plenty of opportunity to develop their sound discrimination skills.



Aspect 1 - General sound discrimination - Environmental

The aim of this aspect is to raise children's awareness of the sounds around them and to develop their listening skills. Activities suggested in the guidance include going on a listening walk, drumming on different items outside and comparing the sounds, playing a sounds lotto game and making shakers.

Ways to support your child at home

- ❖ Go on a listening walk – when on a walk make a point of listening to different sounds i.e. cars revving their engines, dogs barking, birds tweeting, aeroplanes in the sky etc.
- ❖ When home talk about and try and remember all the different sounds you heard.
- ❖ Play sound lotto – commercial sound lotto games can be purchased from many toy shops.
- ❖ Make and explore sounds using a range of props such as running a stick along a fence, tapping a pan lid. Encourage your child to talk about and describe the sounds, can they make the sounds themselves.



Aspect 2 - General sound discrimination - Instrumental sounds

This aspect aims to develop children's awareness of sounds made by various instruments and noise makers. Activities include comparing and matching sound makers, playing instruments alongside a story and making loud and quiet sounds.

Ways to support your child at home

- ❖ Make your own musical instruments using card board boxes, yoghurt pots, elastic bands, dried peas, pasta etc. Shake these loudly or softly. Plays guess what's inside this instrument and describe the sounds.
- ❖ Listen to a range of music with your child from pop to classical. Encourage your child to move in response to the variety of music styles and moods. Talk about the music, helping them to extend their descriptive vocabulary.



Aspect 3 - General sound discrimination - Body percussion

The aim of this aspect is to develop children's awareness of sounds and rhythms. Activities include singing songs and action rhymes, listening to music and developing a sounds vocabulary.

Ways to support your child at home

- ❖ Sing some action rhymes such as 'wind the bobbin up', 'Incy wincy spider' etc. Play nursery rhyme CD's and classical music and clap along with familiar rhymes or learn new ones.
- ❖ Try different types of claps; clap your hands softly / fast/ loudly. Make a pattern with your child to follow. Stamp your feet, click your fingers or your tongue, tap fingers etc., and generally explore different sounds.



Aspect 4 - Rhythm and rhyme

This aspect aims to develop children's appreciation and experiences of rhythm and rhyme in speech. Activities include clapping out the syllables in words and odd one out, rhyming stories, rhyming bingo e.g. finding pictures of things that rhyme from a selection of pictures e.g. hat/cat, or mouse/ house or dog/frog etc.

Ways to support your child at home

- ❖ Read poems of rhyming stories, sing songs and nursery rhymes as often as you can. Try using gestures (acting out the story / rhyme) tap regular beats and pause to emphasise the rhythm of the piece and the words that rhyme.
- ❖ Try out some rhythmic chanting of your own such as 'two, four, six, eight hurry up or we will be late' or 'bip, bop, boo who are you?' etc.

Aspect 5 – Alliteration (words that begin with the same sound)



The focus is on initial sounds of words, with activities including I-Spy type games and matching objects which begin with the same sound and sentences with words beginning with the same sound e.g. big bear bounces balls.

Ways to support your child at home

- ❖ Alliteration is a lot of fun to play with. Your child's name can be a good place to start e.g. Harry has hundreds of happy hamsters, Will watches wibbly wobbly webs, Freddy find five funny frogs etc. Encourage other familiar members to have a go or make up sentences about them e.g. Mummy makes marvellous marsh mellows, Granddad grows green grass.
- ❖ Emphasise all alliteration in songs and stories e.g. 'Peter piper picked a peck of pickled pepper' play about with familiar stories such as 'Old MacDonald had some sheep, shoes, shorts with a sh, sh here etc.
- ❖ Play games to identify the odd one out in a spoken list e.g. cat, cup, boy, and car.

Aspect 6 - Voice sounds



The aim is to distinguish between different vocal sounds and to begin oral blending and segmenting. Activities include Metal Mike, where children feed pictures of objects into a toy robot's mouth and the teacher sounds out the name of the object in a robot voice - /c/- /u/-/p/ cup, with the children joining in.

Ways to support your child at home

- ❖ Say words in different ways (fast, slow, high, low, using funny voices)
- ❖ Sing songs using only one sound e.g. 'la, la, la, la' and ask your child to guess the song.
- ❖ Make and exaggerate voices for characters when reading stories.
- ❖ Read or tell sound stories – these encourage sound making as you read the story.

Aspect 7 - Oral blending and segmenting



In this aspect, the main aim is to develop oral blending and segmenting skills.

To practise oral blending, the teacher could say some sounds, such as /c/-/u/-/p/ and see whether the children can pick out a cup from a group of objects. For segmenting practise, the teacher could hold up an object such as a sock and ask the children which sounds they can hear in the word sock.

Ways to support your child at home

At this stage this is all oral (spoken). In the early stages the emphasis is on helping children to hear the separate sounds in words and create spoken sounds. It is important we use letter sounds and not names e.g. for the word cat to say c-a-t and not C(see)-A(ai)-T(tee)

- ❖ Sound talk – try breaking down simple words when giving instructions or asking questions such as ‘Can you find your h-a-t (hat)?’ ‘s-i-t (sit) on your s-ea-t (seat)’ etc. It is important to say the sounds in order through the word and then the whole word too.
- ❖ Blending – this is a vital skill for later reading – the separate sounds (phonemes) of the word are spoken aloud, in order and are then merged together into the whole word. This merging together is called blending. For example if an adult said d-o-g the child would know and say the word ‘dog’.
- ❖ Segmenting – this is a vital skill needed for later spelling. The whole word is spoken aloud, and then broken up into its separate sounds (phonemes) in order. For example the adult would say ‘dog’ and the child would know to break down the word to say d-o-g.

The early phases of the Letter and Sounds programme form the foundation for the development of early reading and writing skills. These skills are built on as children move through the phases in the Reception and Key Stage 1 classes.