

Dear Parents,

After the Mid- Term Break we will be commencing the Literacy Lift Off initiative for 1st and 2nd classes. This is an evidence based programme designed to develop literacy skills and increase the reading age of the participating pupils. It will run daily until Easter and each pupil will receive a new book going home every night. The school has invested hugely in these books so it is imperative that they are treated with great care and returned to school in the accompanying folder each day.

How does Literacy Lift Off operate?

The children are tested and their current reading age and level recorded. With this as a guide the children are then divided into four groups based on reading ability. The groups are designed so that each child is reading at her level and working with those of similar ability. Each group takes turns to participate in the following stations:

1. Familiar Reading
2. New Book
3. Phonics/ Word Study
4. Writing

The teacher adapts the activities of each station to the ability of each group. Station last for 10 minutes and then the children move to the next station.

Familiar Reading

Each child reads the book that they read at the new book station on the previous day. This is the book that they take home at night. At this station, as well as listening to the reading, the teacher will check the children's understanding of individual words. She will also check that the children have a grasp of the bigger picture. The roles of the characters are discussed. Comprehension strategies such as prediction, connecting to own life, inferring etc are all consolidated at this station.

New Book

At this station some or all of the following take place:

- Direction of reading
- Pointing to words while reading

- Picture walk (Discuss the pictures prior to reading to introduce children to some of the new vocabulary they will meet in the book)
- Introduction to story - author, illustrator, blurb, genre of story, plot, characters
- Teacher may model reading
- Word/ Letter find
- Each child reads at own pace in their indoor voice. Teacher listens to each child independently
- Teaching points on errors and strategies for figuring out unknown words (eg picture cues, context, decoding, chunking, "what makes sense?") are all done at this station

"Although a child reads a book with a high level of accuracy there may be many features of the text which have not yet come to notice" Marie Clay, Reading Recovery

The teacher endeavours to highlight these features of text in the more natural setting of reading rather than in isolation.

Word Study/ Phonics

At this table the children learn about the structure of words, sounds within words (beginning, middle and end sounds), blends (ch, br, ow, ai...), prefixes (word beginnings eg dis, un, mis...), suffixes (word endings eg. able, ing, ed), syllables, rhymes, compound words, silent letters etc. Grammar points like speech marks, commas, exclamation marks are also covered when the children are ready.

Each child has a mini whiteboard to practice writing words or making words with magnetic letters. Sound boxes are used to break words into chunks e.g .

Fl	ow	er
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This helps the children to see words as sound chunks rather than individual letters.

Writing

At this station the children are taught the process of writing. The emphasis is not on the finished sentence or on handwriting. The purpose is to encourage children to focus their thought so that they can create a concise well-formed sentence based on the book that they have just read. The process of transferring this thought to paper is a complex one as it tests the child in the following areas: identifying key points in the story, keeping the sentence in

their head while they are writing, word spacing, grammar and punctuation points, remembering sound structures for spelling.

Again this is all based on the child's level of reading fluency. Some groups may receive partially completed sentences such as: T- c- s- on t- b- m-. (The cat sat on the big mat) while other groups would be expected to construct more complex sentences on their own with the teacher as a guide.

How can parents help?

- Set aside 10 minutes each day to read with your child and engage in some of the following activities.
- Discuss the cover of the book, the pictures, the illustrator, author etc
- Listen to your child read
- If your child gets stuck on a word ask them what strategy they could use - look at the picture, chunk it up, sound it out, look for a little word within a big word, read on for clues (but always remember to go back!)
- Ask your child questions about the story and encourage your child to give as much information as possible.
- Your child could ask questions to see if you were paying attention! - this is your chance to model answering questions correctly.
- Can your child sequence events from the story correctly? What happened first, then what happened, what happened last?
- Can they summarise the story giving the main theme in one or two sentences?
- Discuss the characters, their favourite part of the story, what they didn't like, what might happen next if there was another chapter in the story?
- Is there anything in the story that reminds them of their own life? Talk about this with them.
- The more you talk with your child the more their vocabulary and confidence in speaking and reading will grow.

'The more you read, the more you know.

The more you know the more places you'll go!

Dr. Seuss

