

## **What can I do to help my child with phonics?**

At Stubbins, we teach phonics using the 'Twinkl Phonics' programme of study. It is a fun and interactive way to support children in learning how to read and write.

The alphabet contains only 26 letters. Spoken English uses about 44 sounds (phonemes). These phonemes are represented by letters (graphemes). In other words, a sound can be represented by a letter (e.g. 's' or 't') or a group of letters (e.g. 'th' or 'ow').

Once children begin learning sounds, they use this to help read and spell words.

### **What do all the technical words mean?**

#### **What is a phoneme?**

It is the smallest unit of sound and a piece of terminology that is taught and used throughout the teaching and learning of phonics. At first it will equate with a letter sound but later on will include the digraphs. For example 'rain' has three phonemes, / r / ai / n.

#### **What is a grapheme?**

A grapheme is a letter or a number of letters that represent a sound (phoneme) in a word. Another way to explain it is to say that a grapheme is a letter or letters that spell a sound in a word. E.g. /ee/, /ea/, /ey/ all make the same phoneme but are spelt differently.

#### **What is a digraph and a trigraph?**

A digraph is when two letters come together to make a single phoneme. For example, /oa/ makes the sound in boat. We use the term trigraph to mean a sound made from a combination of three letters such as /igh/. We don't have a term for when four letters make one sound!

#### **What is blending?**

Blending is the process that is involved in bringing the sounds together to make a word or a syllable and is how /c/ /a/ /t/ becomes cat.

To learn to read well children must be able to smoothly blend sounds together. Blending sounds fluidly helps to improve fluency when reading. Blending is more difficult to do with longer words so learning how to blend accurately from an early age is imperative.

Modelling how to make the sounds blend smoothly together without stopping after each individual sound.

#### **What is segmenting?**

Segmenting is when a word is 'sounded out' and is a skill used in spelling. In order to spell the word cat, it is necessary to segment the word into its constituent sounds; c-a-t.

Children often understand segmenting as 'sounding out' or 'sound talking' a word into its separate sounds. Before writing a word young children need time to think

about it, say the word several times, segment the word and then write it. Once children have written the same word several times they won't need to use these steps as frequently.

Children will enjoy spelling if it feels like fun and if they feel good about themselves as spellers. We need, therefore, to be playful and positive in our approach – noticing and praising what children can do as well as helping them to correct their mistakes.

### **What are tricky words?**

Tricky words are words that cannot be decoded or 'sounded-out' but need to be learned by sight. They don't fit into the usual spelling patterns. In order to read simple sentences, it is necessary for children to know some words that have unusual or untaught spellings. It should be noted that, when teaching these words, it is important to always start with sounds already known in the word, then focus on the 'tricky' part.

### **What are high frequency words?**

High frequency words (or common words) are words that recur often in much of the written material young children read. Many of these are decodable and children can sound them out but it is important that they learn them by sight in order to make their early reading flow. These words are also essential for early writing and the next step after reading them by sight is to spell them correctly.

### **What are CVC words?**

CVC stands for *consonant - vowel - consonant*, so words such as map, cat and dog are CVC words. Later, children also look at CCVC words such as clip, stop, twig; CVCC are words such as limp, help and belt and finally CCVCC are words such as crust and drink.