

# **Phonics and Reading**



**at Helmingham  
Primary School  
and Nursery**



## Reading and Phonics at Helmingham Primary School

At Helmingham Primary School we strive for reading to be at the core of our whole curriculum. We want every child who enters our school to make rapid and significant progress in reading from the first few weeks at school all the way through to the end of Year 6.

In this booklet I will explain how we do this during Reception and Year 1. During the last few years we have spent considerable time developing and improving our reading and phonics programme.

We want all children to make the best possible start to their education

### Reading Book Levels

At Helmingham we have organised our reading books into phonic based book levels. I will explain how this works and what you can expect when your child starts learning to read at school.

We have 7 reading books levels based on the colours of the rainbow. Each reading book level is linked to a specific set of sounds. Each set of sounds are taught to children before we move them on to the next book level. For example if a child is reading green books we will begin teaching them the sounds for the level above (blue) so that they are ready to move onto that level as soon as they can. To allow us to do this we use regular assessments of children's phonic and reading levels and adjust them as needed. We are always looking to move children onto the next book level and are keen to see what the children need to learn next.

This table shows our book levels and the sounds associated with each book level. I have also put the typical progression of reading during Reception and Year 1 alongside the reading levels. Children do not always follow this progression as all children develop at different rates. This is not something you should be judging your child against; it is simply a guide to show the average progression through our reading levels.

Red s a t p i n m d	Reception Autumn Term
Orange g o c k e u r h b f l s s c k f f l l	
Yellow j v w x z y z z	Reception Spring Term
Green q u c h s h t h n g a i e e	
Blue i g h o a o o a r o r u r o w	Beginnin g of Year 1
Indigo o i e a r a i r u r e e r	
Violet a y o u i e e a o y i r u e a w	
Silver w h p h e w o e a u e y	Year 1 Spring Term
Gold a - e e - e i - e o - e u - e	Beginnin g of Year 2




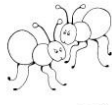








## First Steps into

### Reading Red

Red  
s a t p i n m d

When a child first starts school we teach them the first set of sounds (phonemes), which you can see above.

We teach the children to say the sound that the letter makes rather than the letter name, eg. sssssssssss and not letter s. We also teach children actions to help them to remember the letters.

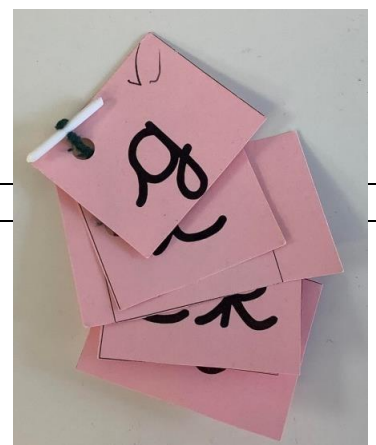
	<b>s</b> Weave hand in an s shape, like a snake, and say ssssss.	
	<b>a</b> Wiggle fingers above elbow as if ants crawling on you, saying a, a, a.	
	<b>t</b> Turn head from side to side as if watching tennis and say t, t, t.	
	<b>i</b> Pretend to be a mouse by wriggling fingers at end of noise and squeak i, i, i.	
	<b>p</b> Pretend to puff out candles and say p, p, p.	
	<b>n</b> Hold arms out at side, as if a plane, and say nnnnnnnnnn.	

Full list of actions will be provided

#### . Flashcards

Each child will take home a set of flashcards to practice the sounds taught during our daily Phonics lessons. We usually start children with red flashcards to practice the red sounds.

Children will have four or five sounds on their flash cards at a time. These will be letters we are teaching during our daily phonics lessons. We ask parents to practice the flashcards every day with their children. We check flashcards daily with the children in school. As soon as a child knows the sounds on their flashcard the adult in school will put a tick next to the letter sound. When a child has three ticks on their flashcard we remove that card and give them a new flashcard to work on.



Please note – do not tick flashcards – we will do this at school.

## Reading Words

Once a child has learnt to recognise the first set of sounds on their flashcards we begin to give children simple words to read. These words contain the sounds that they have been learning.

The first word a child is given may be the word 'pat'. We teach the children to put their finger under each letter and say the sound it makes, e.g. p/a/t. Once a child has said all of the sounds in a word they will say the word 'pat'. At first children might need a little help with sounding out (blending) their first few words. Your child might say the sounds in the word 'pat' and you might need to help them to say the word. With time and support your children will be blending these simple words independently.

## Reading Books

Once a child is able to read the words on their flashcards confidently we will start sending home reading books. We will then start sending home the next level of flashcards (orange) as we like children to work on flashcards that are one level higher than their reading book level.

## Changing Reading Books

Children are encouraged to change their own reading books during the day in school. We ask for children to read their reading book on two separated days before they change their books. The first read gives children the chance to sound out and get familiar with the words in their books and then children develop more fluency and understanding of the text for their second read. We try to give children as much independence as they can manage when changing reading books. Please let us know if your child hasn't changed their books for a few days. We will then encourage the children to change their books.

## Reading at Home

Try to read and practice flashcards with your child five times every week. When you read with your child please sign in their reading diary, adding a comment if you wish. Once a child has read their reading book twice (either at home or at school) they can change it for a different book. Regular reading at home is the best thing you can do to support your child with their learning. We really value parental support and find that children who read regularly at home make more progress than those who do not.

## Assessments

We understand that all children start school at different levels and we carry out assessments to see where to start children on the reading scheme, when to move children onto a new book level and when to provide children with additional support. Please feel free to come into school and look at or discuss our assessments of your children's reading. We really want to work with you to support your children's reading progress.

## Orange

Orange  
g o c k e u r h b f l s s c k f f l l

Once a child knows all of their red sounds and words we move them onto the orange sounds.

Within the orange level children learn to read a digraph (two letters that make one sound) eg. ff, ll, ss and ck. In a digraph two letters make one sound, for example in the word cuff, the ff makes one fffffff rather than two sounds c/u/ff, rather than c/u/f/f.

### Tricky Word Flashcards

We teach children to sound words out using their phonic knowledge. There are some words that your child will come across that they will be unable to sound out at their phonic level. We call these words 'tricky words'. Children need to learn to recognise these tricky words by sight, rather than trying to sound them out. We will start to put a tricky word on your children's flashcards when they are at orange level. These tricky words will be printed on white card. Any words on coloured card are for children to learn to sound out, but any words on white card are for children to learn to read by sight, e.g. was, to or said. Once a child is reading orange books they will begin to see some tricky words in their books. Hopefully children will be able to recognise them in their books as well as on their flashcards.

### Yellow and Green

After orange books your child will move onto yellow and then green books. These books contain the following sounds:

Yellow  
j v w x z y zz

Green  
qu ch sh th ng ai ee

At this level children continue to learn about digraphs – two letters that make one sound eg. ch in chip and sh in shop.

### Blue and Indigo

Blue  
igh oa oo ar or ur ow

Indigo  
oi ear air ure er

When teaching blue and indigo books we teach children to read and write words containing adjacent consonants and a long vowel sound, such as spark, boost and paint. In blue we also teach children their first trigraph (three letters that make one sound) – igh. They read this trigraph in words like night, light, and tight.

## Tricky Words

Throughout our reading scheme we encourage children to learn to read tricky words (printed on a white flashcard). As children become more confident at reading them we also encourage children to learn to spell these words. We expect all children to be able to spell the tricky words by the end of Year 1. We do find that it helps children to learn to spell some tricky words by the end of Reception. We will give you all a full list of tricky words that we teach during Reception and Year 1 so you can support your children with this.

### Violet, Gold and Silver

#### Violet

ay ou ie ea oy ir ue aw

#### Silver

wh ph ew oe au ey

#### Gold

a-e e-e i-e o-e u-e

Once children reach the last three book levels they should be reading with increasing fluency and confidence. During these levels we teach alternative spellings of sounds taught previously. For example when children were reading blue books they learnt the igh sound. During violet level we teach children that you can also make the same sound and spell it as ie, like in pie and tie.

### Spilt Digraph

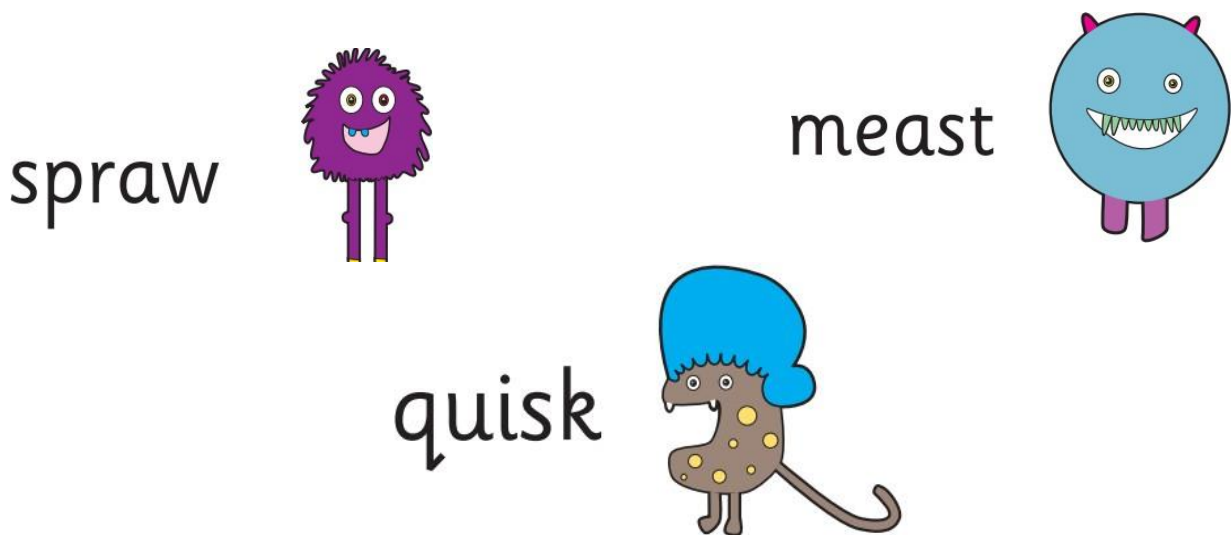
Gold level contains split digraphs. They are not as complicated as people often think. At this level children are very comfortable with the idea of a digraph – two letters that make one sound. A split digraph is simply a digraph where the two letters in the digraph are not directly next to each other, e.g. in the word cake the a and the e are a digraph and make an ai sound, but they are not next to each other.

## Year 1 Phonic Screening

Towards the end of Year 1 all children take part in the Year 1 Phonic Screening. This is a national assessment of children's phonic ability. Children are given a 40 words to read using their phonic knowledge. Half of the words are real words and half of the words are pseudo words. We usually call them alien or nonsense words with the children.

Children do the assessment out of the classroom, one to one with the class teacher. It is always carried out in a very low pressured environment and children are not usually aware that they are being tested.

I have put some examples of alien words from the 2019 Phonic Screening below.



## Additional Support

We pay close attention to children's reading progress and carry out regular assessments. At times we might feel that certain children need additional support with their reading based on our assessments. If a child is receiving additional support it isn't necessarily because they are struggling. We might give additional support to a child who is nearly at a new book level and needs a little bit of extra support to move them onto another colour band. We might also provide support for a child who has one or two sounds that they struggle with and we will support them until they have learnt those sounds or we might work with another child on learning tricky words. Please come and speak to us if you have any concerns or questions about your child's reading levels or reading progress.

## Accelerated Reader

Once children have progressed through all of the phonic based reading book levels we move children onto the Accelerated Reader reading scheme. Our Accelerated Reader books are kept in the library and children read them with greater independence. When a child moves onto the system they complete a reading test on an iPad. We choose a suitable book level for a child using information from their reading test. Children change their Accelerated Reader books in the library as often as needed. When children need to change their Accelerated Reader book, they need to do a reading comprehension quiz on the iPad. These quiz questions give children the opportunity to show their understanding of the text that they have read. We monitor children's quiz scores to ensure that their comprehension level matches with the book level that they are reading. Each child completes a reading test at least every half term, sometimes more frequently, and we use the results of their reading test and their quiz test scores to decide their new reading book levels. We aim to move all children onto accelerated reader by the beginning of Year 2.

When children move onto Accelerated Reader books they get given a number range to read eg. 0-5-0.9. This means they can choose a book with a level of 0.5, 0.6, 0.7, 0.8 or 0.9.

### How to support your child when reading at home

- 1) Keep it fun – children read best when they are enjoying reading at home. Try not to make it a battle, instead view it a nice bonding time between you and your child.
- 2) Be consistent – children need to realise that they need to read every day, once they have read they can get on with their evening. Many parents find it easier to do reading when they first get home from school, other parents prefer to save reading until closer to bedtime or first thing in the morning.
- 3) Read a range of books – children do need to read their reading books and do their flashcards each day, but they also need to experience a wide range of other books. Go to the library and read as many different types of books as you can with your child.
- 4) When sounding out words with your children try to use the pure sound without adding an extra uh sound on the end – eg. ssssssssss, rather than suh. Come and ask me to demonstrate so you can see the difference.
- 5) Take turns – sometimes children will appreciate it if you read a page and they read a page. I know some children read to family members over FaceTime or read to the dog! It is important to read and recap flashcards every day so things like this help to keep daily reading interesting for children.
- 6) Enjoy reading – I really hope you enjoy seeing your child move from the very beginnings of being a reader at the beginning of Reception to a fluent and confident reader at the end of Year 1.