


Raglan Primary School



A Guide for Parents and Carers The First Steps to Reading and Writing

Where you see the  symbol you will find some suggested activities that will support your child in their learning.

Introduction

Children learn a great deal from other people. As parents and carers you are your child's first teachers. You have a powerful influence on your child's early learning.

From a very early age your child will need to experience a wide range of activities and experiences with you, for example, singing and saying rhymes, making and listening to music, listening to and joining in conversations, painting and pretend play. These activities will help your child take the first important steps towards reading and writing.

At Raglan Primary School children take part in a high-quality communication, language and literacy development programme designed to promote every child's learning through a play-based approach.

A phonics teaching programme called *Letters and Sounds* is used to support the teaching of reading and writing in the school. It builds on the activities the children have already experienced in their lives and other settings. At Raglan Primary School we also have adapted this to meet the requirements of the new Primary National Curriculum.

The children learn through lots of play and activities and are encouraged to use their increasing phonics knowledge in freely chosen activities.

If you are involved in helping your child it makes a big difference to their learning.

This booklet will give further information about the *Letters and Sounds* programme and the best ways to support your child's learning at home.

Learning to read and write in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's spoken language supports reading and writing

From a very early stage, children develop an awareness of the different sounds in our spoken language. They learn to use their voices to make contact with you and to let people know what they need and how they are feeling. As parents and carers, you best understand your baby or young child's communications; you are key people in helping them develop their speaking and listening skills.

Children need lots of opportunities to talk with others as they develop and practise their speaking and listening skills. This helps to build their confidence and improves their ability to communicate with other people. This is a really important aspect of learning to socialise and will help your child feel confident when the time comes to make friends.

In order to make a good start in reading and writing, children need an adult to talk to and listen to them.

Everyday activities such as preparing meals, tidying up, putting shopping away and getting ready to go out, offer you chances to talk to your child and explain what you are doing. They hear the way language is put together into sentences for a purpose.



Ways you can support your children at home: Talking and Listening

- **Make time to listen to your child talking** - as you meet them from school, as you walk, or travel home by car, in the supermarket as you shop, at meal times, bath times, bedtimes - any time!
- **Switch off the TV, radio and mobile phones** - and really listen!
- **Show that you are interested in what they are talking about** - look at your child, smile, nod your head, ask a question or make a response to show that you really have been listening.
- **Make a collection of different toy creatures** - for example, a duck, a snake, an alien, say the sound it might make as you play together, for example,, 'quack-quack', 'sssssss', 'yuk-yuk', and encourage your child to copy you.
- **Listen at home** - switch off the TV and listen to the sounds both inside and outside the home. Can your child tell you what sounds they heard, in the order in which they heard them?
- **Play-a-tune** - and follow me! Make or buy some simple shakers, drums and beaters, then play a simple tune and ask your child to copy. Have fun!
- **Use puppets** and toys to make up stories or retell known ones. Perhaps record your child telling the story and play it back to them.

The importance of speech sounds

As children grow older they begin to understand more about the sounds of our language and they are able to join in with rhymes, songs and stories by clapping, stamping and skipping. This is an important stage as children's ears are learning to tune into all the different sounds around them. Playing with sounds and tuning your child's ears into sounds will develop phonological awareness which is the ability to discriminate different sounds. Over time, this will help your child develop an understanding that words are made up of different sounds (*phonemes*) and they will be able to hear the different sounds in a word. Gradually they will learn to match sounds to letters (*graphemes*). This is phonic knowledge. They use this knowledge when they are reading and writing.

If you have any questions about phonics or how to say the sounds correctly with your child please talk to a member of the EYFS team who will be able to help you.



Ways you can support your children at home: Sound Talk

This is a very supportive activity to play with your child.

Try breaking down simple words when you are giving instructions or asking questions, such as 'Can you find your h-a-t hat?' 'Where is the c-a-t cat?' 'Sit on the s-ea-t seat' 'Eat your f-oo-d food'. It is really important to say the sounds (*phonemes*) aloud, in order, all through the word.

Prior to this, your child should have experienced lots of the environmental, instrumental and body percussion, rhythm and rhyming, alliteration, and voice sounds activities to tune in their ears.

Speaking and listening are the foundations for reading and writing

Letters and Sounds - Phase 1

In this ongoing phase, your child will be learning to:

- have fun with sounds
- listen carefully
- develop their vocabulary
- speak confidently to you, other adults and other children
- tune into sounds
- listen and remember sounds
- talk about sounds
- Understand that spoken words are made up of different sounds.

Phase 1 consists of seven interlinking parts:

- environmental sounds
- instrumental sounds
- body percussion
- rhythm and rhyme
- alliteration (words that begin with the same sound)
- voice sounds
- oral blending and segmenting.

You can help your child develop in each of these by trying some of the ideas below. Remember that all these activities should be fun and interactive. Give your child lots of encouragement and cuddles as you play together. Smiles and praise will help develop a sense of achievement and build confidence.

This is all oral (*spoken*). Your child will not yet be expected to match the letter to the sound. The emphasis is on developing the ability to distinguish sounds and create sounds.



Ways you can support your children at home: Environmental Sounds

- Go on a listening walk - when walking down the road, make a point of listening to different sounds: cars revving, people talking, birds singing, dogs barking. When you get home, try to remember all the sounds you heard. You could try taping the sounds, to listen to them again, or try reproducing them yourselves, using your voices or instruments.
- Make sounds, using a range of props, such as running a stick along a fence or tapping on the bin lid.
- Invent a secret family 'knock' for entering rooms.
- Play 'Sound lotto'. A commercial version of this can be purchased from many children's toy stores but making your own, from your sound walk, would be far more rewarding.



Ways you can support your children at home: Instrumental Sounds

- Make your own musical instruments, using cardboard rolls, tins, dried peas, beans, stones. Shake these loudly, softly, as you are marching, skipping or stomping. Play 'Guess what's inside the instrument'.
- Sing known songs loudly and then softly, stretch words in known songs and add new words or sounds.
- Listen to a range of music with your child, from rap to classical. Encourage your child to move in response to the variety of musical styles and moods.



Ways you can support your children at home: Body Percussion

- Learn some action rhymes, such as 'Wind the bobbin up'.
- Play some commercially produced CDs or download some songs. Clap along with familiar rhymes and learn new ones.

- Listen to the sounds your feet make when walking, running or skipping: slowly, softly, fast, stomping hard, in flip flops, boots and high heels.
- Try different types of clapping: clap your hands softly, fast and make a pattern for your child to follow. Do the same, clapping your thighs or stamping your feet. Tap your fingers. Click your tongue.
- Invent a special family clap routine for when someone does something really well.



Ways you can support your children at home:

Rhythm and Rhyme

- Get into the rhythm of language: bounce your child on your knee to the rhythm of a song or nursery rhyme, march or clap to a chant or poem.
- Help your child move to the rhythm of a song or rhyme.
- Read or say poems, songs, nursery songs and rhyming stories as often as you can, try to use gestures, tap regular beats and pause to emphasise the rhythm of the piece.
- Add percussion to mark the beats, using your hands, feet or instruments.
- Try out some rhythmic chanting such as 'two, four, six, eight, hurry up or we'll be late' or 'bip bop boo, who are you?'



Ways you can support your children at home:

Alliteration (words that begin with the same sound)

- Alliteration is a lot of fun to play around with. Your child's name can be a good place to start, for example, say: 'Gurpreet gets the giggles', 'Milo makes music', 'Naheema's nose', 'Carl caught a cat', 'Jolly Jessie jumped', 'Tina is talking'. Encourage other family members to have a go, for example: 'Mummy munches muffins', 'Daddy is doing the dishes'.
- Emphasise alliteration in songs and stories, for example: 'Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers'.
- Play around with familiar songs, such as 'Old MacDonald had some sheep, shoes, shorts, with a sh sh here and a sh sh there', to emphasise alliteration.
- Identify the odd one out, for example, *cat*, *cup*, *boy*, *car*.

- Make up little nonsense stories together, using lots of alliteration.
- Collect items that start with the same sound from the park, the garden and around the house.
- When shopping, think about items you are buying and say: 'a tall tin of tomatoes', 'a lovely little lemon'. Encourage your child to do the same.



Ways you can support your children at home: Voice Sounds

- Repeat your child's vocalisations.
- Make fun noises or nonsense words.
- Say words in different ways (fast, slowly, high, low, using a funny voice).
- 'Sing' known songs using only sounds, for example, 'la, la, la', and ask your child to guess the song.
- Vary your tempo and pitch when reading stories.
- Make different voices for characters when reading stories.
- Read or tell sound stories. Your local library or bookshop will be able to point out some very good books that encourage sound-making as you read the story. This is huge fun and can involve all the family.



Ways you can support your children at home: Oral Blending and Segmenting

This is all oral (spoken). Your child will not be expected to match the letter to the sound at this stage. The emphasis is on helping children to hear the separate sounds in words and to create spoken sounds.

Oral blending and segmenting is a later skill that will be important when the time comes for your child to read and write. Being able to hear the separate sounds within a word and then blend them together to understand that word is really important.

Blending is a vital skill for reading. The separate sounds (*phonemes*) of the word are spoken aloud, in order, all through the word, and are then merged together into the whole word. This merging together is called *blending*. For example, the adult would say **c-a-t = cat**.

Segmenting is a vital skill for spelling. The whole word is spoken aloud, then broken up into its separate sounds (*phonemes*) in order, all through the word. For example, the adult would say *cat* = *c-a-t*.

The importance of mark-making

Your child will notice adults around them reading and writing and they will want to copy them. Mark-making is the first step towards writing. Mark-making in the early stages is closely linked to physical development. The more opportunities your child has to develop large and small movement in their arms, hands and fingers, the easier it will be to make marks with a variety of tools.

Activities such as digging, 'painting' outdoor surfaces with water and a large brush, sweeping, and swishing a scarf through the air in different shapes will help develop large motor movement. Small or fine motor movement will be needed to hold pencils and pens correctly. Hanging out the washing and playing with pegs, using a pegboard and picking up grains of rice with fingers and tweezers will help develop the pincer grip needed for writing.

In the early stages of learning to write, your child will like to experiment, making marks on paper with a variety of writing tools such as brushes, pens, pencils and felt-tip markers. They will often include drawings with their writing. Sometimes you will write for them. It is a good idea at this stage to use lower-case letters when you write for your child, introducing capitals only for names.



Ways you can support your children at home: Other things to do at home

- Turn off the TV so you can listen to and talk to your child.
- Read every day to your child.
- Set up a place where your child can experiment with mark-making, both outside and inside, using gloop, paint, pens, stamps and stencils onto a variety of surfaces such as paper, cardboard and material.
- Collect a variety of pencils and pens, and keep them handy for your child.
- Create a special writing bag to keep little writing tools in, for travelling in the car or visiting the doctor's. Change the contents regularly.



Ways you can support your children at home:

What to do if your child is reluctant to read or write at home

Relax! It is important not to worry if your child shows no inclination to write at home; the important thing is to keep on sharing books and talking together. There is no need to insist that your child does some writing - more often than not they will choose to do so when they have a real reason to.

Reading

- Make sure your child sees you reading.
- Read **to** your child. Show you like the book. Bring stories to life by using loud, soft, scary voices - let yourself go!
- Leave books around your house for your child to dip into.
- Let your child choose what **they** would like to read - books, comics, catalogue, stories on the iPad or computer
- Read favourite stories over and over again. Enjoy!

Writing

- Make sure your child sees you writing.
- Compose an email together inviting a friend over to tea.
- Make words together using magnetic letters.
- Make up a story together about one of their toys. You write for them, repeating the sentences as you write. When it is complete, they can draw pictures to go with it.
- Buy stickers of a favourite film or TV programme and make a book about it.

Letters and Sounds - Overview of Phases 1 to 6 at Raglan Primary School

Phase	Phonic Knowledge and Skills
<i>Phase One</i> (Nursery/Reception)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening skills and the ability to discriminate between sounds. These are divided into seven aspects, including environmental sounds, instrumental sounds, body sounds, rhythm and rhyme, alliteration, voice sounds and finally oral blending and segmenting
<i>Phase Two</i> (Reception)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 19 grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) • Blending and segmenting sounds through a 2 phoneme (sound) and then a 3 phoneme word • Applying their knowledge to reading and writing sentences • Letter names as well as matching upper and lower case letters • Common exception words, for example 'no'
<i>Phase Three</i> (Reception) weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 further GPCs, including most of the sounds that comprise of 2 letters (digraphs). • Segmenting and blending using all the GPCs learnt so far • Reading and spelling CVC (3 phoneme) and 2 syllable words and captions • The alphabet, corresponding upper and lower case letters and vowels and consonants in order to begin learning spelling rules • Common exception words, for example 'was'
<i>Phase Four</i> (Reception)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blending and segmenting adjacent consonants in words in order to read and spell words with 4 or more phonemes • Recognising syllables and using this in reading and writing • Applying this skill to reading and writing sentences • Reading and writing common exception words, e.g. 'said'
<i>Phase Five</i> (Throughout Year 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative ways of pronouncing and spelling the phonemes and graphemes they already know • Reading and writing phonically decodable two-syllable and three-syllable words • Spelling and reading of common words (high frequency words) • Spelling days of the week • Teaching of grammar including the past tense and suffixes such as ing, ed, es/s, where the root word doesn't change.
<i>Phase Six</i> (Throughout Year 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative ways of spelling the phonemes they already know. • Spelling rules and patterns, including suffixes, contractions, homophones, near homophones and polysyllabic words. • Spelling and reading of common words (high frequency words) • Proof reading their own work

