Phonics Glossary for Parents and Carers

A quick guide to some words you may hear when we talk about phonics and reading.

Word	Definition
Blending	Putting sounds together to read a word: /s/ /a/ /t/ → 'sat'.
CVC word	A consonant–vowel–consonant word, such as 'cat' or 'sun'.
Decodable book	A reading book that is matched to the phonics a child has been taught.
Digraph	Two letters that represent one sound, such as 'sh', 'ch' or 'ai'.
Fluency	Reading accurately and smoothly, with increasing automaticity, so attention can be given to understanding the text.
Grapheme	A letter or group of letters that represents a sound. For example, 'ai' and 'ay', represents the sound /ai/.
GPC	(Grapheme–Phoneme Correspondence) - The link between a written letter or letters and the sound they represent.
Phoneme	A sound we can hear in a word. For example, 'ship' has three phonemes: /sh/ /i/ /p/.
Phonics	A system used to teach children how to read and write by connecting the sounds of spoken English (phonemes) to individual letters or groups of letters (graphemes)
Prosody	Reading with suitable expression, phrasing and pace.
Pure sound	A clear, distinct pronunciation of an individual letter sound without adding an extra vowel sound - like "uh" at the end e.g. /f/ not fuh.
Reading for pleasure	Reading or sharing books because they are interesting, enjoyable or meaningful.
Segmenting	Breaking a word into its sounds, often to help spell it: 'ship' → /sh/ /i/ /p/.
Sound button	A visual symbol placed under letters in a word to help young children break down and sound out text. 
Trigraph	Three letters that represent one sound, such as 'igh'.
Tricky word	A word with a part that cannot be read using the phonics pattern a child has learned so far.