

How we teach phonics at St Blaise

What is phonics?

Phonics is a method of teaching children to read skilfully and quickly by linking sounds (phonemes) and the symbols that represent them ([graphemes](#), or letter groups).

What is a phoneme?

A [phoneme](#) is the smallest unit of sound. The phonemes used when speaking English are:

s sat	t tap	p pan	n nose	m mat	a ant	e egg	i ink	o otter
g goat	d dog	ck click	r run	h hat	u up	ai rain	ee knee	igh light
b bus	f farm	l lolly	j jam	v van	oa boat	oo cook	oo boot	ar star
w wish	x axe	y yell	z zap	qu quill	or fork	ur burn	ow now	oi boil
ch chin	sh ship	th think	th the	ng sing	ear near	air stair	ure sure	er writer

Phonics learning step 1: decoding

Children are taught [letter sounds](#) in Reception. This involves thinking about what sound a word starts with, saying the sound out loud and then recognising how that sound is represented by a letter.

The aim is for children to be able to see a letter and then say the sound it represents out loud. This is called [decoding](#).

Phonics learning step 2: blending

Children then need to go from saying the individual sounds of each letter, to being able to [blend the sounds and say the whole word](#). This can be a big step for many children and takes time.

While children are learning to say the sounds of letters out loud, they will also begin to learn to write these letters ([encoding](#)). They will be taught where they need to start with each letter and how the letters need to be formed in relation to each other. Letters (or groups of letters) that represent phonemes are called [graphemes](#).

Phonics learning step 3: decoding CVC words

Children will focus on decoding (reading) three-letter words arranged consonant, vowel, consonant ([CVC words](#)) for some time. They will learn other letter sounds, such as the consonants g, b, d, h and the remaining vowels e, o, u. Often, they will be given letter cards to put together to make CVC words which they will be asked to say out loud.

Phonics learning step 4: decoding consonant clusters in CCVC and CVCC words

Children will also learn about [consonant clusters](#): two consonants located together in a word, such as tr, cr, st, lk, pl. Children will learn to read a range of [CCVC words](#) (consonant, consonant, vowel, consonant) such as trap, stop, plan. They will also read a range of [CVCC words](#) (consonant, vowel, consonant, consonant) such as milk, best, dent.

Phonics learning step 5: vowel digraphs

Children are then introduced to vowel digraphs. A [digraph](#) is two vowels that together make one sound such as: /oa/, /oo/, /ee/, /ai/. They will move onto sounding out words such as deer, hair, boat, etc. and will be taught about [split digraphs](#) (or 'magic e'). They will also start to read words combining vowel digraphs with consonant clusters, such as: train, groan and stool.

Phonics learning step 6: consonant digraphs

Children will also learn the consonant digraphs (two consonants that together make one sound) ch and sh and start blending these with other sounds to make words, such as: chat, shop, chain and shout.

Encoding, or learning to spell as well as read

Alongside this process of learning to decode (read) words, children will need to continue to practise forming letters which then needs to move onto encoding. Encoding is the process of writing down a spoken word, otherwise known as [spelling](#). They should start to be able to produce their own short pieces of writing, spelling the simple words correctly.

It goes without saying that reading a range of age-appropriate texts as often as possible will really support children in their grasp of all the reading and spelling of all the phonemes.

Phonics learning in KS1

- Phonics is explicitly taught at St Blaise in daily lessons throughout Reception and KS1. Then after this in KS2 it is taught and applied throughout their learning including in English and Guided Reading.
- We follow a structured intensive Phonic programme called 'Letters and Sounds' from the Department of Education's guidance on phonics teaching.
- Children will always work within the phase that is appropriate for their level of learning.
- They are assessed regularly so their progress is tracked.

By the end of **Reception**, children should be able to write one grapheme for each of the 44 phonemes.

In **Year 1**, they will start to explore vowel digraphs and [trigraphs](#) (a group of three letters that makes a single sound, like 'igh' as in 'sigh') further. They will begin to understand, for example, that the letters ea can make different sounds in different words (dream and bread). They will also learn that one sound might be represented by different groups of letters: for example, light and pie (igh and ie make the same sound).

Children in Year 2 will be learning [spelling rules](#), such as adding [suffixes](#) to words (such as -ed, -ing, -er, -est, -ful, -ly, -y, -s, -es, -ment and -ness). They will be taught rules on how to change root words when adding these suffixes (for example, removing the 'e' from 'have' before adding 'ing') and then move onto harder concepts, such as silent letters (**k**nock, **w**rite, etc) and particular endings (le in bottle and il in fossil).

Recommended websites to support your child's learning

www.phonicsplay.co.uk

<https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/for-home/reading-owl/expert-help/phonics-made-easy/>