

# Letters and Sounds

*A Guide to helping your child*

**Cranmer Preschool**

Abbey Lane • Aslockton • Nottinghamshire • NG13 9AW

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Ofsted Registration No: 258576 • Charity Registration No: 1025379



## Introduction.

As Parents and carers you are your child's first and most important teachers. You have a powerful influence on your child's early learning.

From a very early age your child will need to experience a wide range of activities and experiences with you, for example, singing and saying rhymes, making and listening to music, listening and joining in with conversations, painting and pretend play, to develop their early reading and writing skills. These activities will help your child take the first important steps towards reading and writing.

At Cranmer Preschool children take part in a high quality communication, language and literacy development programme, called Letters and Sounds, designed to promote every child's individual learning. The children learn through lots of play and activities and are encouraged to use their increasing phonics knowledge and mark making skills in freely chosen activities. In order to make a good start in reading and writing, children need an adult to talk to and listen to them and practice activities that increase their fine and gross motor skills.

This booklet will give further information about the Letters and Sounds programme, and the best ways to support your child's learning at home.

Books are a rich source of new words for your child – words you would not use in everyday conversations appear in books. Children need to have a wide stock of words (vocabulary) to understand the meaning of books, so read aloud and share books as often as you can. They will enjoy it and it will be useful to them when they come across these words in their own reading later on.

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## Letters and Sounds – Phase 1

In this ongoing phase, your child will be learning to:

- have fun with sounds
- listen carefully
- develop their vocabulary
- speak confidently to you, other adults and other children
- tune into sounds
- listen and remember sounds
- talk about sounds
- understand that spoken words are made up of different sounds.

Phase 1 consists of seven interlinking parts:

- environmental sounds
- instrumental sounds
- body percussion
- rhythm and rhyme
- alliteration (words that begin with the same sound)
- voice sounds
- oral blending and segmenting.

You can help your child develop in each of these by trying some of the ideas below. Remember that all these activities should be fun and interactive. Give your child lots of encouragement and cuddles as you play together. Smiles and praise will help develop a sense of achievement and build confidence.

This is all spoken (oral). Your child will not yet be expected to match the letter to the sound. The emphasis is on developing the ability to distinguish sounds and create sounds.

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## Ways to support your children at home:

### 1. Talking and Listening.

- Make time to listen to you child talking – as you meet them from their setting or school, as you walk or travel by car, at meal times, bath times, bedtimes ... anytime!
- Switch off the TV, radio and mobile phones – and really listen!
- Show that you are interested in what they are talking about – look at your child, smile, nod your head, ask a question or make a response to show that you really have been listening.
- Make a collection of different toy creatures – for example, a duck, a snake, an alien, say the sound it might make as you play together (for example, 'quack-quack', 'ssssss', 'yuk-yuk') and encourage your child to copy you.
- Listen at home – switch off the TV and listen to the sounds both inside and outside the home. Can your child tell you what sounds they heard, in the order in which they heard them?
- Play-a-tune – and follow me! Make or buy some simple shakers, drums and beaters, then play a simple tune and ask your child to copy.
- Use puppets and toys to make up stories or retell known ones.
- Record your child telling the story and play it back to them.
- Have fun!

### The importance of speech sounds

As children grow older they begin to understand more about the sounds of our language and they are able to join in with rhymes, songs and stories by clapping, stamping and skipping. This is an important stage as the children's ears are learning to tune into all the different sounds around them. Playing with sounds and tuning your child's ears into sounds will develop phonological awareness, that is, the ability to discriminate different sounds. Over time, this will help your child develop an understanding that words are made up of different sounds (phonemes) and they will be able to hear the different sounds in a word. Gradually they will learn to match sounds to letters (graphemes). This is phonic knowledge. They use this knowledge when they are reading and writing.

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## 2. Sound Talk

It is really important to say the sounds (phonemes) aloud, in order, all through the word.

Prior to this, your child should have experienced lots of the environmental, instrumental and body percussion, rhythm and rhyme, alliteration and voice sounds activities to tune in their ears.

Try breaking down simple words when you are giving instructions or asking questions, such as

“Can you find your h-a-t (hat)?”

“Where is the c-a-t (cat)?”

“Sit on the s-ea-t (seat).”

“Eat your f-oo-d (food).”

Find real objects around your home and practise ‘sound talk’. First, just let them listen, then see if they will join in, for example, saying:

“I spy a p-e-g – peg.”

“I spy a c-u-p – cup.”

“Simon says – touch your ch-i-n – chin.”

Speaking and listening are the foundations for reading and writing

## 3. Environmental sounds.

- Go on a listening walk. When walking down the road, make a point of listening to different sounds: cars revving, people talking, birds singing, dogs barking. When you get home, try to remember all the sounds you heard. You could try taping the sounds, to listen to them again, or try reproducing them yourselves, using your voices or instruments.
- Make sounds, using a range of props, such as running a stick along a fence or tapping the bin lid.
- Invent a secret family ‘knock’ for entering rooms.
- Play ‘sound lotto’. A commercial version of this can be purchased from many children’s toy shops but making your own, from your sound walk, would be far more rewarding.

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#### **4. Instrumental sounds.**

- Make your own musical instruments, using cardboard rolls, tins, dried peas, beans, stones. Shake these loudly, softly, as you are marching, skipping or stomping. Play 'Guess what's inside the instrument'.
- Sing known songs loudly and then softly, stretch words in known songs and add new words or sounds.
- Listen to a range of music with your child, from rap to classical.
- Encourage your child to move in response to the variety of musical
- styles and moods.

#### **5. Body percussion.**

- Learn some action rhymes, such as 'Wind the bobbin up'.
- Play some commercially produced CDs. Clap along with familiar rhymes and learn new ones.
- Listen to the sounds your feet make when walking, running or skipping: slowly, softly, fast, stomping hard, in flip flops, boots, high heels.
- Try different types of clapping: clap your hands softly, quickly and make a pattern for your child to follow. Do the same clapping your thighs or stamping your feet. Tap your fingers. Click your tongue.
- Invent a special family clap routine for when someone does something really well.

#### **6. Rhythm and rhyme.**

- Get into the rhythm of language: bounce your child on your knee to the rhythm of a song or nursery rhyme; march or clap to a chant or poem.
- Help your child move to the rhythm of a song or rhyme.
- Read or say poems, songs, nursery songs and rhyming stories as often as you can. Try to use gestures, tap regular beats and pause to emphasise the rhythm of the piece.
- Add percussion to mark the beats using your hands, feet or instruments. Try out some rhythmic chanting such as 'two, four, six, eight, hurry up or we'll be late' or 'bip bop boo, who are you?'

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## 7. Alliteration (words that begin with the same sound).

- Alliteration is a lot of fun to play around with. Your child's name can be a good place to start, for example, say: 'Gurpeet get the giggles', 'Carl caught a cat', 'Jolly Jessie jumped'.  
Encourage
- other family members to have a go, for example: 'Mummy munches muffins', 'Daddy is doing the dishes'.
- Emphasise alliteration in songs and stories, for example: 'Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers'.
- Play around with familiar song, such as 'Old MacDonald had some sheep, shoes, shorts, with a sh sh here and and sh sh there', to emphasise alliteration.
- Identify the odd one out, for example, cat, cup, boy, car.
- Make up little nonsense stories together using lots of alliteration
- Collect items that start with the same sound from the park, the garden and around the house.
- When shopping, think about items you are buying and say: 'a tall in of tomatoes', 'a lovely little lemon'. Encourage your child to do the same.

## 8. Voice sounds.

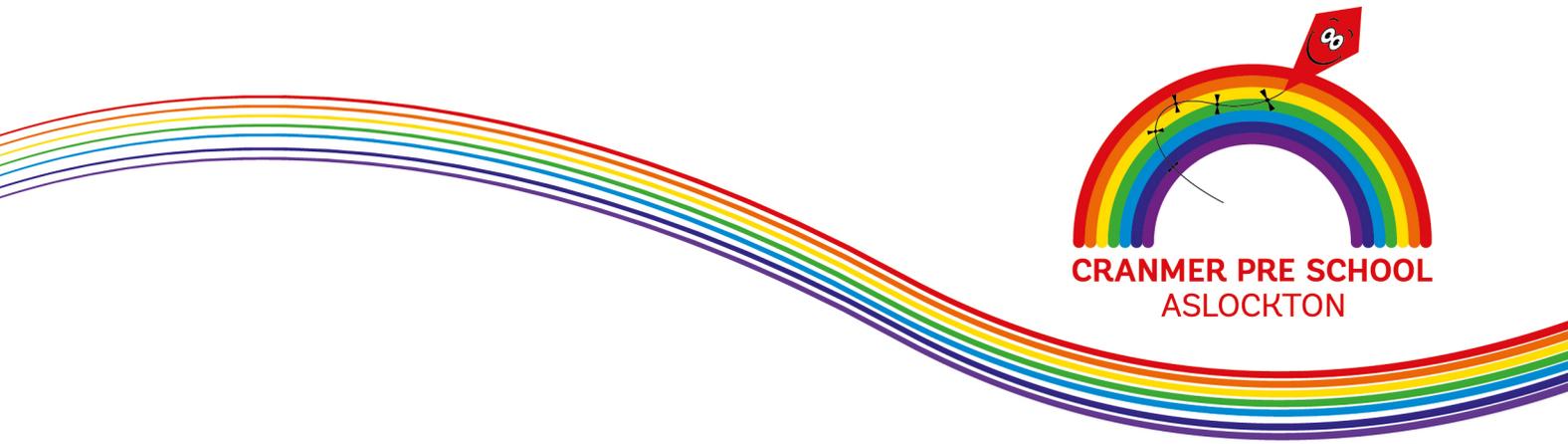
- Repeat your infant's vocalisations.
- Make fun noises and nonsense words.
- Say words in different ways (fast, slowly, high, low, using a funny voice)
- 'Sing' known songs using only sounds (for example, 'la, la, la') and ask your child to guess the song.
- Vary your tempo and pitch when reading stories.

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## 9. Oral blending and segmenting.

This is all oral (spoken). Your child will not be expected to match the letter to the sound at this stage. The emphasis is on helping children to hear the separate sounds in words and to create spoken sounds.

Oral blending and segmenting is a later skill that will be important when the time comes for your child to read and write. Being able to hear the separate sounds within a word and then blend them together to understand that word is really important.

Blending is a vital skill for reading. The separate sounds (phonemes) of the word are spoken aloud, in order, all through the word and are then merged together into the whole word. This merging is called blending. For example, the adult would say,

c-a-t = cat

Segmenting is a vital skill for spelling. The whole word is spoken aloud, then broken up into its separate sounds (phonemes) in order, all through the word. For example, the adult would say,

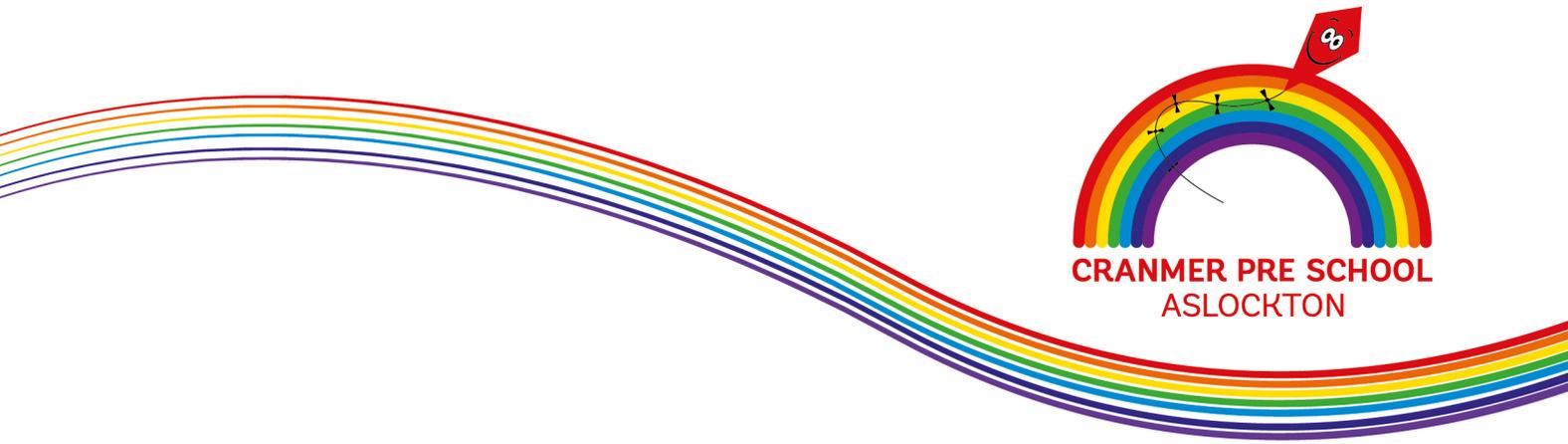
cat = c-a-t.

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## The importance of mark-making

Your child will notice adults around them reading and writing and they will want to copy them. Mark-making is the first step towards writing. Mark making in the early stages is closely linked to physical development. The more opportunities your child has to develop large and small movement in their arms, hands and fingers, the easier it will be to make marks with a variety of tools.

Activities such as digging; 'painting' outdoor surfaces with water and a large brush, sweeping and swishing a scarf through the air in different shapes, will help develop large motor movement. Small or fine motor movement will be needed to hold pencils and pens correctly. Hanging out the washing and playing with pegs, using a pegboard and picking up grains of rice with fingers and tweezers will help develop the pincer grip needed for writing.

In the early stages of learning to write, your child will like to experiment, making marks on paper with a variety of writing tools such as brushes, pens, pencils and felt-tip markers. They will often include drawings with their writing. Sometimes you will write for them. It is a good idea at this stage to use lower-case letter when you write for your child, introducing capitals only for names.

## Other things to do at home.

- Turn off the TV so you can listen to and talk to your child.
- Read to your child every day.
- Set up a place where your child can experiment with mark-making, both outside and inside, using gloop, paint, pens, stamps and stencils, onto a variety of surfaces such as paper, cardboard and material.
- Collect a variety of pencils and pens and keep them handy for your child.
- Create a special writing bag to keep little writing tools in, for travelling in the car or visiting the doctor's. Change the contents regularly.

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## **What to do if your child is reluctant to read or write at home.**

### **Reading**

- Make sure your child sees you reading.
- Read to your child. Show you like the book. Bring stories to life by
- using loud, soft, scary voices – let yourself go!
- Leave books around the house for your child to dip into.
- Let your child choose what they would like to read – books, comics,
- catalogues.
- Read favourite books over and over again. Enjoy!

### **Writing**

- Make sure your child sees you writing.
- Compose an email together inviting a friend over to tea.
- Make words together using magnetic letters.
- Make up a story together about one of their toys. You write for them, repeating the sentences as you write. When it is complete, they can draw pictures to go with it.
- Buy stickers of a favourite film or TV programme and make a book about it.

**We hope that this resource and the ideas are useful for you to work with your child, in a fun and play based way, to improve their communication, language and literacy development. If you have any further questions please contact a member of staff.**

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## Useful websites and leaflets for more information

[www.parentscentre.gov.uk/foragegroup/3to5years/readandwritetogether](http://www.parentscentre.gov.uk/foragegroup/3to5years/readandwritetogether)

Really good ideas about how you can enjoy sharing books with your child and tells you a bit more about phonics.

[www.parentscentre.gov.uk/foragegroup/5to7years/alittlereadinggoesalongway](http://www.parentscentre.gov.uk/foragegroup/5to7years/alittlereadinggoesalongway)

Ideas about how to help you child as they are learning to read.

[www.read-count.org/index.asp](http://www.read-count.org/index.asp)

A website for you and your child to explore together. It will give you some ideas about reading with your child and online games for young children to play, both with you and on their own. It also has ideas for games to play away from the computer.

[www.basic-skills.co.uk](http://www.basic-skills.co.uk)

The Basic Skills website will keep you updated on a range of literacy developments.

[www.bookstart.co.uk](http://www.bookstart.co.uk)

Provides information about the national Bookstart scheme and the Bookstart packs that your child will receive as a baby, a toddler and at age three to four. It also gives information about sharing books with your child. You can find out about Bookstart events in your area, which you can attend with your child.

[www.talktoyourbaby.org.uk](http://www.talktoyourbaby.org.uk)

Lots of information for parents and carers of babies and young children and suggestions for activities, features, DVDs, books and events that are both useful and fun. You can have their free newsletter emailed to you directly.

[www.ican.org.uk](http://www.ican.org.uk)

Lots of information for parents and teachers on the importance of speaking and listening skills for young children's development. Although it is aimed at early communication development, there is a lot of very useful information and material, such as Chatter Matters, that can be downloaded from the website; some free materials can be ordered.

[www.wordsforlife.org.uk](http://www.wordsforlife.org.uk)

Includes tips for getting boys to read and songs and rhymes for sharing with young children.

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## **Glossary - the word we use with your children.**

Blending	The process of combining phonemes into words, e.g. c-a-t cat.
Consonant digraph	Two consonants that make up one phoneme, e.g. sh, ch, th.
CVC word	Consonant-vowel-consonant word e.g. cat, pin.
Decode	The ability to read words.
Digraph	Two letters representing one phoneme e.g. ch, ar, er.
Encoding	This involves listening for the phonemes and deciding which letters represent those phonemes.  Synthetic phonics teaches children that the English alphabetic code is reversible; if you can read a word you can spell it.
Grapheme	Written representation of a sound, a way of writing down a phoneme, can be one or more letters.
Homograph	Words that are spelled the same but have different meanings, and how you pronounce it depends on the context. e.g. he read the book, I like to read.
Morpheme	The smallest unit of meaning in a word e.g. one morpheme (house), two morphemes (house/s).
Phoneme	The smallest unit of sound in a word. There are approximately 44 phonemes in the English language. Phonemes can be represented by different numbers of letters.
Phonological awareness	Awareness of sounds within words.
Segment	To break a word or part of a word into phonemes, e.g. c-a-t, ch-a-t.
Split digraph	Two letters which work as a pair to make a sound but are separated within a word. e.g. a-e in make, i-e in size
Synthetic phonics	The blending or synthesising of phonemes to make a word
Trigraph	Three letters representing one phoneme e.g. igh, dge.
Vowel digraph	A digraph in which at least one of the letters is a vowel, e.g. ea, ay, ai

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