



8th September 2017

Dear Parents

READING IN YEAR 5

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 will continue to have one library lesson a week. Pupils may either choose to read a book that they bring from home, or may select a book from the library which will become their 'reading book' – it will not, however, be from a reading scheme. They should choose a book at an appropriate level (guidance will be given by Mrs Beasley and Mrs Wootton) but they should also not be afraid to experiment. Mrs Reeves also has a carefully selected range of books that she keeps in her classroom and that she will encourage her class to read.

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 different kinds of questions, 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. It would be useful if you could tick to show which questions you have been 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.

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. It should 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, listening to downloaded audiobooks or CD's (available from our library) can make long journeys, or the trip to and from school, more of an adventure.

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. However, whatever we as teachers do to develop children's reading skills, 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 challenges 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, take some quiet time out, 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 and 2017, where you will also find a list of boy appeal authors. Our librarian, Mrs Wootton is always able to recommend new titles too and regular displays of new books bought for the school library are continually refreshed.

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

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'G Chitty', written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Ghislaine Chitty
Head of English