

How We Teach Reading



Supporting Your Child With Reading

Primary One



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Introduction

Reading is one of the most important skills your child learns, and continues to develop, in school. It is vital in learning to write and in opening up many other areas of the curriculum. It is needed to be able to read signs, follow instructions, play games, use a computer and enjoy newspapers, magazines and comics. Reading is life-enhancing and should bring both pleasure and satisfaction, not only in school but in many aspects of a child's life. It is because of these things that we place such great emphasis on reading in school.



The process of learning to read is, of course, a gradual one and your child will continue to build up his/her reading skills throughout their education, starting with basic, but vital, skills in the early years and moving on to progressively more sophisticated ones, as he/she matures. As with all learning, it is important that solid foundations are laid to allow this progression to take place effectively. Since starting school only a few weeks ago, your child has already spent a great deal of time building up early reading skills and your support, at home, has been invaluable. However, we are aware that tasks and requests often change as new books are sent home and that parents are sometimes uncertain about how to continue supporting their child as effectively as possible.

The aim of this booklet is to give an overview of the way we teach reading, along with some useful information and suggestions about how you can support this at home. It is important to emphasise that every child is different and to remember that not every child will do all the tasks, whilst others may undertake supplementary ones, at certain stages.

It is also important to remember that, though learning to read is a serious matter, it should be a pleasurable activity for everyone involved.



Reading At Home

The Use of Other Reading Material

There is much more to reading than "reading books", and it is important that your child realises that the skills he/she is learning can be used in any form of reading. He/she will be limited at first, but as their skills grow, encourage them to read a variety of materials; fiction, non-fiction, comics, magazines, instruction booklets, posters, road signs, the cereal packet on the breakfast table! Visit the local library or borrow books from our class library.



As he/she becomes more independent at choosing books, they may choose a book that seems inappropriate in terms of level of difficulty. As long as this does not result in a feeling of failure, or frustration, this should not be a problem.

If the book is too difficult for your child:

- Read the whole story to him/her. Even if they are able to read it themselves, this can be very rewarding for both of you.
- Discuss the story after you have read it to him/her, using the illustrations to help.
- Allow them to read words or phrases they can cope with.
- Let them read as much as they are able, with you helping when they get stuck.
- Read together at the child's pace.

Don't worry if:

- Your child occasionally chooses a very simple book. Many adults also enjoy an "easy read" as a way of relaxing.
- Your child chooses the same book several times. Young children enjoy re-reading a story immensely, and are building up vital reading and comprehension skills as they do this.

The most important points are that your child is growing in confidence and the he/she views reading as a pleasurable, and satisfying, activity.



Reading At Home

Before You Begin

The reading tasks we set your child to do at home play an important part in developing his/her skills. However, it is important that they are enjoyable and do not create unnecessary tension, for any of you! We have listed some tips to help you get the most out of these tasks.

- We are aware that many families lead very busy lives and appreciate that time is often precious. We suggest that you spend only short periods of time, as little as ten minutes for some children, doing the suggested reading tasks, at home.
- Don't try to do all of the activities, every night.
- Mix favourite activities with ones your child is less confident about.
- Pick your time carefully. Both you and your child must be relaxed if your shared experience of reading is to be enjoyable.
- Make sure there are no distractions eg. the television is off and other children are well occupied.
- Be comfortable. Sitting side-by-side, where you can both see the book is important. Physical closeness helps to create a relaxed atmosphere, although this may change as your child gets older.
- Remember that you are sharing a book with your child and that it is not a test to see how well he/she is doing. If he/she is stuck with a word or phrase, don't let them struggle over it. Instead tell them perhaps by pointing to the words as you say them.
- Do praise, without going overboard. Perhaps you can emphasise which part he/she did correctly or which strategy they used well.
- Try not to get frustrated. Children pick up on all sorts of signs, even something as small as a sigh!
- Stop when you or your child is becoming tired. Five minutes of positive reading is better than ten minutes of frustration.
- Try to make reading together as enjoyable as possible, for both of you.



How We Teach Reading

We use a wide variety of books and resources in the teaching of reading. The graded scheme we use most extensively is Oxford Reading Tree but we do use others such as Story Worlds and Songbirds. The other main resource we use is Jolly Phonics.

Oxford Reading Tree

Stage 1

During your child's first few weeks at school he/she is introduced to the main characters in O.R.T. - Kipper, Biff, Chip, Mum, Dad and Floppy. These characters' names also make up the majority of key words at Stage 1. Key words are those which children should be able to recognise by sight and are built up as they progress through the stages, to form an increasing sight vocabulary. The other key words at this stage are *a*, *and* and *the*. Your child learns these key words by seeing them written beside illustrations, playing games and completing written tasks such as O.R.T. Worksheets.

Your child also uses picture books which tell stories about these characters. He/she hears an extended story in school and discusses its contents, often including his/her own their own experiences. They then bring this story home to share with you.

Main Aims

- Character identification.
- Knowledge of key words.
- Understanding the format of a book.
- Understanding story structure.
- Sequencing.
- Predicting.
- Discussing aspects of the story.
- Relating the story to personal experience.



How We Teach Reading

What Parents Can Do

- Discuss the story with your child.
- Practise key words using games and sheets which are sent home.

Stage 1+

Some, but not all pupils then move on to Stage 1+. This stage continues to build on the skills started at Stage 1. However, the books your child reads now contain short captions. These books allow him/her to practise the key words in the context of simple, but enjoyable, stories. Some new words are introduced but it is not vital that your child should recognise them at this stage; many of them appear as key words at later stages.



Your child will have an extended story read to him/her which includes the short captions in the book. The captions will be pointed out to him/her. Some children will be able to read the captions relatively quickly while others may need time to achieve this.

Main Aims

- Reinforce all of the Stage 1 skills.
- Introduce simple captions.

What Parents Can Do

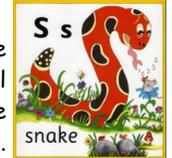
- Discuss the story with your child.
- Read the captions to, or with your child.
- Ask your child to point out key words he/she is confident with.
- If your child is ready, listen to him/her read the captions.
- Continue to practise key words, using games and sheets which are sent home.



How We Teach Reading

Jolly Phonics

Jolly Phonics complements the approach used in O.R.T. and teaches children another vital reading skill; the ability to sound out an unknown word, and blend it, so that this word can be heard.



As your child progresses through Jolly Phonics, he/she will bring home tasks to do on a regular basis. You will know which sounds he/she is familiar with and when he has begun to blend these sounds together to read words. When he/she has reached this stage, they can be encouraged to sound out short, phonetically correct words, though it is important that this is done without pressure.

Together these different approaches develop:

- An understanding of how stories work.
- Early comprehension skills.
- The ability to sequence and predict.
- An increasing sight vocabulary.
- The satisfaction of reading real stories at an early stage.
- The ability to decode simple, regular words.

Using The School-Home Diary

If you have any queries about your child's reading, his/her teacher will always be happy to discuss these with you. Your child's diary also allows us to keep in touch with each other about what is happening.

Please write down anything which is significant in the diary. It helps us to know which areas your child is doing well at home and which ones he/she finds more difficult. You should also feel free to praise your child's efforts here, as they will often ask what you have written. However, don't feel that you have to write a comment every time!

Please look at the diary in case we have made a comment or explained an extra task. It also helps if you sign it, so that we know it is being brought home regularly. Again, we will only write something if it is significant.



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Stages 3–5

The pattern of tasks set at Stage 2 continues throughout Stages 3-5. At each new stage, new key words are introduced, a few in each of the main trunk stories. The books become longer and children are slowly introduced to more complicated captions. By Stage 5 some sentences will span over two lines, for the first time. The nature of the stories slowly changes and by Stage 5 an element of fantasy is introduced in *The Magic Key Stories*. This means that the nature of discussion will also change, though children should still be encouraged to relate incidents to their own experiences.

At all these stages there are books for further reading. As before, your child will read as many as he needs to master the skills at that particular stage.



The Use of Other Reading Schemes

Children will also have the chance to experience other reading schemes which often use a similar approach to O.R.T. This can be used to widen their reading experience, by allowing them to become familiar with different types of stories. It can also give them the opportunity to consolidate their skills at a given level, and allow them to grow in confidence. If there are any particular tasks to be carried out at home, related to these books, information will be put in the reading diary or passed on through a letter.



How We Teach Reading

Points To Remember

- Don't worry if your child gets part of the caption wrong, as long as he/she is making an attempt.
- Don't spend too long at any one time.
- Do praise him for his attempts at reading

Stage 2

This stage follows Stage 1 or Stage 1+. At Stage 2 the books used become longer and contain more captions. The key words at Stage 1 will continue to be important, but are now added to. There are 18 new key words at Stage 2 and these are introduced through 6 main stories, 3 key words per story. As the stories are more complicated, your child will have these books for longer, sometimes up to a week. This allows us to cover the many skills needed in school, and for you to support them at home. A pattern of tasks will begin to emerge which you should be able to follow with your child.



In School

- A story is introduced and children relate it to their own experiences.
- The children hear an extended story and talk about it.
- The extended story is read again, this time pointing out the captions in their book.
- The extended story is repeated, perhaps using the listening centre.
- The children are encouraged to retell the story.
- Attention is again drawn to the captions.
- Key words for that story are introduced using context cards (copies of sentences containing the key words will be sent home at this stage).



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In School (cont'd)

- Games and writing activities are used to reinforce skills.
- Using guided responses, children are encouraged to read the captions.
- An assessment takes place in which your child is asked to:
 1. Sequence and read the story with pictures and captions.
 2. Sequence and read the story with captions only.



At Home

Day 1

- Share the story with your child in a relaxed setting.
- Look at the pictures and find details to discuss.
- Read the story to your child; he/she may want to read along with you.

Day 2

- Encourage your child to retell the story, prompting him by questioning, if necessary.
- Read the story to/with your child.
- Read out a sentence at random. Can your child find the page with this sentence?
- Encourage your child to attempt the captions. Praise should be given even if he/she is not entirely accurate but is making an attempt.

Day 3

- Use the sentence strips sent home by asking your child to match them to the relevant page in the book.
- Read the sentences out loud.



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At Home (cont'd)

Day 4

- Study individual key words which appear on the back of the sentence strips.
- Ask your child to locate the key word within the sentence.
- Ask your child to read the key word in isolation.

Day 5

- Encourage your child to read the story by him/herself.



Your child may also be asked to play some games at home. If this is the case, clear instructions will always be included.

There are many supplementary books at this stage, to give children extra practice. Not every child will read every book before moving on; others will benefit greatly from being given the opportunity to reinforce their skills as widely as possible. It is important that your child is progressing at his own pace and is building up his skills effectively.

Points To Remember

- Don't worry if your child gets part of the caption wrong, as long as he/she is making an attempt.
- Don't spend too long at any one time.
- Do praise him/her for their attempts at reading.
- Some children may take longer than a week to cover all the activities - check the reading diary for information.
- Your child will not always be expected to read the captions precisely before moving on to a new book.

