

Supporting Reading at Home

Read to your child

Enjoying reading by sharing a book and reading to your child from a very early age is a vital part of getting children interested in books. This establishes print awareness, develops vocabulary and comprehension skills. It gives the child access to stories which they would probably not be able to read and understand by themselves. This simple activity develops so many skills including; language and vocabulary skills, imagination and thinking skills, literacy skills, concentration, auditory and visual skills. An additional benefit is that it can also often boost self-esteem and a sense of closeness through shared enjoyment. Reading to your child should be continued for as long as possible, certainly into Key Stage 2 and hopefully will become a pleasurable routine within your household!

Encourage your child to read to you

- Your child may have a school book to read each night. If not try to engage your child in reading something which will interest them, for example, connected to a hobby or pastime.
- Make reading an important / relevant / useful part of everyday life. For example, if your son or daughter has a new computer game / board game / toy etc. read through the instructions together. In that way reading has to be used to access the new game. Encourage him / her to look up their favourite programmes in a TV magazine, get them to read reviews/ previews of the programme. If cooking is an interest look up and read recipes together.
- It is often difficult to engage older readers, especially boys, in story books which they may find babyish so encourage reading from any suitable source, e.g. comics, magazines, catalogues, story CDs.
- Read through the newspaper articles and reports of favourite football / rugby / other sports teams and / or other interests together.
- Give your child the newspaper and a marker pen and ask him / her to see how many times they can find, for example, footballer's / celebrity's names, team names, anything really. This activity helps scanning skills and visual discrimination.
- If you are visiting the cinema or watching a film at home try to find a review for you and your child to read together first. The internet, newspapers and magazines are good sources for this type of information.
- Visiting the library together is valuable in encouraging your child to take an interest in books. It is free, has large selections of books, CDs, story CDs etc. and there will usually be something which will be of interest. Try to use your judgement and steer your child away from reading materials which are clearly going to be too hard for him/her to read as this may cause frustration. Maybe a CD of the book (if available) would be a better alternative if your child is very determined. Otherwise you could always read the book to your child or pair read it.

- Try to find 10-15 minutes daily to do some sort of reading together. This will be better than trying to battle through 30 minutes twice a week. Little and often will keep the momentum of reading going.
- As with any other skill, regular practice improves reading but remember that reading is a difficult skill. Be positive and always give praise for effort!

How best to listen to your child read

Make sure you are both relaxed and not too tired. Ensure there is time and a suitable place, with good light, for reading.

Remember, reading should be a positive experience so ensure praise throughout the activity. Be patient!

Before reading: Look at the cover, read the blurb on the back of the book together or aloud to your child and talk about the book- is it fact or fiction, what is it about? Show enthusiasm! If there are any unusual names, read and show them to your child to prepare them for when they appear in the story.

It is sometimes helpful to use a reading ruler or point to words to help track the text. Ideally the child should point but at first you may do this for them.

If your child has difficulty with a word, WAIT - thinking time is valuable. If no attempt is forthcoming encourage techniques to support the decoding. These can include some, (but not all), of the following:

- Look at the picture, does this help?
- What does the word begin with?
- Can the word be broken down into easier chunks- cover part of the word and reveal in sound chunks, encouraging your child to sound aloud. e.g. *asleep* → *a sl ee p* Help your child to then repeat the whole word by blending all the sounds together
- Read past the unknown word to the end of the sentence, can the word now be attempted?
- Think about the meaning of the sentence so far- make a sensible guess based on what has been read already
- If these don't result in success then suggest the correct word to the child and move on!
- If a child is stopping frequently because of unknown words then the book may be too hard- discuss this with your child's teacher. In general about 90% accuracy is recommended to ensure understanding and a degree of fluency.

After reading

Talk about the story (or what has happened so far) and reflect. This develops vocabulary and sequencing skills as well as expressive language skills and will help you to find out if your child has understood the story. Ask your child some questions but make sure you also give your opinions too. This should be an enthusiastic conversation, not a question session! These could include:

- What might happen next?
- Did you enjoy that story, why?
- Can you invent a different ending?
- Who was your favourite character?
- Why do you think XXXXX said/did that?