

Basic Reading Skills

Phonics Knowledge (sounds and spelling)

Gaining a knowledge of phonics is most important in the early stages of reading. At an early age, children become aware of sounds around them and can discriminate between different sounds they hear in their environment, such as a dog barking, a cat meowing or the beep of the pelican crossing. Once children can do this, they can build upon it to learn about the sounds involved with language. Singing nursery rhymes is a way in which we encourage phonic awareness in the early stages of teaching reading at St. Andrew's School. Rhymes help children hear the different sounds in our language. Children then begin by learning the individual sounds which go together to make words, as in d/o/g= dog. These speech sounds are called phonemes. The ability to hear individual phonemes and associate them with a letter or a group of letters is a vital early stage in learning to read. This then leads on to children breaking up a word into sounds (segmenting) and then building it back up to say the whole word (blending).



Children at St. Andrew's are taught phonics through a system called 'Letters and Sounds'. We also use 'Jolly Phonics' within the main system of 'Letters and Sounds' that provides children with an action, song and visual image for the children to remember each single phoneme (one letter sound *a, b, c*) and also a digraphs (two letters together which makes one sound *ai, ie, ee, th, sh, ch*) and trigraphs (three letters together which makes one sound *igh, ear, ure*). Most of these are introduced at a very rapid pace throughout Reception.

It is very beneficial that you encourage your child to identify these sounds and use them frequently as this is the first stepping stone for your child in learning to read. You can do this by encouraging your child to sound out a word when reading with your child at home. Letters and Sounds is explicitly taught until the end of Y1 and revisited at the beginning of Y2. However, phonic knowledge will be used throughout your child's education as they meet trickier words in the more challenging texts they read and in their spelling. If your child is having difficulty with their phonic knowledge this will be reinforced and consolidated throughout their schooling at St. Andrew's.

Word Recognition and Graphic Knowledge

Unfortunately, in the English language, phonic knowledge will not help decode every word. English has lots of irregular words - words that can't be sounded out, so, from Reception, children will be taught to recognise common 'irregular' words as wholes. These types of words are known as 'tricky' words and they will be displayed in classrooms and often sent home for your child to learn them by sight as part of the first 45 and first 100 common words.

Grammatical Knowledge

For children to read fluently, children must also use their knowledge of grammar - the way sentences are put together and make sense. During reading sessions, we might encourage children to "miss a word out" if they are finding it tricky and continue reading the sentence. We will then support them in using their grammatical knowledge to decipher what word is missing.



Knowledge of context

Your child will bring home a variety of different text types in their book bag - from fictional stories and fairy tales to non-fiction texts. This will help your child build a knowledge of different text types and the features of them. The more your child knows about different types of texts, from general knowledge, talking about the subject before reading and from looking at the pictures, the more it will help them to work out unknown words.