

# Further support for parents with your child's reading and writing.

## Reading

*"The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more you learn, the more places you'll go."*

— Dr. Seuss, "I Can Read With My Eyes Shut!"

Reading is one area that parents can really help their children. Reading is a skill that unlocks many doors in children's learning.

*"Reading aloud with children is known to be the single most important activity for building the knowledge and skills they will eventually require for learning to read."*

— Marilyn Jager Adams

One way in which children get better at reading is through lots of practice. By hearing children read at home, you can help them practise and improve. As you get more experienced, you will find more ways of helping children with their reading. But the main thing you will be doing is giving them more opportunity to practise by reading aloud to an adult.

Some Suggestions:-

- Talk with children about the book they are reading. What is it about? Do they like it? What has happened so far? What do they think will happen next?
- With younger and less able readers, talk about the pictures. Pictures help children to understand the words.
- With older and more able readers, discuss the characters and the words and phrases used by the author.
- When a child doesn't know a word, ask him or her to try it and then tell the child what it is. Only get involved in 'word-building' if the teacher has asked you to do this.
- If a child misreads a word, stop him or her and say the correct word - although if it is a word which makes no difference to the meaning (for example 'home' instead of 'house' or 'water' instead of 'sea'), it is usually best to ignore it.
- Use lots of praise and encouragement, and avoid criticism. It is important that the children become more confident with reading.
- Choose a suitable time (not when there are distractions such as a favourite TV programme on!) Make full use of the time available. Hear children read - or talk to them about their reading - for as long as possible. This gives them extra practice and children often become more fluent if they read for longer than two or three minutes. But don't make children read for longer than they can keep their interest and attention on the task.

When children are assessed in their reading at school, we don't always just listen to children read and see how fluent they are. It is a lot more about how a child understands and interprets what they are reading that will be assessed.

## Writing

Writing is made up of four elements: Spelling, Punctuation, Handwriting and Composition.

### **Spelling:**

Phonics (the learning of the 'sound' of letters and letter combinations) is the basis of spelling.

Recognising, using and blending sounds and learning sight words is vital to children's rapid spelling skills. Next comes learning spelling 'rules' (e.g. 'i before e except after c'). If your child finds spelling difficult, consider whether s/he needs to continue to work on his phonic skills. It does not necessarily mean that your child has a specific learning difficulty (such as Dyslexia).

#### **How can I help my child with spelling?**

Support your child by discussing their weekly spellings as well as helping them to learn the words. What sound, letter pattern or rule are they learning this week?

### **Handwriting:**

How letters and words are formed on the page.

#### **How can I help my child with handwriting?**

Prompt and encourage him/her to use the correct style when writing at home. Do some extra handwriting practice; you'll be amazed how quickly your child's handwriting and speed improves. (NB research has shown that by the age of seven, children have great difficulty changing the way they write and 'bad habits' become engrained. Certainly by Year 5 and 6, pupils who join our school will find it extremely difficult to change their style. It is probably too late for them to learn a new model.)

### **Composition:**

Thinking of what to write; organising our thoughts and getting ideas down on paper. Achieving a desired effect, e.g. to instruct, persuade, inform, entertain, etc.

### **Punctuation:**

Used to help make the meaning of written sentences clear and as the writer intended them to be read. This is often one of the key areas which prevent children from achieving higher National Curriculum Levels. Using basic punctuation accurately is a very common writing target for many children.

#### **How can I help my child with punctuation?**

After your child has produced their written homework, ask them to proof read their work to check whether they have used punctuation accurately. After they have done this, have a look at the piece yourself - is there any punctuation missing?