Phonics terminology:

PHONEME - smallest unit of sound

GRAPHEME - written representation of the sound

DIGRAPH - two letters making one sound e.g. ee

TRIGRAPH - three letters making one sound e.g. igh

SPLIT DIGRAPH - where two letters are not adjacent e.g a-e as in cave

CVC – consonant vowel consonant

GPC – grapheme/phoneme correspondence

SOUND BUTTONS – annotations to define individual phonemes eg l o ck

BLEND – to run individual sounds together to pronounce a word s n a p = snap

SEGMENT – to split a word into its individual phonemes to spell it r ai n = rain

Learning to read, reading to learn

There is a huge emphasis on schools sending home decodable books matched to the stage children are working at. The National Curriculum states children should be taught to: *'Read aloud accurately books that are consistent with their developing phonics knowledge and that do not require them to use other strategies to work out words.'* The Reading Framework published in July 2021 also states that: *'A systematic Phonics programme includes sufficient decodable books or texts, so that children can practise, at school and at home, their increasing knowledge of GPCs and their blending skills in meaningful contexts.'*

What is a decodable book? (with thanks to 'Phonics Family' for examples)

A decodable book is one that is made up of words in which the very large majority can be read independently as the letters and sounds have been previously taught. It will be very closely matched to the stage children are working at in Phonics. At Bridgewater school we have re-organised our reading books in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 to match the taught sequence in our phonics lessons. For children in Reception, and starting to learn phonics, a reading book will contain simple CVC words like 'sat', 'pat' and tricky words 'I' and 'the'. For children working in phase 5 – into Year 1 - the book will contain words made up of alternative graphemes like 'ou, 'ie' and split digraphs.

Why decodable books?

1. They make children feel successful and learn to use phonics as their prime approach to reading.
2. As soon as children have learnt a small number of letters and their corresponding sounds they can begin to apply this knowledge to their reading including words ever seen before.
3. They provide the opportunity to revisit and review previously taught knowledge.
4. They encourage independence in reading.

As an example: A reception child confident in identifying Phase 3 graphemes and saying the corresponding sounds, eg 'sh', 'ar', 'oo', and 'th' can segment and blend words that contain them and can recognise the phase 2 and 3 tricky words (the, she, we etc) would struggle to apply their developing phonics knowledge if they receive a book like Book 1. Book 2 is phonically decodable

BOOK 1

Words not pitched at the correct level for the child are crossed out. e.g. from the Reading Framework 2021

~~What~~ ~~does~~ a ~~bird~~ ~~like~~ to ~~eat~~? A ~~bird~~ ~~likes~~ to ~~eat~~ ~~worms~~. ~~What~~ ~~does~~ a ~~giraffe~~ ~~like~~ to ~~eat~~? A ~~giraffe~~ ~~likes~~ to ~~eat~~ ~~leaves~~. ~~What~~ ~~does~~ a ~~seal~~ ~~like~~ to ~~eat~~? A ~~seal~~ ~~likes~~ to ~~eat~~ fish. ~~What~~ ~~do~~ you ~~like~~ to ~~eat~~?

BOOK 2

Decodable words matched to the level the child is working.

Look up! A ship!
Will it land?
Yes. Let's run and see it.
A thing with three legs
and six arms got off.
Can we go in?
Up, up, up we went on a
trip to a far planet.

How can I support my child to read a decodable book at home?

- Have a quick read of the book first so that you are familiar with the story and can ask appropriate questions.
- Look together at the graphemes and tricky words the book contains before you read it (typically found on the back or inside the front cover)
- Encourage your child to use their phonic knowledge and 'sound out' the words. Encourage your child to place their finger underneath the word they are reading to stop them getting 'lost'.
- If they are struggling with a word, model segmenting and blending yourself.

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