

HOW WE TEACH READING AT BLACKBOYS CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

According to research carried out by the University of London Institute of Education, reading for pleasure is more important to a child's educational achievement than their family's wealth or social class.

At Blackboys Church of England Primary School we aim to immerse children in a rich reading environment and to give them the opportunity to explore a wide range of quality texts. This provision supports word recognition, comprehension and vocabulary development.

Learning to read is, of course, central to what we do at Blackboys School and we follow government guidance in making the teaching of Phonics an important focus in all year groups.

A Literacy Guide for Primary Schools 2012/2013, published by the National Literacy Trust, summarises the government's approach: "For the teaching of early reading to be successful, it needs a balanced and creative approach in a context of rich oral language development. This should include the systematic teaching of phonics, as well as a focus on application, exploring comprehension and meaning, and reading enjoyment."

So, alongside the teaching of phonics, there is also an important focus on comprehension and reading for enjoyment in our school. To encourage this, a variety of books are available to pupils of all ages. Other methods we use to support children in learning to read include eg looking at pictures, considering the context, reading ahead, and looking at word shape.

What is phonics?

Phonics is a way of teaching children to read quickly and skilfully. Children are taught how to:

- recognise the sounds that each individual letter makes
- identify the sounds that different combinations of letters make - such as 'sh' or 'oo'
- blend these sounds together from left to right to make a word

Children can use this knowledge to 'de-code' new words that they hear or see. **This is the first important step in learning to read.**

Although some words do not lend themselves to this method of teaching, it has

been found that children who have been taught phonics tend to read more accurately than those taught using other methods such as 'look and say'. This includes children who find learning to read difficult - for example, those who have dyslexia. Tricky words are taught in a visual way through repetition.

Every year our school offers a workshop to support parents in their understanding of phonics. We would encourage you to attend one of these workshops and, of course, to speak to your child's teacher if you have any queries.

Helping your child with phonics

Phonics works best when children are given plenty of encouragement and learn to enjoy reading and books. Parents play a very important part in helping with this.

Some simple steps to help your child learn to read through phonics:

- Ask your child's class teacher about our approach to phonics and how you can reinforce this at home. For example, the teacher will be able to tell you which letters and sounds the class is covering in lessons each week
- You can then highlight these sounds when you read with your child. Teaching how sounds match with letters is likely to start with individual letters such as 's', 'a' and 't' and will move on to two-letter sounds (digraphs) such as 'ee', 'ch' and 'ck'
- With all books, encourage your child to look at the pictures first and discuss which words the child might see. Your child can then 'sound out' unfamiliar words and start to blend the sounds together from left to right. Once your child has read an unfamiliar word you can discuss what it means and help him/her to follow and discuss the story
- Your child's teacher will also be able to suggest books with the right level of phonics for your child. These books are often called 'decodable readers' because the story is written with words made up of the letters your child has learnt. He/she will be able to work out the words using their phonics knowledge
- Try to make time to read with your child for 5-10 minutes every day - this is more effective than half an hour twice a week. Grandparents and older brothers or sisters can help too. Encourage your child to blend the sounds all the way through a word
- Word games like 'I-spy' can be an enjoyable way of teaching children about sounds and letters. You can also encourage your child to read words from your shopping list or from road signs to practise phonics
- Our school uses 'book bags' and a reading record, which is a great way for

teachers and parents to communicate about what children have read. The reading record can tell you whether your child has enjoyed a particular book and also highlights problems or successes he/she has had, either at home or at school.

- Look at websites such as <http://www.phonicsplay.com> . The alpha blocks website also helps with how to pronounce sounds as well as providing children with games to play.

There is a variety of information on the Blackboys School website that you may find helpful, including a copy of the presentations used in our Phonics workshops. Alongside the wider school agenda, teachers dedicate lesson time to reading for enjoyment by reading, sharing, recommending and discussing texts other than set texts.

Other activities to support learning to read at all levels in our school include:

- Spelling Activities, based on the spelling patterns taught that week in class
- Comprehension: reading a text and answering questions on it
- Silent Reading: the children read books/comics/newspapers or stories/poems they have written themselves
- Follow-up Tasks, linked to a guided reading session
- Use of our school library and reading corners
- Reading Challenges and games
- Visits to our Library Van
- Working with other schools
- Reading texts across the curriculum

What else can you do?

- Continue to read to/with them for as long as they wish to continue
- Read aloud together, allowing the child to 'take over', especially in well-known stories
- Use the strategies listed above to help your child when he/she seems to need/want it
- Simply encourage reading without turning it into a chore
- Give books as presents
- Buy the child a bedside lamp
- Join your local library: making the library a source of reading material helps to make it possible for children to have a constant supply of books, magazines and other publications. The local library also organises a number of excellent activities for the school holidays and breaks.

Our whole school community supports and encourages reading in all its forms and children are encouraged to share their reading experiences at all levels. As well as

encouraging our pupils in their initial skills development, we look to engender a real love of reading that will remain with them throughout their lives and be a source of pleasure that they will constantly return to