

# Learning and Developing as a Reader

## Speech and Language

Learning to read is about recognising words and understanding what is being read. The vital first step however, is the development of good speaking and listening skills. Specific activities are planned within Reception to help children develop a wider and broader vocabulary, providing opportunities to speak and listen to a range of audiences and speak with greater clarity.

It is important to model pronouncing words correctly and using a more mature vocabulary. For example, *the* rather than 'du'. This will help ensure that others can fully understand them, whilst also helping them form simple sentences accurately during conversations or when story telling. Please take a few minutes, maybe when your child is in the bath or playing / speaking to someone else, to listen carefully to how they say certain words; there may well be some surprises!

## First Books

The first books we send home are our '**Tell a Story**' books. They have no words in – just pictures that tell a story. These are important as they develop a whole host of early reading skills - communication, language, comprehension and vocabulary.

Here are a few tips to get you going with these first 'Tell a Story' books:

- ✓ Talk about the title, front and back covers – when looking at the front cover, ask what they think the book might be about and what's happening in the picture. Read the title to your child.
- ✓ Encourage your child to talk about each picture and tell **their** story.
- ✓ Ask them questions about what's happening.
- ✓ Talk about the characters – how are they feeling and what are they doing?
- ✓ Encourage them to make predictions about what they think will happen next.
- ✓ Discuss book handling skills - how to hold, open and turn the pages correctly and how to work through the book in order.

## Our ELS Phonics Programme

Learning letter sounds and the letter shapes is the next step towards becoming a reader and helps children develop a secure understanding of what makes up words. Our ELS phonics programme will support your children in making quick progress to become fluent and confident readers.

So far, we have covered the sounds within the first 3 weeks of the programme – please see attached ELS Term-by-term progression sheet so that you know what your child has been taught in school.

We will always talk about sounds not letter names as we want the children to learn that letters are symbols for sounds, so that when they see the letters **m a t**, they say and hear /m/ /a/ /t/ 'mat'.

To begin with, we shall be working with 2- and 3- sound words – e.g. at, sat. We encourage the children to say the sounds (sounding out) and **listen** to hear what the word is (blending). We use robot arms and blending hands to support this. For this reason, sounds need to be said very precisely. For example, when we see the letter **m**, we say /m/ and not '**muh**'. Of course, some sounds are much more difficult to say without adding a bit of an 'uh', but with practise it can be done!

During our Phonics lessons, we also teach your children to pull the sounds in words apart (**segmenting**) to help them **write (spell)** simple words.

## Sharing Books with Words

The books your child will be bringing home are carefully matched to the teaching taking place in school. Your child will be practising what they have been taught in school with you at home. We will only ask children to read books independently when they can decode these by themselves. Their first books begin with a caption or simple, repetitive sentence on each page. It is a key part of learning to read that children re-read words and sentences that they can decode (sound out) until they are fluent (read with ease and precision). By reading texts at least twice, children have the greatest opportunity to achieve this fluency. We ask that you read the decodable books provided by the school at least **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.

Here are our top tips:

- ✓ Talk about the title, front and back covers – when looking at the front cover, ask what they think the book might be about and what’s happening in the picture. Read the title to your child if they are not familiar with the words (this could also be the case if a familiar word has a capital letter).
- ✓ Look through the book together first and ask them to describe what they see, then encourage them to tell the story in their own words – as they’ve been doing with their ‘Tell a Story’ books.
- ✓ Ask questions about what’s happening and why something has happened.
- ✓ Talk about the characters – how are they feeling and what are they doing?
- ✓ Encourage them to make predictions about what they think will happen next.
- ✓ When attempting to read the words on a page, help your child to point to the word themselves and have a go - **say the sounds and blend to read the word** - sounding out and blending.
- ✓ Picture clues and story context can also help when reading. Please don’t ever worry about needing to cover a picture whilst your child reads the text.
- ✓ Discuss book handling skills - how to hold, open and turn the pages correctly and how to work through a book in order. Model reading from left to right.
- ✓ Read the book as many times as you want! We suggest at least twice.

## Developing Blending Skills

Learning to hear and blend sounds in simple words can be a really tricky skill to grasp. It can take a lot of practise to hear what they’ve sounded out. We will often re-model the sounds for the children, leaving only a very short gap between each sound.

Playing games with the sounds in words can be good fun. They will help the children understand that everyday words are made up of sounds and that these sounds can be pulled apart and put back together to form recognisable words. So, ‘cat’ can be separated into /c/ /a/ /t/; and we can put these sounds back together again to gives us ‘cat’. ‘Guess the Animal’ games work well as there are many 3-sound animals to pick (e.g. fox, hen, pig, dog).

## Using the Reading Record

Each child will have a reading record. Please ensure that you sign or tick each time your child reads. When your child has read their book twice, we will change their book. Please do keep reading books and your child’s reading record in their book bag each day so that adults in school can read with them too.

## **Harder to Read and Spell Words (HTRS)**

Unfortunately, there are many words in the English language that can't be blended easily and so in addition, children need to learn to recognise some common words by sight instead of sounding out and blending each time. Shortly, the children will be given a list of 'harder to read and spell words' (HTRS words) to learn to read at home.

## **Library**

The children can all choose a book from our school library to enjoy sharing with you at home. When they have finished this book, they can pop it in their drawer so that it's ready to change when Mrs Walker is in on a Wednesday.

## **Reading for Enjoyment**

It's really important that we all help children develop a love and passion for reading, to enjoy finding things out and to embrace getting lost within a story. It is crucial that children have a variety of reading role models. Seeing members of their family reading, teachers at school, as well as their friends, can inspire them to become readers. Even though we are introducing school reading books, please do continue to enjoy sharing lots of books and stories at home – there's nothing better!

I hope that this information has been helpful. If you have any questions at all about your child's reading, please do not hesitate to speak to me.

**Happy reading!**

Mrs Lewis