



## **A Reading Guide for Parents**

Helping your child to read for pleasure and purpose



The ability to read fluently, with understanding and for pleasure is the most important academic gift we can give our children. For parents, learning about how we teach reading at school, supporting this process at home and enjoying sharing the written word with your children is one of the best ways of helping with their happy and successful progress through school.

We hope that this booklet will give you some useful background information and ideas about reading at home with your child. Please do not hesitate to come and see us if you need any further help or advice.

*"Children are made readers on the laps of their parents." — Emilie Buchwald*

## First things first...

Helping your child with reading doesn't just mean listening to him / her reading a school reading book, although this is of course vitally important! Here are some other ways of developing reading skills in your child:



- Talk and listen to your child
- Make time for discussion – of a TV programme, a news item, a film, during a walk, over a meal, in the car, at bath-time
- Read stories, poems and other texts aloud to your child – and don't deny yourself the pleasure of reading more challenging texts to older children
- Let your child see you reading for purpose and pleasure
- Visit the library / bookshops
- Listen to stories on CDs, the radio, the internet
- Give your child access to a wide variety of written material: books, magazines, websites, recipes, instructions, TV guides, catalogues, games

*"Great books help you understand, and they help you feel understood."  
– John Green*

## General Strategies for Reading at Home



- Find a really good time for reading practice – five minutes of quality time, when you can give your full attention to your child, is better than longer periods when neither of you are fully concentrating
- Talk about the book with your child before reading – you could introduce any words that you think your child will struggle with or any words he or she may not yet understand
- If your child is finding a book difficult, don't ask him / her to sound out every word - focus on words you know that your child can decode
- Sometimes read with your child (paired reading) or take it in turns to read a page
- 'Book Talk' is an essential part of the shared reading experience (see below for useful tips!)
- Give plenty of praise and let your child know that you are enjoying listening to the text
- Co-opt other people in to listen to your child read – grandparents, friends, visitors
- Keep reading sessions short and enjoyable – reading should never be a chore!
- Your fluent Key Stage 2 reader needs as much help as your beginner in Reception – see the 'Book Talk' and 'Reading for Meaning' sections for ideas

*"Make it a rule never to give a child a book you would not read yourself."  
– George Bernard Shaw*

## Strategies for Helping with Decoding

As you know, one of the vital first steps of early reading is to be able to 'sound out' words and blend sounds together in order to read them. This is called 'decoding'.

During the early stages of learning to read, children are given books which they are able to decode using phonic strategies that they have been taught at school. As they become more confident readers, they will continue to use these strategies and develop many others. Some of these strategies are listed below:

- 'Blending' or 'sounding out' whole words, particularly in the early years: 'ch - o - p', 'p - l - ay', 't - r - ai - n'
- Recognising common endings (-ing, -ed, -er, -tion, -able) and prefixes (un-, de-, in-)
- Finding the root word within more complex words (discovery, subway, incoming, discontentment)
- Using syllables to break words down into more manageable chunks (mis-con-duct, en-count-er-ing, ex-tra-or-din-a-ry)
- Recognising words 'at sight' (fluent readers read most words like this)
- Using the context of the word or picture clues.

**TOP TIP: It's a really good idea to stop and re-read the sentence, if you have paused to decode a word, so that you do not lose the sense of the text you are reading.**

*"You know you've read a good book when you turn the last page and feel a little as if you have lost a friend."*

*- Paul Sweeney*

## Reading for Meaning

Learning to decode words gives children access to our literate world but we need to understand what we are reading in order to be able to make use of it. As your child grows in confidence as a reader our teaching at school places less emphasis on simply decoding texts and more emphasis on understanding them. We call this **reading comprehension**.



### Some of the key skills of reading comprehension are:

- 'Skim reading' a text to pick out important or useful information
- Understanding the writer's meaning and intention
- Knowing what devices the writer uses to make the meaning clear (this could be sub-titles in a non-fiction text, short sentences to create atmosphere in a scary story or metaphors in a poem)
- Having a wide vocabulary and being interested in finding out the meanings of new words
- Being able to express an opinion about a text and backing it up with examples and quotations
- Using inference to give informed opinions about a text (using clues from the text to understand something that is implied by the author but not directly stated).

*"You're never too old, too wacky, too wild, to pick up a book and read to a child"*

*- Dr. Seuss*

**Book Talk** is a great way for you to help develop your child's reading comprehension skills and encourages you to engage in really meaningful discussion with your child about a text.

Don't feel as if you have to be firing questions at your child all the time. Try making statements about the book instead and allow your child to respond to your thoughts and ideas.

Here are a few conversation starters to get you going...

I wonder why that character is behaving so mysteriously / oddly / unkindly...

Perhaps in the next chapter they will find the treasure / make friends / meet someone new...

I love that word – it makes me feel...

I really like the way the author is building up the tensions / using speech / describes the mountain...

My favourite character is... because....

I think he's mean because he....

I really can't wait to find out what happens next!

This reminds me of that book / film / description / writing style...

I really like the pictures in this book about spiders because...

## **If it's all getting a bit too stressful...**

- Try paired reading (taking it in turns to read a page / paragraph / chapter)
- Don't expect perfection – maintaining the sense of the book is more important than correcting every single mistake
- Keep reading sessions short and enjoyable – make them a really treasured part of the day!

## **Where next?**

*" Why don't you read something...*

*...harder?*

*...with less pictures?*

*...by another author?*

*...from the school library?*

*...that's not a comic / Xbox game / football magazine / iPad!?"*

It can be frustrating if your child often chooses to read texts that seem too easy for him / her or texts that would not be considered of the highest literary quality!

Try 'drip feeding' your child a wider range of literature through:

- Reading more challenging books to him / her
- Watching the beginning of a TV or film adaptation to 'whet the appetite'
- Providing accessible but informative non-fiction about a topic in which the child is currently interested (websites are useful for this)
- offering a wider range of books
- going to see our school librarian

*"Once you learn to read, you will be forever free."  
— Frederick Douglass*

## **Useful Websites**

[northsomersetteachersbookaward.com](http://northsomersetteachersbookaward.com)

[lovereading4kids.co.uk](http://lovereading4kids.co.uk)

[booktrust.org.uk](http://booktrust.org.uk)

[literacytrust.org.uk](http://literacytrust.org.uk)

[booksforkeeps.co.uk](http://booksforkeeps.co.uk)

[theguardian.com/childrens-books-site](http://theguardian.com/childrens-books-site)

[telegraph.co.uk/books/childrens-books](http://telegraph.co.uk/books/childrens-books)



## **Children's Book Awards**

Blue Peter Book Award ([booktrust.org.uk](http://booktrust.org.uk))

Carnegie Medal & Kate Greenaway Medal ([carnegiegreenaway.org.uk](http://carnegiegreenaway.org.uk))

Costa Children's Award ([costa.co.uk/costa-book-awards](http://costa.co.uk/costa-book-awards))

Guardian Children's Fiction Prize

The Children's Book Award (formerly Red House Book awards-  
[fcbg.org.uk](http://fcbg.org.uk))