

LEARNING TO READ

Introduction

We love reading at Whitchurch C of E Primary School and the standard achieved by our children is high. From the moment children start school in reception to the end of Year 6 we encourage children to read and enjoy books. We understand the importance of being about to read as a secure foundation for all learning later in life, but we also love reading because it ignites the imagination and opens up doors on new and exciting worlds. By teaching reading so well, our aim is to ensure every child is fluent and confident and is therefore ready to take on secondary education with confidence.

Good teaching of reading is most effective when it is backed up with good quality practice. This needs to be supported at home and we really value the time parents take to hear their children read and to read to them. Sharing books and stories with your child is most important as well as being enjoyable. Many children continue to enjoy being read to long into Key Stage 2.

By hearing reading at home, parents enable children to practise the skills they have learned at school. This is important as home reading is all about practice, with no expectation that parents should teach the skills. Research indicates that the frequency of reading is a major factor in a child's reading ability and that reading ability impacts on success throughout school. We want to work in partnership with parents and provide the children with a Reading Diary which can become a conversation between home and school about a child's progress.

Two key aspects to reading

At the core of our early reading approach, are the two main elements of learning to read: the decoding of words and the comprehending of texts. From the very beginning, we weave these together in our teaching and learning.

What do we mean by decoding?

Decoding is the ability to apply knowledge of letter-sound relationships, including knowledge of letter patterns, to correctly pronounce written words. Understanding these relationships gives children the ability to recognize familiar words quickly and to read words they haven't seen before. The knowledge of the letter-sound relationships is taught through phonics lessons.

At Whitchurch CE Primary all children have daily lessons in phonics in Year R and Year 1. Progress in phonics is rapid and most children are ready to move from phonics for reading to phonics for spelling during Year 1 and then on to the Spelling programme in Year 2 and onwards. All children in Year 1 take the phonics screening test in June. Some children continue to have phonics lessons further up the school if required.

What do we mean by reading comprehension?

Reading comprehension refers to the essential ability of being able to understand what is being read. From Reception to Year 6, all children are taught to develop their comprehension skills.

To develop these skills, we focus on the following strategies:

- Asking 'I wonder' questions and predicting
- Using background knowledge – any knowledge that you can bring to your reading which helps you to understand it
- Visualisation – creating pictures in your head
- Inference – using clues to work out things that the author has not specifically told you
- Identifying the important parts of a text and getting the gist
- Being able to identify when something doesn't make sense or when you are unsure about something in your reading and to have ways to fix it

Vocabulary development is crucial to reading comprehension and once again it is taught at all ages.

Reading in Early Years

Reading in Early Years begins with the teachers sharing lots of picture books (fiction and non-fiction) with the children. This helps them to learn how to listen and respond to a story whilst developing positive attitudes to books and reading.

Children are also taught about books and the key concepts of print. These include: a book's orientation, how to hold them and turn the pages, reading from the top of a page to the bottom, the return sweep, left to right directionality in sentences and words, one to one correspondence resulting in the pointing at each word and the use of pictures in reading.

Decoding: In Early Years, children have daily phonics lessons.

We use Read Write Inc to help teach the children the letter sounds because it supports children to remember. Children learn by remembering the accompanying picture, the rhyme or story and by physically drawing the letter shape.

Not all words are easily decodable so we include some teaching of whole words, referred to in the scheme as "red words". Red words have some tricky letters eg. Said, the first and last letter are easy to identify but the ai in the middle is tricky.

Reading Comprehension: From the beginning children are encouraged to listen to and discuss stories through "Story-time". These story times play a significant part in early reading development and can be whole class, small group, or at times individual sessions. Children are taught to link their own knowledge to the story and to ask "I wonder" questions. Later, when children are reading their own books, they are encouraged to apply these skills. Children are introduced to new vocabulary through the stories and discussion.

Reading Books: We use Read Write Inc reading books to start the children off in reading for themselves. The children are not asked to read a book until they have learned at least ten letter sounds and can blend them together to form words. The children are usually taught in small guided reading groups of between 2 and 4 children. The book will be read in three sessions in school before the child takes the book home to read. Children are usually delighted to show off their new reading skills to their parents and they should have been prepared so well in school that they can sail through the book.

Key Stage 1:

Reading in Year 1

Reading in Year 1 continues to build on the phonics and comprehension elements of reading.

Decoding: Phonics is at the core of learning to read in Year 1 so daily phonics sessions continue. We continue using the Read Write Inc scheme.

Reading Comprehension: Reading comprehension is taught as part of guided reading and in story time, where children experience high quality discussions with their teacher. In story time the teachers choose a range of fiction and non-fiction of increasing complexity. Teachers continue to build on the skills of asking “I wonder” questions and linking the children’s general knowledge to their reading. The strategy of visualisation is introduced. Vocabulary knowledge is developed through these sessions.

Guided Reading: The children continue to read in small groups with the teacher or the LSA. The session is structured to enable the children to decode independently and then to discuss the meaning. The children continue to take home books to practice at home once they have read the book in school.

Usually about the middle of Year 1 children have completed the phonics scheme and are ready to take on books which require a greater range of skills to decode. These books are graded by colour to show a progression so that children are given books which increase in sentence complexity and subject material.

Reading in Year 2

During Year 2, as phonic knowledge becomes established, reading comprehension gains in importance.

Decoding: Teachers continue to teach phonics for reading and spelling. Where necessary additional phonics teaching is provided.

Reading Comprehension: Reading comprehension continues to be taught through story time. Listening comprehension supports reading comprehension and teachers provide a range of experiences and books. The skills of asking “I wonder” questions, linking background

knowledge and visualisation continue to be developed. Children learn to summarise, make connections between books and make inferences. Teachers continue to build children's vocabulary in reading and speaking.

Guided Reading: In Year 2 most children read in small groups with the teacher, but some children may need individual attention if they are finding reading difficult. Children move through the reading scheme until they are ready to become a free reader and choose their reading books from the library. Children will continue to take home a reading book every day and it is important to continue to ensure children read at home. At this stage, children are expected to use their phonics, sight vocabulary and meaning clues to read at a fluent level.

Key Stage 2:

By now, most children will be choosing books freely from the library. We have an extensive and modern library which is managed well by our librarian, Mrs Clarke. Mrs Clarke is a most enthusiastic librarian and is very knowledgeable about children's literature, so she is able to help children choose suitable books. In addition to popping into the library to change their reading book, every child has a weekly, timetabled slot in the library with Mrs Clarke. Mrs Clarke always reads to the children and introduces them to new books and authors.

Decoding: Phonics knowledge continues to be embedded, mainly through the teaching of spelling.

Reading Comprehension: Fundamental to reading comprehension in Key Stage 2 is the idea of active reading and that the child is thinking about the text at all times. While reading, children should be applying the 6 key strategies: linking their background knowledge to their reading, asking "I wonder" questions and predicting, visualising, making inferences and identifying the important words in the text and getting the gist. At all times children are encouraged to check that what they are reading makes sense and if it doesn't to find ways to fix the problem. These strategies are taught in Year 3 and Year 4 and built on and applied in Years 5 and 6. Children continue to develop their vocabulary through reading, discussion and writing. We teach these skills through "Shared Reading Time" which is taught for 30 minutes at least three times a week.

Individual and Group Reading: Children are heard read at least once a half term on an individual basis to monitor their progress. Whilst most reading is taught as a class, teachers may decide to hear specific groups or individuals when necessary.

Class Reader: To expose the children to a wide range of increasingly complex texts and to encourage the enjoyment of reading, all classes have a class novel, which the teacher reads to the children regularly.

Children Who Struggle to Learn to Read

At Whitchurch C of E Primary School, we identify children who are struggling to learn to read as early as possible. Extra support will be provided where necessary to ensure a strong phonics base and in Reception and Key Stage 1 additional adult support is provided for children who need to revise lessons already taught.

Children who have struggled to learn phonics will work at a slower pace with a LSA who has been trained to teach reading.

Reading comprehension is supported through the Inference Training Programme. This is a small group intervention which is run by a trained Learning Support Assistant three times a week for twelve weeks.