



Phonics and Early Reading at Swiss Gardens Primary School

Thursday 15th October 2026



A young boy with glasses is lying on his stomach on a bed, reading an open book. He is wearing a light-colored long-sleeved shirt. The background is a blurred bookshelf filled with books. The image is in grayscale with a dark overlay.

▶ *Early reading **ignites creativity, sparks curiosity, and stimulates the imagination in young children.** Often, this leads to role-play as children grow which helps to develop other skills such as empathy, problem-solving, and morality.*



Aims

- ▶ To explain what phonics is and how it is taught at Swiss Gardens
- ▶ To explore some useful phonics terms
- ▶ To briefly outline the different stages of Song of Sounds and what is covered in each
- ▶ To share how you can support phonics and reading at home.



What is Phonics?



- ▶ Phonics is part of a set of skills we use to teach children to become readers and writers.
- ▶ It teaches children to be able to:
 - Listen carefully and identify the sounds that make up each word
 - Recognise the sounds that each letter makes **p**
 - Identify the sounds that combinations of letters make **sh ee**
 - Blend these sounds together from left to right to read a word **sheep**
- ▶ This helps children to learn to read words and to spell words for writing.
- ▶ It is a Government initiative.
- ▶ Being able to read words is only one part of being a reader (decoding).



Useful Phonics Terms

Phoneme – the smallest unit of sound within a word e.g. **s**

Grapheme – what the sound looks like written down

Digraph – when 2 letters make 1 sound e.g. **sh**

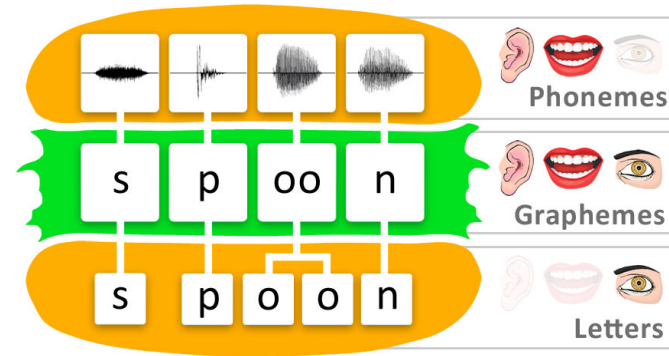
Trigraph – when 3 letters make 1 sound e.g. **igh**

Split vowel digraph – when a vowel sound is split by a consonant e.g. **cake**, **bike**

CVC word – stands for consonant – vowel – consonant **h-a-t**

Tricky words – Words that cannot be decoded e.g. **the**, **was**

Blending and Segmenting – putting the sounds together to read a word/ breaking up words into sounds for writing.



Phonics at Swiss Gardens



- ▶ We use the Song of Sounds programme to teach phonics.
- ▶ It teaches phonics in an engaging manner, using music and actions.
- ▶ Phonics teaching is daily to help the children quickly learn their sounds and practise applying them when reading and writing.
- ▶ By the end of Reception, children will have been introduced to 45 sounds!
- ▶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o3mAgyNOINE&source_ve_path=OTY3MTQ&embeds_referring_euri=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.songofsounds.co.uk%2F





A Typical Phonics Session

- ▶ Revisit - Each phonics session will start with the song or a flash through of sounds learnt so far - repetition is key to successful learning.

- ▶ Teach – Introduce the focus sound for the session e.g



- ▶ Practise – Say it, sing it, write it, read it in a word, write it in a word. All with teacher support and modelling.



- ▶ Apply – Play games that involve spotting, reading and writing that sound in words.
- ▶ Long Phonics – Friday focuses on application of newly taught sounds.



Progression in Phonics

Stage 1 – taught in Reception – begins with the 26 letters of the alphabet but taught in a way to get children reading (s, a, t, p, i, n). The children then move onto digraphs and trigraphs.

Stage 2 – taught in Year 1 - the children revise Stage 1 sounds and then are introduced to alternative representations of a sound. E.g. ai (rain), ay (play), a-e (bake).

Stage 3 – taught in Year 2 - revision of all previous sounds taught plus the introduction of more complex spelling patterns e.g. ge (charge), dge (bridge), g (genie).



Differentiation



All children are different and will learn in different ways and at different speeds.

Song of Sounds is a visual, auditory and kinaesthetic programme.

If children need additional support, they will have extra phonics sessions in smaller groups to help revise the sounds they have been taught.

Children who are quick to learn the sounds will be moved on to develop their reading and writing ability.

Support

For less-able children, put the flashcards ("le", "el" and "al") in the bag or box and ask them to practise writing the graphemes rather than whole words.

Challenge

Finish by asking more-able children to practise writing the whole green sentence.

Support

Help less-able children to read by drawing the sound buttons as the graphemes bounce in, and asking them to blend the sounds as you sweep your hand underneath.

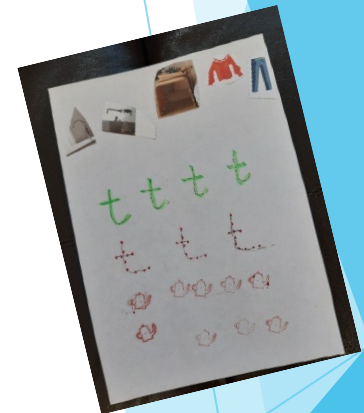
Challenge

Ask more-able children to read independently. If this is easy for them, choose a grapheme flashcard at random and ask them to cover a picture that has the relevant grapheme.

Supporting at Home - Phonics

- ▶ Learn the song with your child and practise the actions together.
 - ▶ Help your child to say the 'pure' sound e.g. 's' not 'suh'.
 - ▶ Each week, we will let you know which sounds we have focused on. These will be on a sticker in reading records. Practise these with your child – can they say them, write them, think of words that start/end with that sound?
 - ▶ Play games to help embed learning from school:
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I spy with the focus sounds, spot the sounds on signs/labels, write out the sounds, cut them up and spread out on floor. Can they splat the sound when you say it? Hide the sounds and make a sound hunt around your home. Sort objects from around the home into initial sounds e.g. s = sock, stick.



Supporting at Home - Reading

- ▶ Children's colour banded reading books that they bring home will contain the sounds your child has learnt at school. These are progressive and children will move to the next colour reading band when they know and can apply more sounds to their reading.
- ▶ We additionally assess children on their understanding of a book. We call this comprehension and includes retelling what has been read and answering questions about the book.
- ▶ To have the most impact, reading little and often is the key. Spend 5/10 minutes each day sharing your child's reading book with them. This could be first thing in the morning, in the bath, after dinner, before bed, on the way to school – whenever works best for you and your child!
- ▶ We change reading books once a week. Children need to read the same book to build confidence and accuracy. It is ok if they read it from memory! Library books will also be changed every week.
- ▶ Please read with your child daily and comment in your child's reading record regularly.
- ▶ Continue to read to and share a range of books with your child. Our aim is to nurture a love for reading. Phonics is just one part of reading.
- ▶ PLEASE KEEP YOUR CHILD'S BOOK IN THEIR BAG AFTER EACH READ SO WE CAN EASILY CHANGE IT!



We assess children against the 7 areas of learning in Reception. In Literacy, by the end of Reception children should be able to...

Literacy

Comprehension

- Demonstrate understanding of what has been read to them by retelling stories and narratives using their own words and recently introduced vocabulary.
- Anticipate (where appropriate) key events in stories.
- Use and understand recently introduced vocabulary during discussions about stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems and during role play.

Word Reading

- Say a sound for each letter in the alphabet and at least 10 digraphs.
- Read words consistent with their phonic knowledge by sound-blending.
- Read aloud simple sentences and books that are consistent with their phonic knowledge, including some common exception words.

Writing

- Write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed.
- Spell words by identifying sounds in them and representing the sounds with a letter or letters.
- Write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others.

Supporting Children's Reading at School

We would warmly welcome any parent volunteer reading helpers! If you have any spare time and would like to support children's reading at school each week, please do let your child's class teacher know and we can arrange a time and day.



Useful Websites:

- [Phonics play](#)
- [Oxford Owl](#)
- [Topmarks](#)
- [BBC Bitesize](#)



Watch: 's', 'a', 't', 'p' sounds

Watch the animation and learn all about the sounds 's', 'a', 't', 'p' with the Phonics Wizards!



Thank you for listening!

Do you have any questions?

