

HELPFUL HINTS FOR SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD TO READ AND WRITE BETTER

Year 1 & 2 Parents meeting - January 2024

PHONICS

During Reception, Years 1 and 2 the children learn phonics. (They will continue with this learning into KS2) We use the RWI phonics programme. In Reception, the children started with single sounds such as 'm' as in moon, 'a' as in apple etc (see set 1 and the simple speed sounds chart). Some children learnt these sounds really quickly and others are still practising. 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 learnt all the single sounds they started **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. Sounding out the words is called "Fred Talk".

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: ch, th, sh, oo.

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

After the simple sound sheet, we move on to the complex sound sheet which has the many variations of spellings with vowels (digraphs ie x2 letters making one sound – these are called "special friends" and trigraphs when x3 letters make one 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" (or "alien 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 known as "**red 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.

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!**"

Writing

Handwriting

It is really important that the children are writing each letter correctly. Remind the children not to take their pencil off the page when writing each letter. 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. 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/**red 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. Often children think faster than they can write so missing out words or phrases is very common.

Reading

The children will all have started learning to read with the RWI books (starting with red, then green, purple, pink, orange, yellow blue, grey). These books match with your child's phonetic ability.

When the children have reached the grey level of RWI, they will get a colour banded book which we use to develop the child's comprehensionskills (the order of the colours is : pink, red, yellow, blue, green, orange, turquoise, purple, gold, white, lime).The aim is to get to between orange and purple by the end of Year 1.

Lime is the expected level for Year 3. The colour band for your child is based on reading assessments. It is not a race!

The focus initially is on reading the words, however comprehension is vitally important in order for them to progress. Some children can move through the colours bands quite quickly initially but by the time they get to purple band the focus is much more on comprehension and expanding vocabulary and so they don't move up the colours so fast. Children also need to become **fluent** readers. **Fluency is very important.**

Children are taught to read in RWI English lessons. They will read the same book during the week and then bring it home to read to you. They should be able to read this book fluently to you – it should not be a challenge or too difficult because they have been practicing with it during the week.

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). Please sign your child's reading record when you hear them read. You can write messages here to say how you feel your child is getting on. When reading at home here are some suggestions for supporting them:

When reading the RWI books, up to grey level:

- Practise their speed sounds – do these out of order as children can memorize them without reading them
- Practise reading the red words and the green words at the front of the book
- Encourage your child to spot the red or green words when reading the book
- Your child should be able to decode all the words – this will show they are reading at the right level. Please then encourage your child to read the book fluently (not like a robot!)

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, helping them to develop independence as a reader. If you jump in straight away and tell them the word, you are teaching your child to be dependent on you. 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?
- 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.

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".

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.

Playing card or board games is also great to help with turn taking, developing vocabulary and concentration.

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 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.

Useful links

[Parent video: How to say the sounds - YouTube](#)

[Parent video: What is Read Write Inc Phonics - YouTube](#)

[Parent video: Understanding Phonics - YouTube](#)

[Parent video: Introduction to Daily Read Write Inc. Phonics Lessons - YouTube](#)

If you have read this far, well done!!