

## Information for Families

### Reading and Phonics in the Reception class



#### **Importance of real books**

Illustrated story books are great for sharing, as children love being read to. Your child will bring home a book from the school library so please try to read to your child every day. Run your finger under the words when you read, so that they begin to understand that the text on a page goes from left to right, top to bottom. Discuss what is happening in the story/ pictures, point out things on the page, and answer your child's questions. Ask questions of your own and listen to your child's responses.

Your child will probably want to hear a favourite story many times. Research suggests that repeated readings help children develop language skills, so even if you are bored of it, carry on! Retelling familiar stories is a great way for your child to develop his/ her memory skills; memory is a vital skill in being able to read as many words cannot be sounded out (eg. **the, to, so, like**).

Other reading opportunities can come through sharing comics and magazines, annuals, and non-fiction books. Some children love learning facts about fire engines, dinosaurs or insects. All of these texts are valued reading activities, and can be recorded as part of your child's reading challenge.

#### **Word sparks books**

Your child will also bring home a word sparks book when they are beginning to "decode" words. "Decoding" means learning that there is a relationship between a written symbol (ie a letter or several letters) and a sound. However, decoding is only part of the process of reading as understanding what they have read (comprehension), is important too.

The first reading books may have no or very few words. Books without words are really useful as they encourage the child to tell the story themselves from the illustrations. Encourage your child to talk about the pictures. Ask questions such as "what is the dog doing?", "what do you think will happen next?", "how is the girl feeling?" The books without words often have prompts for you to use. Many of the books also have lots of additional activities on the inside front and back covers, which are really useful to try.

#### **Ready to read?**

In the UK it is now accepted that the best way to teach most children to read is by phonics. One of the most important skills when learning to read is pushing sounds together, ("blending"). In order to do this successfully we need to hear sounds in the precise pronunciation. When we teach the sounds they are very short; s is pronounced "ssssssss" and not "suh". If not taught correctly, confusion can occur as the child blends the sounds.

For example, if the sounds are taught incorrectly as cuh a tuh (cat), when blended the word becomes cuhatuh.

We teach the initial letter sounds in a specific order, starting with **s a t i p n** as these 6 letters can be put together to make numerous simple words- **sat sit sip sap pit pat pan in it**. We use simple words at this stage ie consonant-vowel-consonant words (cvc) (eg **tip, tan**) or vowel-consonant (vc) (eg **in, it**). Your child will bring home their "little blending book" to practice with you every day, and this will reinforce and consolidate the learning at school. To begin with, four new sounds are introduced each week.

To best support us in teaching your child how to read we ask that you read the decodable texts provided by the school 4 times across the week. Spending 10 minutes a day reading with your child will hugely support them in their journey to becoming an independent reader. We will be changing children's books once a week on Fridays, this allows your child to re-read each text several times building their confidence and fluency. Any books that are not yet decodable for the children will be a sharing book. These books are there for you to read with your child, helping us to instill a love of reading from the very beginning of their reading journey. These could be read together with your child reading the words they are able to decode or could be read to your child. If you have any further questions or queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Useful links and additional information:

To hear the correct pronunciation of the sounds of the English phonic code, watch this video: <https://vimeo.com/641445921/9382cf6db0> for phase 2 sounds and <https://vimeo.com/642342878/59d233684c> for phase 3 sounds.

For additional games and activities to support your child try these websites:

[www.oxfordowl.co.uk](http://www.oxfordowl.co.uk)

[www.letters-and-sounds.com](http://www.letters-and-sounds.com) (*phase 2 activities*)

**Remember to fill in the reading diary every time you read to or with your child.**

Make book time a warm and loving time when the two of you can cuddle close together. Bedtime is an especially great time for reading together, but do what works best for your family.

**Read together every day.** Little and often is the key.

Thank you.

Miss Jenna Wittman