**Reading books and reading at home in Little Acorns**



Reading at home is a really important part of your child’s reading development and we know that you are all keen to support this as much as you can. This may seem daunting and you may worry about getting it “right” so I have put together the following guidance to help you:

**What is reading at home?**

There are lots of different ways:

Reading for pleasure or a purpose

You probably already do lots of these things without even realising it!

* Reading stories – at bedtime, bath time, anytime! This is where an adult or older child reads a story TO a child. The child listens, looks at pictures and comments along the way but the main telling of the story is by the adult and the child is mainly listening.
* Sharing stories – again at any time! This is where adults and children read a story together and the child takes part in telling the story. It may be a very familiar story that your child knows really well and can “read” (recite) parts of off by heart. It may be that there is a refrain that your child can join in with or rhymes that your child may try to predict.
* Audio books – listening to stories on devices such as on car journeys or when you need to focus on something else. Try encouraging your child to sometimes just listen to a story rather than always watching an animated version to help improve listening skills and stamina.
* Reading familiar text around the environment – encourage your child to spot written text that they may see regularly such as a house, street or shop name. Help them to read their name on any letters or documents you receive. Encourage them to find their name on gift labels and cards. Look for familiar phrases such as “Happy Birthday” or “Father Christmas”. Read the names of their favourite items when you go shopping at the supermarket. Read signs which are repeated in more than one setting (eg. car park, exit, open etc)

Reading practice using reading books sent home from school

This is possibly the area where you feel you need the most guidance and support but don’t worry, you won’t “get it wrong” and it shouldn’t turn into a difficult chore that you have to complete.

* Reading books with no words - up to now your child has brought home wordless reading books every week. This is to help establish good habits of sharing a book between home and school as well as basic reading skills of reading left to right, sequencing stories and using pictures.
* Phonics books – in Little Acorns we have a daily phonics lesson which helps children to learn new sounds and the letter/s which can represent these sounds. These new sounds/letters are only added to the little phonics book (that comes home in reading bags) AFTER they have been covered in class. Therefore, your child will be familiar with all of the sounds in their phonics book. You can ask your child to say the sound they know when you show them the letters in their books. Ask them if they know any other words which start with the same sound (not letter – it is really important to stick to the sounds in the book and not refer to the letter names or ask for other words starting with that letter because words like apple and acorn both start with the same letter but have very different sounds that the letter “a” represents.)
* Decodable reading books – your child will now start to bring home a reading book which has words in it. These books are very carefully and specifically matched to the phonics which your child is confident at using. For most of the words in the book, your child will be able to sound them out and blend the sounds together to read the word. This is something which we do every day in class and your child is getting better and better at doing this. These decodable reading books are designed to be simple and will probably not contain an exciting story. They are designed to make your child feel like a successful and confident reader because they contain (mainly) words which they can read by sounding out and blending. This is a fundamental part of early reading progression as it ensures your child associates reading with success right from the start. Here are the simple steps to practising reading these books at home:

1. Take it slowly, one word at a time and allow your child to sound out each word one letter at a time. If they are finding this part difficult (which they may as there are more words on a page than they have been used to) then encourage them to think about pressing “sound buttons” under each letter in the word. You could even write it out one word at a time for them to make it easier to distinguish each word at this point. Don’t rush to finish the book in one sitting – if your child is getting tired or struggling then come back to it later. Think about the book one page at a time, not as a whole text. Praise lots and help where needed but please make sure that you or any other adults always use pure sounds when sounding out (there is guidance to this on our class webpage.)

2. There will be “tricky” words in these reading books which cannot and should not be sounded out. These are words like “the, go, to, I, said, was…” where the letters don’t represent the sounds your child is familiar with. We are learning to read these “by sight” in the classroom and we practise some of them daily. However, some children find these hard to remember and need lots and lots of opportunities to see them and practise reading them before they can easily recall them. You can tell your child what this tricky word says (definitely don’t ask them to sound it out) by pointing at it and saying the word eg “This word says the” and asking them to point to and repeat the word. Every time you come across this word in the future give your child chance to remember it (say things like “We saw this word on the other page, can you remember what it says?) and then tell them quickly if they can’t recall it. You could even make a game of saying “Can you see how many times you see the word “the” is in your reading book today?” Remember that at this point early reading is all about giving your child confidence and success – we don’t want them to struggle and see reading as a negative thing.

The tricky words included in each reading book will usually be highlighted on the inside cover (there is often a “How to use this book” type page) so it is worth finding out what these are before you start reading then you can be prepared for them as they come up.

3. Fluency stage – read each sentence/ page again (this is probably better done at another time rather than straight after the decoding stage – little and often is usually the best way) and this time encourage your child to read some words without sounding out (only if they can). Can they point to any of the words and say what they say (read them) straight away? If not, don’t worry, just sound them out and blend them again (and again and again…). Fluency is a stage of reading where most of the words are read without overt sounding out or hesitancy and is the main focus of early reading skills. Comprehension and higher order reading skills depend heavily on having this sound base (although fluency and comprehension are often mutually reliant) so it is an important skill to practise.

4. It may take a whole week of repeatedly reading little and often to complete each reading book successfully and that is absolutely fine! Decoding (sounding out) and fluency are skills which should not be skipped over or rushed. You may find that you end up reading the book 3/4/5 times or more in order to build up fluency. This may seem tedious to adults but if approached in the right way with children it will help them to feel like they are good readers from a very early stage. This will help to build confidence as they see themselves as successful readers and will encourage children to engage in reading in a positive way in the future.

I hope that you can see that at this early stage there is a marked difference between reading for pleasure and practising reading skills. Please take and enjoy every opportunity you can to read whatever you and your child like and choose so that reading continues to be a pleasurable experience for you both. In addition, please try to help your child to become a willing and confident reader by practising the simple texts we send home as reading books in the ways I have suggested.

As always, please feel free to ask if you would like any further information or support in helping your child with early reading skills. Any of the Little Acorns team will be happy to chat to you or alternatively please feel free to call or email and I will get back to you as soon as I can.

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