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Phonics at Five Acres

Dear Parents and Carers,

You will be aware of the Government expectations for all schools to teach phonics to all children in early years and Key Stage One. These expectations culminate in formal phonics assessments taken at the end of Year One and Year Two. This leaflet is intended to provide some background information about how we approach the teaching and learning of phonics here at Five Acres.



What is Phonics?

From a very early stage, children develop an awareness of different sounds in spoken language.

They develop an understanding that spoken words are made up of different sounds (phonemes) and they learn to match these phonemes to letters (graphemes).

Phonics is about children knowing how letters link to sounds (graphemes to phonemes) -

e.g. c as in 'cat', ll as in 'fell', ee as in 'sheep'

Once children begin learning sounds, they are quickly used to read and spell words.

There are two key skills children need to learn.

Blending

To learn to read well children must be able to smoothly blend sounds together.

The teacher shows children how to do this –

c—a—t \longrightarrow **cat**

The separate sounds (phonemes) are spoken aloud, in order, through the whole word, and are then merged together into the complete word. The merging together is called blending – it is a vital skill for reading.



Segmenting

Segmenting is a skill used in spelling. In order to spell the word cat, it is necessary to segment the word into its constituent sounds -

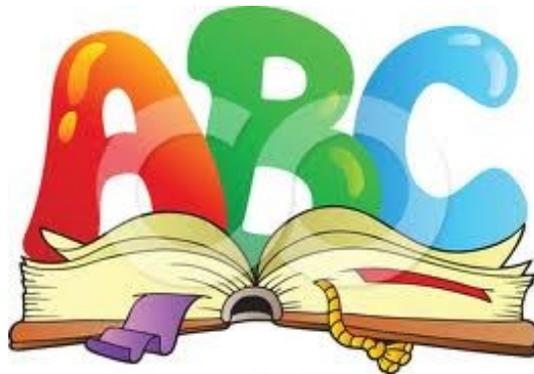
cat \longrightarrow **c—a—t**

Children often understand segmenting as ‘breaking up’ a word. Before writing a word young children need time to think about it, say the word several times, ‘break up’ the word and then write it. Segmenting can be seen as the inverse to blending, and for most children both skills are essential in learning to read and write confidently.

Phonics Screening Check

All children in Year One will complete a national phonics screening check. The phonics screening check comprises of a list of 40 words that children read one-to-one with a teacher. The list is a combination of both real and 'pseudo-words' (nonsense words). Children need to be able to blend the sounds together fluently to read the words.

The phonics screening check is carried out in every primary school in England. Five Acres has consistently achieved higher than the national average of children reaching the expected standard. Any children who have not achieved this standard will be given further support and will retake the screening check in Year Two.



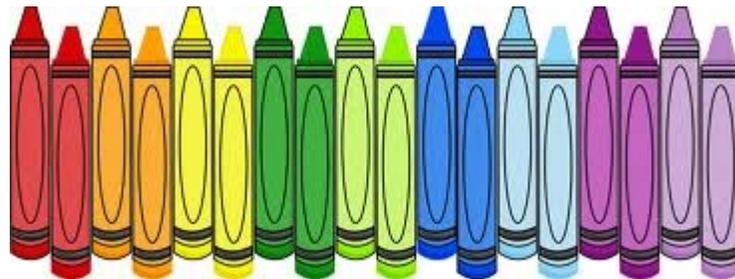
Here at Five Acres, we use a structured phonics scheme developed in Oxfordshire called 'Codebreakers'. The phonics screening check does not add to our knowledge about your child's progress as we already keep a careful track of children's progress in phonics.

Our approach to reading is that phonics is an important tool in learning to read, but it is not the only strategy to be used.

In many English words, and in many short and common words, phonic strategies are not useful or appropriate. For example, we do not teach children to sound out words like 'was', 'said' or 'why'. We teach children to recognise these types of words by sight.

Learning to Read

Five Acres has an excellent track record at teaching children to read. Children's attainment in reading in both Key Stage One and Key Stage Two is better than national averages. We will therefore continue to teach children to read in the way we know works well. This has a strong element of phonics within it, but also involves the teaching of other skills and strategies.



If you would like to know more about our Codebreakers phonics programme, or about the phonics check at the end of Year One, please ask a Key Stage One teacher, or Mr Wood.

