



9<sup>th</sup> September 2016

## READING IN YEAR 5

Dear Parents

At the start of the new academic year, I thought it would be valuable to share some of our ideas about how to help your child with reading, especially as the structure of reading with the children within the school day, and at home, has changed.

Mr Hall is writing to parents of pupils in his class to explain the way in which he encourages children to read from a reading list this term. Set 2 and Set 3, however, will continue to have one library lesson a week. During this lesson, pupils should choose a book which will become their 'reading book' – it will not, however, necessarily be from a reading scheme. They should choose a book at an appropriate level (guidance will be given by both class teachers and Mrs Wootton) but they should also not be afraid to experiment.

We would like to shift the emphasis from hearing a child read to being able to talk about what they are reading, and this is where you, as parents, can help. We would encourage you to hear your child read for at least ten minutes each day, asking them questions of a variety of different kinds, to encourage them to articulate what they understand, not just about the literal level of the text, but also about the characters, their motivations, the use of words etc. Children in Sets 2 and 3 will have a reading record, similar to the one they brought home last year, and we ask that you sign this reading record. Suggested questions to ask are on the left hand page of the reading book. Please tick to show which questions you have asked. If you have discussed questions which do not match exactly, please tick the question which is most similar. With this approach, your children will be given an opportunity to share thoughts and ideas, justify their reasons, and take a step towards becoming a confident reader and speaker.

In addition to this method of recording their reading habits, we successfully launched reading forums on Firefly last year, where Year 5 pupils could recommend titles they had enjoyed and respond to comments made by classmates.

We would like reading to be a pleasure for the children and would like to encourage a degree of independence in their choice of reading material. Therefore, they can bring a book to the library which they have chosen with you, in order to avoid having more than one book 'on the go' (which some children find difficult).

Children must have their reading book with them at school, so they can read during any quiet moments during the school day in addition to the short time spent reading silently at the start of their English lessons.

I would also like to take this opportunity to point out that reading cover to cover fiction is not the only route to success. In fact, there are many different types of reading materials, which must also be credited: reference books, biographies, manuals, joke books, poetry, graphic novels, newspapers, magazines and plenty more. Whilst we can and do recommend material, ultimately the choice of what and whether to read or not to read is down to your child. We would like it to be pleasurable and not a chore and if we can find a route in through other channels, this can only be a positive step.

Another worry you may have is that the material is 'too easy'. However, if the book happens to engage their attention and has brought entertainment, it can only be a good thing and there is the hope that it will lead to better books afterwards.

I would also encourage you to read aloud to your children – it is something we can carry on doing for as long as our children want to hear us. It is possible to read and talk about some wonderful novels which are perhaps beyond a child's ability to read for themselves, but not beyond their understanding. They may not understand every word, but they will hear the words, and be able to talk about what is happening, and the experience can be a shared pleasure, rather than supervised homework.

If you do not like reading aloud, there are excellent CDs of a huge variety of quality novels available from libraries (including our own) which make long journeys, or the trip to and from school, more of an adventure. Audio-books can also be downloaded from iTunes.

In English lessons, work will be based on a different text or genre each term, and continued exposure to poetry and other pieces of writing will broaden the children's experience of the written word. Whatever we as teachers do, however, to make the development of the various reading skills an enjoyable experience, and however exciting it may be to appreciate the way in which words work, there is nothing to beat the pleasure of reading for its own sake.

In the coming year there will be some exciting reading events with visiting authors, book sales, 'reading round the world' and World Book Day celebrations to name but a few, with the hope that these will continue to inspire your children to pick up a book and read in this increasingly demanding, fast-paced world we live in.

I am often asked to recommend books. This is not straightforward as there are so many good books bursting onto the shelves of Waterstones and each child is so different in their preferences. But as a starting point, you might pick one from the attached list that recommends some of the best new titles of 2016. Our librarian, Mrs Wootton is always able to recommend new titles and the board in the entrance to the Dearnaley building also details recent award winning titles.

I hope everyone enjoys the term ahead – and happy reading!

Yours sincerely



Ghislaine Chitty  
Head of English and Drama