

Reading at Whittington CE (VA) Primary School

Dear Parents,

In light of the recent DfE publication, 'The Reading Framework – Teaching the Foundations of Literacy' we are amending slightly the way we approach reading at Whittington.

In the document, we are reminded that, 'Reading is fundamental to education. Proficiency in reading, writing and spoken language is vital for pupils' success. Through these, they develop communication skills for education and working with others.' Children who are good at reading do more of it – they learn more about all sorts of things.

This guidance aims to, amongst other things, support schools to evaluate their teaching of early reading, identify how to improve provision as well as to support schools working with parents to help their children learn to read.

At Whittington, we use a systematic, synthetic phonics scheme called, 'Read, Write, Inc.'. The Education Endowment Fund considers phonics to be one of the most secure and best evidenced areas of pedagogy and recommends that all schools use a systematic approach to teaching it.

Reception and Key Stage 1 classes have a daily phonics lesson to enable all pupils to learn the alphabetic code of English and different phoneme–grapheme-correspondences in a systematic way – children are taught explicitly the correspondences between letters and sounds as well as the skill of blending the individual sounds together to read.. This skill is assessed regularly throughout the year and intervention is given if pupils appear to be struggling with certain sounds.

As well as a daily phonics session, time is built into our curriculum for children to experience different literature that is read to them on a daily basis, so that they start to develop a love of reading and get to learn different vocabulary that they cannot yet read themselves.

Each class will be making use of the school library every week – the children will choose a book of their choice to take home for the week and read with their families. This is also to promote a lifelong love of reading. Children benefit greatly from listening to family members reading aloud to them.

The report also talks about repetition of stories – it is not just the number of different stories children listen to that matters. It helps develop a greater emotional engagement by re-reading texts.

When children start to bring books home to read, we will not be changing them every day – each Key Stage 1 class will be changing books 2 or 3 times a week to enable children to re-read their books rather than just rushing through levels.

The most significant change is the way that we will be choosing books to send home – most texts are not decodable for children who are beginning to read. The National Curriculum says that children should be taught to:

‘...read aloud accurately books that are consistent with their developing phonic knowledge and that do not require them to use other strategies to work out words.’

For this reason, we will be using the Read, Write Inc. reading books that are carefully structured so that they can decode every word as their knowledge of the alphabetic code increase. These books match our phonics programme perfectly. It may look like your child has a book that is too ‘easy’ for them but this will build their confidence, feel more successful and help them progress faster in the long run. Children will continue to read decodable books until they can blend sounds to read new words fluently and automatically.

We will also be sending home one of our Book Band books for you and your child to enjoy together – they can join in with words that they know and which are decodable.

One of the appendices from the reading Framework will be made available to you – it has suggestions on how to read with your child.

Hopefully, this has gone some way to explaining the changes to how we approach reading at Whittington. As always, please feel free to contact us if you have any further questions.