

## Literacy

Young children need to be exposed to a wealth of language before they will develop as competent readers and writers. They need to hear and use a rich vocabulary - so engage in meaningful conversations with your child and encourage them to give opinions, describe things and speak clearly in proper sentences, using a growing vocabulary. Don't use "baby" talk, but do remember to explain the meaning of words in several ways, to enable your child to understand the true meaning and use of new words.



## Reading



- Read lots and lots of stories - including traditional tales - to your child, and make this a happy, uninterrupted time together.
- Encourage your child to notice things about books - the way they are organised, where the title/author/illustrator are given, whether it is an information or story book, any unusual things about the print or pictures that help you to read it.
- Encourage reading in the environment - signs, food labels/packets, instructions etc.
- Model reading as an adult - for pleasure and information.
- Sing and chant lots of nursery rhymes.
- Value any book your child brings home from school, but encourage them to enjoy other books - from your home collection or the library. Don't let your child think that the school "reading book" is the only important book - it isn't!
- Encourage lots of discussion with picture books - make up a story together and think of different versions or endings. Model the use of interesting vocabulary and speaking in complete sentences and encourage your child to do the same.
- Help your child to notice common words that recur in the early reading books and tell them what they say - e.g. I, am, is, can. Character names just need to be learnt - children begin to recognise these by sight and cannot "sound them out".

- Help your child to learn letter sounds (not names), and to start to recognise the letter symbol. Play "I-spy" and matching games. Work on a few at a time. Then encourage them to notice the ones they know in their books, and use your finger to point along the word as you model sounding it out.
- Don't attempt to sound out difficult words or names - just tell your child. Stopping too often will spoil the story. Maybe at the second or third reading you can look at a few simple words to sound out together. Begin with just the initial sound and use the pictures and context for a good guess. Eventually, children look at end sounds, and after that, at medial vowels. This takes time!!
- Help your child to follow the text with their finger, pointing to the words one at a time, from left to right.
- Always encourage your child to talk about the story - why did something happen, what if ..., what would you do, how do we know, how was the character feeling ..... Comprehension is a crucial skill and one that needs developing from the very beginning. We don't want children to be able to read words but not understand or be able to evaluate what they have read.

Please be patient as your child learns to read! This is a very complicated skill and can take a long time. The first books your child brings home from school will be self-chosen "sharing" books for you to just enjoy together. Please record titles read in the home/school book, and initial or make a short comment so the teacher knows that the book has been read. The "I Can Statements" in the front of the home/school book will tell you the reading skills that your child is currently learning, so that you can reinforce these when you read together.

## Writing



Some children love writing and others are more reluctant. Reluctance often comes from a feeling of not being able to write and that what they write is "wrong". We want to foster a 'have a go' approach to writing. Here are a few ideas to help you at home:

- Always praise your child for attempting to write and ask them to share with you what they have written. Don't scribe underneath unless it is for someone else to read, in which case, write the correct words at the bottom of the paper not immediately underneath their writing.

- Encourage the correct letter formation (please ask the class teacher if you have not seen our script). Begin with letters in your child's name and practice just a few at a time.
- Use small case letters, except for the beginning of names.
- Once your child knows a few letter sounds, encourage them to "have a go" - and praise the effort. If they use the initial sound of a word that's great! Don't tell them how it should be written - this will often destroy their confidence and willingness to write.
- Only encourage the correct spelling when your child is confident to have a go. Then concentrate on common words or names of family/favourite TV characters etc - words that they will want to use often - and also simple, phonetic words, especially 3-letter words - e.g. can, pet, dog, cat, man. (CVC - consonant-vowel-consonant)
- Find reasons to write - invitations, thank you notes, lists for presents or to remember things, postcards.
- Model writing as an adult to show why it is important - shopping lists, cards, memos etc.
- If your child finds it difficult to hold a pencil, let them have a go with a paintbrush, fingers in sand/thick paint etc, using big movements on big paper!
- Don't have a battle over it if your child does not want to write!

