

# **Berkeley Primary School**

## **Every Child a Reader**

Information for parents  
about reading  
at school and at home

## **Our aim**

We believe that the importance of reading cannot be underestimated - it is the key that unlocks the door to all learning. Our ultimate aim is therefore 'Every Child a Reader'. We believe this is achieved by providing excellent teaching of reading, set in a context of wide-ranging high-quality reading experiences, so that children will develop a love of reading that stays with them for life.

## **What we do**

We offer a variety of reading experiences in school, each one providing either a teaching or practice opportunity. The choice of text for each type of experience is determined through a system that indicates how many words in every 100 are likely to present some difficulty on the first reading.

We aim to cover a varied range of texts throughout the primary school years. These include:

<b>Fiction and poetry</b>	<b>Non-fiction</b>
Traditional/fairy stories	Recounts
Poems	Reports
Myths, legends & fables	Instructions
Adventure, mystery, history & sci-fi stories	Explanations
	Discussions
	Persuasive arguments

Your children's reading experiences are outlined below.

### **1) Experiences in school where reading is taught:**

- Whole class modelled and shared reading: This takes place during the daily literacy lesson, using a text that requires reading at approximately 75% accuracy; in other words, 25 out of 100 words will present a challenge. This type of reading is therefore very heavily led and supported by the teacher. Sometimes the teacher demonstrates how a text should be read and new words tackled; sometimes the children all read together, supported by each other. The purpose of this type of reading is for children to hear what fluent reading should sound like, and give them access to language and literature which would be beyond their grasp if they had to read it on their own.
- Guided reading: This takes place with small groups of children of similar reading ability. We assess all aspects of the children's reading carefully before we group them, using a system that provides us with detailed information about both their strengths and areas for development. Texts are then chosen to match their needs, at 'instructional level', which is approximately 90% accuracy. Our teaching is planned around two key areas: recognition of the words and comprehension of the language.

## **2) Experiences in school where reading is practised:**

Throughout the week, there is a wide range of opportunities for children to enjoy reading, to practise and apply their skills and develop 'reading stamina' for longer texts. Learning new reading skills will be incidental in these situations, but they are of key importance in helping to develop 'the reading habit'.

- Regular independent reading: this may be done individually, with a partner or in a group.
- Reading individually to an adult: this is an opportunity for the teacher or another adult in school to find out how children are getting on and provide some extra practice.
- Hearing good quality books read aloud in the classroom or assemblies: it is very important for children to be read to, even once they can read themselves, because they hear how written language should sound and it enriches their language experience (which will have a powerful influence on their ability to write well).
- Reading across the curriculum: this requires children to use information books and reading instructions and questions on the interactive whiteboard, in textbooks and on worksheets.
- Browsing through books in classroom book corners and the library.
- Reading in the environment for information: for example, signs, labels and posters around the school.

### **3) Reading at home:**

- A very important practice opportunity is provided by our range of home reading books. These are now divided into colour bands which include a variety of both fiction and non-fiction books. We no longer rely completely on one 'scheme', which can be too narrow in its focus and doesn't allow children to develop their individual taste in authors and illustrations.
- Children are able to choose their own home reading book from the range of books in the colour which matches their 'fluency level', that is, where they are able to read with at least 95% accuracy. The purpose of reading at this level is to develop confidence and expression, and above all, to promote enjoyment. It offers a chance for children to return to favourite books if they wish, and to find more books by an author they have enjoyed.
- The colour bands are deliberately fairly broad in their scope, with some overlap between each one. The progression of reading difficulty from one to another is fairly gradual, and children may encounter variations in the level of difficulty within each band, but they should have the necessary strategies to tackle unknown words with relatively little support. As they get older, they will require less help with the reading itself, but will still benefit from a discussion about the content.

## **What we teach**

The following information provides you with an outline of what children need in order to develop into confident and skilled readers. Our teaching of reading in school aims to ensure that your children systematically acquire these skills and attitudes to the best of their ability. The importance of your support with all these things at home cannot be underestimated, so we aim to keep you informed about what your children need to practise in order to improve.

### **1) Knowing how books work:**

- In the early stages of reading, time is spent enjoying books together to develop the skills necessary for learning to read.
  
- It is essential that young readers are able to:
  - Hold a book the right way up
  - Find the front and back
  - Turn the pages one by one
  - Find the top and bottom of a page
  - Identify where the story starts
  
- They also need to understand that:
  - Words are different from pictures – so they can identify where to start reading on each page
  - One written word corresponds to one spoken word
  - Words are made up of letters, and sentences made up of words
  - Words are read from left to right

- Some of our early reading activities include:
  - Looking at the cover and discussing what the book might be about
  - Looking through the book and talking about the pictures
  - Using 'book language' such as 'title', author', illustrator' and 'blurb', and encouraging the habit of using the blurb on the back to find out what a book is about
  - Demonstrating how to slide a finger from left to right under the words as they are read

## **2) Using the pictures:**

- Pictures are an important part of a story so we spend time talking and asking questions about them to help develop a full understanding of the story.
- Some books have no words at all; these are used to develop the very important skill of story telling which widens vocabulary and develops imagination.
- Where books have very few words, pictures are used to add detail and meaning so they have to be interpreted in partnership with the words (which means that covering the pictures to check whether children can read the words isn't very helpful).

## **3) Fun with rhymes:**

- An ability to hear and use rhyme is a vital part of developing children's reading skills.

- We spend time reciting rhymes together and learning them off by heart.
- We encourage children to play around with rhymes, changing the endings to make up new ones of their own (the funnier the better).
- We use books with stories that are told in rhyme, and encourage children to predict rhyming words.

#### **4) Phonics first:**

- In Reception and Year 1 we focus strongly on developing children's understanding of how words work through a structured programme of phonics teaching. This is explained in more detail at an information evening, and lots of activities are provided for children to do at home.
- A good phonic knowledge helps children to read simple words by saying each sound and blending them together. From the beginning, they are encouraged to use this strategy to read words in their reading books – and the more they practise, the quicker they acquire the 'word building' habit.

#### **5) 'Heavy duty words':**

- Some words are used very frequently and children develop into fluent readers if they can learn to recognise them quickly without having to work them out.

- This is especially important for words that do not obey the rules for phonics – referred to as ‘tricky words’.
- We send home activities to reinforce learning of these words – if they are practiced regularly and often, recognition becomes automatic.




## **6) Other ways of working out what the words say:**

- We also teach children to ‘decode’ words by:
  - Looking for short words within longer words
  - Breaking long words into smaller parts
  - Making a ‘sensible guess’ using the first sound of a word and referring to the picture, or the rhyme, pattern or meaning of the sentence; they then read the whole sentence to check that their guess makes sense
  - Going back to the beginning of a sentence for a ‘run-up’, which involves reading past an unknown word to get a sense of the meaning, going back to fill in the gap and finally reading the completed sentence to check the meaning
- It is important to recognise that there are times when it is all right to tell children words they don’t know, so that they don’t lose sight of what they are reading about.

## **7) Comprehension:**

- Development of comprehension is an important aspect of all taught reading, and has a particularly strong focus in guided reading.

- It is vital that children’s comprehension matches their ability to decode print, whatever their reading level.
- It is very important that children are able to answer questions about their reading; we teach the children to recognise three different types of question, as follows:

<p>Literal questions, known as ‘In your face’ or ‘Right there’</p>		<p>These questions ask children to find information that can easily be located in the text, and are fairly straightforward to answer</p>
<p>Inferential and deductive questions, known as ‘Use you nut’ or ‘Think and search’</p>		<p>These questions are a little more difficult, requiring the children to search the text for information in more than one place and draw their own conclusions</p>
<p>Evaluative questions’ known as ‘Detective reader’ or ‘On your own’</p>		<p>These questions ask the children to reflect on their reading and offer their own opinions, finding evidence to support what they say</p>

**Important!**

All types of question are addressed throughout the school – we don’t wait until children can read fluently before developing their comprehension skills.

## **Developing your children's interest, confidence and independence**

The activities described in the previous sections should give you some guidance for providing help for your children along the same lines as the work we do in school. In addition, there are some things that can be done even more effectively at home than at school. And you don't have to rely solely on the home reading book!

### **1) Maintaining interest:**

- If possible, read to your children for a short while each day, even after they are able to read to themselves; this is an opportunity for you to model good reading e.g. how to use expression and different voices to bring a story to life
- Make use of the local library; allow time to choose books with your children and look for more books by authors and illustrators that you have enjoyed previously.
- If possible, visit a bookshop from time to time to buy a book, building up a collection of favourites to read again and again.
- Join a book club such as 'The Red House' so that you can see the books that are available for different age ranges and take advantage of special offers.
- Let your children see you reading for different purposes e.g. books, magazines, newspapers, cookery books, repair manuals etc.;

encourage them to engage in activities with you that involve reading for a purpose.

- Encourage your children to read print in the environment e.g. street signs, shop names, food packages etc.

## **2) Building confidence:**

- Short frequent sessions with home reading books are best, when you and your children are not too tired or would rather be doing something else.
- Don't worry about correcting minor mistakes that don't affect meaning if it would interrupt the flow of the story.
- Allow children time to correct their own mistakes before jumping in to put things right.
- Don't worry if reading books appear to be easy – remember that home reading books are designed to be at practice level, in order to develop fluent reading.
- Don't worry if children choose books they've read before – this is another way of gaining confidence, and it's good to have favourites.
- Don't put pressure on children to do more than they are capable of, but celebrate their successes.
- Give plenty of praise and encouragement!

### 3) Encouraging independence:

- Once children can read fluently by themselves, they do not need to read every word aloud to you.
- However they should still be reminded to read and encouraged to talk about their books.
- Questions you might ask include:
  - Where/when does the story take place?
  - Who are the main characters, what do they look like?
  - What happened in the story?
  - What part of the story did you like the best?
  - What do you think will happen next?
  - What have you learned from this book?
  - Do you know any more stories like this one?
  - What makes you think that....?
  - Can you explain why....?
  - What makes this a good story?
  - Could you make this story better, how?
  - What do you think these new words mean?
- As well as asking questions, there are various other things you can do to support the development of comprehension skills; for example, you might ask children to:
  - Identify any words or parts of a book that need some explanation
  - Retell stories or recall factual information in their own words

- Express their own feelings and opinions about story lines, characters etc.
- Predict what is going to happen next at various points in the story; even if a suggestion turns out to be wrong, a sensible idea has value and may be a starting point for discussion

### **Practical issues**

Please may we request that our reading books are looked after carefully, and returned promptly; they should be carried in bags that will keep them flat, away from food and drink.

We would like to you use the reading contact book to record the reading your children do at home – please indicate successes, difficulties or concerns. Please do not hesitate to speak to the class teacher if you have any questions or worries, or would like further information about reading.

It is very expensive to purchase single copies of reading books; we therefore ask that in the event of a book being lost or damaged, you make a contribution of £5 towards its replacement. Please sign and return the attached slip to indicate your agreement to this.

### **Useful websites**

For additional information, you may like to visit the following websites:

[www.yearofreading.org.uk](http://www.yearofreading.org.uk)

[www.readingconnexts.org.uk](http://www.readingconnexts.org.uk)

[www.readingchampions.org.uk](http://www.readingchampions.org.uk)