

Next week is half term break. Although some of the children are looking ready for a week off, they have had an excellent first half term and we have been really pleased with how well everyone has settled and picked up routines. Thank you for all your help and support in getting them off to a good start.

Next half term we will be continuing the topic of 'This is Me!' This week we will continue our work on families and recap after half term and start to think about pets. The children are welcome to bring in pictures of their family or pets to share.

We hope you have been finding the newsletter helpful. Please let us know if there is ever anything you would like additional information about. This week we have included some information about books phonemic awareness and books we read.

Please could you ensure your child has one or two changes of clothes in school, including socks, for if they have an accident or get wet. If your child has needed to borrow any of our clothes, please could you return them as we are getting low, and it's good to have spares in case of emergencies, thank you.

We hope you all have a lovely Autumn break, and the children have a relaxing week off ready for a busy, exciting second half of the term as we head towards Christmas! You may have noted in the Woodstock weekly the dates for the Nativity are December 10<sup>th</sup> @ 9:30 and December 11<sup>th</sup> @ 2:00pm. You will receive more details next half term. Monday 4<sup>th</sup> is an INSET day, so we look forward to seeing you on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup>

Best wishes

Ellie Green & Kelly McIlroy

## The Teaching of Phonics and Reading in Nursery

### Phonemic Awareness

In Nursery children are introduced to learning about letters and sounds initially by supporting the development of speaking and listening and awareness of sounds. Spoken language is made up of sequences of little sounds. The small units of speech that correspond to letters of an alphabetic writing system are called phonemes. The awareness that language is composed of these small sounds is termed phonemic awareness.

The awareness of phonemes can be difficult as people do not attend to the sounds of phonemes as they produce or listen to speech. Instead, they process the phonemes automatically, directing their active attention to the meaning of the utterance as a whole. The challenge, therefore, is to find ways to get children to notice the phonemes, to discover their existence and separability. Fortunately, many of the activities involving rhyme, rhythm, listening, and sounds that young children enjoy are ideally suited for this purpose.

This awareness is the essential first step to reading, and a child's level of phonemic awareness on entering school is widely held to be the strongest single determinant of the success that she or he will experience in learning to read. Research clearly shows that phonemic awareness can be successfully developed through activities and, furthermore, that doing so significantly accelerates children's subsequent reading and writing achievement. To encourage this development children will experience activities where they explore and experiment with sounds and words, distinguish between sounds in the environment and phonemes, and show awareness of rhyme and alliteration.

Activities of this kind fall largely within the Communication & Language and Literacy areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage, although they also draw on and promote other areas of learning. As well as a variety of games and activities we play with the children music also has a key part in developing children's language. Many activities are adult-led activities and the way we model speaking and listening, interact and talk with the children is critical to the success in promoting the children's speaking and listening skills. We also provide opportunities on a daily basis for child-initiated learning where the children can play and explore their new-found skills. This plays a very important part in their development.

By the time the children leave Nursery they will have experienced a wealth of listening activities, including songs, stories and rhymes. They will hopefully be able to distinguish between speech sounds and many will be able to blend and segment words orally. Some will also be able to recognise spoken words that rhyme and will be able to provide a string of rhyming words, but inability to do this does not prevent children moving onto the next phase as these speaking and listening activities continue.

The next phase involves children learning the first set of sounds with their associated letters. These are taught explicitly in the term before Reception, and we support the children as they show readiness. Learning letters and sounds enables children to see the relationship between reading and spelling from an early stage, such that the teaching of one reinforces understanding of the other. Decoding (reading) and encoding (spelling/writing) are treated as reversible processes.

We appreciate that children are at different points in their development and will progress at different rates, so we work to support them with activities relevant to them. We will also suggest home learning activities through this newsletter that will support children's phonemic awareness.

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### Reading

Picture books are so important. In Nursery books are shared through a planned story time at least daily. The children are sometimes read to 1:1 or in small groups in addition to this. This is dependent on the development of the child's listening and communication skills as well as their ability to concentrate for a length of time. When sharing books children are encouraged to make observations, discuss their views, and enjoy stories. Children are encouraged to talk about what is happening in the picture, how or why it is happening and predict what might happen next. Developing their descriptive language is also very important at this stage.

Throughout the year the structure of a book is explained, for example, the book cover, front & back, title, author, illustrator and how we read from left to right. The children also learn how to treat books with care and respect.

As parents you play a major role in encouraging your child to read. Building on their initial observations to enhance their story telling as much as possible and helping them develop their language will go a long way in ensuring your child becomes a confident and happy reader.

As you probably know from sharing books at home children are often keen to read the same book over and over again. At Nursery we use a core bank of stories that we will be working on and revisiting through the year. These are almost all very repetitive and rather like songs! This makes them easier for children to join in with so that the experience of reading becomes interactive, and the children begin to learn the story as they are read to. In each book there will be much to discuss so that the children understand the vocabulary as well as what is happening. All the books have pictures, which support the text but also compliment and add to it. It is important to discuss the pictures and what is happening in them as much as the text. After a while, the children will get to know each story word for word, which can give great confidence to early readers in terms of fluency when reading.

Some of the core books we share are: -

- **Where's Spot?** Eric Hill (Puffin)
- **Dear Zoo** Rod Campbell (Puffin)
- **You Choose** Pippa Goodhart and Nick Sharratt (Random House)
- **We're Going on a Bear Hunt** Michael Rosen (Walker Books)
- **Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?** Bill Martin Jnr and Eric Carle (Windmill Books)
- **Jasper's Beanstalk** Nick Butterworth and Mick Inkpen (Hodder)
- **The Very Hungry Caterpillar** Eric Carle (Puffin)
- **Hairy Maclary from Donaldson's Dairy** Lynley Dodd (Puffin)
- **Each Peach Pear Plum** Allan and Janet Ahlberg (Puffin)
- **Hug** Jez Alborough (Walker Books)
- **The Train Ride** June Crebbin (Walker Books)
- **Come on, Daisy!** Jane Simmons (Orchard Books)

Alongside this reading list we will also share a selection of nursery rhymes, poems, traditional tales, stories from other cultures and myths and legends and 'page turners' to ensure that your children are absorbed in a rich and varied reading culture. We will let you know what rhymes and stories we focus on as we move through the year.

We have already shared 'Hug' and 'Where's Spot'. Over the next few weeks, we will be enjoying Hairy Maclary from Donaldson's Dairy and then Dear Zoo. You might wish to borrow these books from the library to share at home or if you already have them make a point of sharing them. Sharing Hairy Maclary many times with your child you can encourage them to join in and savour the rhymes. You might ask: *Which is your favourite dog? Who is your least favourite?* Try inventing other similes instead of 'as big as a horse', for example, 'as big as a car'! You could spot the rhyming words, play games to hear which words rhyme and which do not, or talk about names that we give pets.

The book Dear Zoo is a gateway into learning about different animals. The repetition of 'so' will add the conjunction to a child's repertoire. You could discuss the reasons for sending the animals back – heavy, fragile, tall, dangerous, fierce, grumpy, 'with care', scary, naughty, jumpy and perfect. Toys or puppets are a good way to act out different parts together and get really involved with the story. Simple puppets cut out of cereal boxes and stuck on lolly sticks will suffice.

We hope this information will help you support your child's learning. If we can be of further help, please ask.