

What is Phonics?



A Brief Overview

Phonics is a method of teaching children to read by linking sounds (phonemes) and the symbols that represent them (graphemes).

Therefore, phonics is essential for children to become successful readers, spellers and writers in the early years of schooling and beyond.

Before children can learn to manipulate sounds to read and write, they need to develop their phonological and phonemic awareness – being able to listen and identify sounds around them. These sounds include environmental sounds, instrumental sounds, vocal sounds, rhymes as well as hearing and identifying letter sounds. Hence a great part of phonics teaching, in these initial stages, is rooted in developing children's speaking and listening skills.

Phase 1 Phonics Explained

In 2007, 'Letters and Sounds' provided guidance on the teaching and learning of phonics. They created phases for children to progress through to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to become confident and fluent readers and writers.

Phase 1 lays the foundations for phonics in early years and beyond, targeting and developing phonological and phonemic awareness.

Phase 1 is organised into seven different aspects:

Aspect 1 – Environmental Sounds – General Sound Discrimination

The aim of this aspect is to raise children's awareness of the sounds around them and to develop their listening skills.

Aspect 2 – Instrumental Sounds – General Sound Discrimination

This aspect aims to develop children's awareness of sounds made by various instruments and noisemakers.

Aspect 3 – Body Percussion – General Sound Discrimination

The aim of this aspect is to develop children's awareness of body sounds and rhythms.

Aspect 4 – Rhythm and Rhyme

This aspect aims to develop children's appreciation and experiences of rhythm and rhyme in speech.

Aspect 5 – Alliteration

The focus is on the initial sounds of words

Aspect 6 – Voice Sounds

The aim is to distinguish between vocal sounds and to begin oral blending and segmenting.

Aspect 7 – Oral Blending and Segmenting

In this aspect, the main 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 children can pick out cup from the group of objects. For segmenting practise, the teacher could hold up an object such as a sock and ask children which sounds they can hear in the word sock.

The Foundation in Phonics Programme



An Introduction to Monster Phonics

At the heart of the programme are the Monster Phonics monsters. These create a context for learning, and motivate and engage children through a range of multi-sensory learning opportunities.

Each monster has a backstory, and these are used in all areas of the Foundation in Phonics Programme; stories and songs, activity teaching PowerPoints, resources and the inclusive Meet the Monster books and the foundation in Phonics reading books.

