



LONG CRENDON SCHOOL

the place to grow

Early Reading and Writing Guidance



At Long Crendon School we are using the DfE validated Bug Club Phonics, which is a systematic synthetic phonics programme that features the following:

- Daily lessons from the start of Reception
- Teaching of the main grapheme-phoneme correspondences of English in a clearly defined, incremental sequence
- Supports children reading and spelling from very early on
- Includes blending for reading and segmenting for spelling activities
- Provides opportunities for children to practise and apply known phoneme-grapheme correspondences for spelling through dictation of sounds, words and sentences
- Features language sessions that teach 'tricky' common exception words
- Provides resources that support the teaching of lower-case and capital letters correctly, with clear start and finish points
- Includes direct teaching sessions, with extensive teacher-child interaction and involves a multi-sensory approach
- Has reading texts that closely match what has been taught up to that point.

Parental support is important to all children as they benefit from plenty of praise, encouragement, and of course practice, whilst learning. You should be guided by the pace at which your child wants to go. If interest is being lost, leave it for a while and then come back to it later. Not all children find it easy to learn and blend sounds. It is important to remember that this is not because they are unintelligent, but because they may have difficulty remembering symbols and words. It can also be reflected in your child's developmental stage: they may be immature and not yet interested. Extra practice will help with fluency in reading and support your child's development at home and at school.

The five basic skills for reading and writing **words** are:

1. Learning the letter sounds (phonemes)
2. Learning letter formation
3. Blending (putting sounds together to hear a word)
4. Segmenting (splitting up a word into sounds)
5. Spelling (including common exception words or 'tricky words')

The children have been learning the 44 main sounds that make up words in the English language (this includes digraphs, which are two sounds put together to represent a different sound such as 'sh'). They have also been learning letter formation and orientation. This is a continuous process which will lead towards cursive writing (when ready).

Once the children are confident and secure with knowing all their letter sounds, they will then be ready to start blending.

Blending is the process of saying the individual sounds in a word and then running them together to make the word, for example, sounding out *d- o- g* and making 'dog'. It is a technique every child will need to learn, and it improves with practice. To start with you should sound out the word slowly and clearly, to assess if a child can hear it, giving the answer word if necessary. Some children may take longer than others to distinguish this. You should then say the sounds quickly in order for them to hear the entire word. Your child may find it is easier if the first sound is said slightly louder. Try little and often with words like *b-u-s*, *c-a-t* and *h-e-n*. We will be providing blending word lists for you to take home and practise (when your child is ready).

Remember that some sounds (digraphs) are represented by two letters, such as *sh*. Children should sound out the digraph /*sh*/, not the individual letters (*s - h*). With practice they will be able to blend the digraph as one sound in a word. So, a word like *rain* should be sounded out *r-ai-n*, and *feet* as *f-ee-t*. It is important to be able to distinguish between a blend (such as *st*) and a digraph (such as *sh*). In a blend the two individual sounds, *s* and *t* can each be heard. In a digraph this is not so. When an adult models the process of sounding out a blend, encourage your child to say the two sounds as one unit, so *fl-a-g* not *f-l-a-g*. This will lead to greater fluency when reading.

Once the children have learnt the sounds they may begin to experiment with writing. At first, they are likely to use phonetic spelling. For example, a child attempts to write the sentence; 'Can you come to my house for tea?' and formulates the following; 'can yoo cum to mie hous for tee?' If you look at each of the phonetic attempts you can clearly hear the sounds and digraphs that have been used. If this is independent writing, then praise the child for having a go themselves and try to resist correcting the mistakes as this can affect their confidence and willingness to try again. However, if you are supporting your child and they ask you how to write a word, then encourage your child to 'sound out' the phonemes they can hear and praise them for identifying those sounds. You can then model the correct spelling as they are writing and explain that sometimes there are other ways to make the same sound and sometimes they are tricky words and aren't spelt as they sound. For example, if your child hears the phoneme /oo/ after the /y/ in the word 'you', respond by saying "well done it does sound like the /oo/ digraph, but 'you' is a tricky word and you write it with an 'o' and 'u' at the end like this..."

****Please ensure that when your child sees you write, use lower-case letters and not capital letters (except when used properly, such as the beginning of names and sentences etc).***

As mentioned already, some words in English have an irregular spelling and cannot be read by blending, such as 'said' 'was' and 'one'. Unfortunately, many of these are common or 'high frequency' words. The irregular parts have to be remembered. We call these common exception or 'tricky words'. Tricky Words are words that need to be recognised 'on sight' so essentially they need to be learned by memory. We will be sending word banks with 'Tricky Words' home for you to practise with your children as they are being taught at school. Here are a few suggestions to help practise these words without making the task too monotonous!

- Print out the 'Tricky Words' and put them in a special box, then take turns to pick out a word and see if you remember it; say it, practise saying it and perhaps think of a sentence with that word in it (we do this at school).
- Look, Say, Cover, Write and Check. Look at the word to see which bit is tricky. Ask your child to try writing the word in the air saying the letters. Cover the word over and see if your child can write it correctly. Check to make sure.
- Say it as it sounds, perhaps even making a little joke about it. For example, the word 'was' is pronounced 'wass', to rhyme with *mass*, the word *Monday* is said as 'mon' (day)

Remember that learning should be fun and 'testing' your child, or making them feel under pressure will only inhibit self-esteem and could put your child off. Try to make up a game and practise in a way that

makes the process enjoyable. It is also useful to pick an appropriate time to practise, (i.e.) put up the words on the fridge and look at them whilst having breakfast, or laminate them and put them up on the wall at bath time. Please don't spend any more than 5 minutes a day on this and remember that sitting your child down straight after school, or when they are tired isn't likely to be the most receptive time to learn.

Once your child is taught the phonemes at school, you will be able to access phonic books at home to practise blending. This will be via the Bug Club Phonics online platform. The books will feature words with only the phonemes that have been taught in phonic lessons and will not contain text that your child hasn't isn;t able to decode. In addition, your child will be able to choose an appropriately levelled phonic book from our class library to read for 'pleasure'.

When your child is confidently and fluently blending words and consistently remembering tricky words, they will commence weekly guided reading sessions where we will share more advanced texts, selected by the teacher and assessed regularly.

Please refer to the supplement 'Ideas for Shared Reading' which describes key elements to the successful development of reading and writing.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries or concerns about the above.

Thank you.

Mr. Poote



Ideas for shared reading with your child

Reading is a complex task and requires a number of skills. A child that simply learns to 'decode' words can often misinterpret many other elements that make up 'reading', particularly fiction. Children learn to read and decipher print very early on. For example: How many young children do you know that cannot read the words; 'McDonalds' or 'CBeebies'? However, reading a children's story for example requires an understanding of many other elements, such as character expression, intonation, inference, subplots, hidden meanings, subtle jokes etc. The more that a child experiences these elements and patterns in stories when modelled by an adult telling a story, the richer their understanding will be.

I cannot emphasise enough the importance of not rushing or putting pressure on your child to try to read too early. By all means explore text and have fun looking at words in print, but remember that your child will be having a 'reading book' for the whole of their school life! If you get too absorbed by simply reading one basic story after another, your child will soon lose interest and may also lose confidence if they haven't fully learnt the other skills required.

Below are a few ideas that you can try when you are sharing a book with your child. Please don't do all of them at the same time! They are intended as prompts to use and develop as you explore:

- Find a quiet place to share a book together (let your child turn the pages).
- Read through and re-read the story (adult).
- Ask your child to predict what might happen next (first time reading)
- Let your child retell the story to you (at their level), if they lose interest, stop and come back to it another time.
- Try telling the story without the book.
- Try asking your child to read some words independently.
- Ask your child what they know about the book.
- Ask key questions about the main characters. Think of words to describe them.
- Discuss other characters in the story.
- Ask what your child might do if they were a character in the story. What might they say?
- Ask your child what they like best about the story.
- Talk about your own thoughts about the story; is there something you don't like? What might you change? Ask your child what they might change.
- If you were the Author and you wanted to try a different idea, what would you do differently? Would you change a character? Perhaps you might change the ending?
- Try finding out about other stories by the same Author (visit the Library)
- Try finding out about elements in the story from other resources (e.g.) if the story has animals; can you look on the internet for pictures?
- Ask your child to draw pictures of the characters in the story, or make up their own characters.
- Help your child to write (or adult scribe) words to describe the character (e.g.) two large, pointy ears, two round staring eyes etc.
- Role-play elements of the story by creating props and costumes to help when re-enacting.
- Make up your own story together. Have fun inventing settings for the story and enjoy naming and describing different characters (good and bad).
- When making up a story, think about the different elements or ingredients (e.g.) openings, scary moments, funny incidents, sudden or dramatic occurrences, happy or sad endings etc.
- Tell and retell the made up stories and share them with family and friends.
- Create your own books, paying attention to Authors, Illustrators and Titles as well as the 'blurb' at the back which you could ask your child to explain.



I hope that this has helped. If you would like to speak more about this, please let me know.

Have fun!

Mr. Poote