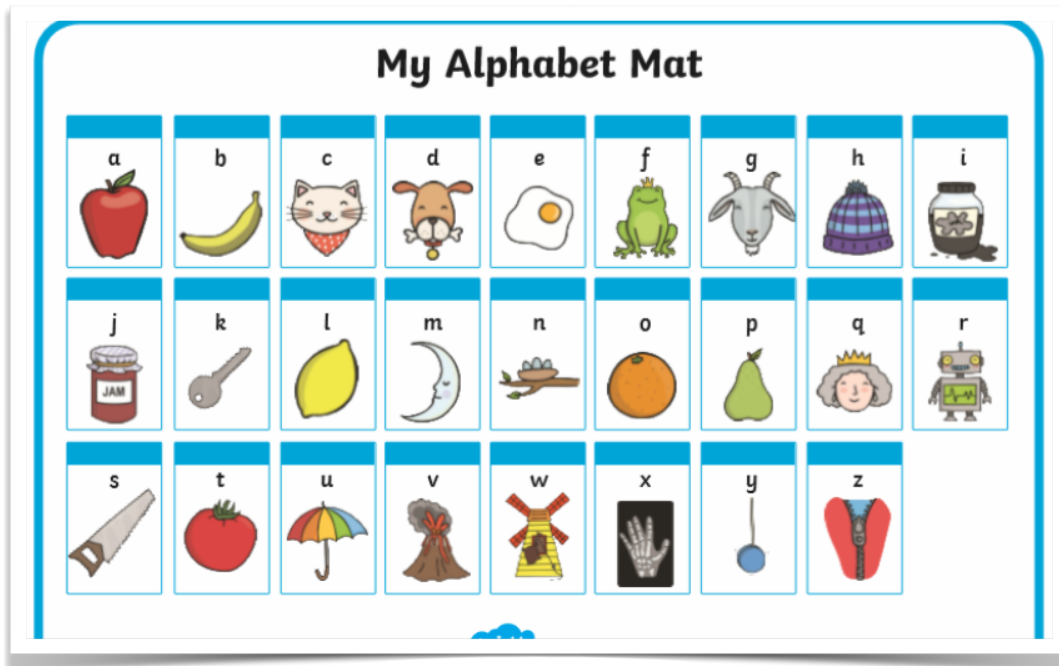


# Ladybird's Class

Explore, Enjoy, Excel ~ PHONICS



## PHONICS IS OUR SUPERPOWER

In Reception and Year 1 the phonics we learn becomes our Superpower.

When children start in Reception they will have had a mixture of exposure to phonics. Some will have had some sessions in their pre-school setting and some may have older brothers and sisters who they have watched and heard learn to read or practise phonics. Bringing all that understanding, and in some cases no exposure to phonics, together to enable it to be a Superpower happens during the first two years at school. Their phonics journey starts long before school though.

1

### HEARING

Listening to others speak and hearing stories starts the phonics journey.

2

### SEEING

Seeing letters around us, looking at the words in a book as others read.

3

### DOING

Beginning to use the letter sounds to play games or point to them in a text.



### Recite a nursery rhyme

Learn a new one together or recite favourites ones.



### Share a story

Find a comfortable place and share a story or two.



### Talk together

Have a chat with your child. This is the best way children hear the spoken word and are ready to use it themselves.

## Why is phonics so important?

Phonics is a method for teaching reading and writing of an alphabetical language. It is done by linking the sounds of the spoken language, phonemes, with the letters of the written language, graphemes.

Recent research suggests that children are born with an area of their brain ready and waiting to develop their ability to read. For this part of the brain to become a reading brain it requires instruction. The type of instruction and experiences that occurs during early experiences and phonics teaching.

The ground work for this early development and preparing the brain for reading starts in the home environment. The initial steps of becoming a reader start with what is referred to as 'phonological awareness', this happens as a child hears spoken language and begins to develop their own use of it. Phonological awareness is not related to print but merely about what is heard, a child learning to say a new word by breaking down the parts of it as they say it. Linking words together that begin with the same phoneme and rhyming. A quick and easy way to help a child with this early development is through nursery rhymes. The importance of a child hearing and then learning nursery rhymes has grown in its understanding in recent years. A nursery rhyme organises similar sounds together, often has a rhythm that is easy to pick up, supports storytelling, helps promote social skills and boosts early language development.

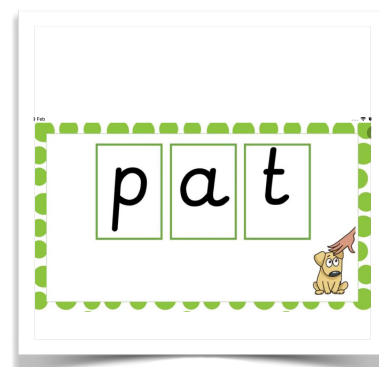
Once a child has developed good phonological awareness they are ready to develop the next set



of skills needed to read and write - phonics. It is skills they are learning, and with all skills, whatever the task, learning them in the correct order makes the end result one that will produce good results and last a lifetime.

Phonics starts with developing an awareness of the sounds the letters make, the phoneme. This is called decoding. It doesn't start in alphabetical order but starts with some of the most frequently seen and easier to learn letters - s, a, t, p. Spending time ensuring children know these sounds is crucial, child led activities help but explicit teaching is the only way for a child to make a secure connection between a letter and its sound.

Once children have a good understanding of the sounds being taught they can start to blend using words that contain those phonemes. This is saying the letters of the word as individual sounds and then bringing them together to say the word - the beginning of reading. Without this ability, for many children reading becomes a scary task to do!



## **“Explicit teaching of phonic skills is helpful for all children, harmful for none, and crucial for some” (Snow and Fuel, 2005)**

As readers of the English Language, not all of the words we read can be successfully sounded and blended. There are words that, despite our best efforts, will not sound the same when we try to apply phonic understanding to reading them - said for example. These are words that need to be learnt by sight and this is recognised in phonic teaching. They are words that need explicit teaching through repetitive hearing and seeing the word. There are lists of these words and they are available on the Ladybird Class page of our website.

Once a child has started to experience phonics and knows a number of letter sounds and is beginning to blend them, then letter formation is brought into the skill set. Accurate letter formation is key from the beginning. The child will start to see the link between the skills they have been learning, making a connection between reading and writing and developing their understanding of why these skills are important.

As reading and writing form the bedrock for all that happens in school - from art to yoga, it is necessary at some point to use one or both of these skills and without the SUPERPOWER OF PHONICS learning will be a tricky concept to master.

If you would like more information on phonics and ways to support your child at home please do contact me.

## **Ways to help your child at home**

- Play rhyming games - how many words can you think of that rhyme with cat?
- Play I spy
- Read and share stories. Find a comfortable place and share a story, children are never too old to listen to stories being read by others. Share the pages as you read. Rereading their favourite story, will support their understanding of how we read and story structure.
- Find story related activities that you can do together or as a family. If a favourite story is 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt', chant the story as you walk around, go on a bear hunt, what other places could you go through to find the bear or maybe it's another animal you are hunting.
- Colour and draw pictures related to letters or stories.
- As they start to develop their reading please don't forget this is still just the beginning of their journey. Your child will need support and patience from you.
- Looking on websites for phonics games or ways to say the letters. There are lots of sites that have videos and activities that can be done to support children with phonics at home.
- Remember school is only part of their phonics journey for reading and writing.