



# Golden Valley Primary School

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*'Sharing Kindness,  
Challenging Ourselves and Others,  
Achieving Excellence'*

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Dear Parents and Carers,

Thank you to all the parents and carers who were able to join us for our Phonics and Early Reading Workshop last week. It was wonderful to see so many of you there and to have the opportunity to share how we teach phonics and early reading in Reception.

If you were unable to attend, please don't worry. We hope this information sheet provides you with all of the key information from the presentation and helps you feel confident in supporting your child's reading journey at home.

## **Supporting Phonics and Early Reading at Home**

Learning to read is one of the most important skills your child will develop during their time in Reception. At Golden Valley, we teach phonics daily using a Government approved scheme called Unlocking Letters and Sounds, helping children learn the relationship between letters and the sounds they represent.

As children progress through Reception, they learn to:

- recognise and say a range of sounds (phonemes)
- recognise the letters and letter groups that represent those sounds (graphemes)
- blend sounds together to read words
- segment words into sounds to support spelling
- read books with increasing confidence and fluency
- begin to understand and discuss what they have read

## **Blending and Segmenting**

There are two key skills that children use during phonics lessons:

Blending is used for reading. Children look at the sounds in a word and push them together to read the whole word.

For example: c-a-t = cat

Segmenting is used for spelling. Children hear a word and break it down into individual sounds before writing it.

For example: dog = d-o-g

The more children practise these skills, the more confident and automatic they become.



## Saying the Sounds Correctly

When practising sounds at home, it is important that children say the pure sound rather than adding an "uh" sound to the end.

For example: mmm not muh

This makes blending much easier and helps children read words successfully.

## Common Exception Words

Alongside phonics, children also learn Common Exception Words (CEWs).

These are words that appear frequently in reading and writing but cannot always be sounded out using the phonics knowledge children have learned so far.

Some examples include:

the, was, said, are, one

We teach children to recognise these words by sight. This means that rather than sounding out every part of the word, children learn to instantly recognise and read the whole word automatically. Regular practice helps these words become embedded in children's memory and improves reading fluency.

## Using Your Child's Reading Record

Your child's reading record is an important tool that can help support both their reading and writing development at home. It contains useful guidance about the phonics programme, the sounds your child is learning and how you can support them throughout the year.

**You will find QR codes on page 68 which link to videos demonstrating how to correctly pronounce each phoneme (sound).** These can be particularly helpful when practising at home and will ensure your child hears the pure sounds that we teach in school.

Please remember to record any reading that takes place at home in your child's reading record. This helps us to maintain a strong partnership between home and school.

## Reading Books at Home

Your child will bring home a reading book that closely matches the sounds they have been learning in school. These books are carefully matched to their phonics knowledge, helping them build confidence and success as readers. We ask that children read their school reading book at least four times each week. Reading sessions do not need to be long. In fact, just 5-10 minutes of focused reading each day can make a huge difference to your child's progress. At this stage of learning, some children are ready to bring home fully decodable reading books, while others are not quite ready yet. This is completely normal, and all children progress at different rates.

The books sent home are intended to be easy for your child to read independently, with around 90% accuracy. When reading these books, your child should be able to show off the skills they have already learned and enjoy a successful reading experience. We want children to feel confident, capable and proud of themselves as readers.

Any books that contain new sounds, unfamiliar words or additional challenge will be explored in school with teachers, where support can be provided as needed. Home reading books are designed to reinforce and consolidate learning rather than introduce new challenge.

Reading the same book more than once is incredibly valuable. The first read often focuses on sounding out and decoding unfamiliar words. By the third or fourth read, children become more fluent, accurate and expressive, as well as being able to understand the text they are reading.

Regular re-reading helps children develop:

- fluency and confidence;
- accuracy when reading words;
- expression and prosody (reading with meaning);
- understanding of what they have read.

Alongside their reading book, we encourage you to continue sharing and enjoying stories together at home. Listening to stories helps children develop vocabulary, comprehension and, most importantly, a love of reading.

### **Phonics Tins**

To support learning at home, your child will receive two tins of flashcards:

- One tin containing the GPC's (sounds) they have learned.
- One tin containing Common Exception Words.

These tins are for home use and are designed to help you practise with your child little and often.

The cards can be used as traditional flashcards, but there are lots of fun ways to use them too, such as:

- Sound Hunt - hide the cards around the house and ask your child to find and read them.
- Sound Splat - place several cards on the floor and ask your child to splat the sound or word using a clean fly swatter.
- Quick Fire Reading - see how many sounds or words your child can read in one minute.
- Place cards on commonly used doors around the house so your child reads the sound or word each time they walk through.
- Match sounds to objects beginning with that sound around your home.

### **Updating the Tins**

**We will place the next set of sounds and words into your child's tins each Friday.**

Please ensure both tins are placed in your child's book bag ready for us to update them.

Please take good care of the tins and flashcards, as we do not have replacement tins available.

### **How You Can Help at Home**

The most effective ways to support your child are to:

- listen to them read their school reading book at least four times each week;
- practise sounds and Common Exception Words little and often;
- talk about stories together;

- encourage them to spot sounds and words in the world around them;
- praise their efforts and celebrate their successes.

Learning to read takes time, practice and patience, but every small step helps build confidence. By working together, we can help your child become a happy, confident and enthusiastic reader.

Thank you for your continued support.

Kind regards,

The Reception Team  
Golden Valley Primary School

### **Phonics Glossary**

#### **Phonics**

The method of teaching children to read by linking letters and groups of letters to the sounds they represent.

#### **Phoneme**

The smallest unit of sound in a word. For example, the word *cat* has three phonemes: c-a-t.

#### **Grapheme**

The written letter or letters that represent a sound. For example, s, sh and igh are all graphemes.

#### **Digraph**

Two letters that make one sound, such as sh, ch, th and ai.

#### **Trigraph**

Three letters that make one sound, such as igh in *light*.

#### **Blend**

To push sounds together to read a word. For example: c-a-t = cat.

#### **Segment**

To break a word into sounds to help spell it. For example: dog = d-o-g.

#### **Decode**

To read a word by looking at the letters and saying the sounds.

#### **Common Exception Word (CEW)**

A word that appears frequently in reading and writing but cannot always be sounded out using the phonics knowledge children have learned so far. These words are learned and recognised by sight.

#### **Fluency**

Reading accurately, smoothly and at an appropriate pace.

#### **Prosody**

Reading with expression, rhythm and understanding so that reading sounds like natural speech.

#### **Pure Sound**

Saying the correct sound without adding an extra "uh" sound. For example, saying mmm rather than muh.

