

# HELPFUL HINTS FOR SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD TO READ AND WRITE BETTER

## Years 1 & 2 – March 2020

### PHONICS

When the children were in Reception class they started learning phonics, starting with single sounds such as ‘m’ as in moon, ‘a’ as in apple etc. Some children learnt these sounds really quickly and others have reached Year 2 and are still trying to remember them. There is a huge range of abilities within each year group and how quickly they learn and retain the sounds varies a lot from one child to another.

When the children have learnt all the single sounds they can start **BLENDING** them to make CVC words for example **c – a – t makes cat**. (A CVC word is consonant-vowel-consonant eg words such as hat, peg, tin, hop, bus.) Moving on to CCVC words ie consonant-consonant-vowel-consonant eg ship, chop, thin.

When we sound out the words (one sound at a time), we point to our fingers so the children can count how many sounds there are in the word. This then helps with their writing of the word – they know they can hear 3 sounds so they need to write 3 letters. As they learn more, they will learn that some sounds are written using more than one letter eg the sound “l” can be written “igh”.

The pronunciation of the sounds is very important. For example, don’t say “muh” say “mmmm”. Keep practising!

But of course learning to read and write in English is not as easy as this! The phonics with the single sounds only provide the easiest part of learning to read English! It can teach only the main sounds of English letters with regular spellings like ‘a cat sat’ or ‘on spot hop’. The main and much harder part of learning to read English is learning to pronounce words with alternative sounds for them, such as the <o> in ‘*on, only, once, other, woman, women, who*’ and **ea** - (*treat – great, threat, theatre, create*) and all graphemes with <o> <ou> (*shout – should, touch, soul, soup*) <o-e> (*home - come, move*) <oo> (*food – good, flood*) <oa> (*road – broad*). Also difficult, are words that have the same sound but a different way of spelling it eg my, tie, high, time (4 different ways to spell the same sound!)

At the end of year 1 we have a phonics screening test – this is a statutory requirement. You will be told whether your child has passed (usually needing to score 32 out of 40). Please be aware that the test includes “non-words” and some of our children who are able readers, will read these words as real words and end up getting a low score. The non-words have a picture of an alien, so children can learn when to just sound out the word as it is written.

In addition to the phonics, children learn “sight” words. These are words which they just need to read and learn for example “the”, “said”, “what” etc. They also need to be able to spell these words. See the Dolch 1<sup>st</sup> 100 and 2<sup>nd</sup> 100 word lists. Some of these words can be sounded out phonetically but many cannot.

### **Spellings**

Please continue to practise spellings at home and keep going over ones from previous weeks. The children are learning to **LOOK COVER WRITE CHECK**. Try making up mnemonics, for example the spelling of the word “said” can be remembered by learning the rhyme “**silly apples in ditch!**”

By the time they finish Year 2 we are aiming for the children to write stories, instructions, recounts etc. They are expected to write a page or more in a sustained way, with development of ideas, descriptions of characters, settings etc. Most of the children should be able to meet the new age related expectations (ARE) while a few will be above and a few below.

## Writing

### **Handwriting**

It is really important that the children are writing each letter correctly, (with cursive writing, you always start on the line). Remind them not to take their pencil off the page. Look carefully while your child is writing and check they are forming each letter properly – if they're not, practise as much as possible! It is really important that they do form the letters correctly so that they can learn joined handwriting correctly in Year 2. It is very hard to join the letters if you're not writing each individual letter properly. The English curriculum requires joined writing and so children cannot meet the ARE if they are not joining letters by Year 6. They would not be graded *above* ARE in Year 2 if they cannot join their handwriting.

### **Independent Creative Writing**

As soon as children can blend sounds and write letters, they can begin to write sentences by themselves. In Year 1 they would start by writing simple sentences:

eg I went to the park. Teachers then try to extend the children's writing

eg I went to the park with my sister. We had lots of fun.

**In Year 1** the emphasis is on beginning sentences with a **CAPITAL LETTER** and ending the sentence with a **FULL STOP** (and later they will learn ? and ! ) They also need lots of practise to leave "**FINGER SPACES**" between each word. They also do lots of practise spelling sight words correctly ie those words which cannot be phonetically sounded out eg the, said, they, was, who, what etc. They must also keep re-reading what they have written to make sure it makes sense. They then need to edit their work to improve or correct it (more Year 2 upwards). Often children think faster than they can write so missing out words or phrases is very common.

**In Year 2** they learn how to improve their writing in the following ways:-

**Vocabulary** – We want children to use interesting words. At this stage this means adding adjectives (words to describe the noun) or adverbs (words to describe the verb). We sometimes call these WOW words. For example they might use creative, descriptive language to write eg the *scrawny* cat crept through the *spiky* hedge. We also get the children to think of other words to use instead of "said". Eg grumbled, muttered, cried, shouted etc. Reading a lot to your child will expose them to a wider vocabulary.

**Conjunctions** - When children can write simple sentences, they learn to use conjunctions ie a word which links two sentences together eg I went to the park and after that I went to see my gran. At first they would use conjunctions such as and, but, so, because. As the children move up the school this becomes more sophisticated, using conjunctions such as meanwhile, although etc.

**Openers** – This is about getting the children to start each sentence in a different and interesting way. Some children write And then.... And then..... And then..... And then..... so need to think of other ways of phrasing their ideas eg First of all I..... Later I..... After that.... Meanwhile....

**Punctuation** – children begin by learning to use full stops correctly at the end of a sentence. This can be very tricky for some children. It helps if they read their work out loud as then they usually hear where they need to put the fullstops. Next they will learn exclamation marks ! question marks ? commas , speech marks " " apostrophes ' By the time they get to Year 6 they would be expected to use a wide range of punctuation in all their writing.

## Reading

**Daily Supported Reading (DSR)** - starts in summer term Reception and carries on to the end of the spring term in Year 1. For DSR the whole year group is split into reading groups of around 6 children. DSR takes place every day in Year 1 at 10.45 (except Wednesdays). There is a trained adult working with every group at each session (until they reach green band). They work on reading, comprehension and spelling. When DSR finishes, ERIC takes over!

### **ERIC (Everyone Reading In Class)**

From summer term of Year 1 and during Year 2, we have daily ERIC sessions. This is a time when the teacher teaches reading to one group of about 6 children (using the colour banded books). There is a specific focus eg teaching reading strategies when you're stuck on a word, developing comprehension, knowledge of

punctuation etc. While the teacher works with a group (for about 20 minutes), the rest of the class do a range of reading/spelling/comprehension activities independently.

## **Individual Reading**

Children are also heard reading individually by the staff or volunteers. The aim is for the children to read to an adult about twice per week, (sometimes more often if they are struggling). Things happen in school which affect this (eg school trips, practising for an assembly etc) and so there will be some weeks when children are heard less often.

**There are lots of ways to help your child improve as a reader. The main one is to hear your child regularly (minimum three times per week). When reading here are some suggestions for supporting them:**

## **Getting stuck on a word**

If your child gets stuck on a word;

Count to 10 without saying anything – this gives them time to think and try and work it out for themselves. If you jump in straight away and tell them the word, you are not helping your child to develop independence as a reader. They will quickly realise that they needn't bother 'having a go' because if they are quiet someone will just tell them the word!!

If they do not read the word correctly after counting to 10 then you could ask one or two of the following questions (please don't ask any more questions than that!);

- What sound does the word begin with?
- What word would make sense here?
- What might fit there?
- What would sound OK here?
- Go back to the start of the sentence and try again.
- Read to the end of the sentence and go back to see if you can work it out.
- Can you see anything in the picture that might help you?

If they can't work it out then just tell them and move on so that the flow of reading is not slowed down.

When your child corrects their own mistake or works out a word after you have given them a prompt, give them lots of praise. Also, ask them how they worked it out,

"What did you do to work that out? That was clever, that might be useful next time you come to a tricky word."

## **Misreading Words**

If a child reads a word incorrectly, it may look similar but make no sense (e.g. 'what' for 'that') or makes sense but does not look right (e.g. 'dog' for 'puppy'). If they misread a word but don't stop and carry on reading regardless OR insert a word/s that is not there, stop them and ask them to check what they have just read. You could say,

"This is what you just read." Read the words your child said and point to each word too to emphasise your point. If they can't recognise their mistake then tell them what it is (e.g. "If it said dog it would start with 'd' but it starts with 'p' so what might it be instead?" OR "You added a 'the' here/missed out the 'the' here – remember it's important to look carefully at each word")

If they are struggling with one word in particular, use one of the prompts as listed above.

## **Improving Expression**

If your child reads in a monotone (!) model how you could read it instead. Practise with words in speech marks/speech bubbles first, getting them to use funny or silly voices, depending on the character.

Get them to pay attention to punctuation such as ! and ?

Say, "Did you notice the question mark/exclamation mark? Could you read that again making your voice sound like a question/an exclamation/shout it?"

## **Improving Comprehension**

This is the most important aspect of reading and the bit that is most often overlooked!

There is no point in reading if you don't know what you're reading about! **We have many children at school who can read the words but don't have a clue what they're reading.**

After reading a few pages (or one page depending on the amount of text read) ask questions about what they read, e.g.

Why did he/she do that?

How do you think he/she is feeling?

What makes you think that?

What happened after the boy went home? (Obviously relate it to the story)

IT IS REALLY IMPORTANT THAT YOU GET YOUR CHILD TO ANSWER IN FULL SENTENCES!!! It's also important that children are trained to listen to you and able to respond to your questions.

If it is a non-fiction book – discuss the purpose of the Contents Page, Index, Glossary and any unusual or technical vocabulary.

Also ask your child what individual words or phrases might mean eg “rapid”, “a few yards away”.

**SEE SEPARATE SHEET SHOWING THE FULL RANGE OF QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK. We use PM Benchmark to assess reading and if children cannot answer the comprehension questions related to the text, they will not be moved up to the next colour band.**

In Year 2 you could think about getting a thesaurus for the children as a good way of finding different words with the same meaning.

Lots of children can read you a page fluently but then not be able to tell you anything about it! If this sounds like your child, then ask a question after a much shorter amount has been read. If they are still not sure then tell them the answer. **Spend just as long talking about what has happened in the book as you do actually reading the book.**

A lot of children can answer your questions by lifting the information directly from the text. Try asking them things that are not stated clearly but are inferred or hinted at (e.g. the book says “Jenny shivered as she walked along.” You could ask, “What do you think the weather was like that day? Why do you think that?” This is a much more complex skill for children than you might imagine!

### **Other Skills!**

We would also like parents to give their children lots of opportunities to use scissors to cut out, use a ruler to draw a line, learn to fold paper in half (neatly!) and to glue things neatly using a glue stick.

### **In conclusion...**

So, from Reception we begin a journey which continues for many years as the children learn to read and write English.

Each child will learn at a different rate and find some parts easier or harder. It is important not to compare your child's progress with someone else. At the Parents' meeting in November and March the teacher will tell you what sort of progress your child is making. On reports you will see comments like “expected” or “above/below expected”. We want as many children as possible to be at the expected level for their year group. A lot of parents secretly hope for “above expected” but sometimes, children do find learning to read and write very tricky and may be “below expected”.

Difficulties with reading, spelling or handwriting can be developmental and your child may well find it easier when they are a bit older. Sometimes however, there is a specific learning difficulty. If there are any concerns, your child's teacher will discuss it with you. Equally, if you are concerned, please make an appointment to see your child's teacher.

If you read this far – well done!!

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