



**S^t Michael's
School**

Parents' Guide to Reading

At St Michael's we want our children to learn to read with fluency, accuracy and understanding. The reading experience at school is very varied and the little books that the children bring home are just a small part of that.



Learning to read is a complex task and above all we want children to develop a love of reading and enjoyment of books. You as parents have a really important part to play.

Learning nursery rhymes and playing rhyming games are really important precursors.

Imagine being given a book in an alien language:

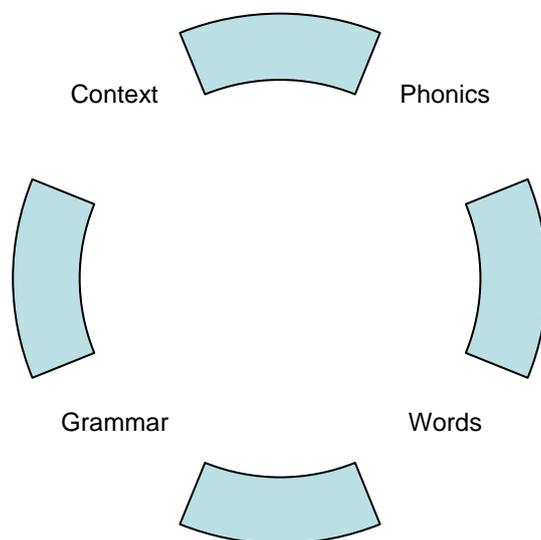


That is a bit what it is like for a beginning reader.

- Where will you start?
- What's the first thing you need to do?
- How do you hold the paper/book?
- Where is the front?
- Is it the right way up?
- What is the title?

The Code

Language is a code and we have to teach children how to break it.



Context

When reading we apply what we already know to help us make it make sense. For young children this might be situations, places or objects, when children begin to read more complex texts their knowledge of how language works also helps them.

The way a grown up introduces a new book therefore can really help children to tackle it:

What do you think it might be about?

Do you remember when we...?

Who do you think this is?

This boy is called...?

Repetition

You've probably noticed that lots of reading books have a very repetitive text – this is because children can then get a flow and feel successful.

The Pictures

Please don't cover up the pictures when your child is reading a book, they are not just there to make it look pretty. They give valuable information to the child to help them work out the story. Talk about the pictures first.

If you want to work with children on reading individual words then **use flash cards**.

Phonics

At school we use a structured scheme called Jolly Phonics.



Letter sounds (phonemes) are taught first then letter names. They are taught in a careful order so that children can quickly build words. The children are quickly introduced to digraphs – where 2 letters make 1 sound for example ch or th – the English language has 26 letters but 44 sounds.

In school the children practise daily with flash cards – they do the action and say the sound which helps to build a memory for symbols. The enunciation or way you say the sound is **VERY IMPORTANT**. Each letter sound has a story and action and the children learn to write the letter shape too.

Blending is when we join sounds together to work out words, the faster a child learns to blend, the faster they learn to read and write. The progression is usually

- Adults say the sounds of a word (s-u-n) and the child says the word (sun). It helps to say the first sound a bit louder.
- The child says the sounds of a word (c-a-t) and then says the word (cat).

Listening skills are essential, if a child can't hear the difference between the sounds then it is hard to blend them.

Blending doesn't easily work for all words, some are **Tricky Words** you just need to know - words like 'the' and 'to'.

Phonics work doesn't stop when the children have mastered the basic code of 44 sounds.

There are many other complexities, for example there are words that are spelled the same but said differently depending on meaning:

I can read a story.

I read a book yesterday.

There are combinations of letters make the same sound for example:

**ay in 'stay', ey in 'they', ai in 'rain', a_e in 'make'
and eigh as in 'sleigh'.**

Reading Strategies

As more of the mechanics of reading are mastered we work with the children on using the strategies they have learned.

Relying only on 1 strategy doesn't work. Independence involves experimenting with what is the best way to work out a difficult word and how to be fluent and expressive

Sound it out

Blending

Picture clues

Guess (inference)

Read ahead/go back

Known spelling patterns

Use the context

Previous knowledge of familiar text

Talk to someone

Read the punctuation

Expression

Understanding

It's not enough to be able to read the words you see – you also need to be able to understand what you are reading. With our more able readers this is a crucial aspect of their learning and something parents can help with when sharing stories at home.

It's all in the conversation:

- Who was your favourite character – why?
- Did the story end as you thought it would?
- How else might it have ended?
- Was the setting important?
- Could the story have happened anywhere else?
- How did it make you feel?
- What other stories have you read like this?



A Well Balanced Reading Programme at School

Shared Reading

We often use a big book to focus on particular reading skill for example, key words, expression or comprehension.

Guided Reading

We use this when basic reading skills are established. Small groups of children who are reading at a similar level share the same text and the teacher will focus on a particular area to develop.

Independent Reading

It is really important, especially as they get older, that children feel able to read by themselves. It is therefore important that the text is not too difficult.



A Graded Reading Scheme

At school we follow a graded reading scheme, hence the coloured stickers on the books. As children move between the levels we give you some guidance on how to support them with the coloured stickers in the reading diary.

We know the level for each child because we assess them regularly using a scheme called Benchmarking. The benchmarking books are carefully graded and the children only see these books during the assessment.

What are we looking for the children to

- read with 95% accuracy,
- read with fluency,
- remember what has happened in the story,
- be able to talk around the story.

The rate of progress varies from child to child and individual children may make rapid progress then plateau for a while or not progress and then take off!

Learning to read is not a competition or a race!



Golden rules for reading at home:

As often as possible but not a chore

Read to your child more than you listen to them

Be comfortable

Praise

It's not a test

Focus on what is right

Enough is enough

ENJOY