

Helping your child with reading



Reading is the most important skill we learn. Think about the number of different types of things you read every day and how tricky life would be if you could not read. Reading affects every part of our life from reading information to enjoying an enthralling story. Therefore it is important that we teach the children not only how to recognize words but to understand and enjoy what they are reading.

How do children learn to read?

Learning to read involves lots of different skills coming together at the same time. Some children will be able to join all of these skills together quickly and others will take a bit longer. Children have to be taught these skills but it is also important that they see you read.

Children have to use lots of different strategies when learning to read. The strategies they use will increase as they become more fluent and confident readers. Below are some of the strategies they might use.

- **Picture clues:** using the picture to help them work out what is happening.
- **Phonic clues:** sounding out individual letter sounds, or blends. Children start by sounding out initial letters sounds and then final letters sounds. **(Watch out for the tricky words that they cannot sound out e.g. said).**
- **Decoding words:** breaking words down into letter sounds, blends and clusters.
- **Sight recognition:** recognizing the word by its shape.
- **Contextual clues:** working out unknown words by checking if it makes sense in the sentence.

How to help your child with reading at home:

Reading with your child at home is vital to your child's reading development. More importantly it is a special time that you can have with your child. The more often you read with your child the more confident they will become. Good quality book talk or reading to your child is as important as reading page after page.

Setting the scene:

- Firstly set aside a small amount of quiet time when it is just you and your child.
- Turn off the television or radio and try to limit distractions as much as possible.
- Let your child know that this is their special time and that you look forward to spending it with them.

Getting started:

- Look at the book and get your child to talk about what they think the story is about. Ask what they think what might happen in the story.
- Spend some time looking through the pages of the book so that they are familiar with the book's layout.
- Talk to them about what they can see in the pictures.
- Ask them to look at the text and pick one or two words that they think look tricky and tell them what they are.
- Play I spy with words on the page.

If your child gets stuck or is very tired when they are reading there are several different ways in which you can help them:

- Get them to look at the initial letter and start sounding the word out.
- Read on and see if they can work out what the tricky word might be.
- Tell them the word. If they are really stuck there is no point in them getting upset.
- Share reading a page each.
- Read the page to them and get them to read it back to you.
- Talk about a word it might rhyme with.
- Use a book mark or straight edge under the line of text so that the child knows where they are.
- As they become more confident and fluent with the text play 'follow my pen/ finger'. The children have to read at the speed in which the pen/ finger moves. This helps to get the children used to pausing at punctuation.

Progress

Some children pick up the skill of reading very quickly and others take a bit longer. If you feel that your child is struggling please don't panic! Keep calm; your child will pick up on your emotions and they may become anxious about reading. Give your child lots and lots of encouragement and praise. If they want to read the same book several times then let them, even if they know the text off by heart it will make them more confident and feel that they are really reading. If they are refusing to read to you, read to them instead, (any book will do). Just remember to keep it fun.

Reading at School

Your child will have a huge number of opportunities to read at school. This will range from one to one reading to sharing a big book altogether. We have a reading scheme that the children progress through during the infants. It is not a race to complete the reading scheme and your child will only move on when their teacher feels they are ready.

The first few books on the reading scheme are picture books and may only have a few words. These books are designed to help the children begin to develop their understanding of how books work and their comprehension and sequencing of stories.

The children will then move through the scheme (which is colour coded). At each stage the children's comprehension of what they are reading expands and a more fluent and expressive reading style is developed. A wide variety of books, including non-fiction, are also introduced.

How often will my child be heard to read and how often should I read with my child.

We usually hear children read on a one to one basis twice a week. However please remember that your child will have lots of different reading opportunities at school and that we are teaching them the range of skills they require in order to be able to read. We aim to change books twice a week and we do keep a record of what they have read.

Regular (daily) reading at home with your child is very beneficial. Each child has a reading record. Please could you fill in when you heard them read and note any comments.

If you have any queries or concerns about your child's reading please come and speak to your child's teacher.