

The following is a selection of activities, which could be done at home to help children with reading.

Talking and Listening

Talking to children on various topics – at home or when out – is important so that children hear language and become familiar with its sound before they learn to read it.

Meal times are ideal for family conversation – if you sit down together.

Television – be selective! Children could help select the programmes they wish to watch and this would ensure that the television is not on **all** the time.

Discuss some programmes after watching them together – some programmes benefit from this.

Have time in the evening or day with no television or other distractions then talk together.

Listening to stories

It is important that children have the opportunity to listen to stories and this is fun when Mum, Dad or grandparents, reads these. Older children as well as younger children enjoy this activity.

At points in the story the reader could stop and ask the listener what happens next. Listening to stories on tape or CD together is another way of enjoying books.

Early stages of reading

Some questions answered:-

What is the value of books without words?



The picture books tell a story which can be discussed between child and adult. Together they can tell the story or the child can tell the story. The aim here is to get the correct sequence, look at the pictures and use words (orally) for things seen in the picture, turn the pages in the book correctly.

Do we write in the reading record book brought home?

Please do! Comments such as, 'We enjoyed this book together'. 'We particularly enjoyed...', 'My child found this book difficult to understand.' It is helpful to the teacher if comments are made about books read at home. However, if you really do not wish to make a comment please sign and date the reading record so that we know that your child has read at home.

What is the value of a book the child cannot read?

This book is for you to read together. Look at the pictures and turn the pages correctly. As you read the book to the child follow the words with your finger. The child can then get the idea of looking left to right and the fact that the shapes known as words convey the story.

Discuss the story at the end.

Stop part way and ask, 'What do you think happens next?'

Let your child come in with words they do recognise.



Is there a value in word spotting?

Yes! Do this at home, when out, when watching television, when reading, when looking at magazines etc. Give praise when your child spots words they know.



What name do I give the letters?

In the early stages we use the letter sounds for the letters not their names e.g. 'a' as in apple. This gives help with word building. The names are introduced when it is felt that the child can cope and won't get confused between the sound a letter makes and its name.

When writing sentences for my child to read, what form of letters should I use?

Please use lower case letters. We do not use capital letters in the early stages except for the beginning of a name. The lower case letters match more closely the letters in their reading books and therefore help with word recognition.

When should we join the public library?

As soon as you start reading to your child! The library gives free access to a wealth of books so earlier you join the better. Your child can then begin to become interested in books at an early age. An interest in books promotes the desire to learn to read.



Initial sound cues

This helps your child to narrow down possibilities when using the above two strategies.



For instance, when predicting the unknown word in the example above, knowing that the word begins with 'd' helps the child to select 'dinner' from the other possibilities.

Similarly, when using picture cues, if an unknown word begins with 'd' and there is a picture showing several different animals, it will be easier for your child to pick out 'dog' from other possibilities.

Word-building

Using sounds to build words is an important skill. It is best used initially with 3 or 4 letter words where the sounds blend quickly and easily, e.g. 'him', 'flat'.

Later, longer words may be split into smaller words and then rebuilt e.g. 'pancake', 'snowman' etc.

Although word-building skills should be encouraged and practised, it is important to keep the flow of reading going to ensure that the child gets the meaning – stopping to build words too often will prevent this.

Your child should not rely on one strategy alone but should be able to use each as the need arises. Through constant practice, and with much encouragement and praise, s/he will soon be employing all of the above strategies to read independently and with enjoyment.



Memorising

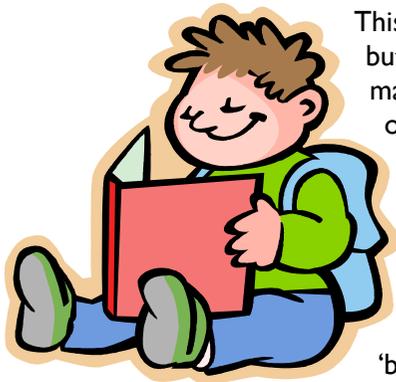
This is one of the first strategies a child uses, and without it s/he would never learn to read, since building a sight vocabulary involves committing the way a word looks to memory. By memorising a book and then matching the words s/he is saying to the written words, your child begins to remember the visual appearance of these words.



Picture Cues

This is NOT cheating! Early reading books are designed so that the child can 'work out' an unknown word from the pictures. It is important however; to ensure that your child is not reading the picture cues alone, but is also looking at the print. Asking your child to point to each word as it is said will direct attention to the print.

Predicting



This may seem as though your child is guessing, but unless it is truly a 'wild' guess, which makes no sense, your child is actually using his or her past experience and knowledge of the way our language works to predict what the unknown word might be. For example: Ben was hungry because he has not had his..... Your child may predict 'breakfast', 'dinner' or 'tea' but would be guessing if s/he suggested 'bicycle'.

How much should my child read each night?

The books children first bring home from school are very short, often without words and are written to be shared from beginning to end. It is important that reading is an enjoyable experience and it is often best if you read the book to your child first and then share it together. Try and talk about the story as this helps with understanding and enjoyment.



Middle Stages of Reading

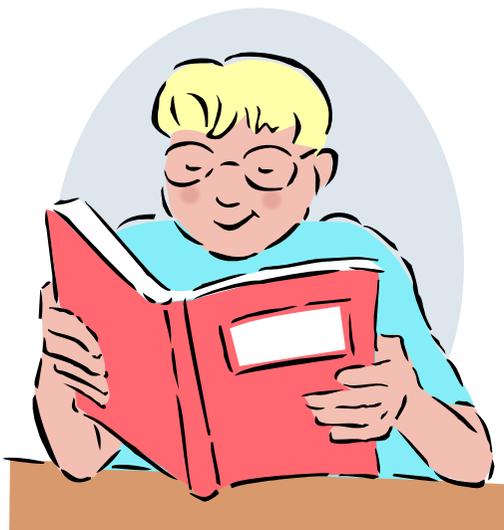
At All Saints we have a structured reading programme. A large and varied range of books including schemes e.g. Oxford Reading Tree, Ginn, Sunshine, All Aboard, are included within the programme and they are organised into 12-levelled stages which concludes with chapter books. These books are levelled according to Cliff Moon's Comparative Chart of Reading.

All children progress at different rates so it is important not to compare one child with another.

Higher Stages of Reading

My child reads well, is there any point in reading with them now?

It is always good to take an interest in your child's reading. Ask your child to read their story to you so that you can enjoy it too. Reading aloud skills are important. By reading to you they can learn where to pause, where to put expression to make the story interesting to other people.



SHARING BOOKS AT HOME

How do we learn to read?

Learning to read is a complex process. Your child has to develop a variety of strategies which work together to help him or her make sense of the written word.

The English language is made up of thousands of words which we, as adults recognise on sight – our 'sight vocabulary'.

But reading is not just a matter of recognising words, it is about getting the message those words convey.

Even in the early stages, reading is not a test of recognising words but an attempt on the part of your child to make sense of what is written - 'to get the message'. Children should read books (including their reading books) for stories they tell, not to find out how many of the words they recognise on sight.

A child in the early stages of reading begins, slowly at first, to build his or her sight vocabulary through frequent exposure to common words. Your child however needs to know how to work out words, which s/he does not recognise, since these will outnumber the words that are recognised. Your child needs, therefore, to develop several strategies to help do this.

These are the strategies, which we can encourage children to develop, when we are reading with them: -

- Memorising
- Picture cues
- Predicting
- Initial Letter sounds
- Word- building



Can my child read other things beside story books?

Words are all around us and if you can encourage your child to recognise this, brilliant! At first they may pick out letters in a sign or in a newspaper. This will progress to recognising key words and then whole phrases or sentences.

As your child's reading develops, encourage them to read comics or newspapers, instructions e.g. recipes, and factual information in books or on the Internet. Reading will also generate questions and discussion, which will ensure understanding.



From all the above it can be seen that at All Saints we see sharing books at home as an important part of learning to read and reading.

We realise how difficult it is to find time to sit with your child especially when there are several children who need your help and attention. Please however do try to give individual children their own time and ensure that this is quality time – the benefits are enormous.

Reading with your child should be a pleasurable experience for both of you – not a time for anxiety.

Here are a few helpful tips: -

- Choose the right time and place – not for example when your child is watching television or on their play station.
- Keep it short – if your child is tired or has had enough, stop. Little and often is best.
- Talk about the story and the pictures with your child. Ask what s/he thinks might happen next, or why something happened.
- Be positive! Encourage and praise every success, however small. Your child should finish the session feeling pleased with him or herself.
- Allow your child time to realise his or her mistakes. Don't correct immediately, the mistake may become obvious to your child as s/he reads on. If not, ask at the end of the sentence, 'Did that make sense?'

Remember – reading should be fun, so above all ENJOY IT!





Sharing Books

At

Home

