

Reading and Phonics at Rush Common School

Reading at School

Rush Common School aims to instil a passion for books and foster a love for reading right from the start so that children become confident and fluent readers. As a school we strive to help children recognise that reading is a life-long skill and will be a fundamental throughout their lives.

The processes by which children comprehend spoken language are the same as those by which they comprehend the words on the page; the difference being that the first relies upon hearing the words and the second upon seeing the words in written form. In order to comprehend written texts, children must first learn to recognise (decode) the words on the page.

Rush Common School believes that getting children off to an early start in reading helps them quickly build up the skills that they need to expand their knowledge and vocabulary. The two areas that are essential for this are:

1. Good early phonics-based teaching of word-decoding skills. This means helping the child to recognise and understand the sounds that letter combinations make – word recognition.
2. Supporting and encouraging children to engage with reading – language comprehension.

The 'simple view of reading' shows that both dimensions are necessary to achieve fluent reading. However, the balance between word recognition and language comprehension shifts as children acquire secure and automatic decoding skills and progress from 'learning to read' to 'reading to learn' for purpose and pleasure. The ultimate goal of learning to read is comprehension. Being able to decode is not enough – unless a child gets practice and experience of reading, he or she will not capitalise on those decoding skills.

Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1

Throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Key Stage 1 (KS1), children are read to continuously as this helps them to learn how books 'work' and develops familiarity with written forms of language. This knowledge and experience makes things much easier when they encounter print.

In the early stages of learning to read, children are exposed to printed words and begin to develop word-recognition and start to see links between sound and letters. This ability, which is known as phonological awareness, is a vital foundation for building fluency of reading. Teachers focus on helping children develop their word recognition skills so they develop a bank of familiar words. As this bank of words expands, the emphasis on comprehension and response grows, helping the focus to move from learning to read, to reading to learn, engaging and interacting with a wide range of texts for purpose and pleasure. At Rush Common School, children are exposed to a range of fiction and non-fiction books which are regularly changed to aid progression with their reading and are provided with individual targets to inform them of their next steps. Rush Common School ensures that a range of colourful and exciting texts are available within each class and in shared reading areas. There is also a well-stocked school library which pupils have the opportunity to visit as part of their curriculum time and during their playtimes.

Alongside the teaching of phonics (see details below), guided reading sessions take place daily. Children read a book in a small group with a teacher and practice key skills, for example; focusing on words and sentences and how they fit into whole texts; reading for meaning; and answering a range of questions to assess their understanding. This questioning is differentiated according to ability and individual needs. Children are also taught on a 1:1 basis to further support their reading skills.

To read texts with greater accuracy and understanding, the pupils are taught to use a number of strategies, including:

- segmenting and blending phonemes in words
- identifying syllables in words
- recognising words with common spelling patterns
- recognising high frequency words and other familiar words
- using picture clues
- using punctuation to help them make sense of the text
- rereading a word or sentence to support their understanding
- using their knowledge of book conventions, structure, sequence and presentation
- encouraging book talk, expressing their opinions and preferences with reasons, and predicting what might happen

Rush Common school uses popular and well-established reading scheme books, which provide the children with reading material which is pitched at exactly their level. 'Oxford Reading Tree' is used as the core resource, however this is supplemented with books from other schemes to provide an extensive library of books at every stage to ensure children have a broad and rich reading experience. These include bright, illustrated short story books set at the children's individual level so they can practice reading at school and at home with success. In addition to this, pupils have access to a range of fiction and non-fiction texts written by popular authors. As our children learn through a creative and cross-curricular text-based curriculum, this provides them with the skills to research topics using a variety of non-fiction texts.

Key Stage Two

In KS2, children are taught reading through whole class shared reading and small group reading, where children are supported to answer more complex higher-order questions about a text, for example inference and deduction. Children are also encouraged to ask their own questions to enhance their understanding. As part of Rush Common's 'text based' English curriculum, texts are often linked to other curriculum areas and feed in to writing lessons. To further encourage reading for pleasure, children are also provided with daily opportunities to read independently and engage in informal 'book talk' with their peers, discussing and expressing views about what they are reading as well as developing children's ability to challenge views courteously. In line with the new National Curriculum, each class also shares a class book (chosen collaboratively by children and teachers), which is read by the class teacher daily so that children experience authors and books that they might not choose to read themselves.

Reading at home

Rush Common School values parents as partners in the process of teaching reading. Children bring home books to share at home and these will be at the level that your child can access independently. Children will be at different stages in their reading and for some, the books that they bring home may contain just pictures.

Helpful Tips for Sharing Reading Books

- Make a regular time each day and sit with your child to enjoy some book talk time. 5 minutes of your full attention is better than a 15-minute session with lots of interruptions.
- Make it relaxed and enjoyable and make sure you give your child lots of praise.
- Start by looking at the front cover together. Ask your child to predict what the book might be about. For children reading longer books, ask them to summarise the story so far.
- Talk about the book they are reading:
 - What is your favourite part or character?
 - How do the pictures help you to read the story?
 - What makes the book different (or similar) to other stories you have read?
 - What do you think will happen next in the story?
- If your child gets stuck, give them some thinking time. Then you could suggest that they sound out the word or look at the picture or read on to the end of the sentence. Praise them when they work it out.
- If your child is still stuck, say the word and encourage them to repeat it. They may want to re-read from the beginning of the sentence so that they don't lose track of the meaning.
- If your child is getting frustrated because the book is too difficult, offer to share the reading. Let your child's teacher know.

Beyond the School

The school reading books are only part of reading at home. There is much more that you can do to help your child enjoy reading and grow in confidence:

- Read every day: read aloud to your children and encourage them to read to you.
- Have a variety of books at home: borrow books from the library, give them as gifts and help your child to build up a collection of their own favourites.
- Read yourself: make sure your child sees you reading for pleasure and for different purposes.
- You could make your own books – use photos and mementoes from special occasions. Work with your child to decide what the text should say and help them to read it back to you.
- Read and share all-time favourites.
- Point out words around you in the wider world, e.g. road signs, shop or building names, notices
- Challenge your child to tell you the story of a TV programme or film you may watch
- Read comics together using different voices for the characters
- Read a book, then watch the film – decide which version your family likes best and why.
- Make a challenge to do at the library, e.g. find different books about a topic of your choice or find this number of books by different authors who have the surname 'Blyton'.

Phonics

Phonics is a method of teaching children to read and write English Language. It teaches children that the sounds of the English Language are represented by letters or groups of letters. Phonics is knowing that sounds and letters have a relationship; it is the link between what we say and what we can read and write. It runs alongside other teaching methods, such as guided reading and shared reading to help children develop all the other vital reading skills and acquire a real love of reading.

Words are made up from small units of sound called phonemes. Phonics teaches children to be able to listen carefully and identify the phonemes that make up each word. This helps children to read and spell words.

All children have focused phonics teaching every day. Rush Common's approach to learning phonics in EYFS and KS1 is through using the Letters and Sounds scheme of work produced by the Department for Education, as well as Jolly Phonics. Rush Common School employs a multisensory approach in EYFS and by using Jolly Phonics, the pupils are provided with a picture, a song and an action to help them learn each different sound. This is an effective and interactive way for young learners to recall phonemes. This scheme introduces each pure letter sound whilst also encouraging the children to listen carefully to sounds and to write them too. Children learn 44 sounds and the corresponding letters/letter groups using simple picture prompts and captions to aid letter formation. They are also taught to blend sounds and segment. Blending is the skill of saying the sounds that make up a word and merging the sounds together until the word can be heard. Segmenting is the opposite of blending. To segment, children are able to say a word and then break it up into the phonemes that make it up. This skill is vital in being able to spell words.

The Letters and Sounds programme provides staff with games and resources to support the teaching of phonics. It aims to build pupils' speaking and listening skills, as well as prepare pupils to learn to read, by developing their phonic knowledge and skills. During the teaching of phonics, children are split into smaller groups which are organised according to ability. Rush Common School aims to make phonics sessions highly engaging; teachers use a range of games and resources to ensure that all children are actively involved. Phonics sessions may include interactive whiteboard games, using websites such as:

- <http://www.phonicsplay.co.uk/>
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/wordsandpictures/phonics/sandcastle/index.shtml>
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/ks1/literacy/phonics/play/>
- <http://www.educationcity.com>
- <http://www.letters-and-sounds.com/>

These games can also be played at home to reinforce the learning at school.

Supporting Phonics at Home

Ideas and activities to help develop children's phonic skills:

- Linking sounds to letters – play 'I Spy' to hear initial sounds
- Counting the sounds in words
- Games, games and more games...
- Rhyme and rhythm: onset and rhyme
- Word sort games: ie/igh
- Whole Word games: Scrabble, Boggle,

Further support for parents can be found on the Oxford Owl website: <http://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/>