

Information for Parents and Carers

Reading and Phonics in the Reception classes



Importance of real books

Illustrated story books are great for sharing, as children love being read to. Your child will bring home a story book from the school library so please try to read to your child every day. Run your finger under the words when you read, so that they begin to understand that the text on a page goes from left to right, top to bottom. Discuss what is happening in the story/pictures, point out things on the page, and answer your child's questions. Ask questions of your own and listen to your child's responses.

Your child will probably want to hear a favourite story many times. Research suggests that repeated readings help children develop language skills, so even if you are bored of it, carry on! Retelling familiar stories is a great way for your child to develop his/her memory skills; memory is a vital skill in being able to read as many words cannot be sounded out (eg. **the, to, so, like**).

Other reading opportunities can come through sharing comics and magazines, annuals, and non-fiction books. Some children love learning facts about fire engines, dinosaurs or insects. All of these texts are valued reading activities, and can be recorded as part of your child's reading challenge.

Reading scheme books

Your child will also bring home a reading scheme book when they are beginning to "decode" words. "Decoding" means learning that there is a relationship between a written symbol (ie a letter or several letters) and a sound. However, decoding is only part of the process of reading as understanding what they have read (comprehension), is important too. We will assess each child's ability to decode regularly and will know when the time is right for your child to start on a reading scheme book.

The first reading scheme books may have no or very few words. Books without words are really useful as they encourage the child to tell the story themselves from the illustrations. Encourage your child to talk about the pictures. Ask questions such as "what is the dog doing?", "what do you think will happen next?", "how is the girl feeling?" When children start to read we encourage them to look at the pictures if they are stuck on a tricky word. You can help them embed this skill early, by talking about the pictures in any books you share now. The books without words often have prompts for you to use. Many early reading scheme books also have lots of additional activities on the inside front and back covers, which are really useful to try.

Ready to read?

Besides the skills of decoding and comprehension, reading also relies on a combination of auditory and visual skills. Visual skills are needed to recognise letters in print, and to know the sounds (and names) associated with them.

Auditory skills are needed to hear the sounds in words (eg. hearing that the word **cat** is made up of the sounds **c a t**). Rhyming games and "I spy" are good for encouraging children to hear sounds in words, so do try these at home. All children learn at different speeds and in different ways. For example, some children will recognise the sounds in print, but cannot hear them in words, and vice versa.

In the UK it is now accepted that the best way to teach most children to read is by phonics. One of the most important skills when learning to read is pushing sounds together, ("blending"). In order to do this successfully we need to hear sounds in the precise pronunciation. When we teach the sounds they are very short; s is pronounced "ssssssss" and not "suh". If not taught correctly, confusion can occur as the child blends the sounds. For example, if the sounds are taught incorrectly as cuh a tuh (cat), when blended the word becomes cuhatuh.

We teach the initial letter sounds in a specific order, starting with **s a t i p n** as these 6 letters can be put together to make numerous simple words- **sat sit sip sap pit pat pan in it**. We use simple words at this stage ie consonant-vowel-consonant words (cvc) (eg **tip, tan**) or vowel-consonant (vc) (eg **in, it**). Your child will bring home their "sound book" to practice with you every day, and this will reinforce and consolidate the learning at school. To begin with three new sounds are introduced each week.

Some words cannot be decoded phonetically; eg **the to no go**. We introduce these tricky words in class and your child should practise these key words at home. We will start this later this term so check your child's school diary regularly.

Useful links and additional information:

To hear the correct pronunciation of the sounds of the English phonic code, type: "**articulation of phonemes**" into an internet search engine, such as Google, for a You tube demonstration. I will also be sharing short video clips and songs on our class homepage, which can be accessed via our school website.

For additional games and activities to support your child try these websites:

www.oxfordowl.co.uk

www.letters-and-sounds.com (phase 2 activities)

<http://jollylearning.co.uk>

Remember to fill in the reading diary every time you read to or with your child.

Make book time a warm and loving time when the two of you can cuddle close together. Bedtime is an especially great time for reading together.

Read together every day. Little and often is the key.

Thank you.

Miss Jenna Wittman