

The Parents' Army



THANK YOU!

I wanted to take the opportunity to say that right from the outset as everyone in school really appreciates you giving up your time to listen to our children read. Also I wanted to say thank you now as it's not something you're going to hear very often. There will be times when you feel you've come in and no one has acknowledged that you're even there. At times you will wonder if what you are doing is actually doing any good at all.

Survival Guide

We know you're here and the benefits of what you do are proven – it's just that classrooms are busy places and teachers are letting you to get on with role. It doesn't mean you're not appreciated though – rather the reverse; it means you're trusted to be helping our children. So once again, thank you.

The purpose of this survival guide is to provide some hints and tips to help you in your role. Of course, should you have any issues or concerns please see me whenever you want. I'm

What to do When You Are Reading with a Child

Reading With Younger Children

- Allow the child to hold the book (if they find this easier) but try to ensure they are doing this correctly;
- Talk about the pictures – they often tell their own story;
- Be an actor – if the book is funny, laugh ... if the book is scary, gasp;
- Use the rhyme and pattern in books to let the children make predictions, for example by pausing before the last word of a line.

Letter Sounds

In common with most schools we use phonics to teach our children to read. This system teaches the children the letter sounds which, when teamed with other approaches, is proved to improve fluency and understanding. There are subtle differences between how we say these sounds and how we think these letter sounds are produced. For example, the letter “m” should be pronounced as more like “mmm” rather than “muh”, which is what people tend to say.

I found this useful list of sounds on the Wellesley Park Primary School’s website:

These first sounds should all be stretched slightly. Try to avoid saying **uh** after each one.:
e.g. /mm/ not muh, /ss/ not suh, /ff/ not fuh.

m – mmmmmmountain (keep lips pressed together hard)

s – ssssssnake (keep teeth together and hiss – unvoiced)

These next sounds cannot be stretched. Make the sound as short as possible avoiding **uh** at the end of the sound:

n – nnnnnnet (keep tongue behind teeth)

f – ffffflower (keep teeth on bottom lip and force air out sharply – unvoiced)

t – tick tongue behind the teeth – unvoiced)

l – lllleg (keep pointed curled tongue behind teeth).

p – (make distinctive p with lips – unvoiced)

r – rrrrrrobot (say rrr as if you are growling)

k – (make sharp click at back of throat)

v – vvvvvvulture (keep teeth on bottom lip and force air out gently)

c – as above

z – zzzzzzig zzzzzag (keep teeth together and make a buzzing sound)

h – (say h as you breathe sharply but – unvoiced)

th – thhhhank you (stick out tongue and breathe out sharply)

ch – (make a short sneezing sound)

sh – shhhh (make a shhh noise as though you are telling somebody to be quiet!)

x – (say a sharp c and add s – unvoiced)

ng – thinnnnngg on a strinnnnngg (curl your tongue at the back of your throat)

nk – I think I stink (make a piggy oink noise without the oi! nk nk nk)

You will find it harder to avoid saying uh at the end of these sounds.

d – (tap tongue behind the teeth).

g – (make soft sound in throat).

b – (make a short, strong b with lips).

j – (push lips forward).

y – (keep edges of tongue against teeth).

w – (keep lips tightly pursed).

qu – (keep lips pursed as you say cw – unvoiced).

The short vowels should be kept short and sharp:

a: a-a-a (open mouth wide as if to take a bite of an apple).

e: e-e-e (release mouth slightly from a position).

i: i-i-i (make a sharp sound at the back of the throat – smile).

Reading With Older or More Independent Readers

- Ask questions about what they are reading – a useful exercise is to ask them to predict what is going to happen next, and explain why;
- Encourage them to talk about their favourite books, authors and genres – this builds their identity as a reader;
- Don't be afraid to read to them some of the time – especially if they seem to be getting bogged down or slowing up. Try alternating who reads which page or even paragraph. Reading to your child is always an incredibly valuable exercise, so don't be put off;
- Ask them to recount what has happened in the book since the last time they read to you (and don't be surprised if the answer is "Can't remember...");
- Discuss why they think the author has used certain interesting words, or why particular words have been capitalized (this happens a lot in many David Walliams books for instance). Perhaps the way the words have been laid out matches what is happening in the action; does the length of the sentences alter the speed you read the action?

What to do When the Child Gets Stuck on a Word

Frequently the child will get the word wrong or stop reading completely if they come across an unfamiliar word. So what do you do?

- Firstly, give them a bit of time – they may get there if you give them a little while to think;
- If there are pictures ask if these help give a clue to what the word might be;
- Ask them if they know any words that look like the one they are stuck on, or if they've seen the word before;
- See if reading to the end of the sentence helps them to work out what the tricky word was; if they are having trouble choosing their next book there are a couple of things you can suggest.
- Can they use the letter sounds to help them work out what the word is?

Sometimes the child may get the word wrong, but their mistake doesn't alter the meaning

of the sentence. In these instances it's better to let most of these go without pointing out their mistakes. The meaning hasn't changed and the child's reading fluency is more important. The parenting world book celebration books are split into age categories and the list can be found on display in the library.

- We also have a book called *Who Next?* This book suggests authors and books which are similar to other authors and titles. It's getting a little out of date now (with no update on the horizon, unfortunately), but it is still useful. The book can be found on the top shelf of the Reference section of the library.

Helping them Choose

Confidentiality

As a member of the Parents' Army you are in a trusted position. The work you do with a child is not a matter for the wider public. I would suggest that when you fill in a child's reading record you restrict yourself to something along the lines of, "Read with parent helper". I would strongly discourage you from discussing how you think the child is doing with anyone other than the child's class teacher – even the child's parent(s).

You are a valuable part of helping our children, but this is just one piece of a larger picture so there may be more aspects in play than you may be aware of. We don't want to risk false or misinformation spreading as this can cause a lot of unnecessary angst and upset. Of course if you have any thoughts or issues please do talk to the relevant teacher or to myself.

Safeguarding

Looking after the welfare of our children (both inside and outside of school) is an important part of school life. Mrs Terrill is our Child Protection Officer. If you have any concerns please see her; or if she is not available, speak to either Mr McGinley or Mrs Bennett.

As you build a relationship with the children who read to you they may consider you to be someone that can talk to about things that are not going well at home or school. This can be matter what you write on, just get it written down. Sign and date the notes you have made a distressing and despite the fact this has not been an issue for any of our volunteers so far, (with the time, too if possible) and make a neater copy if necessary. Pass both sets of notes you need to be aware of what to do should a child make a disclosure of some form of abuse (if you've made a neater copy) to Mrs Terrill, or in the event of her not being available, then (whether physical, mental or sexual) pass your notes to Mr McGinley or Mrs Bennett instead.

It can be tempting to imagine that what you have been told isn't really significant, or seems quite small. Please take a moment to read our do's and don'ts of dealing with disclosures:

Please still record these incidents – it may well form part of a larger pattern which you are not aware of and without this kind of evidence a child may not get helped.

Do's	Don'ts
Listen without judging.	Do not say anything along the lines of "Why haven't you told anyone before?"
Take their disclosure at face value.	It's not their fault this has happened to them, so don't burden them with guilt.
Remain calm and neutral.	Do not question their version of events - if the child believes they are not believed they may not have the confidence to continue.
Reassure the child that they have done the	What you hear may shock or disgust you