

# How you can support your child with reading



A guide for parents of children who are fluent readers

## Introduction

The purpose of this booklet is to give guidance to parents who wish to support their children with reading. Once children are fluent readers, it can be confusing for parents, who wonder what they can do to help. At school there are a number of areas of reading that we use to assess the children's progress; these are similar to the ones used in the SATs tests. The following pages explain which skills are being developed in each area, and give guidance about how you can help. We hope you will also be able to use some of the points outlined when you are reading stories to your child, especially those dealing with inference and deduction which many children find rather tricky. The 2 most powerful things you can do to support your child with reading:

- Encourage them to keep on reading, even if they are already fluent, and talk to them about what they are reading
- Read them stories.....this way they are exposed to a much wider range of vocabulary. This nearly always has a very positive impact on children's writing development.

Thank you for working with us to support your child.

## **Retrieving information from books**

Children are learning to read the text to find, pick up and use information quickly and accurately. These skills can be developed through reading both fiction and non-fiction books.

- In non-fiction books use the index, subheadings etc to find relevant information quickly.
- Help your child scan the text to find a specific piece of information.
- Ask your child to read a paragraph and tell you the main points in their own words.
- Help your child to use concise notes to summarise the main points of a passage.
- Use information from different parts of the book to reach a conclusion eg comparing a character's behaviour at different points in the story.

- Use the index to see if there are any more pages that will tell you more about what you want to know.
- Encourage your child to read new facts out to you and respond with interest or ask questions to see if they can find the answers.
- Ask your child to use evidence in the text to back up their ideas and views.

## Using inference and deduction

This is "reading between the lines", picking up clues from the text, and is a skill developed through reading a range of story books.

- Talk about the characters: what are they like, and how do you know? Encourage your child to refer to specific parts of the text when expressing an opinion.
- Discuss how different characters feel at the start / middle / end of the story. How can we tell?
- Ask your child to predict what might happen next, based on what has happened so far.
- Given what you know about particular characters, how would you expect them to behave in the future?
- Ask your child why particular things happened in the story.
- Ask your child to read a paragraph and tell you the main points in their own words.
- Possible question starters to use:
  - How are..... the same / different?
  - What is important about.....?
  - What happened before / after / when.....?
  - How do you know that.....?

## Identifying structure and organisation of texts

Children are learning how texts are organised to guide a reader. In stories this might be Beginning, Middle, End, or the use of flashbacks. In non-fiction children are learning to use terms such as Contents, Index, Caption, Chapter, Glossary etc.

- Practise using index / contents to find specific information quickly.
- Talk about the purpose of organisational devices, such as captions.
- Some books may not have captions, sub-headings etc. If you were the editor, what captions would you use?
- Help your child use the layout of a web page to find the information they need quickly and efficiently.
- Compare the layout of different books. Which works best and why?
- Discuss how illustrations and diagrams help us understand texts. Your child may need help to interpret tables and diagrams.
- Talk about why bold text and italics are used.
- In stories, help children understand when flashbacks are used and why. They will probably be familiar with this technique from watching films.
- Compare stories with similar structures, such as traditional tales with "stock" characters, or myths where the hero always has a challenge. Books for younger children often have similar structures. Help your child identify ways in which stories are similar to each other.

## Explaining and commenting on writers' use of language

This is where children think about and explain how writers use words and sentence structures, and how particular words and phrases make the text more powerful.

- When you are reading a story to your child, comment on words and phrases you think work really well, and say why.
- Discuss the impact of different kinds of sentences eg very short sentences can be used to add suspense.

- Discuss why authors sometimes ask the reader a question...to make them think, or to make them want to go on reading to find out the answer.
- In some non-fiction texts, such as newspaper reports, writers use emotive words; help your child to see where an opinion rather than a fact is being expressed.
- Help your child find some examples of effective description. What makes them effective?
- Discuss which part of the story best describes the setting.
- Help your child work out the meaning of an unknown word by using the text around it to figure it out.
- Some ideas for question starters:
  - Why did the author choose that word?
  - Which words tell you he is an evil character?
  - What picture did the author want you to get in your mind?
  - Which word works best.....or.....?
  - How does the writer encourage you to read the rest of the text?

## **Identifying writers' purpose and the effect on the reader**

Children are learning to think about why the writer has written the text, and what the writer thinks and what we as readers think about the text.

- Help your child to understand the point of the text eg it might be to explain something, to tell you how to do something, to help you understand the dangers of traffic, to entertain etc.
- In some non-fiction texts, such as newspaper reports, writers use emotive words; help your child to see where an opinion rather than a fact is being expressed.
- Ask" Does the writer tell you everything about cars, or just the history of cars?" What else is there to find out?

- Discuss alternative courses of action in stories. Did the author complete the story in the best way?
- Ask your child to use evidence in the text to back up their ideas.
- Help your child to consider a story from a particular character's point of view.
- Discuss what was the most exciting part of the story, and why.

## **Relating texts to their social, cultural and historical traditions.**

Children are learning to think about what the text tells them about other cultures, times and places. What makes this writer special and how does their writing compare with that of others? What do we know about this type of text?

- Help children classify books as fiction (stories), non-fiction (information texts) and poetry.
- Encourage your child to read a range of story types: adventure, mystery, traditional, humorous etc. By sticking to one familiar genre, children limit their ability to understand texts in depth.
- When you are choosing a story to read to your child, use this as an opportunity to give them experience of a different text type.
- Help your child spot similarities between books eg similar plot, character types, subject.
- Can your child think of any other stories which deal with the same social or moral issues?
- Ask your child how they would have felt in the same situation.
- Help your child identify the message being conveyed by the writer.

- Encourage your child to find out more about the author and to seek out other books they have written.
- Help them make links between historical setting and the story eg some background information on World War 11 and evacuees will make *Goodnight Mr Tom* easier to understand.
- Where relevant, talk about how the historical context effects the story eg the role of girls in a story set in Victorian times.
- If you have enjoyed sharing a story from another culture, find out more about that country.

## **Using a range of strategies, including accurate decoding of text, to read for meaning.**

These are the basic skills of reading, the ways that readers make sense of the words on the page. In KS1 these are the skills that are taught, while in KS2 the higher level skills outlined from Assessment Focus 2 to Assessment Focus 7 are developed. It is important that throughout KS2 children continue to use the skills outlined below in their everyday reading. Selection of reading books at the appropriate reading level is important: if a book is too challenging the child will be unable to practise the wide range of skills outlined, and will go back to using simpler reading prompts, such as over-reliance on pictures, or "sounding out" every word without thinking about overall meaning. Here are the full range of strategies that should be encouraged:

- Use the letter sounds to "sound out" the word.  
Encourage your child to look for familiar strings of letters (er, ing, oo, ight etc) rather than sounding out letter by letter.
- Help your child to spot if the difficult word is similar to a word they know eg light / bright.

- Point out to your child any words hidden within words eg **playground**.
- If they get stuck on a word, encourage them to think what would make sense there. Looking at the picture can help, and isn't cheating!
- If they get stuck, remind them they can go back to the start of the sentence and try again.....they will often be successful second time round, having had time to think about the hard word.
- Help them to miss out a hard word and read the rest of the sentence.....then they will need to reread the whole sentence, popping in the hard word.
- If they get stuck, give them time to try to sort it out independently, don't just tell them the word. You could remind them of the self-help strategies outlined above, or say "What could you do?"
- If they make a mistake and it doesn't make sense, say "You read.....Does that make sense?" and get them to try again.
- If they are not paying close enough attention to the detail in the word (eg misreading "looked" for "looking") ask them to look more closely at the word.
- Help your child to use punctuation to make it sound right.
- Encourage your child to read with good expression. It helps if you demonstrate this.
- If the book is a little challenging, why not share the reading.

The 4 important things to remember are:

1. It must sound right and it must look right. Encourage them to be aware of this as they read and to self-correct if necessary.
2. Allow enough time for children to work out the difficult bits, or to spot their own mistakes and self-correct them independently.....you won't always be there to help them and they need to be able to cope on their own.
3. Good readers use the letter sounds , the meaning and their knowledge about what sounds

right grammatically.....often simultaneously.

Discourage over-reliance on any one cue.

4. Children should notice when they have made a mistake and go back to try to sort it out.