"Phonics additional notes

There are 40+ sounds in English, some of which are represented by one letter (eg "s"), and some of which are represented by two letters which are put together to make a completely different sound (eg "sh"). These "2 letter" sounds are called digraphs; there are also some three letter sounds (eg "igh"), which are called trigraphs.

Letters and Sounds: Phonics has been proven to be the most effective method of teaching children to read, and in 2007 a national framework, called "Letters and Sounds", was introduced. Children progress through 6 phases: by the time they finish the scheme they should be confident readers.

In Reception we start with phase 2, but move quickly on to phase 3 (see slide 1 & 2). We teach 4 sounds a week in phase 2 / early phase 3, and each sound has its own song and action to make it more memorable. We slow the speed of introduction down a little as we get on to the phase 3 digraphs, as these are harder to retain. The children generally find the "single sound" letters in phase 2 and the start of phase 3 quite easy to learn, but then can find the phase 3 digraphs very frustrating, as they then have to learn that combinations of letters make new sounds (eg having just learned the individual "o" and "a" sounds they then need to remember that together they make a different sound if they are reading the word "road").

Pronunciation: The sounds are pronounced in ways that may be quite different from those that you were taught as a child – the intention is to make it as simple as possible to blend them together to decode a word. There is a really good pronunciation video accessible via youtube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5J2Ddf_0Om8 (or search for Read Write Inc pronunciation guide). There are free downloads of audio files for each sound on the Jolly phonics website http://jollylearning.co.uk/gallery/audio-2/ There are also free phonics games and information on a site called phonicsplay.co.uk (we use these in class as well). **Be careful!** There is a lot of information about phonics on the internet, but some of it can be really inaccurate. There are many good schemes out there, but if you are not sure then look for *Jolly phonics* or *Read write inc* as reliable sources of information.

Letter names: we don't teach letter names until your child is confident with letter sounds– one system tends to confuse the other in the early stages, and names don't help decoding. By the end of the year we aim for the children to know both name and sound for any letter.

Tricky words: these are words that "break the rules", because they don't follow regular sound patterns. Unfortunately quite a lot of very common English words are "tricky" – eg *the, we, go, no* etc. These just have to be learnt by heart, and we will send home a few at a time. In the *Read Write Inc* reading books these words are coloured red, so that your child knows when to try decoding and when they just have to recall the whole word. We teach them as words that "play a trick", and the children get very proud when they can spot the trick and read the word!

Reading records: These are little orange books that are sent home once your child is starting to blend sounds into words. We write a note of the book or sheet that we are sending home, and it is really helpful if you can write a short comment to let us know how your child has got on with the task. Once your child is on reading books, we will write a comment every time we read with them, and we would like you to do the same. We only change books once we can see that they have read it at home, **so please don't forget to fill in the orange book!**

Finally…. Please do ask if you want to know more, or if this doesn't make sense! It sounds complicated, but the phonics system really does work and the children make amazing progress, especially if they are consolidating their learning at home as well as in school. We are very grateful for your interest in their learning, and would be happy to go through anything that you are unsure about.

Mrs Mettrick and Mrs Herry