

How we teach your children to read and write

Every child deserves success right from the start. We know that the sooner children learn to read, the greater their success at school. This is why we put reading at the heart of what we do.

We use a teaching programme called *Read Write Inc.* Phonics to teach our children to read and write. We make sure every child can read the last set of phonic stories before they progress to Guided Reading. Some children complete the programme in Year 1 and others in Year 2. Year 3 and 4 children who need extra support follow this programme too; struggling readers in Year 5 and 6 children follow a similar programme called Fresh Start.

During this time, we group children by their reading progress 45 minutes a day and re-assess children every half-term so we can place them in the group where they'll make the most progress. We provide extra daily one-to-one sessions for children who need a bit of a boost to keep up.

How do we get children to remember what we teach them?

It's much easier teaching one child – we can get them to repeat what they have understood in their own words, step by step. Then, if they haven't understood, we can try different words and explanations. So, in order to replicate this back and forth dialogue with a group or class, we use partner work. Children answer every question with a partner, the teacher checks what they know and only moves on when they understand. It means that all children stay focused throughout the lesson. Partner talk is fundamental to the success of our school. We use, 'Turn to your partner' in every lesson throughout the day.

How do we make phonics easy for children to learn?

Read Write Inc. Phonics depends upon children learning to read and write sounds effortlessly, so we make it simple and fun.

The phonic knowledge is split into two parts.

First we teach them one way to read and write the 40+ sounds in English. We use pictures to help, for example we make 'a' into the shape of an apple, 'f'

into the shape of a flower. These pictures help *all* children, especially slower-starters, to read the sounds easily.

Children learn to read words by sound-blending using a frog called Fred. Fred says the sounds and children help him blend the sounds to read each word.

Then we teach children the different spellings of the same sounds, for example, they learn that the sound 'ay' is written ay, a-e and ai; the sound 'ee' is written ee, e and ea. We use phrases to help them remember each sound for example, ay, may I play, a-e – make a cake?

How do we ensure children can read every book?

The first thing we do is to give children books we *know* they can read – without any guessing. (We read lots of other stories *to* them, but do not expect them to read these yet.)

Before they read the story, they sound out the names of characters and new words, practise reading any of the 'tricky red' words, and tell them a thought-provoking introduction to get them excited about the story.

Then, over a few days, children read the story three times: first to focus on reading the words carefully; the second to help them read the story fluently; and on the third, we talk about the story together for example, how characters might be feeling and why.

How do we teach children to spell confidently?

We use just two simple activities: Fred Fingers to spell regular words and Red Rhythms for tricky words.

Fred Fingers

We teach children to spell using 'Fred Fingers': we say a word and then children pinch the sounds onto their fingers and write the word, sound by sound.

Red Rhythms

We teach tricky words with Red Rhythms. We say the tricky letters in a puzzled or annoyed voice and build the letter names up into a rhythm, for example, s-**ai**-d.

Children learn to spell new words and review past words every week, they practise spelling them with a partner and – when they're ready – we give them a test to celebrate their spelling success.

How do we make writing simple for children to learn?

We teach handwriting, spelling and composition separately, gradually bringing each skill together step-by-step.

We teach children to form letters with the correct pencil grip and in the correct sitting position from the very beginning. They practise handwriting every day so they learn to write quickly and easily.

Once children can write simple words, we teach them to 'hold' a sentence in their heads and then write it with correct spelling and punctuation.

Very soon children are able to write down their own ideas. We try out different sentences together, drawing on new vocabulary and phrases from the storybook they've just read. They practise saying their sentences out loud first so they don't forget their ideas while they're writing. They also learn to proofread their own writing using ready-made sentences containing common grammar, punctuation and spelling errors.

Story and poetry time

Story time is the highlight of every day. We have a bank of favourite stories that children get to know really well, and others we read just for fun. Children learn to retell the story, learn the refrains by heart and act out the stories in the role-play area. Children learn poetry too. We've chosen wonderful, memorable poems so children can learn them by heart. The poems focus upon feelings and situations with which young children are likely to be familiar, e.g. bedtime, siblings and feeling poorly.

How can you help at home?

First of all, come to our meetings. We hold these at various times throughout the year to give you practical advice about how you can help.

We appreciate you're busy but here are two things that will make the biggest difference to your child's progress. Every night:

1. Read a bedtime story to your child.

Your child will bring home lovely books from their class story corner. Read these stories *to* your child – don't ask them to read the story themselves as this is beyond their current reading stage. There is some really good advice about how to make bedtime storytime fun on www.ruthmiskin.com/parents

2. Listen to your child read the storybook we send home.

It is the expectation that every child reads for about 10 minutes every day. This is an opportunity for your child to practice and apply the phonics they have been learning at school. Help your child with any sounds or words they are unsure of, ask them questions about the characters, setting, plot and don't forget to praise and celebrate their progress!