



Helping my child to read



A booklet for parents

Help your child with reading

A Guide to Reading

This booklet is written as an overview of our ethos regarding reading at Bisley & Oakridge Schools. We hope you find it helpful as we work in partnership with you in equipping your child with the skills s/he needs to become a happy and independent reader.

Teaching reading, or giving children the skills they need to read, is something many parents and teachers hotly debate, yet often still disagree on! Partly this is because most of us adults don't actually remember the process we went through ourselves to learn to read. Also, it is because, if we are *successful* learners ourselves, we cannot perceive how our children could possibly be struggling with acquiring these skills. Many, however, do struggle, whilst others progress slowly, in the wake of their seemingly excelling peers.

This guide is simply to show the progression of acquiring skills and the indicators of where our children are in the journey to become independent, confident and enthusiastic readers. It is by no means exhaustive and is not meant to serve as a 'prescription to success' - it is just a sharing of ideas and the methods we, in school, use to teach the skills needed to become successful, life-long, lovers of reading.

Above and beyond any of what follows, the single most important thing we can do is to model a love of reading to our children. We, with you, aim to be good role-models, to demonstrate our enjoyment and share it.



Indicators along the Journey.....

As young babies and toddlers, even before any 'formal' pre-school learning takes place, we need to create an environment for our children where stories, text and books are a strong feature. The journey to becoming a reader has begun!

Cloth books, plastic bath time books and chew-friendly (!) hard books have already taught our children that story books are fun and enjoyable. Our children have learnt that stories can make us laugh, create wonderful adventures in our minds and calm us into a soothing sleep.

Already, our toddlers have established that books have a right and wrong way up! They know that bringing a book to a parent, grandparent, auntie or uncle will result in a cosy cuddle with colourful pictures to look at and funny character voices to listen to. Reading so far, is fun.



Starting School...

This is a vital time for your child and for you, as parents, which we at school recognise. We, like you, want your child's transition to school to be easy. We want your child to love coming here. We want to build on all the wonderful experiences you've previously given your child...However, amongst all of this, reading quickly becomes an area of concern for some parents when a 'reading scheme book' isn't quickly seen to be coming home. This is because this 'formalisation' of learning can put pressure on children who previously loved books and can lead to them becoming reading-anxious.

Our aim, is therefore, to continue to develop the children's interest in books in a fun, exciting, spontaneous and varied way. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, fairy-stories, true stories, non-fiction, fables, adventure stories, poems and rhymes are listened to, read, acted out in drama and role-play and re-enacted in puppet show, illustrated and played through. Through all of these exciting activities, stories are brought to life, imaginative skills are stretched and developed and the children eagerly ask when they are next going to do these activities! They learn, alongside this, to share their ideas with their peers in role-play and drama, to take turns, to present their 'productions' and to listen respectfully to each other.

Many children also have a *natural* interest which can be developed through non-fiction, non-scheme, reading. For example, a child with an interest in wild animals may select a non-fiction animal book which could lead to wonderful conversations with you discovering elements of science in talking about habitats. Maths concepts can be explored in counting legs, and elements of Literacy looked at in how sentences are structured. You sharing a book with your child will be incredibly valuable. It will generate enthusiasm and an excitement for the next instalment, particularly if you share your child's enthusiasm.



In the Foundation Stage we teach ‘Letters and Sounds’, a comprehensive reading and writing programme, in which children learn the basics of phonics, the ‘sounds’ we can break words down into in order to ‘sound them out’. These sounds are then blended together again to form the word, e.g. c-a-t = cat! When your child has sufficient phonic knowledge to be a successful reader, they will be given a book from our ‘reading scheme’. This is meant to supplement the other reading activities you and your child are engaging in, not to replace them.

Running parallel with all of this, in English sessions, other learning takes place during the Foundation Stage. There are Guided Writing sessions, in which the children work as a small group to create a story which is scribed onto a white-board by their teacher. At other times, the children work in pairs and take turns to scribe with words they know and with emergent writing (scribbles and attempts at writing letters). Later, they work individually at creating their own stories which are annotated by their teacher. The children can begin to see *themselves* as story-tellers, as authors and as having valid and valued ideas to share. This greatly boosts their confidence, as you’ll imagine.

During each week, Guided Reading sessions take place, where the children in the Foundation Stage are taught skills for reading which they have previously seen modelled by adults at home and at school, including their teacher. They are taught about characters as having feelings and reasons for doing certain things; they are taught about plots in stories and encouraged to question what might happen next; text is looked at in terms of how it is set out on the page and how we read it; key words (words occurring frequently) are discussed and sounded out and learnt as high frequency words; pictures are looked at as tools for helping us understand the words. Children quickly begin to understand that reading words is about understanding, enjoyment, predicting and forming views - not simply about completing a book before being allowed to move on to another. They are, therefore, learning skills for *life* - even at this early stage in their learning.



Soon, as our children progress in reading, we see *them* demonstrating the following skills, many of which you will be able to 'tick off' long before others:

- Can recognise particular books.
- Understands that print carries meaning rather than thinking that the picture tells the story and the reader makes up the words.
- Can separate letter/word/line order (was/saw, on/no)
- Can name or sound out some letters
- Can decode a range of 'key words' (the/a/in/at/etc) rather than sharing memorised knowledge of text read to them
- Can match some signs
- Can hear sounds in oral language
- Can hear sound pattern in rhyme
- Can read some words consistently (the/was/not)

At this early level, in responding to the text, children will comment in some way on the characters' favourite event, for example. Through discussion, they will communicate an interest in books and will talk about aspects they like in non-fiction, in stories and in poems, so cultivating their enjoyment and interest in books of various styles and genres.

As further skills are taught in Guided Reading sessions *throughout* primary school life, still more strategies are acquired enabling children to access increasingly demanding texts. At this second level of development, children:

- Know the alphabet
- Know the sounds of names of the letters of the alphabet
- Can use phonics to build words
- Can use phonics to blend sounds
- Read for meaning, substituting words to sustain meaning where a word is not known
- Use picture cues to help make predictions
- Have a growing number of words recognised on sight
- Can read with some fluency

- Know the basic features of print, eg: capitals, full stops
- Can read familiar signs and captions
- Begin to use alphabetical order
- Understand that books can be used to find things out

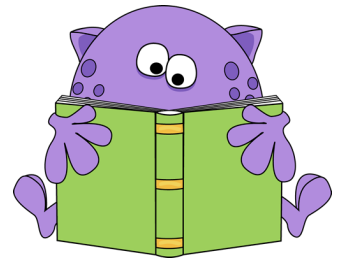
In their reading, your child begins to show preferences, simple likes and dislikes, and begins to reflect upon events in the stories they've read. They are also able to talk about major events in the story in a concrete confident way. At this stage, their predictions are appropriate and sensible as to what will happen next. A further indication of reading with understanding is that your child reads with inflection (intonation and expression), and realises that this makes their reading more enjoyable for their audience - whether it be one person or a whole group.

From this second stage in reading development, your child will naturally progress - though we must remember that all children progress at different rates. The assessment of reading is an ongoing process and children will be moved on when they have consistently shown they have met the assessment focus for their current level/colour band. This ensures that children have demonstrated good comprehension of the text as well as decoding the words.

Of course, we can greatly encourage and facilitate this development by supporting, nurturing, valuing time with our children with books and *always* enjoying reading!



Reading Prompts for Parents



Reading prompts

Parents often wonder how they can help to develop the reading skills of children who are already fluent readers. The best way is to continue to share books with your child, regularly listening to them read, sometimes reading to or with them, but also discussing books read in increasing depth. To become good readers children need to develop skills in seven key areas and it can be useful to think about these when reading with your child.

Decoding:

This is the skill that parents are generally most familiar with, and deals with the varying strategies used by children to make sense of the words on the page. Even fluent readers can be stumped by an unfamiliar word, and it is useful at these times to discuss the range of strategies used to make a sensible guess.

Retrieval and recall:

Early readers need to develop this skill, in order to locate important information and to retell stories and describe events.

Inference:

Reading between the lines. Encouraging children to make inferences based on clues in the text and their understanding of the context of the book will help them to develop this important skill.

Structure and organisation:

As children read a wider range of text types, they need to be able to comment on the features of each and how they are organised. Discussing the presentation of the text, e.g. the use of subtitles to assist reading of a non-fiction text, and the author's reason for organising the text in this way, will support children's development in this area. Making links between the purpose of the text and its organisation is a useful place to start.

Language:

Specifically, thinking about the language choices made by writers, their possible reasons for making those choices and the effect the choices have on the reader. Discussing alternative choices and their effects can be a

good way to begin discussion about the author's language and an opportunity to develop vocabulary generally.

Purpose and viewpoint:

Who is the narrator of this story? What does the writer of this biography feel about his/her subject? Children need to understand that writers write for a purpose, and to be able to recognise that this will have an impact on the way a text is written. Newspapers and advertisements are perfect examples of this and can lead to lots of lively discussions.

Making links:

As adults, we are constantly making links between ideas and experiences. Good readers connect the book they are reading with real life experiences; with other books read and stories heard; with films; and with the context in which they were written. A child reading 'Goodnight Mister Tom', for example, will need to place the story within the context that it was written to fully understand it. They might also link it with other stories read, such as 'Friend or Foe' or 'Carrie's War'. Below are some questions linked to the above points, which I hope you will find useful. It is not necessary to ask every question each time your child reads, of course, but they may prove to be useful prompts to start a more focused discussion.

- What has happened in the story so far?
- What do you think will happen next?
- Who is your favourite character? Why?
- Who is the character you like least? Why?
- Do you think the author intended you to like / dislike this character? How do you know?
- Does your opinion of this character change during the story? How? Why?
- Find two things the author wrote about this character that made him / her likeable?
- If you met one of the characters from the story, what would you say to him / her?
- Which part of the story is your favourite / least favourite? Why?
- Would you change any part of the story? How?
- Would you change any of the characters? How?
- Which part of the story was the funniest/scariest/ saddest/ happiest?
- Find some evidence in the text to support your opinion.
- What is the purpose of this book? How do you know?

- Why is this page laid out in this way? Could you improve it?
- Pick three favourite words or phrases from this chapter. Can you explain why you chose them?
- Did this book make you laugh? Can you explain what was funny and why?
- Have you read anything else by this author? Is anything similar?
- Does this book remind you of anything else? How?
- When do you think this book was written? How do you know? Does it matter? What would it be like if it was written now?
- Do you think the title of the book is appropriate? What would you have called it?
- What is the genre of the book: sci-fi, mystery, historical, fantasy, adventure, horror, comedy? What are the features that make you think this?
- Find two sentences which describe the setting.
- Is the plot fast or slow moving? Find some evidence in the text, which supports your view.
- If the author had included another paragraph before the story started what do you think it would say?
- Would you like to read another book by this author? Why/ why not?

Of course, it doesn't have to be you asking the questions. Why not turn the tables and let your child ask you about your reading material? The greatest encouragement for your child is to see you - their most influential role model - reading!

