

The Importance of Reading at Woodmancote School

Reading is a skill that most of us take for granted, yet is one that is essential for being able to get on in life. As a child grows up, being able to read well not only enables them to discover new facts and to learn at school, but also opens them up to a world of new ideas, stories and opportunities. Therefore, all our staff are committed to ensuring that all children become independent and fluent readers during their time at our school. We want to celebrate reading and for our children to enjoy books as much as we do!

At Woodmancote, we are passionate about books and this love of reading is shared with all pupils. Reading is at the heart of our curriculum and on walking around our school, this is very evident by our engaging reading displays, inviting book corners and our storytelling chairs. We believe that this demonstrates our commitment to reading and driving a culture of reading for pleasure.

'Everyone is reader'

Many of our teachers are dedicated readers and this is passed on to the children in our care. We have a book sharing system within the staffroom to introduce the adults in our school to new literature, both adult and children's books, and to model the good reading behaviours we wish to instil in our pupils.

Our children's love of reading is fostered through access to a wide range of stories, poems and non-fiction books and carefully selected whole class readers. Books are used in all areas of the curriculum to help teach specific topics, as well as broadening children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural awareness.

We work hard to ensure this joy of reading extends beyond the classroom and support, promote and value the contributions that parents and carers make to their child's reading at home. We run regular in class challenges in each year group to not only encourage our pupils to read a wide range of literature, but also to share and discuss these books at home.

We enjoy taking our children to the Cheltenham Literature Festival each year and organise visiting authors to talk to our pupils and further ignite their interest in books. We endeavour to celebrate books throughout the year and most recently, celebrated William Shakespeare's birthday with a dress up day and exciting book related opportunities, we also encouraged children to bring in a book as a donation in order to diversify our collection but also boost our in-class libraries. It was a huge success!

'First steps in reading'

Our structured approach to reading is carefully designed to ensure the best results for our children. It all begins in Little Chestnuts with all of the fundamentals of listening to sounds, hearing rhymes and singing songs. Once children start in Reception, there is greater focus on phonics with more formal sessions, where children learn a new sound every other day, through whole class teaching and a mixture of adult directed and independent activities.

The scheme of work that we use to teach phonics across EYFS and KS1 is Rising Stars 'Rocket Phonics'. We believe that this structured approach to teaching systematic phonics is key to our successes in reading. It is reinforced through enhancement tasks, songs and fun, practical activities related to the corresponding letter formation.

Children initially begin their 'book-reading journey' with non-worded books which develop their questioning and prediction skills. As their segmenting and blending progresses, they are constantly assessed and given books to suit the sounds they have been taught and matching their current abilities. These books are selected from our extensive school scheme which includes a range of publishers including Rising Stars, Bug Club, Floppy's Phonics. These books are changed weekly and regular 'in class' reading sessions ensure children are 'Keeping up'.

'Parents as partners'

Children could not make the progress they do without support from home and we work closely with parents to ensure they understand how to pronounce the phonics correctly and have strategies to develop their child's reading skills. We hold information evenings, record videos for our website and signpost parents to specific parental help guides where appropriate. We encourage adult volunteers within school wherever possible, to help hear children read. This is a great success with many people staying on for several years and following their focus children through their school life.

We make use of technology both in school and at home and suggest the use of 'Teach your monster to read', a popular reading APP as well as 'Phonics Play' where children can put their in school learning in to practice at home. We also hold regular interactive parents' session to support our parents in helping their children at home with their phonics and reading.

We also have a large group of volunteer pupils in Year 5 and 6 who are trained up as 'Star Readers' and during the year work with our youngest children in reception and Year 1 to give them additional reading experiences. It is a real joy to see how empathetic and encouraging these children are and how much they enjoy reading with the children.

'A reading journey'

As the children move through the Infants, phonics remains a high priority and is taught daily in Year 1 and in the early days in Year 2. Children work through the colour banded reading scheme and read frequently with an adult in school. These books are banded in two categories between pink and orange, 'phonetically decodable readers' and 'enrichment readers.' Children receive a mixture of these each week in order to practise the phonics that they have been learning in school.

From orange books, children are given a range of books to develop further confidence as readers until they become accomplished readers when they are encouraged to choose from our 'Starred Readers' to further challenge their literary journey. Each class has its own class library where children are guided to make their own free choices in reading books or indeed, bring in any suitable material from home. The books that we send home ensure our children's fluency and comprehension develops accordingly. Children have their books changed once a week and are given three books to read.

Reading diaries encourage the children to record their reading and respond to set questions, where appropriate as well as give the opportunity for parents to make a note of any progress and next steps.

As their reading progresses, we work on developing a pupil's vocabulary and comprehension skills through structured through whole class guided reading sessions. Activities are carefully planned to ensure that reading stamina also develops as children progress through the school.

In addition to this our class reads ensure that all our pupils are exposed to high quality challenging texts. Teachers choose these texts wisely as we know the importance of providing texts that are crucial in continuing to enhance comprehension skills. This allows for an immersion in more sophisticated vocabulary and therefore helps them to build their own vocabulary that will be wider, challenging and more specific.

'Regular assessments'

To ensure the best outcome for all our pupils, assessment is used continuously to identify progression and next steps for children. This may take the form of day to day observations and informal assessments to more structured reading assessments. Following this, targeted interventions are used to help these children stay on track with age related expectations and their progress is carefully monitored by class teachers and school leaders.

Our primary aim is for all children at Woodmancote School to be successful and happy readers and for this to be something that is upheld by them as they continue their lives into adulthood.