

Friday 17th November 2017

Dear Parents and Guardians,

At Highwoods, we believe that the ability to read is fundamental to pupils' development as independent learners, during their time at school and beyond. Success in reading has a direct effect upon progress in all areas of the curriculum; therefore reading is given a high priority at our school.

Evidence of our success with reading over the years can be seen in the results and achievements of children. Our Phonics scores for the last four years put us in the top 7% of the country and by the time our children leave us at the end of Year 6 our reading scores are significantly above national average. However, in order to support the children further and prepare them effectively for the new standard of national tests at the end of Year 2 and 6 we would like to explore changes to how we deliver reading sessions in our school. In addition to this, and more importantly, we would like to support children in developing positive attitudes to reading which will encourage them towards life-long reading.

With this in mind, we are trialling a new approach to the teaching of reading where the emphasis will move from 'small group guided reading' to 'whole class reading'.

In Whole Class Reading, there is a high level of interaction between teachers and pupils. Children are exposed to high-quality texts and discussion in an immersive environment. Texts are carefully chosen by teachers to provide appropriate challenge that builds on pupils' existing knowledge and understanding. More traditional approaches to guided reading often see a teacher work with a small group, the LSA work with a small group and the rest of the children work independently. Over time, this can result in less progress for those children who do not work with an adult.

How does it work?

In the Foundation Stage and Year 1, teachers will make use of big books and texts on the Interactive White Board as part of their afternoon teaching sessions. From 9.00am-9.30am children take part in Read Write Inc which is a focussed reading programme, based on decoding and fluency. In Year 2, considerably more time is being given to whole class reading sessions (although there will still be some opportunities for 1:1 reading and small group sessions).

In Key Stage 2, each class will have access to 15 copies of a children's novel to share between partners and will work through this novel over the course of a half-term or term, in their daily 9.00am-9.30am reading sessions. Individual pupils will be called upon to read aloud to the class, whilst teachers will model effective reading also.

Response activities include: clarifying unknown words and phrases; inferring and deducing to form an opinion; predicting; explaining authors' intent; retrieving information; summarising and answering comprehension questions.

"Learning for Life"



Reading and exploring the same text as a whole class has generated a lot of enthusiasm from the children so far, who thoroughly enjoy these sessions throughout the school. The opportunities to then use this book as part of writing sessions are vast and as the children have a prior knowledge of the book, the writing is of a greater standard.

School Library Books

Children's access to the library throughout the school day remains the same, meaning that they will still regularly choose individual texts of their own preference and stage to take home and enjoy.

Reading Records

Implementation of the Whole Class Reading approach means that you will see less comments from teachers in children's Reading Records. They will, however, continue to be checked weekly as part of our Star Reader reward programme. These Reading Records are to help us see what children are reading at home and can be used to communicate with us if you spot your child having difficulties or if you want to celebrate successes. For example, they might have completed their first chapter book or have started reading independently at home without prompting from you. Due to less 1:1 reading and small group reading, there will be less comments in records from teachers. **Please do not think that because there is not a comment, your child is not reading at school. Every child reads daily at school.**

Additional Support

Whilst individual reading becomes less of a strategy used throughout the school, teachers will continue to use their professional judgement to identify children requiring basic skill development who would therefore benefit from individual reading to a teacher or LSA.

This is a new initiative that begun in the first half of the Autumn Term. We are already seeing benefits for the children but inevitably there is still a period of transition and reflection. We are supporting staff in trying out new strategies in order to raise standards even further. In January, at a parent meeting, we are going to invite families to see this in action and take part in some of the activities that children have been doing. Below we have put some links to articles and videos that have helped prompt our thinking about developing a positive reading culture:

Mrs P Teach – Whole Class Reading <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zbCNJ5-gRxE&safe=active>

Mrs P Teach – Whole Class Reading: A New Method
<http://www.mrspteach.com/2017/06/whole-class-reading-new-method.html>

Mr Bee Teach – Reading Reconsidered <https://mrbeeteach.blogspot.co.uk/2016/08/reading-reconsidered.html?m=1>

Mr Booth – How I Teach Whole Class Reading
<https://theteachingbooth.wordpress.com/2017/06/02/how-i-teach-whole-class-reading/>

Miss Halls (Literacy Coordinator)

Mr Disley (Head Teacher)

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