

# A PARENT'S GUIDE TO DEVELOPING AND TEACHING EARLY READING AND WRITING SKILLS

We are often asked when children should start to read and write and have, therefore, put together the following points, which we hope will bring some clarification.

## How do children learn to read?

*The first and most important step when starting to read is that your child is ready!*

The early phase of reading is characterised by children's growing awareness of the way in which print conveys meaning, and their increasing ability to understand the links between spoken and written language. Initially, context is a major support for making meaning from print. So very young children recognise familiar words and well-known names on cartons or on other packaging.

Later, children become able to recognise words in context of a well-known book or song. Books with memorable language help them with this. They begin to isolate individual words within these familiar texts. At first, children identify whole words through particular features - their length, their visual pattern, the fact they begin with the first letter of somebody's name, rather than recognising them by the individual letters. At these times children become more familiar with the alphabet and begin to show awareness of phonic sounds. (A phonic is the sound that each letter makes e.g. Bb is 'buh' not bee').

## As parents and practitioners, we promote children's awareness of print and their ability to notice and recognise sounds in many ways.

- **Books and stories** - this is probably the most important way for children to learn what readers do. As children hear stories, talk about the pictures and re-tell stories themselves they will gradually match what they are hearing and seeing. In this way, they will come to an enjoyable appreciation of what reading is all about. Books also encourage concentration as well as visual discrimination of symbols.

*However, before formal writing even begins, children require the following important skills:*

- **Hand-eye co-ordination** - this is developed through puzzles, use of scissors, making marks on paper, cutters and using beads and boards.
- **Pincer grasp** - threading beads, holding paintbrushes, pencils, chalks and other small items, as well as practical life experiences develop this.
- **Wrist flexibility** - this is developed by painting and painting activities, use of construction materials, making patterns in sand, finger rhymes and practical life activities.
- **Self-esteem and confidence** - this is probably the most important aspect of all. Children who are praised and acknowledged for their individual achievements are more likely to learn and therefore we believe that encouraging them and allowing them to achieve at their own pace is the most effective way of teaching children.

## Within our Nursery we incorporate these into our daily activities, as well as many more, to help children, develop the necessary skills for reading and writing.

- General discussions – questioning and problem solving, which also encourages vocabulary.
- Stories (knowing that books are fun and informative)
- Songs and rhymes (identifying rhyming words)
- Circle time activities – re-telling experiences
- Language games – sound distinguishing games, lotto, matching games, etc.

- Interest tables

As the children develop and are confident in using everyday language in a variety of situations, we introduce phonic sounds. There is no particular age at which we do this as children develop at different rates.

When your child is ready he/she will receive, a folder containing a letter of the alphabet which will be built up gradually, adding a letter each week. You will be informed of this when we feel your child ready for the next step. We will also be sending the children home with "library" books so that you can share your child's favourite Nursery book.

It is our aim to form a link from home to school so that we share this very important part of your child's learning. Therefore, if you have any questions concerning your child, please do not hesitate to speak to your child's key person.