



# Reading at Home: A guide for parents

Date: September 2023

Where the: 'Word of God, and the service  
and strength of St. Stephen, guides our  
steps and leads us in learning.'

We are a community where:  
beauty and trust are treasured,  
justice and tolerance are promoted  
compassion and charity are encouraged  
goodwill and loyalty are cherished  
resilience and determination are needed  
forgiveness and love are required



## **The importance of reading at home**

Research proves that children who enjoy reading do better at school in all subjects. Reading improves all of a child's literacy skills and can offer them a lifetime of enjoyment and learning. At St. Stephen's, we aim to promote a love of reading and feel that children discovering books and how to use and enjoy them is crucial to their development.

Through guided reading sessions, one to one reading, group reading and whole class work in English lessons around a variety of genres, we aim to give children access to high quality reading experiences that support and challenge them to delve further into the texts they are encountering and develop confidence in being able to discuss them.

Reading with your child at home is a crucial way to support their learning. Reading books together, reading to your child, hearing them read, discussing reading technique, stories, poems and non-fiction texts are all key ways to will help your child to develop into an able and accomplished reader and writer.

In terms of reading, we want children to be able to:

- Enjoy reading and see it as a pleasurable leisure activity, as well as a means of following instructions and finding things out.
- Have the reading skills necessary to read a range of text types for pleasure and for information.
- To be confident and competent readers, children need to have access to a range of reading experiences.



Here are some general tips for reading and a resource bank of ideas for questions that may help you with sharing books and talking with your children about what they are reading at home.

Remember that children need to read a variety of texts such as stories, reports, information texts, poems, etc. They also love being read to by adults, particularly if you can do the voices! If you show children you enjoy reading it will have a positive impact.

If you feel you need more support with appropriate text or you find that your child is reluctant to read or is finding reading difficult, you should arrange to meet with their class teacher.

## **Reading Strategies: Pause, Prompt and Praise**

**PAUSE** to help them work out the new words

**PROMPT** by using some of the techniques mentioned in this booklet

**PRAISE** them for trying whether they are right or wrong. It is important to use as many clues as possible to help your child when they encounter difficulty. Below are the reading strategies we teach when tackling reading words.



## **Sharing a book with a child**

Make sure your child has a comfortable, quiet place to sit. Distractions such as TV can make it difficult for children to concentrate. Give the book to your child for five minutes so they can look at it alone. This allows the child to investigate and explore the text and pictures independently before starting to read. Read the title together and ask them to tell you about the story and any questions they may have before beginning. Remember talking about books is as important as reading them. Children need to have enthusiasm for texts so allow them to choose their own from the library as well as their school reading books.

## **Reading aloud**

It is important that children, particularly in the Early Years and Foundation Stage, are given the opportunity to read aloud to an adult as often as possible. It improves their decoding and listening skills. Help your child to sound out and blend any unfamiliar words. If they are still unsure, tell them the word and explain what it means. Then read the sentence again together.

## **Reading with older children**

Older children may feel that they enjoy reading on their own more and prefer to read in their head instead of aloud to an adult. This is usually evidence that they are enjoying the reading experience and are skilled and independent enough to read alone. The focus for a parent at this point should be more on discussion of comprehension and fostering an environment where sharing reading experiences and opinions about books is valued at home.

## **Comprehension**

One of the most important parts of reading is comprehension. If a child decodes fluently, but does not fully understand the story or text, then they struggle to enjoy or appreciate books. It is therefore essential that children have opportunity to discuss what they are reading.

One of the more crucial parts of reading is being able to conclude and infer ideas. Open ended questioning such as; ‘Why do you think that happened?’ or ‘What makes you think that?’ will help with this. Asking children to tell you why or show you clues in the text/pictures can improve their inference skills dramatically. We enclose a list of potential questions that could be used in a discussion with a child about a book. This is not an exhaustive list but should hopefully give some starting points for discussion that will help children to unpick and fully understand what they are reading.

## **Bedtime routine**

Don’t give up on the bedtime story, even if your child is a good reader. The more stories and books your child hears, the more they will want to read.

## **Be a good model for your children**

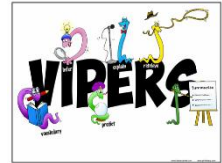
It is important to let them see you reading – anything and everything – newspapers, magazines, catalogues, books etc. – let them know that reading is a valuable skill.

## **Storytelling**

Remember you don’t always need a book to tell a good story - making up a story or telling them about when you were a child or something that happened to you at school is another means of developing story language. It doesn’t always have to be real – show your child how to use their imagination!

## **Praise!**

Remember to use praise a lot and tell them why they have done well i.e. “I really enjoyed listening to that sentence because you made it sound so exciting!”



## **Helpful questions to ask before, during and after reading with your child.**

Children's understanding of what they have read is the key to success and enjoyment of reading. It allows children to challenge ideas, collect a wider range of vocabulary and become creative writers as they use the language they have acquired to improve their writing. Below are grouped questions under different themes that you may ask your child after they have read. They are some basic question starters that will give you a starting point for the type of questions to ask your child about the book they are reading.

### **Retrieval**

- Where does the story take place?
- When did the story take place?
- Can you describe the character's appearance?
- Can you predict what the story may be about from the title?
- Where do the characters live?
- Who are the main characters?
- What happened in the story?
- Can you describe the problem in the story? How would you solve it?
- Can you identify words that describe the setting or character?
- What happened after....?
- Can you tell me why....?
- Look at the picture of the character, how do you think they are feeling? Why might this be?
- Describe what happened at/when.
- What do you think will happen next?
- What did the character say to....?

### **Inference**

- What does the word ... imply/make you think of?
- If you were going to interview/ask a character a question-who would you ask and what would your question be?
- What do you think will happen because of .....?
- Through whose eyes is the story told?
- Why do you think ... feels...?
- If this was you, what would you do next?
- How have the characters changed during the story?
- Predict what you think is going to happen next. What makes you think this?
- How do you know that...? (Deduce/Infer)
- What does the main character feel at this point in the story? How do you know this-can you pick out a sentence?

### **Vocabulary**

- What does (word/phrase) mean?
- Which words has the author used to make the writing sound more formal/informal?
- Why has the author used ... (italics, bold, exclamation marks, headings, bullet points, captions etc.)?
- What has the author used in the text to make the characters sound funny/sad/angry?

- Think of another word you can use here. What different effect would your word have?
- As a reader, how do you feel about this character? What makes you feel that way?
- Can you find any similes/metaphors in the story?
- Find some adjectives that help you picture the scene/character in your mind.
- Find a sentence that encourages you to want to read more of the story.
- Why has the author set out the text like this?

### **Structure**

- How do headings help you when you scan the text?
- How does the layout help the reader?
- How does the title of the story encourage you to read more?
- How does the story blurb on the back cover encourage you to read the book? What things do you now want to find out after reading the blurb?
- Some of the text is printed in a different way, why do you think the writer does this?
- Why has the author repeated structures, words and phrases?
- What is the purpose of the pictures?
- What is the purpose of a caption?
- Why did the author choose to change paragraphs here?
- Why has the author used 'fact boxes' for key points?
- What is the purpose of the chapter titles?
- Which words tell you what order to follow?

### **Writer's Viewpoint**

- What is the writer's purpose and viewpoint of writing the story?
- Can you think of another story that has a similar theme? (good/evil/weak/strong)
- Why does the author choose this setting?
- What makes this a GOOD story?
- What effect do you think the story has on the reader?
- Could the story be better? What would you suggest?
- What impression does the author want to give of this character? Why?
- What is the purpose of this paragraph? (e.g. time moves on)
- What question would you like to ask the writer of the story?
- Who is this advert trying to persuade?
- Would you solve the problem in the story in a different way?
- Do you think.....was right to .....?
- Does the article/story try to get you to care about anything? What can you tell about what the author thinks?

### **Making links and connections**

- Do you know any other stories like this? (good over evil, wise over foolish)
- Where is the story set?
- How is the hero/heroine of this story similar to others you have read about?
- What does the story remind you of?
- Does the story remind you of something that has happened to you?
- How would you have felt in that situation?
- What might you have done instead?
- What other stories have similar openings/endings to this one?

- Many stories have messages, what is the message of this story?
- Are there any familiar patterns that you notice? E.g. story structure, imagery.
- Does the story make you want to find out anything else about .....the history, cultural, social area being discussed?

### **Sequencing (KS1) and Summarising (KS2)**

- Can you number these events 1-5 in the order that they happened?
- What happened after .....?
- What was the first thing that happened in the story?
- Can you summarise in a sentence the opening/middle/end of the story?
- In what order do these chapter headings come in the story?

### **Prediction**

- Look at the book cover/blurb – what do you think this book will be about?
- What do you think will happen next? What makes you think this?
- How does the choice of character or setting affect what will happen next?
- What is happening? What do you think happened before? What do you think will happen after? What do you think the last paragraph suggests will happen next?
- What is happening now? What happened before this? What will happen after?
- What does this paragraph suggest will happen next? What makes you think this?
- Do you think the choice of setting will influence how the plot develops?
- Do you think... will happen? Yes, no or maybe? Explain your answer using evidence from the text.

### **Explain**

- Why is the text arranged in this way?
- What structures has the author used?
- What is the purpose of this text feature?
- Is the use of ..... effective?
- The mood of the character changes throughout the text. Find and copy the phrases which show this. What is the author's point of view?
- What affect does ..... have on the audience?
- How does the author engage the reader here?
- Which words and phrases did ..... effectively?
- Which section was the most interesting/exciting part?
- How are these sections linked?