

**Phonics Teaching at Hartington C of E Primary School
and the Phonics Screening Check
Year 1
A Guide for Parents**

What is Phonics?

Phonics is a way of teaching children to read quickly and skilfully. Children are taught **how** to recognise the **sounds** each individual letter makes and to identify the sounds that different combinations (**blends**) of certain letters make such as 'sh' and 'oo'. Children are taught to read by breaking down words into separate sounds or '**phonemes**'. They are then taught how to blend these sounds together to read the whole word.

At Hartington CE Primary School, we teach phonics following the **Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised**, which is a systematic and synthetic phonic programme. Children in Reception and Year 1 have 25 minutes a day of phonics provision and additional when needed. Year 2 children also have phonics and spelling sessions daily.

Why Phonics?

Research shows that when phonics is taught in a structured way, starting with the easiest sounds and progressing through to more complex sounds, it is the most effective way of teaching children to read. It is particularly helpful for children aged 5-7.

Almost all children who receive good teaching of phonics will learn the skills they need to tackle new words. They can then go on to read any kind of text fluently and confidently to enhance their enjoyment.

Which Reading Scheme?

At Hartington CE Primary School, children learn to read both through learning phonics and tackling real books. The main reading scheme is linked to the Little Wandle Phonics Scheme through books published by Collins, plus additional books which are levelled which the children are encouraged to read daily. Alongside the children from year 2 –

year 6 access the Accelerated Reading Programme which includes a rigorous reading assessment that keeps track of the progress of the children. Monitoring and assessments also take place each term for all children throughout the school. Children have the opportunity to read daily, and are encouraged to talk about books including the illustrations, predicting the storyline and using their phonic knowledge and clues from the story to decode the words. Alongside this, children are taught to read **high frequency words**. These are words such as 'of' and 'one' which cannot be sounded out in the usual phonetic way and therefore just need to be learnt.

What is the phonics screening check in Year 1?

The **National Phonics Screening Check** is a statutory assessment that was introduced in 2012 to all Year 1 pupils, and is a quick and easy way of checking your child's phonic knowledge.

Who is it for?

All Year 1 pupils will take the phonics screening check annually. This usually takes place in the Summer Term. After the screening, parents will be informed if their child passed the screening check.

What is in the phonics screening check?

It comprises a list of 40 words which are either 'real' or **nonsense** ('pseudo'). It will assess phonics skills and knowledge learnt through Reception and Year 1. Your child will read one to one with a teacher. It will be your child's current teacher so it will be a familiar face. Your child will probably complete the check in 10-15 minutes. They will be asked to 'sound out' a word and blend the sounds together. The check is very similar to the tasks which the children already complete during phonics lessons.

Is it stressful to test such young children?

The assessment is age appropriate and the adults involved will all be known. The children at Hartington CE Primary School are familiar with the set up as we are constantly reviewing children's progress in the

same way. It should be an enjoyable activity for children which takes no more than 15 minutes. There will be a few practice words at the beginning to make sure your child understands the activity.

What are Nonsense or Pseudo words and why are they included?

These are words that are phonetically decodable but are not actual words with an associated meaning e.g. '*brip*', '*snorb*'. These words are included in the check specifically to assess whether your child can decode a word using phonic skills and not their memory. The pseudo words will be shown to your child with a picture of an alien. The children will be asked what the alien's name is by reading the word. This will make the check a bit more fun and provides the children with a context for the nonsense word. Crucially it does not provide any clues, so your child has to be able to decode it. Children generally find nonsense amusing so they will probably enjoy reading these words.

How will the results from the screening be used?

You will be informed of your child's progress in phonics and how he or she has done in the screening check, towards the end of the Summer Term. All of the children are individuals and develop at different stages. The screening check ensures that teachers understand which children need support with decoding.

What happens if a child struggles with the screening check?

The screening check will identify children who have phonic decoding skills below the level expected for the end of Year 1 and who therefore, need extra help and support. Schools are expected to provide extra help and children will then be able to re-take the assessment in Year 2.

How can I help my child?

There are a number of things that parents can do with their child to support early reading development:

- Let your child **see you enjoy reading** yourself. They are influenced by you and what you do!

- **Immerse** your child in a love of reading.
- **Make time** for your child to read their school book to you.
- With all books, encourage your child to '**sound out**' unfamiliar words and then **blend** from left to right rather than looking at pictures to guess.
- There are many **phonic games** for children to play and enjoy at www.phonicsplay.co.uk and www.lettersandsounds.com.

We hope this information is useful. Remember, we are here to help your child achieve their very best. If you have any questions, please ask your child's class teacher or teaching assistant.

***** Hartington's Top Ten Tips to Help your Child Read! *****

- 1) Choose a quiet time** (10 minutes is long enough with no screens)
- 2) Make reading enjoyable** (sit with your child and stop when they lose interest)
- 3) Maintain the flow** (let your child self-correct and don't be tempted to keep jumping in to correct)
- 4) Be positive** (praise often and don't keep pointing out the mistakes)
- 5) Success** is the key (keep to easier books until your child is ready – don't pressure them and rush to harder books)
- 6) Visit the library** and read as a family (read to your child daily)
- 7) Regular practice** (read for a few minutes each day)
- 8) Communicate** (show an interest, connect the books to your child's life, write in the school reading journal)
- 9) Talk** about the books (talk about the pictures, predict the ending, discuss the characters and favourite parts)
- 10) Variety** (children need to enjoy reading and not be forced - it's therefore great to give them a wide reading diet which includes: comics, picture books, hard backs, magazines, poems and information books)