



# Phonics at St Columba's Catholic Primary School

At St Columba's we follow a synthetic phonics programme called Letters and Sounds. Synthetic phonics is simply the ability to convert a letter or letter group into sounds that are then blended together into a word. Letters and Sounds is divided into six phases, with each phase building on the skills and knowledge of previous learning. Children have time to practise and rapidly expand their ability to read and spell words. They are also taught to read and spell 'tricky words', which are words with spellings that are unusual.

## Nursery

In Nursery, we introduce the children to Phase One which concentrates on developing children's speaking and listening skills and lays the foundations for the phonic work which starts in Phase Two.

The emphasis during Phase One is to get children attuned to the sounds around them and ready to begin developing oral blending and segmenting skills.

## Reception

In autumn term, we introduce the children to Phase Two. In Phase Two, letters and their sounds are introduced one at a time. A set of letters is taught each week. As soon as each set of letters is introduced, children will be encouraged to use their knowledge of the letter sounds to blend and sound out words. In the spring term, we

introduce the children to Phase Three. During Phase Three, the children are introduced to twenty five new graphemes. They will also learn the letter names using an alphabet song. In the summer term, we introduce the children to Phase Four. When children start Phase Four of Letters and Sounds, they will know a grapheme for each of the 42 phonemes. In Phase Four, no new graphemes are introduced. The main aim of this phase is to consolidate the children's knowledge and to help them learn to read and spell words which have adjacent consonants, such as trap, string and milk.

## Year One

During the first half term in Year One, we recap Phases Three and Four before moving onto Phase Five in Autumn Two. During Phase Five, children will learn more graphemes and phonemes. Alternative pronunciations for graphemes will also be introduced, e.g. ea in tea, head and break. In June the children have to complete the Phonics Screening Check. This comprises of 40 words the children have to read using their phonics skills.

## Definitions

**Phoneme** - the smallest unit of sound in a word.

**Grapheme** - the letters that represent the phoneme.

**Blending** - Recognising the letter sounds in a written word, for example c-u-p and merging or 'blending' them in the order in which they are written to pronounce the word 'cup'

**Segmenting** - 'Chopping Up' the word to spell it out. The opposite of blending. Identifying the individual sounds in a spoken word (e.g. h-i-m, s-t-or-k) and writing down letters for each sound (phoneme) to form the word him and stork.

**Digraphs** - two letters that make one sound.

**Trigraphs** - three letters that make one sound.

**Tricky words** - Words that are not phonically decodeable e.g. was, the, I.

## Year Two

During Year Two, the children will start Phase Six.

They will be able to read many familiar words automatically. When they come across unfamiliar words they will in many cases be able to decode them quickly and quietly using their well-developed sounding and blending skills. At this stage children should be able to spell words phonetically although not always correctly. The main aim of Phase Six is for children to become more fluent readers and accurate spellers.

In June, children who did not pass the Year One Phonics Screening Check will retake it.

## Key Stage Two

In Key Stage Two some children will still need support with phonics. This is mainly done through spelling lessons. These children are also supported through carefully targeted interventions.