

## HIGH FREQUENCY WORDS



### What are High Frequency Words?

High Frequency words are those words which occur most frequently in a text, for example, '**and**', '**the**', '**as**' and '**it**'. They are often words that have little meaning on their own, but they do contribute a great deal to the meaning of a sentence. Some of the key words can be sounded out using basic phonic rules, for example '**it**' is an easy word to read using phonics. However, many of the key words are not phonetically regular and are therefore hard to read in the early stages. These words are also referred to as Red Words, Orange Words (KS2), tricky words or sight words. In addition to being difficult to sound out, most of these words have a rather abstract meaning which is hard to explain to a child. It's easy to learn words like **cat** and **house** because they can easily be related to a real object or a picture, but how do you represent the word "**the**" or '**of**'?

High Frequency words are words which children need to tackle even in very simple texts. These words usually play an important part in holding together sentences and early familiarity with them helps children get pace and accuracy into their reading at an early stage.

### Why learn the High Frequency Words?

Researchers tell us that learning just 13 of the most frequently used words will enable children to read 25% of any text (whilst that 25% wouldn't make much sense on its own, it's a very good start).

Learning 100 key words gives a beginner reader access to 50% of virtually any text. When you couple immediate recognition of key words with a good knowledge of basic phonics, that's when a child's reading can really take off.

### What are we doing in school?

From EYFS onwards, children are taught to recognise key words in context when reading and to use them with accuracy in their writing. Many of the key words have difficult spellings and do not follow regular patterns so the words need to be reinforced through other practice and activities.

In Key Stage 1 we have produced our own system for teaching these words, allowing children to learn them in small steps of 10 words at a time and achieving a certificate once each set has been successfully acquired.

Teachers keep records of children's progress through the sets of words – this of course will vary as all children are individual and learn at different rates. There is no pressure to move on to the next set until children are confident in the reading and spelling of the words they are learning.

### What can you do at home?

Research shows that work at home can make an important contribution to children's progress at school. All children who access the RWI reading books or Book Bag Books are exposed regularly to red and green words which are pulled out of the main text as a key focus. In Years 1 and 2, child bring home an appropriate set of High Frequency words, also linked to the RWI programme. Once in Key Stage 2, focus is on spelling patterns and rules and the 100 high frequency words. Any help you are able to give your child with the learning of these words will reinforce their learning in the classroom and support their development of a sight vocabulary, which is essential if children are to read and write with confidence, fluency and understanding.

Please ask if you have any questions or would like more guidance.