Church Gresley Infant and Nursery School

Helping Your Child with English

INTRODUCTION

English brings together the important skills of reading and writing. It also involves speaking and listening, as good oral work helps children's understanding of language in both oral and written forms and of the way language can be used to communicate.

Many parents ask teachers what they can do at home to help their child develop English skills. This booklet gives an outline of what happens at Church Gresley Infant and Nursery School in speaking and listening, reading and writing, and contains some ideas of the things you can do to help.



SPEAKING AND LISTENING

A child's ability to speak and listen is fundamental to their language and social development and their learning at school. Children need to learn how to speak clearly, thinking about the needs of their listeners; join in discussions and make relevant points; listen carefully to what other people are saying; and use language in imaginative and creative ways.

In school, children are encouraged to listen accurately to discriminate sounds; focus on individual words; receive and follow instructions; and respond to the contributions of others. They are taught to use clear speech and articulation to speak to specific audiences – their friends, classmates, parents and other adults.

Puppets, drama, nursery rhymes, role play areas, retelling stories, circle time and discussing ideas for different viewpoints are just some of the activities used throughout school to develop a richness and variety of talk.

Throughout each day, the children are actively involved in listening to talk and asking and answering questions, not only in the allotted English lessons but also in other curriculum areas e.g. work in Science when groups investigate information and report back to class; role playing in History, when they act as historical characters and answer questions posed by their classmates; discussing what is happening in a piece of work by a noted artist in Art and Design.

How you can help:

- Extending instructions – give your child an instruction containing just one element e.g. "Bring me the car, please"; this can then be extended by adding further elements e.g. "Bring me the red car, please" and then "Bring me the red car, please and put it behind me"; this encourages your child to listen attentively to **all** of your words; make sure that you speak all elements clearly.
- Talk to your child and ask questions during everyday activities e.g. shopping, driving in the car, family outings, mealtimes; encourage them to answer clearly in sentences rather than in one word e.g. 'Which cereal would you like this week?' – 'I would like Frosties please' – not just 'Frosties'.
- When listening to your child read, ask questions about the characters or events in the book (see the section on Reading); ask for points of view about the behaviour of the characters, or possible outcomes – 'What will happen next?' 'How will it end?'
- Remind your child to listen carefully when others are speaking, so that they can respond appropriately; encourage them to take their turn in speaking, and not to interrupt others and shout out.
- Remind your child to listen carefully when others are speaking, so that they can respond appropriately; encourage them to take their turn in speaking, and not to interrupt others and shout out.
- Encourage your child to look at you when they are speaking and model this appropriately to your child by looking directly at them also when you or they speak.

READING

Your child is surrounded by a wide variety of text and opportunities to read. Sharing books with adults and children at home and at school provides an excellent introduction to reading.

Our aim at school is to foster a love of reading and to provide a wide choice of books for the children to read, share and use as sources of information.

Reading in school takes a variety of forms:

- Independent reading involves specific texts matched to each child's ability, providing them with a basic sight vocabulary and an understanding of story lines and characters
- Shared reading in English lessons introduces a range of text forms as the children cover specific objectives set in the National Curriculum.
- Guided reading with small groups of children is an opportunity for the class teacher to reinforce concepts and skills learned during an earlier session, and to monitor individual children's approach to decoding words in more challenging texts.
- Library books allow children to discover their preferences; to choose favourite books for rereading or books by familiar authors; to foster an interest in information – non-fiction – books; and to develop an awareness of the need to look after books and the library.
- An environment around them rich in different text types and vocabulary – labels, their own names, titles of displays, word banks – handwritten or produced on the computer.



At School

Essential Letters and Sounds (ELS) is our chosen phonics programme. The aim of ELS is 'Getting all children to read well, quickly'. It teaches children to read by identifying the phonemes (the smallest unit of sounds) and graphemes (the written version of the sound) within words and using these to read words.

Children begin learning phonics at the very beginning of Reception and it is explicitly taught every day during a dedicated slot on the timetable. Children are given the knowledge and the skills to then apply this independently.

Throughout the day, children will use their growing phonics knowledge to support them in other areas of the curriculum and will have many opportunities to practise their reading. This includes reading 1:1 with a member of staff, with a partner during paired reading and as a class. Children continue daily phonics lessons in Year 1 and Year 2 to ensure all children become confident, fluent readers.

We follow the ELS progression and sequence. This allows our children to practise their existing phonic knowledge whilst building their understanding of the 'code' of our language GPCs (grapheme phoneme correspondence). As a result, our children can tackle any unfamiliar words that they might discover.

Children experience the joy of books and language whilst rapidly acquiring the skills they need to become fluent independent readers and writers. ELS teaches relevant, useful and ambitious vocabulary to support each child's journey to becoming fluent and independent readers.

We begin by teaching the single letter sounds before moving to digraphs 'sh' (two letters spelling one sound), trigraphs 'igh' (three letters spelling one sound) and quadgraphs 'eigh' (four letters spelling one sound).

We teach children to:
decode (read) by identifying each sound within a word and blending them together to read fluently,
encode (write) by segmenting each sound to write words accurately.

Children will also take home a ‘share’ book (not decodable) regularly. We encourage you to share this book with them as often as possible. Every day you read with them, they will earn a stamp to go towards a badge scheme. There are lots of badges to collect! A new badge is issued each time your child has read a certain number of times – this amount increases as each badge through the scheme is achieved.

At the early stages of reading, ask your child questions e.g. Who are the characters in the story? What has happened so far? What do you think is going to happen next?

In school we use a wide range of reading materials including playscripts, poetry and information books. We also provide the children with resources to supplement this including games and the use of laptops and IPads. The class teacher will regularly assess your child and decide when the books should be changed. The teacher will also assess your child to see if they are ready to move onto the next phonic phase.

Please help us to teach your children to care for books by keeping them away from food, pets and younger members of the family. After reading they should keep their books in their bag ready to return to school.

In addition, we encourage the children to choose library books which they can take home to share. We have 2 afterschool library sessions, held on Monday and Thursday, when parents/carers can accompany their child to select a book from The Enchanted Forest, our lovely school library. Try to encourage your child to exchange their library book weekly. Don't worry if they choose the same book more than once. It means they enjoy it. Your child may choose a book that they can easily read and read it to a younger brother or sister, or they may choose a harder book for you to read to them.

HELPING YOUR CHILD WITH READING

The following are some of the things that can be done to help a child get ready for reading:

- listening to and learning nursery rhymes
- sharing a few favourite repetitive stories over and over again to help your child remember the language patterns.
- listening to stories.
- looking at picture books.
- sharing and discussing a book.
- holding books the correct way up.
- turning pages correctly.
- moving from left to right.
- showing that words are all around us and have something to say.
- recognising their own name.
- pointing to the words in a book and saying the words together.

Research shows children who are regularly heard read at home, make the best progress in reading. Practice makes perfect!

Reading at home

Reading is enjoyable. Choose a convenient time for you both, remove any distractions and sit close to your child.

Children will only read books that are entirely decodable, this means that they should be able to read these books as they already know the code contained within the book.

We only use pure sounds when decoding words (no 'uh' after the sound).

We want the children to practise reading their book 4 times across the week working on these skills:

Decode - sounding out and blending to read the word.

Fluency - reading words with less obvious decoding.

Expression - using intonation and expression to bring the text to life

What do you mean by "share a book"?

There are lots of ways to share a book. You can look at the pictures together and talk about them. Read the story to your child letting him/her hold the book and turn the pages. Let your child read the story to you even if this is making the story up from the pictures, this is a **very** important stage. Gradually your child will begin to look more and more closely at the print. Most importantly of all **PRAISE ALL ATTEMPTS!**

Use the pictures in the book as they provide valuable clues to the written word. This allows you to see if your child has understood. You may also like to pick out individual words to see what words the children are able to decode.

Once your child has begun to read, you can help them by using some of the following ideas:

- Give the child time to try the word before you tell them.
- Let the child use the pictures to help them understand what is happening in the text.
- Look at the beginning letter of the word and see if they can find something beginning with that sound in the picture.
- Segment and blend to work out simple words (some words don't fit this rule).
- Let the child read the start of the sentence again or to the end of the sentence to see if they can guess by making sense of the sentence.
- If you have helped your child with a page or two of the book let your child go back and read it on their own to help them remember what they have just learned.
- Stop from time to time and ask your child to recall what has happened in the story. Talk about the characters and be sure your child understands what they are reading.
- Can your child predict what might happen next?
- At the end of a story encourage your child to tell you the story in the right sequence and with some detail.
- When your child has finished a book check that the phonemes cards can be read away from the book.
- Please try to let the teacher know what you have been doing by writing in the home/school diary.
- The teacher will then help your child choose a suitable new book.



What to do if your child does not want to read?

If your child does not want to read do not force him/her but leave the book for a while and play word games or read a library book together. It is important that your child develops a good attitude to reading.

Do not expect your child to read the **whole** book in one sitting, a couple of pages a day would be better than the whole book in one night a week.

If reading is fun your child will want to share it with you. If your child has trouble remembering words you can write the words on card and he/she can make sentences from the book. Your child's class teacher can give you other ideas to help with the words.
Please inform your child's class teacher if your child is reluctant to read for more than a few days. Perhaps a different book would rekindle interest.

If your child knows the story by heart, this is an important step in learning to read. Help your child to point to the words as he/she recites the story. Make sentences from the book and cut up the words. Match to the sentence in the book.

At what age can I stop reading aloud to my child?
Keep on reading aloud as long as your child wants you to. Remember you can read a book that is more difficult than the one your child is reading and your child will hear new words and expressions which will eventually be used in your child's own writing.

Do not worry if your child chooses a book he/she has already read. We enjoy re-reading favourite stories too!

Your child knows the story by heart
Sometimes children learn stories by heart but do not look at the words. It is an important part of learning to read. You could ask the child to read particular bits – like people's names or a repeated sequence like:

"I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down".

Point to the words as your child says the words.

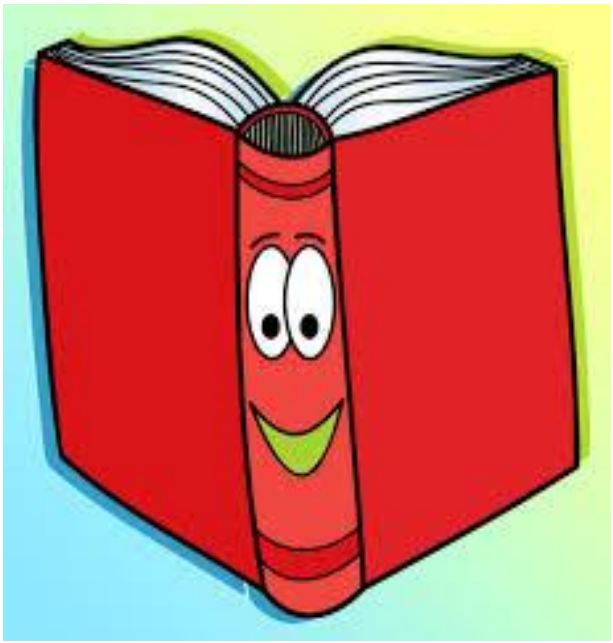
If reading is fun, your child will want to share it with you.

But I don't have time to read everyday!
Children can read to, and with, lots of people – parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents, friends and of course themselves.

Reading takes many forms. Children "read" signs at McDonald's or road signs, when travelling in a car. They "read" instructions when playing with Lego and captions on television. Reading labels, packets, newspapers, comics and magazines also help to develop an understanding that reading is for real life, not just in reading books.

Encourage all attempts; be positive and always give praise. Remember children are particularly encouraged to read when they see you reading.

If you have any concerns about your child's reading, please come into school – we will be only too pleased to help and offer advice.



WRITING



Children need to write for a range of purposes:

- to communicate to others
- to create imaginary worlds
- to explore experience
- to organise and explain information

They should be able to write independently with confidence, fluency and understanding; understand the sound and spelling system and use it to spell accurately; know, understand and be able to write a range of styles in fiction, poetry and non-fiction; plan, draft, revise and edit their own work; develop their powers of imagination and inventiveness through their writing; have fluent and legible handwriting, and use punctuation, such as capital letters, full stops, question marks and commas, to help the reader to understand what is written.

Through a range of activities, children see the writing process being modelled by the teacher and other adults in the class, and take part regularly in composing, spelling and handwriting.

From an early stage, children are encouraged to 'have-a-go' at writing independently. In Nursery and Reception, opportunities arise in role-play situations, where writing can be seen to have a purpose. Scribbles, lists of letters and name writing are all early stages in the writing process. The children then move onto 'over-writing' words suggested by them and written by an adult. Then they copy underneath or from a sentence book, before becoming independent, using dictionaries and word banks to help with spelling.
Writing skills are taught during English lessons through shared and guided sessions. Objectives in both fiction and non-fiction text types include simple sentence construction, character profiles, instructions, reports of events, book reviews, poetry and imaginative stories.

Spelling is taught in several ways:

- through daily phonics sessions
- through regular spelling sessions
- through spelling the Common Exception Words (from the National Curriculum for each year group) - words are sent home to be learned when the class teacher feels the individual child is ready; these words increase in number as the child progresses through school, and are tested regularly.

The handwriting scheme, Letter join, moves from a basic script in Nursery and Reception, based on lower case letters, to a pre-cursive script in Years 1 and 2. Practice takes place at first in handwriting sessions and as the children's skills develop they will be expected to complete all work in a continuous cursive style.

Our agreed cursive style is as below:



How you can help:

- Composition – write captions for the pictures your child may have drawn, remembering to use lower case letters except for the beginning of a sentence or for names, or encourage them to have-a-go themselves; at the start, their writing may consist of isolated letters or marks, but they will then begin to spell simple words that can be easily sounded out e.g. cat, dog. Eventually they will begin to spell more words accurately and attempt those that are less familiar – try not to correct too many mistakes as this can be disheartening; help them to think of what they want to write before putting pencil to paper, and then to keep re-reading what they have written to see if it makes sense.

- Spelling – practice spelling the Common Exception Words within their year group.

- Handwriting – use capital letters only for the beginning of sentences or of names; the school has a scheme for letter formation which you can use – start by making the letters on a large scale using paint, chalk, wax crayons and in the air, before moving onto using pencils; try to provide a pencil for your child to work with rather than a pen – neater work can be produced – pencils don't smudge as much! At a later stage, encourage them to write the letters on a line.

Remember that your child's teacher is always there to offer advice and ideas if you feel that your child is experiencing problems in any of these areas.



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