

**Brockhurst and Marlston House Schools Pre-Preparatory Department.**  
**Early Years – Nursery.**

Dear Parents,

The exciting time has arrived for your child to embark upon their journey of learning to read. This journey will continue for many years and you will no doubt share times of great triumph and encounter challenges with your child.

During these early stages of development, it is crucial that your child develops and fosters a love of books, text and illustrations as it is this passion that will drive them to enjoy reading for life. For some children it takes a little while to locate this enthusiasm through support and encouragement and in others, it already exists. Both of these approaches are perfectly normal and wonderful in their own ways.

The books that will be coming home with your child are from a variety of reading schemes offering a wide range of text styles, writing styles, formats, subject matters and illustration techniques. We try to expose the children to different books so that they can tackle new texts with increasing confidence and learn more about books in general.

A key element in learning to read is deciphering a story. This is about the comprehension behind a text and the child's ability to perceive what is occurring and ultimately learn to 'read between the lines'. Some of the books are picture books with no words and this is designed to develop these comprehension skills within your child.

When your child brings home one of these books, it is important to spend time looking in depth at the pictures. Initially you may find you have to ask your child many questions to find out what is going on. In time, your child will learn how to read the pictures and they will begin to volunteer information. Quite often they pick out the humour, items they already know about or they relate what is happening to their own experience. We encourage all of this. Spending time looking at the detail of the pictures increases the child's understanding of the story. This can range from facial expressions to background activity.

During this early stage, you can ask your child to begin predicting the ending thus demonstrating their comprehension of what is happening. If they come up with an ending that is different to the books and yet still a plausible finish, discuss it with them and expand upon their ideas. This will encourage them

and highlight the notion that being an author is all about being creative and thoughtful.

As your child develops, books with simple words, high frequency words (those such as 'the' or 'and') and simple, short phrases may be introduced. Please do not be frustrated if your child has picture books for a while. These building blocks for reading must not be rushed and your child's teacher will know the best time to move forward.

With these books, it is important to continue developing all the skills outlined above. Please still take the time to enjoy the illustrations and use them to help decipher the text. Carry on asking interesting questions and predicting the endings to foster and nurture the enjoyment of reading.

When looking at the words, ask your child to sound out the letters. Encourage them to make the letter sounds instead of their names (such as 'a' for apple, not A). This is how they will be taught in school and it not only ensures consistency but also makes it easier to blend the sounds together to make words.

Once all the sounds have been identified, ask your child to say them again and again, quicker and quicker. Hopefully your child will start to hear a word emerging. If they find this tricky, it often helps if you sound out the word slowly and then help them guess. It is best not to let them get frustrated with this process and we encourage you to help them if this is the case. Often you will notice that all of a sudden this skill 'clicks' with your child. This can happen quickly or may take several months or even years. Again, we urge you not to worry or feel frustrated but if you are concerned, come and talk to your child's class teacher.

There are many skills required to read words within a book and all of them bear equal importance at this early stage – as your child progresses through Form 8 and 7, some of the skills become less important as the other skills become more dominant. These skills include:

- Using illustrations to work out a word.
- Sounding out and blending a word.
- Reading the rest of a phrase and working out a word they are 'stuck' on.
- Reading words by sight recognition – this is for those words which do not follow a phonic pattern. A child must learn to recognise them by their shape and make up. For example: 'the', 'you', 'are'.

Your child's teacher will choose an appropriate book for your child. This will be accompanied by a blue Reading Record Book. This is where the teacher records achievement, and targets as well as general comments about your child's reading. We ask you to use this book as a written conversation, letting us know what you have managed to do at home, areas your child has succeeded and if they have found anything tricky. The reading books will be sent home on your child's last session of the week and **we ask that all books be returned to school on the following Monday or Tuesday morning (depending on your child's session)**. This is to allow the teachers time to change or adjust the reading books ready for the weekend. We have chosen this timeline to allow you the weekend to enjoy reading with your child. It should be a pleasurable, unhurried experience for both of you and we recognise how exhausted the children often are by the end of the school day.

If you have any queries at all, please do not hesitate to contact your child's teacher and discuss them.

We really hope you enjoy this exciting phase of your child's education. Good luck and happy reading!

Many thanks for your ongoing support.

The Early Years Teachers.