

## Learning to read-early days (reception)-at White Bridge Primary School September 2018 (A brief guide for parents)

At White Bridge Primary School we teach children to read using a phonic system known as Letters and Sounds. It is a very successful method of teaching children the early reading skills that they need to become fluent readers. As children join the school, we ask you to start **homework** with your child to support their reading development, and this **daily reading homework** should become part of your daily routine throughout their time at school.

Through Letters and Sounds we teach the children all of the **sounds** of the letters of the alphabet: how to build words (synthesise) from sounds for reading; how to break words down for spelling (segmenting); and to recognise a core of words on sight (100 word sight vocabulary) which will support them in becoming fluent readers. This is a phonic based reading approach.

The Letters and Sounds programme is broken down into six phases. Reception children begin with Phase 1 which helps to develop their listening skills in the environment, as well as discriminate between the sounds that occur in words. They will learn to orally segment and blend familiar words through games and other activities so that they hear for example that c – a – t = cat, Within a short time the children will relate this oral segmentation and blending to letters and understand that the letters c-a t make the word cat. The programme moves quite quickly and during Phase 2 and Phase 3 the children will learn a new phoneme (sound) every day. They will of course continually practise previous learning and will also learn to spell and write the sounds (graphemes), and the sight vocabulary (100 words).

In Letters and Sounds the children are taught the correct terminology of the sounds they are learning and will soon understand that a phoneme is the sound of a letter or letters, a grapheme is the written form of the phoneme, a digraph is where two letters represent one sound and a trigraph is where three letters represent one sound.

Letter names will be taught alongside letter sounds, but when helping the children to blend the letters for reading and spelling we ask that you only use the letter sounds please.

The teachers work at a pace that suits the class, and enables them to learn, practise and retain new words, sounds and other skills. They take account of where individual children are.

**In school** the children do one or two Letters and Sounds sessions a day – one lesson where children learn and apply new skills, and another where the skills are practised or applied to reading picture books and stories. The lessons are interactive and fun and most children learn the sounds quite easily. The children work as a whole class, although if it is identified that a child's needs differ they will be given additional teaching input at another time of the day, or perhaps with another class.

### Helping at home/Homework

We ask you to help at home by reading books with your child, and practising sounds and words with them **every day**.

- For sounds, the teacher will enter the letter sounds that the children are learning in class in the back of their reading diaries. Please ask them to say the **sounds** as you point to them. Sounds will be added to as their learning progresses. Sometimes point to them in a different order, or write them on paper and see if they still know them. Some children will pick these up quickly, and others will take longer.
- For the sight vocabulary words, the children need to read them without sounding out, and again, as the list develops, sometimes do it in a different order.

As they learn words and letter sounds, you should get them to read these in their books. At first they may not make the link, and you may need to tell them that it is a word or sound that they know. When you come to a

word that can be sounded out, and you know that they have learnt those sounds, then ask them to try and do this.

If you are not sure how to say any of the sounds, your child may well be able to help, but please do ask the teachers, who will also be happy to help.

Parents often want us to add letters and words to the list quickly, and I know that this is because the children seem to know them when you do them at home. The teachers are very experienced at this, and they will be adding words and sounds at the right rate for secure learning. As the year progresses, the words added will reflect what individual children know when they are assessed in class. Adding words and sounds too quickly can compromise progress, and the children forget earlier words. Sometimes, if the rate is too quick, they do not transfer their learning to seeing and reading the words in a text.

Children are assessed on entry to school, and if children already know sounds and words, their teaching and the sounds and words that they have in their reading diaries will reflect what they know.

Please read a book as well as practising sounds and words. At first children will be able to sound out some of the words but might need you to read other unfamiliar words. If reading a very short text that they have read before, they may memorise the whole thing, and will not be reading individual words. This is normal, and is just one of the early stages of learning to read. To help them:

- You read to them, pausing when you come to a word that you know they can read and then get them to read. Point to the words as you and they read. As their skills improve, they will be reading an increasing amount, and you will read less. Try to keep the flow going if you can.
- Sometimes go back over a page and point to sight vocabulary words, asking them what they say again. This will help to secure these words.
- As they learn more sounds, sometimes ask them to try and sound out simple words. Start with 2 and 3 letters. Remember that they will only be able to have a go at this once they know all the sounds in any given word. Putting sounds together to make words (synthesising) has to be taught: on the whole children cannot do this automatically. They may not be able to do this for quite a while.
- Over the year, as children build up their skills, you will be getting them to read with less support, and having a go themselves first. I cannot say when this will be, as all children develop at different rates.

**PLEASE sign the reading diary every time you read and practise with your child.** When the teacher reads with your child individually, they will write in the diary too. Your signature lets us know that you have read with them, and helps the teacher to judge progress, and assess difficulties for your child. When a child really struggles with reading, it makes a big difference if we know whether they are reading every day or not at home. This is true for all of their time at school, not just their first year. If you have not signed the diary, we will assume that you have not read with your child: we do ask the children, but they are unreliable in this, and often cannot remember. **This daily reading is their homework.**

When we teach reading in school we read with the children individually. They will learn to read using scheme books and where possible will bring home a scheme book closely matched to their developing phonic knowledge.

When you are reading with your child do encourage them to sound out words that can be broken down using the method that they are taught in school.

The children will also bring home a real book since we feel that these are valuable in helping children develop a rich vocabulary and a love of books. You can share the real book with your child, perhaps reading one or two pages with them and talking about what you have read.

The children in Reception tend to read individually on set days and are told to take two books when they read in school. They will only change their scheme books at these times but if they finish them at home it is always good practice to read books more than once.

The children can change their real books more frequently, selecting a book of their choice. Alternatively you can come into the school at the end of the day to do this with your child. Please do not take more than one real book at a time.

As most parents have access to the internet, there is a useful resource on You Tube: 'Mr Thorne does phonics' which you may find really useful and fun for your children. I suggest you start with 'How to learn the letters and sounds of the alphabet', but Mr Thorne does many further activities that put the letters in context within words too.

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