How Can I Help At Home?

Recognising sounds
Playing games such as 'I hear with my little ear, something starting with…..' can really help children to pick out the starting sounds of familiar words. As they become more confident they can begin to segment the whole word into individual sounds, e.g. c-a-t and f-i-sh. It is important that sounds practiced in isolation reflect the sounds we hear in whole words. For example: 'p' rather than 'puh' and 'rrr' or 'mmm' rather than 'ruh' or 'muh'. It is really helpful when you're reading with your child if you encourage them to say the sound that they can see rather than spelling out the letters, as it is blending the sounds together that enables them eventually to read whole words.

Rhyming songs and games
Playing with word sounds and singing rhyming songs really helps your child to hear the different sounds in words. For example, making up nonsense words that rhyme with names or familiar objects is a good way of supporting your child's sounds. It may sound silly, but it's something everyone can join in with and it's great fun!

Recognising letters
Playing 'I spy' with printed materials such as newspapers, books or comics can help children recognise starting sounds in unfamiliar words
When you are out and about, encourage your child to pick out letters/sounds that they know from signs, place names, supermarket aisles, menus, car plates, etc.

Writing at home
All mark-making, or 'pretend' writing, should be encouraged—it is a great way of building confidence and practicing holding a pencil. Giving children opportunities and purpose for writing at home will help to reinforce their learning in the classroom. Here are some simple things you can do to support your child:

- Ask for help writing shopping lists or message
- Encourage them to write their name on any work that they do
- To increase confidence, use whiteboards or magnetic letters which can be easily erased
- Make cards or address envelopes to post to friends or family and help your child to write a message or address
- Children love post-it notes! If you leave some lying around the house you'll soon find little messages stuck all over your house! Encourage your child to write a caption with pictures that they draw. You can always write in yellow pencil, or dots for them to trace over to build up confidence
- Magnetic letters on the fridge or radiator can really encourage your child to experiment with arrangements of sounds
- Have a 'Writing Book' for your child to record their ideas and just 'have a go' at mark-making. It helps them feel grown up!

If your child lacks confidence to have a go, you can always write in yellow pencil, or dots for them to trace over

Handwriting
It is really important that children begin to form letters correctly as soon as they start writing. There are lots of ways to improve confidence and work on handwriting at home.

Practice Gross Motor Formation (large scale) to build confidence in letter formation. For example:

- Try using big paint brushes & water with a splash of food colouring on the wall or floor.
- Write letters in the air with ribbons on sticks or sparklers.

Practice Fine Motor Control building up strength in little fingers can be 'hidden' in fun, daily activities such as:

- Cotton bud/finger painting and colouring in
- Weaving (wrap wool around an old shoebox and weave everything from strips of plastic bag to leaves and grasses from the park)
- Lego, Meccano or other small-scale construction kits
- Playdough (if you are unable to purchase this, maybe find a recipe online and store it in the fridge).

Reading
Enjoying books and looking at print is an essential part of the reading process, even if your child is not yet reading whole words. See which sounds they can recognise on the page, and which sounds key words start with. What is going on in the pictures? Engaging them in the whole book really supports their reading fluency and comprehension, as well as their confidence when they do start to read themselves. As they do begin to read whole words, long or unfamiliar words can appear very daunting so that they won't even attempt to read it. By encouraging your child to take the word sound by sound they will build confidence to blend their sounds together and work out words independently.

Reading Activities
Engaging children in stories helps with understanding the purpose. For example:

- Try using puppets or teddies to re-tell the story
- Act out scenes together and talk about what happens next
- Even make your own puppets with lolly sticks!

Some Useful Websites
For games to help with letter recognition, rhyme, initial sounds and word-building:
https://www.topmarks.co.uk/english-games/5-7-years/letters-and-sounds
ictgames || html5 English Games Page
https://www.phonicsbloom.com/
https://timeforphonics.co.uk/phonics-games/
www.phonicsplay.co.uk