

Learning Together

‘Making Reading Fun!’



The first step towards being able to read is enjoying books and having a love of reading. Hopefully, your children will already be interested in books and stories whether or not they can read them. The aim of this booklet is to help you to understand the different stages of learning to read and ultimately to help you to help your children to develop their reading skills as well as their love of reading.

Reading in Reception

While some children start Reception already knowing how to read, there are children who are only just beginning to recognise letters, letter sounds or words as well as children who are not yet reading at all. Our aim in Reception is to ensure that all children are given the tools to begin to read, to develop their reading abilities and importantly, to understand what it is that they are reading. To do this, we use several valuable teaching methods and strategies consistently and continuously.

Firstly, we engage children with stories through speaking and listening activities. This may include using role-play, puppets, picture books, beautifully illustrated texts, animated and interactive texts or story CDs and songs. Remember, the more we enjoy something, the more likely we are to do it and to do so successfully!

Alongside a wide and enjoyable range of speaking and listening activities, we teach the children how to recognise and use the letters of the alphabet. This is called 'Phonics' and is an essential part of learning to read. There are about 42 'phonemes' or sounds to learn and once your child begins to learn these, they are able to build words and become effective readers. We teach each letter and sound in a set order (not in alphabetical order but rather in the order understood to be most effective in teaching children to recognise letters and matched to speech development patterns) through games and songs, aiming to include large and small formation opportunities such as 'sky-writing' and writing on whiteboards.

The children begin to build and read words as soon as they know 2 or 3 letters, though obviously many children can already recognise, sound and write their own names for example.

The next stage in learning to read is through shared, guided and individual reading. Every day, we share at least one story or book (but usually more) as a class and this will involve the children in predicting language, especially when sharing rhyming books and stories, as well as in talking about the books and taking turns to read words, captions, phrases or sentences.

In Guided Reading, we share books in smaller groups and encourage each child to take turns to search for key words, or read a page or section of the book after sharing it as a group and talking about it.

This is a great way to get children helping one another and thinking about what they are reading.

When children are able to recognise and use a large number of letters and sounds, we give them individual reading books to bring home. These books are shared in school and we aim to hear each child read and change their books over at least once a week. Even if your child has not yet brought home a reading book, don't worry and don't stop reading! Share any book the children are interested in and if they want to bring one in to share at school, we would love to see and hear the kind of books that they enjoy.

Things that we need to understand when teaching children to read

Everyone is different and of course we all learn in different ways. However, there are common features of how people learn, especially when it comes to reading. A great example of this can be found in what we call, 'cueing strategies'.

Cueing strategies are our brain's way of making sense of text. For most of us, straightforward reading is as easy as speaking - unless we need to consider what the text means, it happens instantly with no real effort. For our children, being able to read takes a lot of effort and we need to give their developing brains ways to recognise text quickly.

When a child is beginning to read, there are four main ways that we can encourage children to decode the text.

1. Looking at the picture
2. Making the first sound of the word, emphasising the initial sound and the movement of our lips needed to make that sound
3. Having a good guess
4. Reading on and going back to see if we can work out the word or what might be written

Learning to read is not easy. As every child is different, the age at which children are able to read varies greatly. Similarly, their ability to read varies so much that it would be very difficult for us to tell you exactly what to do to help your children to learn to read or to be better readers! However, there are some age-appropriate tips that we can give you to support your children regardless of their ability. We hope that you find them useful as a starting point and to help you to enjoy reading with your children.

Top Tips for Reading with your Children!

1. Choose a quiet time and a comfortable, quiet place

Set aside a quiet time with no distractions. Ten to fifteen minutes is usually long enough, and at Reception age, even five minutes can make all the difference.

2. Make reading fun!

Make reading an enjoyable experience. Sit with your child, reading to them or with them, or allowing your child to read to you. If your child loses interest then do something else.

3. Keep going!

If your child makes a mistake, do not interrupt to correct them immediately. Let them try to self-correct or tell them the unknown words to maintain the flow rather than insisting on trying to build them all up from the sounds of the letters. If your child does try to 'sound out' words, encourage the use of letter sounds rather than 'alphabet names'.

4. Be positive

If your child says something nearly right to start with that is fine. Don't say 'No. That's wrong,' but 'Let's read it together' and point to the words as you say them. Boost your child's confidence with constant praise for even the smallest achievement.

5. Success is the key

Don't choose a difficult text just because you want to make progress with your child's reading. Until your child has built up his or her confidence, it is better to keep to easier books. Struggling with a book with many unknown words is pointless and can make reluctant readers. Even if your child can read all the words, you have to question their understanding.

A child may read every word perfectly but do they know what the story has been about?

6. Visit the Library

Variety is the spice of life! Any text promotes reading and understanding so let your children choose from a wide selection!

7. A book a day...

Try to read with your child on most school days. 'Little and often' is best. At school, we only have a certain amount of time to dedicate to reading with one child at a time and as much as we would love to focus on this, there are other things that we need to do to develop the 'whole child'. Your help with reading is essential!

8. Share experiences

We send home a Reading Log and your comments here really help us as children often behave differently at home and at school. Try to communicate regularly with positive comments and any concerns. It is all about working together and valuing reading.

9. Talk about the books

There is more to being a good reader than just being able to read the words accurately. Just as important is being able to understand what has been read. Always talk to your child about the book; about the pictures, the characters, how they think the story will end, their favourite part, and so on. You will then be able to see how well they have understood and you will help them to develop good comprehension skills.

10. Text is all around us!

Remember children need to experience a variety of reading materials. Text is everywhere. Give your children a shopping list when you go shopping, or ask them to help you too for road signs when you are driving. This opens up communication opportunities as well as reading experiences.

What to do when...

As many things are with children, reading can be a challenge! Don't panic! There are things that can help to make reading a pleasure and not a chore. Here are some common problems and possible solutions!

1. **My child refuses to sit and read!** The first thing you need to know is 'why'? Is your child lacking in confidence with reading? Are they tired at certain times of the day? Is the book not interesting to them? There are many reasons why children are not always keen to read but it is not a reason for concern. If it is after school, your child may be tired - we are very busy at school! They may feel pressured into reading when they do not feel like reading - imagine coming home from work and being told that you are now going to read before you do anything else! Sometimes children, especially young children, just do not want to sit and read. Think of alternatives - maybe a computer or board game involving reading opportunities, a role-play using puppets to tell a story or a visit to the supermarket with a shopping list!
2. **My child can read but cannot talk about the story.** Many children can read fluently but lack comprehension skills. Try reading a wide range of texts and talking them through. Try not to ask questions but rather comment on the text to further your child's understanding and to encourage them to say whatever they are thinking after reading something.
3. **My child can read, what can I do next?** It is fantastic to hear children reading. Think about what you do as a reader and direct your child's progress towards that. Can they read with expression or use character voices? Do they change their reading rhythm or pitch when reading? Do they recognize different punctuation marks? Widen your child's vocabulary and allow them to explore texts that interest them. Remember, we are better at things that we enjoy and we are more likely to do fun things!

Finally, there are hundreds of resources available to support reading. Many you will be familiar with but here are some less well-known websites to help you to support your child's reading.

www.wordsforlife.org.uk

www.mightybook.com

www.literactive.com

www.roythezebra.com