

Dear parents and carers

Welcome again, to a new school year! We are writing to you to outline some reading ideas for you to share with your child.

Key Stage One is such an exciting time for your child as a reader, as they become familiar with a growing number of sounds and common exception words and hence continue to read with growing fluency and confidence. As you may already be aware, as soon as your child begins in reception at Lower Park, they are introduced to the Read, Write inc. (RWi) systematic phonics programme. This scheme continues throughout Key Stage One and sometimes beyond, until your child is confident identifying, decoding and blending all the most common sounds used in the English language. In these early weeks of the new school year, we will be informally assessing your child in these sounds and words, in order to ensure that the books they bring home to read are consistent with what they are learning, or have previously learnt, in school. This way, your child consolidates their learning as they progress through the scheme, as well as experiencing a high level of success throughout each step of their reading journey.

Common exception word reading challenge! We have attached a list of common exception words for years one and two to this letter. These words (also known as 'red' words in RWi) are exceptions to the 'best bet' rules of sounding out and are more difficult to decode. Unfortunately, they therefore just have to be practised and learnt on sight. It is essential for your child to be able to read these words confidently and without hesitation or attempting to sound out – this will greatly improve their fluency and comprehension when reading. We would recommend focusing on a few words at a time, depending upon your child's confidence and then introducing new words on an on-going basis. Make these practise sessions short, frequent and as fun and fast-paced as possible. Here are some suggestions for some games:

- Write five words (or ten if your child is confident) on flashcards and hide them around the house and garden. How quickly can your child find them and read them all correctly?
- Play Snap with two sets of the same words mixed up, encouraging your child to read the words aloud as they go.
- Play Kim's game (two sets of the same words face down on cards, turn two over at a time and keep if you make a pair).
- Place the words on flashcards going up the stairs and encourage your child to read them on the way up.
- How many words can your child read in 10 seconds? 30 seconds? 1 minute? Can they beat their score?
- Bingo: Write the words on a grid for your child and pull flashcards out of a bag. How quickly can your child achieve three in a row or a full house?
- We have enclosed a colouring sheet which your child may like to shade in every time they can read a word on sight (without hesitation or attempting to sound out). Please note, this sheet shows all the common exception words that your child will be expected to be able to read **by the end of the school year**, so please don't feel under pressure to do them all at once! We will continue to introduce these words daily during phonics lessons and guided reading sessions in school.

1. Learn a nursery rhyme or poem to perform aloud. We would like your child to choose a short nursery rhyme or children's poem to learn and recite aloud. Poetry, stories with repeating patterns of language and song are all really important parts of early reading. They introduce your child to rhythm and rhyme (as well as the fact that poetry doesn't always rhyme), and hopefully can also be lots of fun! We would therefore ask that you work with your child to select a poem for them to learn off by heart. This may be a very simple repeating pattern of just a few lines, or it may be longer and more complex, depending on their confidence (it may be you need to guide them in order to ensure they don't choose a poem that is too challenging). Once you have chosen a poem, we would suggest that you model reading the poem aloud several times to your child first. Discuss the structure of the poem with your child (i.e. where to take a breath, whether your voice goes up or down, quiet or loud, whether any words rhyme etc). Encourage your child to practise reading the poem as many times as they need to in order to be able to perform it with confidence. They may wish to learn the poem off by heart, or they may

prefer to have the poem in front of them to act as a prompt, but either way it would be great if you could support your child in practising reading the poem aloud so that they are confident, fluent and expressive. In the week beginning 20<sup>th</sup> September we will invite the children to perform their poem to the rest of the class if they so wish. However, **performing the poem is not an assessment and is not compulsory** (we want it to be fun!), so please don't worry if your child would prefer not to perform. Your child may wish to choose a traditional nursery rhyme, or they may prefer to choose something else. These websites have some lovely poems for children if you are having difficulty choosing:

<https://www.joshuaseigal.co.uk/my-poems>

<http://www.jamescarterpoet.co.uk/poems.html>

<https://funny-poems.co.uk/children/primary/>

2. Design a bookmark. The children will have the opportunity for 'quiet reading' each day in school, where they can enjoy reading at their own pace. With this in mind we would love it if your child can bring in their own bookmark for occasions when they might need a placeholder. There are lots of lovely suggestions here: <https://thewaystocreate.com/16-easy-handmade-bookmark-ideas-for-kids-to-make/> and here: <https://www.redtedart.com/tag/bookmarks/> but please feel free to use your own ideas! We would ask that the children bring their (named) bookmarks into school no later than 20th September.
3. Look together at your child's own picture book selection. Can they pick out their favourite five? Chat about these books together. Why are they favourites? Who are the main characters? What happens in the stories? Are they similar or are they all very different? Or does your child prefer non-fiction? Enjoy some special story times with your child: you may wish to create a 'story snug' where you make a reading den out of cushions, blankets and bedsheets and enjoy hot chocolate and biscuits. Alternatively, if the weather is good, you may wish to have a 'booknic' outside, where you fill a hamper with your child's favourite books and enjoy sharing them on a picnic blanket with their favourite treats. We would love to see any photographs of your reading experiences on Dojo and we will celebrate with your child and share them with the rest of the class.
4. Happy reading! We are so looking forward to having lots of 'book chats' with your children, to find out their favourite books and hopefully to introduce them to some fabulous new ones. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions or concerns.

Best wishes

The Key Stage One team