

15<sup>th</sup> April 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

We know how important your child's reading is to you and there have been questions that you have asked when holding discussions with teachers. Therefore, as an English team, we thought it would be beneficial to outline how we teach reading in school and clarify anything that you may have heard the children mention that you are unfamiliar with.

### **Why does my child have two books?**

Every child has two books. The first book is their 'reading for pleasure' book. This book is chosen by the child from the class book shelf or the school library. The second book is their 'practise book' which is also referred to as a 'colour band' book. This book is matched at the child's reading ability.

### **What is 'benchmarking'?**

PM Benchmark is a form of reading assessment which is designed to assess students' instructional and independent reading levels using accurately levelled fiction and non-fiction texts. Benchmarking assesses the children fluency and comprehension skills.

### **What is a 'colour band' book?**

Colour band books are books that are levelled by difficulty. Each Book Band has its own colour – from lilac to dark red. Children work their way through the colours. They tend to learn at different speeds – periods of growth followed by periods of consolidation, their progress may seem to slow for a while. The periods where you don't see rapid progress may seem worrying but they are important, as your child develops confidence in using and applying their newly acquired skills. If you are ever worried about your child's progress, talk to their teacher.

### **What is a 'decodable' book?**

*Decodable books* are books that contain the phonetic code that the student has already learned. For example, a child at the beginning stages of reading who has learned the short vowel sounds could decode simple words like hat, bed, and pig, but would not be able to decode words like see and owl. Therefore, the book they are given just uses those words. The decodable books that the children take home to read are closely linked to their phonic knowledge and the phase they are currently working on.

Phase 2 – pink colour band books

Phase 3 – red and yellow colour band books

Phase 4 – blue colour band books

Phase 5 – green and orange colour band books

### **Why has my child been asked to read a book for a second time?**

A child may be asked to read a book for a second time to further develop their fluency or if the adult feels that they have not understood the text.

### **What is 'fluency'?**

Fluency is the ability to read a text accurately, with appropriate pace, and with expression. Fluency is important because it provides a bridge between word recognition and comprehension.

### **What is 'comprehension'?**

Comprehension is the understanding and interpretation of what is read. To be able to accurately understand written material, children need to be able to (1) decode what they read; (2) make connections between what they read and what they already know; and (3) think deeply about what they have read.

### **When does my child change their book?**

Foundation stage – when they have read their book and show a good level of fluency and understanding (book changing days are currently Monday and Thursday)

KS1 – when they have read their book and show a good level of fluency and understanding (book changing days are currently Monday and Thursday)

KS2 – when they have read the book and discussed it with an adult

### **Why is my child being asked to read a poetry book?**

We pride ourselves on offering children a wide range of genres throughout their school life. Poetry is an important part of their reading diet as it gives them the opportunity to explore words and their meaning at a higher level.

### **What is a 'free reader' and when do they become a 'free reader'?**

The term 'free reader' refers to a child who has finished the reading scheme. Children don't necessarily have read every single book in the reading scheme – it's common to skip titles or even whole stages as they progress – but will have worked through the levels to a point where their teacher feels their reading skills and comprehension are secure. Instead of having two books, your child will just have a 'reading for pleasure' book. If your child becomes a 'free reader', it is still expected that they read with an adult at home and will be listened to by an adult in school at least once a week.

### **How is my child assessed as a reader?**

The following assessments take place:

- Benchmarking – at the end of each half term
- NTS Reading Assessment – at the end of each term
- Teacher assessment – at the end of each half term
- Phonics assessments (EYFS, KS1 and identified children in KS2) – at the end of each half term

### **What does WTS, EXS, GDS mean?**

WTS means that your child is working below the expected standard for their year group.

EXS means that your child is working at the expected standard for their year group.

GDS means that your child is working above the expected standard for their year group.

**If my child is struggling, what support is available?**

If you are concerned about your child's reading, please make sure that you contact your child's class teacher in the first instance. There are lots of ways that we support the children in school with their reading. Here are just a few:

- Lexia
- Phonics intervention
- Individual reading sessions
- After school booster classes
- Deployment of support staff

As always, if you do have any questions regarding reading please do not hesitate to contact your child's teacher or a member of the English team.

Regards,

Miss Sarah Hennigan and Mrs Penny Marshall

(EYFS & KS1 English Lead) (KS2 English Lead)