



## Reading River Parents' Guide

# Why is phonics so important?

Reading is an important life skill that all children and young people deserve to have. Here are just a few reasons why reading is important:

- Boosts imagination
- Provides pleasure and entertainment
- Increases communication skills
- Vital for communication through letters, emails and social media
- Increases understanding of the world
- Vital for learning
- Key skill for employment
- Key skill for independence

**Everyone has the right to read.** It is our job to find how to support all pupils at Highfurlong to be successful readers.

## What is phonics?

Phonics is a way to teach people how to read. Extensive research shows that this is the most effective way to teach reading. Through this method we teach children and young people the sounds different letters and groups of letters make. They then use this skill to distinguish between the different sounds in words. They can read by splitting the word into smaller sounds (decoding) and push the sounds together to make a word (blending).

Phonics is broken down into phases. The first phase develops key listening skills which are required before moving on to learning letters and sounds. The remaining phases introduce sounds in a specific order alongside other reading skills.

Phonics is fast paced and repetitive to quickly build upon prior knowledge. This why supporting school by practicing phonics and reading at home will help your child.

# What is Reading River?



Reading River is a phonics and reading tool which has been designed by Jasmine Short and Shelby Mercer at Highfurlong school. The tool has been created with all of our pupils in mind with a huge focus on making sure all pupils are able to access it and can make good progress within phonics and reading.

As our learners at Highfurlong may not be working at expected national levels, our phonics scheme is not required to link to specific age groups. It can be used throughout all school years where required. In addition to reading and writing skills Reading River intends to build confidence, communication skills and a love for reading.

Reading River is based on synthetic phonics in line with the Department for Education's '[Letters and sounds](#)' guidance. During the phonics pathway, learners will move along the river stopping at different animals which represent phonics phases one to six. This is where they will learn the skills they need to become fluent readers.

Most learners will follow the phonics pathway, but some may take an alternative pathway. This is called 'Reading Rapids' and is where learners will be taught to read through whole word reading. This links directly to the phonics phases. As learners reach the end of the river and are fluent readers they will become 'Explorers' and will access post phonics activities. As Explorers they will build on the skills they have developed throughout Reading River and will focus on increasing vocabulary, knowledge and reading comprehension. Sensory access resources have been created to support all learners with SEND to access phonics. Including symbols, E-Tran frame, coloured or tactile dots, frames with sound buttons and phonics resources. We use a range of reading schemes and reading resources which link directly to each phonics phase. These are organised to suit younger and older readers. These resources will be available for parents to use at home. In addition to this parents' guide, videos will be shared to further explain Reading River and give more detail on each phase and how to use this tool at home.

# How can I help my child with phonics and reading at home?

Your child will be working on phonics and reading every day at school. To have your support to reinforce what they have learnt and to practise these skills is invaluable to consolidating understanding and allowing your child to learn more quickly and successfully. Your child's class teacher will send some activities and phonics resources for you to do at home when you can. They will share the phase or pathway your child is working on and will let you know when they move to the next phase in Reading River. Phonics is very repetitive, so don't worry if you feel you are repeating yourself a lot. We recommend enjoying stories and reading together for fun as much as possible.

You will receive a separate parents' guide for the specific phase your child is on. This will include what is taught in each phase and will share examples of activities you can do in the home.

## Reading at home

### Intent

- Increase opportunities for pupils to practise their reading skills
- Increase opportunities for parents to engage with learning
- Increase a love of reading

### Implementation

- Videos of how to support children to practise reading at home will be shared
- Parents' guide will be shared
- Teachers will provide support to individual families where needed
- Teachers will use Seesaw to communicate progress with parents
- Teachers will send resources home
- Parents will return resources daily

### Impact

- Pupils will make faster progress in reading
- Pupils love for reading will develop
- Parents will have the skills and knowledge to support reading at home

# Glossary

Here are some definitions of words that you might hear or see in information about phonics and reading:

- ❖ **Phoneme** - The sounds written letters make which make up a word
- ❖ **Grapheme** - The written representation of a sound
- ❖ **GPC** - Grapheme phoneme correspondences, the relationship between the sound (phoneme) and written letters (grapheme)
- ❖ **Blending** - joining together individual sounds to make a word
- ❖ **Segmenting** - breaking down words into their individual sounds
- ❖ **Phase** - phonics level or stage
- ❖ **High- frequency** - words that are used a lot in day to day reading, writing and speaking
- ❖ **Decodable** - words that can be fully sounded out in order to identify the word
- ❖ **Tricky words** - words which cannot be sounded out, also known as sight words
- ❖ **Letter names** - the name of the letter (ABC song)
- ❖ **Letter sounds** - the sound a letter makes
- ❖ **CVC** - words made up of consonant/vowel/consonant e.g. cat, map, pan
- ❖ **VC** - words made up of vowel/consonant e.g. an, at, in