

Reading at Lostock Hall Community Primary School

Reading is a vital and lifelong skill which we use every single day of our lives to access and engage with the world in which we live. It is therefore of paramount importance that we ensure the children who are part of our school are taught to be fluent and competent readers by the time they move on to secondary education. The teaching of reading comprises two main elements: firstly being able to read actual words and secondly understanding the meaning of the words, sentences or paragraphs being read.

On entry to our school, many children have no prior knowledge of phonics and the different sounds made by letters of our alphabet. In the foundation stage, we give our children those tools by teaching the different phonemes and how they fit together to form words (blending). Learning this gives the children the skills they need to begin reading and recognising different words in the world around them. Daily phonics sessions and regular reading, both at school and at home, allow the children to become more familiar with an increasing bank of words which they eventually recognise automatically and can read 'on sight'. By the time children reach Year 2, children can use their acquired phonics knowledge to decode unfamiliar words only, as they now have an extensive bank of automatically recognisable words which they can read and understand immediately, giving meaning to the text they are reading.

Phonics underpins our teaching of reading during the early years at our school, however it is also important that the children understand that what they are reading carries meaning. Regular reading aloud of books to the class and discussions are therefore also vitally important and form part of our day to day routines all the way through our school, not just in the early years. Although further up the school, this becomes a mixture of reading to the class and reading with the class.

As children move up the school, the teaching of reading becomes less about decoding particular words and more about the meaning of the words when read together in sentences and paragraphs. This begins at a basic level in KS1, where understanding is more about simple comprehension, and talking about what has happened in a story, for example. In upper KS1 and lower KS2, children are taught the beginnings of inference and deduction, learning that there might be things going on 'beneath the surface' of what they are reading; learning to look for clues to identify themes, ideas and messages that might not be explicitly stated. This becomes a vital tool in upper KS2 where the teaching of reading encompasses straight forward comprehension, more complex inference and deduction, evaluative skills, and learning to investigate language and how it has been used in more detail. Throughout all year groups, children are continually encouraged to investigate and discover new and exciting words, extending their vocabulary and internal bank of words.

On entry to our school, children are given a reading diary (which forms part of our ongoing assessment of reading and which parents are also encouraged to comment in, after hearing their child read) and a home reading book. The choice of home reading books is very carefully structured in the FS and KS1, as children work their way through a catalogue of books organised according to difficulty. Group guided reading forms part of our daily routine, after which evaluative comments will be written in reading diaries.

From Year 3 onwards we encourage the children to become much more independent readers and, in many cases, children choose their own home reading books (though this is supervised by the class teacher to ensure each child is choosing a book that will provide the right amount of challenge, not too easy or too hard). This is important because children need to learn to make their own selections and understand/discuss why they have made a particular choice. In KS2, each classroom has its own bookshelf for independent reading, where the books are colour-coded according to difficulty level. Bookshelves are well stocked with up-to-date resources which are colourful and eye-catching and appeal to a range of different interests. In upper KS2, as many of the children are reading novels by this stage, a whole section of novels is available to the children, organised according to genre, to encourage the children to read a range of different books and text types.

Assessment is key to ensure the children in our care are gaining the skills they need and making good progression in their reading. In the foundation stage, children are assessed and tracked on their phonics knowledge and progression. This information is used to tailor our teaching to the needs of the children. Teacher assessment and observation are also key and used as part of our day to day, ongoing assessment of the children's learning. Further up the school, children do take part in optional SATs reading tests three times a year and this information is again used to track their progression and to tailor our teaching to the individual needs of our children. Children identified as not making the expected progress in reading or experiencing difficulties are quickly identified and given extra support.

Children in our school are taught to be fluent and competent readers, secure in their ability to decode unfamiliar words and to fully understand what they are reading. However, at our school, it is also part of our philosophy not just to teach the children to be able to read, but to encourage them to WANT to read; the enjoyment of reading and reading for pleasure is something we value and see as extremely important and something that we hope our children will take with them into adulthood.