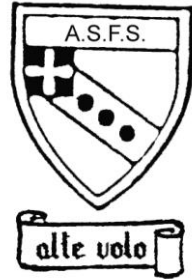


# All Saints' First School



## *Helping your child at home.*

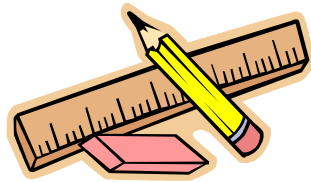
*A guide for parents and guardians.*

*This booklet is designed as a guide to help and support your child's learning.*

## Helping at home

Helping at home with your child's learning is a valuable support to the work that is done in school. It is appreciated by the school and is a way of becoming involved with the day to day development of a child's ability. At school we are often asked by parents and guardians the question 'How can we help our child?'

This booklet is designed to give you some ideas and guidance as to how you can support your child.



It is important to state that the school does have a homework policy that sets out what is to be expected of each year group in terms of work to be done at home.

We set a variety of homework activities. In the Foundation Stage and at Key Stage 1 we give children books to take home and read with their parents. We give guidance to parents on achieving the maximum benefit from this time spent reading with their child. Sometimes we ask children to talk about a topic at home prior to studying it in school. For example, in the history topic on toys, we ask children to find out what toys were popular when their grandparents were young, and, if possible, to bring examples into school to show other children. Sometimes we ask children to find and collect things that we then use in school, and occasionally we ask children to take home work that they have started in school, when we believe that they could benefit from spending further time on it. When we introduce a new topic, or research a particular subject, we encourage the children to use not only the school library but also the local library, as well as the internet. Weekly spellings and maths are given when appropriate in Key Stage 1.

At Key Stage 2 we continue to give children the sort of homework activities outlined above, but we expect them to do more tasks independently and we expect the children to consolidate and reinforce the learning done in school through practice at home. In this Key Stage, homework can be research/topic based over a period of time with a finished piece of work handed in for marking. Weekly maths and literacy tasks are given. Children are also expected to read at least 2 pages of their reading book each night.

Children of first school age should be able to rest, relax and play when they get home as well as taking part in out of school activities that interest them. School cannot dictate how much parents or guardians work on supporting school work but do ask that balance is kept. Our homework policy does recommend how much time should be spent on activities for good reasons. Whilst little support has a detrimental effect so does too much and no gain is made from trying to ask of a child to either go over and over skills or learn something they are not yet ready for. Also no piece of work should take more than half an hour. Please don't spend hours on any piece of work. If a child is finding something hard speak to the teacher or write a note on the work.

So below is some guidance on various ways in which you can help. Most of all it should be relaxed and fun and seen as an opportunity for your child to share with you the learning activities and skills they have covered during the school day.

## Reading at Home



At school we stress the importance of all children reading regularly. Children become better readers if they read with others at home. When parents hear their child read they improve their child's confidence and, by taking an interest, show that reading is important to them.

Some ideas to help your child read at home:

- Try to spend about 15 minutes each evening reading with your child. If she/he reads independently encourage him/her to have a quiet place away from distractions to read.
- When hearing your child read try to be patient. Encouragement and praise have a positive effect.
- If your child does not know a word, try to break it up into smaller bits. Perhaps give the beginning sound and encourage him/her to try the next bit. Ask your child to look at the picture and the context which surround the word that they are struggling with to try to guess what the tricky word might be.
- Never allow a child to struggle for too long over a word. They will lose track of the meaning of what they are reading.
- Look at the front cover and the title of the book. Ask your child to predict what the story might be about.
- Look at the pictures together before reading a page and discuss what you think the story might be about.
- Talk about the text. If it is a story discuss the characters and what they are doing. If it is an information book talk about other information that may be linked to the text.
- All children have been given a reading book mark with questions for you to ask your child at their appropriate reading level.
- Discuss what they think might happen to characters after the story has finished.
- Occasionally read the book aloud at the same time as your child so that he/she learns to read with expression.
- Some children may bring home a card with reading prompts on. These are linked to levels and the ideas on them should be used as discussion points about the book.
- Most importantly enjoy sharing books together!



## Reading in School

### The Daily Phonics Session:

All children in foundation stage and key stage one will take part in a 20 minutes daily phonics session. Key stage two children do phonics for three twenty minute sessions a week. For younger children this focuses on letter recognition, building up to blending letters for reading. As children become fluent readers and writers the phonics sessions will give them an opportunity to apply their phonics knowledge to recognise and spell an increasing number of complex words.

### Guided Reading:

All children take part in a guided reading session on a weekly basis. This is where a group of children of similar reading ability all share a book together with an adult in school. This gives staff the opportunity to listen to all the children in the group read from the book and also to discuss the book in more depth than if a child was reading to them individually.

Typically, if the book is fiction, children in a guided reading session might:

- Look at the front cover of the book and predict what the story is about.
- Discuss how characters are feeling at different points in the story and what we think they might do or say next.
- Consider how punctuation is used in the story.
- Have a go at putting more expression into their reading.
- Consider the vocabulary choices in the story and the effect they have.

### Individual Reading Books:

Our scheme is made up of fiction, poetry and non fiction books with the idea that, over time, children can experience each genre of writing and develop their own preferences. Many schools do not have an individual scheme but as a school we are very proud of the impact and opportunities this provides.

All children will bring a reading book home from the school scheme. For reception this is not straight away and the children begin the scheme when the reception staff consider the individual to be ready. It is important first to get a basic level of phonics and the process is always explained at a meeting for reception parents held early in the autumn term.

Children's books will be changed for a new one at the discretion of the teacher. The reading scheme is designed to develop confidence and an enjoyment of books with emphasis placed on the rounded reader who has a depth of comprehension rather than moving through the scheme with speed. It is not possible to change books everyday as it is a very time consuming process however the staff endeavour to try to change books as often as possible. For the younger ones it could be that the children are given 2 or 3 books for the week. The idea is not that these are read on the first night and then more expected but that they are used in line with the guidelines above. Also the whole idea of the reading scheme is to provide a structure for the development of each child's reading which then can be applied to books from home, library books, etc. We hope that you will help us in

encouraging the children to use their reading skills on a whole range of materials they see every day.

Children in Years 3 and 4 are capable of organising their own changing of books under the guidance of their teacher. Throughout the week day they will be given opportunity to do this however it is up to them to get their book ready for changing and either asking what they should get or telling the teacher what they have chosen. This is something they can all do independently.

## Spellings for home

As part of the phonic sessions children may be given a number of spellings or a spelling rule to learn. These will focus on the sounds or patterns being covered during the week and may be checked in a simple test. The children will move onto these tests usually during Year 1 at some point but it is important that they start when they are ready. Children will have spent time in their phonics groups learning the blend or pattern to be tested. Therefore they should already have a good grasp of the words they are to be tested on when they bring home their list of test words.

## Reading Journals

As children become fluent readers they will be expected to keep a reading journal. This is an exercise type book provided by school where the children are encouraged to jot down things of interest that arise from what they have read. It is an excellent habit to cultivate. The children are told that the journal is theirs and can be used and organised in a way which suits them best. They are encouraged to use it to respond to and reflect on their reading.

The kind of things the children might want to include in their reading journals are:

- WOW words and descriptions from their reading – these could be divided into descriptions of people, settings etc.
- Glossaries and definitions of words that are new to them.
- Diary entries for a character.
- Letters to a character or from a character.
- Alternative endings to a story.
- Transforming part of the text, e.g. story to play script, newspaper report, cartoon strip etc.
- Writing down facts learnt from the book
- Using a non fiction book to write their own quiz
- Draw a timeline of events from a book
- Write questions you would like to ask the author of the book.

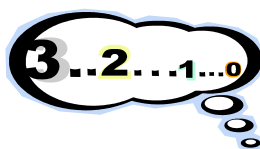
Sometimes children will be asked to complete a specific activity in their journals for homework but they are also free to use their journals whenever they want to. Teachers are always keen to see what they have been using their journals for and will often reward them with merits.

## Handwriting

Starting in the Foundation Stage we teach a continuous cursive style of handwriting. This is in line with our dyslexia friendly status the key advantages to this style of handwriting are:

- By making each letter in one movement, children's hands develop a 'physical memory' of it, making it easier to produce the correct shape;
- Because letters and words flow from left to right, children are less likely to reverse letters which are typically difficult (like b/d or p/q);
- There is a clearer distinction between capital letters and lower case;
- The continuous flow of writing ultimately improves speed and spelling.

## Numeracy work for home



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Children in Years 2, 3 and 4 will receive weekly homework linked to the numeracy work they have covered. When year 1 children are ready then appropriate activities may be set. The objective of numeracy homework is either to reinforce the objectives covered throughout the week or to give the children chance to use and apply previous knowledge.

The children should be able to explain how they could do their work. Please try not to do the work in 'the way you were taught' as this can work against what is being done in the class. All homework is issued with an introduction from the teacher. If your child is finding the work hard the best approach is to try to encourage before contacting the teacher who will then put in the relevant support.

Homework is not the only way that you can help with the numeracy that your child is doing in school. Try some of these to reinforce learning that has taken place at school:

□ A key part of every numeracy session in school is mental maths, so practise at home. Children must get used to solving problems in their heads, rather than resorting to a calculator. Play games with your child: throw two dice and multiply the numbers, then move on to multiplying the sum of two throws by the sum of another two throws. Try to get some pace into the game!

- Play snakes and ladders, cribbage, darts, dominoes and other games that depend on numbers, counting, calculation and scoring. 'Battleships' is a fun way to use graphs. Invest in a range of maths puzzle books.
- Talk about pocket money with your child. Help them to add it up week by week, and work out whether they can afford a particular toy or treat. Shop using money and calculate change.
- Capitalise on hobbies. If your child is car-mad, talk about relative engine sizes, fuel economy, speed and performance. If they have a favourite pop group, get them to compile a list of statistics such as the number of weeks each single is in the charts. Watch and play sports that involve scoring, timing, counting, measuring.
- Add number apparatus to your child's toy collection - counters, a purse full of change, dice, dominoes, a tape measure, ruler, pack of cards, timer, different shapes - and use them to make mathematics come alive.
- Be creative! Ask your child to look out for patterns and shapes on floors, wallpaper, plants, animals, buildings - anything from the arrangement of tiles in the kitchen to the markings on the cat. Draw objects made entirely of triangles, rectangles or squares: make 'butterfly' pictures by painting on one half of the paper and folding it over so that the image is mirrored. Make mobiles by suspending objects from coat hangers and ensuring they balance.
- Think about time. Look at clocks, both digital and analogue. Estimate how long a certain activity will take to do and see if you are right! Work out how long it is until the next mealtime. Play games: how long is a minute, starting from now?
- Think about calendars and dates too. Make a timeline that includes the birthdays of each member of the family and work out how far apart each one is. Use different units: months, weeks and days, even hours, minutes and seconds. Add other important events, such as a family holiday, and encourage your child to count down to the big day.
- Cooking is great for helping your child get to know simple weights and measures. An old-fashioned set of balance scales is ideal. Count out spoonfuls of ingredients. Let your child help you set the timer and count down to teatime! Later on, this is a good way to introduce the idea of ratios and proportions, too. Bear in mind that your child will be learning the metric system at school, so try to measure amounts in grams and kilograms.

Helping is not restricted to numeracy and literacy. Using the curriculum information on the school website you can become familiar with the topics covered and support your child through online research or with books from home or the library. Also going on visits linked to our topics is a great support to the work we do. Taking your child swimming and the other activities many of you do, help both the social and physical development of your child and the benefits are seen in a school.

We hope that this booklet gives you some ideas of the ways you could help your child. It was not designed to tell you what to do but to give ideas and advice if it is needed. We would welcome any comments on the above so that we can make improvements for the future.

Thank you.