

St. Andrew's C.P School

Information for parents

Helping your child to become a good reader

Reading is an integral part of our daily lives and therefore it is a crucial skill for children to master. Reading enables children to fully access the school curriculum, to find out about new subjects and to gain pleasure from a wealth of literature.

Reading at home

As parents you play a vital role in helping your child learn to read. We hope that the information in this leaflet will support you in helping your child to become a good reader.

Reading at home has many benefits, here are just a few.

- ❖ **Practise** - children need to practise their reading **every day** in order to become more confident.
- ❖ **Be a good role model** - if children see that you value books and enjoy reading they will be encouraged to do the same.
- ❖ **Express yourself** - reading out loud helps children to develop their spoken language skills as it exposes them to correct forms of grammar and phrasing. This helps them to improve their ability to express themselves verbally.
- ❖ **Word power** - reading books, magazines and websites exposes children to a wealth of **new vocabulary**.

Our 10 top tips on hearing your child read

The following points are tips on how you can help to make reading a positive experience for your child.

1. Make reading enjoyable.

Sit with your child and be attentive. It can be frustrating if they are struggling or reluctant but try not to pressurise them. Do something else together if they lose interest.

2. Practise regularly

Try to read with your child as often as possible. 'Little and often' is best.

3. Choose a quiet time.

Family life is often busy but try to set aside a quiet time. Turn the television off and make sure there are no distractions. Ten to fifteen minutes is usually long enough. It is a good idea to make reading part of your daily routine. Listen to your child read at the same time every day so that it is expected and it does not become a struggle.

4. Maintain the flow

Don't interrupt straight away if your child misreads a word. Instead allow them time to correct themselves. It is important that children learn to 'sound out' words but sometimes it is better to tell them unknown words to help them maintain the flow. When your child does try to 'sound out' words, encourage them to use letter sounds rather than alphabet names.

5. Be positive

Boost your child's confidence by giving them lots of praise, even for small achievements. If they make mistakes re-read the text with them, pointing to each word as you say it.

6. Success is the key

Sometimes it can be tempting to push children on too quickly because we want them to make progress. However, it is important not to give a child a book that is too difficult because this often has the opposite effect. Children need to build up their confidence and struggling with a book with many unknown words is discouraging. Children lose the flow and cannot understand the text and this can cause them to lose confidence and become reluctant readers.

7. Visit the library

Encourage your child to use the public library by making regular visits with them.

8. Communicate

Try to communicate with your child's teacher regularly by writing a comment in their reading record, even if the book they have read is not their school book. This will help your child to know that you are interested in their progress and that you value reading. It also helps the teacher to know what kind of books the children are interested in.

9. Talk about the books

There is more to being a good reader than just being able to read the words accurately. It is important that children are able to understand what they have read. Always talk to your child about the book. Discuss the pictures, the characters, how they think the story will end and what their favourite part of the story is. This will help them to develop good comprehension skills.

10. Variety is important

Children need to experience a variety of reading materials e.g. picture books, novels, comics, magazines, poetry, information books, websites. Provide them with opportunities to read a range of different types of text.



A brief guide to phonics

You will probably have heard your child or their teacher talking about phonics lessons. You might also have heard a few unfamiliar terms such as split digraphs or graphemes.

Hopefully the following information will help to explain some of the technical terminology.

What is synthetic phonics?

This refers to the blending (or synthesizing) of sounds to make words.

This is a method of teaching children how spoken words are made up of sounds called phonemes and how the letters in words (graphemes) correspond to those phonemes. When reading, children are taught to sound words out into separate phonemes and to make a word from these sounds.

When spelling, children are taught to break the word apart and identify all the sounds in a word. Then they use their knowledge of the phonemic code to write the word.

What is a phoneme?

A phoneme is the technical name for the smallest unit of sound.

What is the phonemic code?

We have 26 letters in our alphabet but there are 44 phonemes in our spoken language. Lots of different letter combinations are needed to make these phonemes.

The phonemic code refers to the 44 phonemes and all the ways each phoneme can be written.

What is a digraph?

Sometimes a phoneme is represented by a single letter, e.g. /c/ /a/ /t/.

Sometimes a single phoneme is represented by two letters. This is called a digraph. For example,

- in the word /ch/ /o/ /p/; where /ch/ is a digraph as both letters only make one sound.
- in the word /b/ /oa/ /t/; where /oa/ is a digraph as both letters only make one sound.

- in the word /m/ /i/ /ss/; where /ss/ is a digraph as both letters only make one sound.

Children learn that sometimes a single phoneme can be written in several different ways. E.g. the sound /ay/ in play. This phoneme can be written;

/ay/ as in the word **play**

/a-e/ as in the word **spade**

/ea/ as in the word **break**

/ey/ as in the word **hey**

/eigh/ as in the word **eight**

/a/ as in the word **later**

/ei/ as in the word **vein**

/ai/ as in the word **rain**

What is a split digraph?

This is when two letters, split, make one sound. (This was sometimes referred to as magic e). For example

- a-e as in **make**
- i-e as in **site**
- o-e as in **hope**
- e-e as in **these**
- u-e as in **flute**

What is a consonant cluster?

This refers to two (or three) letters making two (or three) sounds. For example,

- The first three letters of **straight** are a consonant cluster.
- The first two letters of **bright** are a consonant cluster.
- The first two letters of **sleep** are a consonant cluster.

What are vc, cvc and ccvc words?

These are the abbreviations for vowel-consonant, consonant-vowel-consonant, consonant-consonant-vowel-consonant used to describe the order of letters in a words, e.g. am, Sam, slam.

What is segmenting?

This refers to splitting up a word into its individual phonemes in order to spell it. For example

the word 'cat' has three phonemes: /c/ /a/ /t/

the word 'mend' has four phonemes: /m/ /e/ /n/ /d/

the word 'helping' has six phonemes: /h/ /e/ /l/ /p/ /i/ /ng/

What is blending?

This is the process of bringing the sounds together to make a word or a syllable. E.g. /c/ /a/ /t/ becomes cat.

Can all words be easily decoded in this way?

Some words cannot be decoded so easily in this way. This is why it is also important to develop the children's sight vocabulary by practising reading of the common words.

You can help your child at home by helping them to practise reading and spelling these words. (See the attached lists).

Reading for understanding

Reading comprehension is an essential part of the reading process. To become fluent readers children need to understand what they read.

During guided reading lessons in school children are taught a range of reading strategies and they are encouraged to reflect on their own understanding and learning.

During the first stages of learning to read, children's understanding of texts tends to be based on the literal interpretation and recall. As their reading skills develop, children begin to explore the complex meanings of a text using inference and deduction, (i.e. reading between the lines), so it is important that parents continue to hear their child read and discuss the texts with them throughout Key Stage 2.

Your role as a parent is valuable in helping your child to develop his/her reading comprehension when you are reading together at home. Hopefully the following points will give you some ideas.

1. What to do before starting to read

Look at the title, the front cover or a chapter heading.

Ask your child:

- What does it make you think of?
- Who do you think the characters are?
- When/where do you think the story is set?
- Does the cover/title give you any clues about what might happen?
- What kind of a story/book do you think this is?

2. Prediction

Predicting what a text, or part of a text, might be about encourages children to pay more attention when they begin to read.

Ask your child:

- What do you think this book/part of the book will be about?
- What do you think will happen next?
- Why do you think that?
- Can you find some evidence in the text to support your prediction?
- How do you think the story will end?

3. Questioning

Asking children questions about what they are reading will help them to develop their understanding. Different types of questions will encourage them to think in different ways.

The three types of question are:

- **Literal questions** - these questions ask children to recall information that is directly stated in the text.
- **Deductive or inferential questions** - to answer these questions children must read between the lines, look for clues about things in the text and combine information found in different parts of the text. These questions encourage children to go beyond the information, to look for a hidden meaning by what is inferred in the text and to draw on their own experiences.
- **Evaluative or response questions** - these questions ask children for their own views and opinions about a text and the effectiveness of chosen words or phrases.

The following lists are suggestions for the types of questions that you could ask your child when they are reading to you.

These questions could be asked about any text:

- Who wrote this book?
- What type of writing is this?
- Who do you think would like this book?
- Why would they like it?
- What do you think/feel about what you have read?
- Have you read any other texts like this one?
- Did anything puzzle you?

These questions could be asked about fiction and plays:

- Who is the narrator?
- Who is the most important character?
- Where is the story set?
- What do we know about the setting?
- Why does the writer use dialogue?

These questions could be asked about poetry:

- What does this poem make you think about?
- What picture do you see in your mind when you read this poem?
- What is the effect of the rhyme, rhythm and line length?

These questions could be asked about non fiction texts:

- How can we find information quickly in this text? (Contents page, index, glossary)
- How is the information presented?
- Why is it presented in this way?
- Why does the author use diagrams/pictures/headings/bold writing?
- How does the layout help?

These questions help children to understand, describe or retrieve information from a text:

- Which word told you that.....?
- What diddo?
- What happened at/when.....?
- What doesmean?
- Where/when are.....?
- What did...../you find out about.....?
- Where did go?
- Describe.....

These questions help children to deduce, infer or interpret information or ideas from a text:

For Key Stage 1

- Why/how did?
- Which words tell us.....?
- Why did you think.....?
- How can you tell.....?
- What doesthink/feel?
- How do you know?

For Key Stage 2

- What ideas are we given about.....?
- What does the word.....imply about.....?
- Why did?

- Which words tell us
- How did
- Why isimportant?
- How was different after.....?
- How didreact?
- What does.....think?

4. Discussion

Discussing different aspects of a text will encourage your child to engage with, and respond to a text more fully.

There are many different ways to start a discussion about a text. Here are some suggestions.

- Think about and discuss the different characters in stories. *E.g. What are the characters like? (Ask them to find evidence in the text to support their answers). Why do the characters behave as they do? How do they feel? How do you know? What do you think they will do next?* Children love playing the game 'Hot Seating'. Take on the role of one of the characters from the text without revealing your identity. Encourage your child to ask you questions to enable them to guess which character you are pretending to be.
- Discuss an important sentence, such as a cliff-hanger at the end of a chapter. *E.g. Ask what do you think might happen next? Why has the writer used this sentence?*
- A story may be both sad and happy. Ask your child to explain why.
- Ask your child what they like/dislike about a text. Encourage them to give reasons for their answers.
- For Key Stage 2 - what can you tell about the viewpoint of the author?
- Explain how the text is suitable for different types of reader.
- After reading an extract from the beginning of a text, ask your child what makes readers want to read the rest of the book.

- Discuss an incident or character in a text. During the discussion identify which comments are based on fact and which are based on opinion.
- Look at the illustrations. Ask your child if they can find any additional information from the pictures. Ask them if there are any differences between the text and what is shown in the pictures.
- Stop at the point in a story where a character faces a problem or a dilemma. Discuss possible ways of solving the problem and consider the consequences of the suggestions.

5. Vocabulary

Reading is an excellent way of helping your child to develop their vocabulary. As well as learning many new words, children can gain an understanding of how writers use language.

Ask your child:

For Key Stage 1

- Why did the writer use this word?
- What does this word tell you about.....?
- Which words told you about how was feeling?
- What do these words tell us about.....?
- What does this word tell us about the setting?
- Find three words that tell you/describe.....

For Key Stage 2

- Explain why this word is used.
- How has the choice of words created a feeling of?
- What do phrases such as tell you?
- Why did the author choose this verb?
- What does this word/phrase suggest?

6. Summarising

Children need to learn how to summarise texts by identifying the main ideas or events. Many children find this difficult and they tend to include too much detail.

Help your child to find the most important ideas or events in a text as they are reading to you. Ask them to give you a brief summary of what they have read. For example:

- Ask your child to give you a brief summary at the end of each chapter outlining key events.
- After reading to you, ask your child to give a summary of the text to another member of the family.
- Ask your child to write a blurb for a book that summarises the story or theme.

7. Make reading personal

It can help children to gain a fuller understanding of a text if they are able to relate it to their own experience.

The following ideas will help your child to do this.

- Stop at important points in a story. Ask your child to imagine what he/she would have done in the same situation. Would they have made the same decisions as the characters in the story? Ask your child to explain their decisions.
- Ask your child to choose the funniest, scariest, most exciting or most interesting part of a story or information book. Ask them to explain their choice.
- Compare the book to other books that your child has read. Ask them if they have read other books by the same author or on the same topic. Discuss any similarities or differences between the books.

We hope that this information will be useful and that you will endeavour to work with us in helping your children to become confident readers.

