

THE  
*Raleigh*  
SCHOOL



Phonics  
— S T E P S

# Parents' Guide

2024-25

## Introduction

All children attending The Raleigh School begin their learning journey to become expert readers and writers as soon as they arrive at the school. We begin this journey with Phonics teaching. The programme we use to help your children to achieve these goals is Phonics Steps.

Phonics Steps serves as a metaphor for the child's journey through their learning. Each step they take moves them closer to mastering the fundamentals of the English language. In order to progress, children learning through our programme take small steps from sound to word, moving from phase to phase until they reach the top of their learning staircase and achieve big results!

'Little steps to big results' underpins our teaching and learning ethos, with learners accompanied on their journey by a range of relatable characters who understand, and experience with them, the wonder of learning to read and write. In each phase, learners walk in the footsteps of the children who've come before them and the characters they meet along the way. With pride and joy at the heart of the Phonics Steps programme, our children become equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge and positive learning behaviours to embrace new challenges and overcome any obstacle.

Phonics Steps has been developed by South Farnham Educational Trust in partnership with phonics and early reading experts. Our schools have developed a highly effective Letters and Sounds approach over many years, with Phonics Screening Check results consistently amongst the top three per cent in the country. Phonics Steps is a synthesis of exemplary practice cultivated by expert teachers across many partner schools.

Phonics Steps incorporates the latest guidance issued by the Department for Education as well as drawing on the latest research into how children learn best, how to ensure learning stays in children's long term memory and how best to enable children to apply their learning to become highly competent readers. The planned progression of the programme pulls together all this research and experience to provide optimum progress for all children.

We are delighted to have had the opportunity to share the Phonics Steps programme and help many children to take their first step towards big results!

## Why teach phonics?

To read English successfully, children must learn to turn the words they see in a text into sounds, and make sense of these sounds. It is important for children to learn letter-sound relationships because English uses letters in the alphabet to represent sounds. Children learn the sounds that each letter makes, and how a change in the order of letters changes a word's meaning. For example, if we don't pay attention to letter order, words such as 'dog' and 'pat' might be misread as 'god' and 'tap' respectively.

## Supporting your child at home

### Demystifying the terminology:

There is lots of jargon associated with the teaching of phonics but the children are explicitly taught it right from the beginning of their journey so will be familiar and may use it at home. Below is a glossary which explains all of the terms. To accelerate the progress of the children, it is helpful for everybody working with them to be using the same vocabulary.

#### Glossary of Key Terms

**Phoneme** - A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound that signals a distinct, contrasting meaning. There are approximately 44 phonemes in the English language.

**Grapheme** - A letter, or combination of letters, that corresponds to a single phoneme within a word. Graphemes can be made up from 1 letter e.g. p, 2 letters e.g. sh, 3 letters e.g. tch or 4 letters e.g. ough.

**GPC** - The links between letters, or combinations of letters (graphemes) and the speech sounds (phonemes) that they represent. In the English writing system, graphemes may correspond to different phonemes in different words.

**Phonological Awareness** – The general ability to attend to the sounds of language as distinct from the meaning.

**Digraph** - A type of grapheme where two letters represent one phoneme. Sometimes, these two letters are not next to one another; this is called a **split digraph**.

**Trigraph** - A type of grapheme where three letters represent one phoneme.

**Oral Blending** - Hearing phonemes and being able to merge them together to make a word. Children need to develop this skill before they will be able to blend written words.

**Oral Segmenting** - Hearing a word and splitting it up into the phonemes that make it. Children need to develop this skill before they will be able to segment words to spell them.

**CVC Word** – A word made up of a consonant, vowel, consonant.

**CVCC Word** – A word made up of a consonant, vowel, consonant, consonant.

**CCVC Word** – A word made up of a consonant, consonant, vowel, consonant.

**Adjacent Consonants** – Two or more consonants next to each other in a word, for example 'clip'

**Suffix** – A letter or group of letters added to the end of a root word to create a new word. For example – **ing** in **playing**.

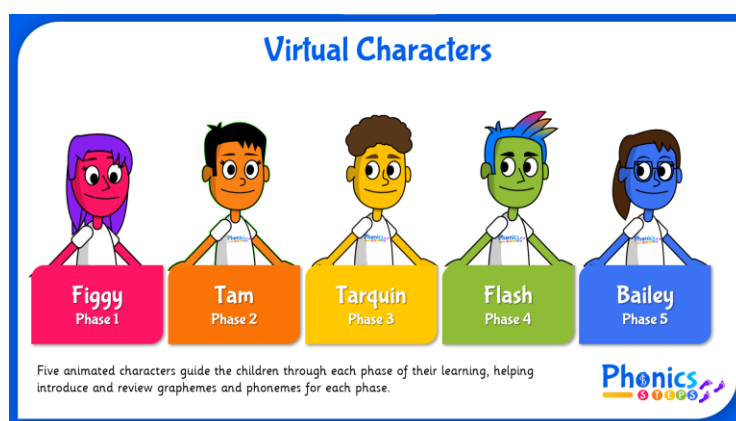
**Prefix** – A letter or group of letters added to the beginning of a root word to create a new word. For example **un-** in **unhappy**.

**Schwa** – The schwa is a sound that is represented by all of the vowels. It makes the /uh/ sound. When sounding out a word phonetically you should always speak in pure sounds. For example, when saying the sound for the letter 's', children should be encouraged to say: 'ssss', and not 'suh'

## The Virtual Characters

You may hear your children talking about some of their new ‘phonics friends’ at home. In each phase, learners walk in the footsteps of the children who’ve come before them and the characters they meet along the way.

Each of their names has been carefully chosen to match the phase that they represent. (E.g. Figgy the first phonics friend is alliterative and double syllable – some key Phase 1 sound patterns. The rest are decodable using sounds or patterns introduced at each phase. By the end of the programme, the children can decode each of the characters’ names. They each use the purest version of the sound.



## Phonics Steps Parent Portal

You can access the Phonics Steps Parent Portal using the details below. Here you will find a wide bank of resources to support phonics and reading at home. These include handwriting guides, flashcards, pronunciation videos, action demonstrations for each sound and recorded songs to accompany each sound. As these resources will also be used during the children’s phonics lessons, they will already be familiar with them and how to use them and therefore provide the children with consistency across home and school.

**How to access the parent portal:**

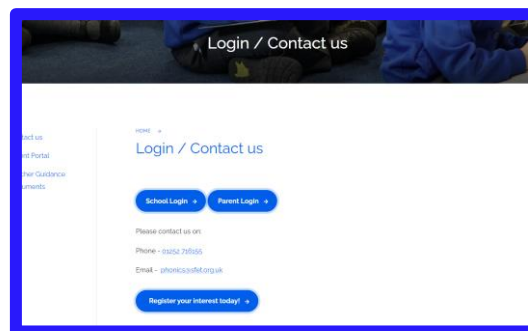
- 1. Access the website at [Phonics.org.uk](https://www.phonics.org.uk)**



## 2. Click 'Login/contact us'



## 3. Click 'Parent login'

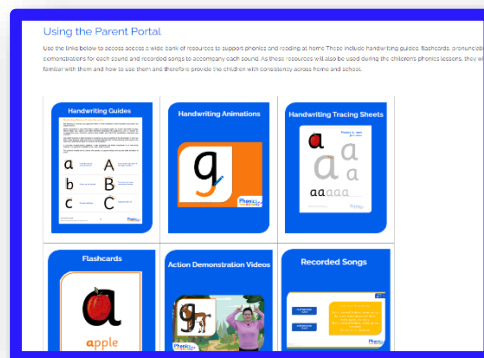


## 4. Enter your login details:

**Username:** [raleighparent@phonics.org.uk](mailto:raleighparent@phonics.org.uk) **Password:** Phonic\$2024

*(Please note that this email address is not monitored and does not forward to the school – please contact the school in the usual way.)*

You will then see all available resources and be able to use these with your children.



If you have any questions, please email: [info.raleigh@sfet.org.uk](mailto:info.raleigh@sfet.org.uk) or speak to your class teacher.