

Dear Parents/Carers,

We have been working hard to revise how we teach reading at Mill Lane to ensure all children become fluent and successful readers. As a result, we wanted to share some important information on our new reading scheme; approach to guided reading and reading awards.

We have invested in the UK's most successful reading scheme. Oxford Reading Tree is currently used in over 80% of primary schools and has helped millions of children from all over the world learn to read ... and love to read. Rooted in reading for pleasure and with systematic phonics at its heart, Oxford Reading Tree's well-loved characters, breadth of over 800 books and varied writing styles give children everything they need to become confident readers here and at home. Schools across the world use Oxford Reading Tree books, including series such as: Floppy's Phonics, Biff, Chip and Kipper, Traditional Tales, Songbirds Phonics, In-Fact, and Story Sparks.



What are book bands and Oxford levels?

In the UK, book bands are used across different reading schemes to indicate the reading level of each book. Here at Mill Lane we use the Oxford Levels system instead though both run concurrently. You will see our Oxford 'levels' alongside book band colours on the back of each Oxford Reading Tree book. (These are found on the back of the books themselves).

What are reading schemes?

A reading scheme is a series of books that have been carefully written to support the process of learning to read and to help children make progress as readers. What educational researchers know about how children learn to read – and how best to motivate them to learn – is changing and improving all the time. The best reading schemes reflect this research and help teachers to deliver the best teaching in order to improve outcomes for children.

What do the different colours, bands and levels mean?

All reading schemes have a careful structure designed to support the teaching in class and to ensure that when a child takes a book home they can read it successfully, build confidence and make progress. Educational publishers consider a number of factors when determining the 'level' of a book including phonic knowledge, vocabulary, sentence length, number of words on a page and use of illustrations.

Moving up?

The point at which your child is ready to move up a level depends on your child and the teacher's approach. Generally, a teacher will want to know that a child is secure and confident at a given level before moving them on. It's also important to bear in mind that not

all levels are of equal size. In the first few years of school, the steps of progress are fairly small, and children will move through a number of levels quite quickly. As children move up the levels, the steps become broader and 'moving up' happens less frequently. It's also important to remember that different children develop their reading skills at different rates so comparing your child with others is not helpful.

Some of the branches (levels) are broad and shouldn't be missed because they have a range of genres and in particular a whole range of traditional stories that are statutory in year 1- research has shown that more and more children are coming to school with no knowledge of fairy stories/traditional tales so they need exposure to them. Moving a pupil up too quickly means they could possibly miss out on whole genres. If you think your child is ready to move on, talk to their teacher – there may be good reasons why they are being 'held back' for a bit, for example to work on their comprehension, fluency or expression.

When should I worry about my child's reading?

Children learn to read in different ways and at different speeds. Many very clever children come late to reading or may struggle with it for a long time. Do not panic; come and talk to us. It is not cause for concern if your four- or five-year-old is not yet reading, but you can give them a boost at home where necessary, through activities that focus on fun. Talk to your child's teacher about what your child is doing at school and how you can support this at home. If your child is not reading by the time they are six, you might want to ask advice from their teacher. But it is important to know that there is every chance that your child will soon catch up.

Is my child a struggling or a reluctant reader?

There are two main types of worry that parents have about their child's reading. You may have noticed that your child doesn't seem interested and won't pick up a book. If they do, they seem to be able to read the words quite well – it's just that they don't want to. We call this group of children reluctant readers – and often they are boys. The trick is to switch them on to reading by using their interests: magazines about computer games, books about dinosaurs, and instructions on how to build a model, comics and adventure stories – whatever works.

The second type of worry parents have is when their child just can't seem to remember the sounds of letters or remember common words – like the word 'the' or 'come' – from one day to the next. Reading is a slow and painful struggle, distressing for your child and distressing for you to watch. These children we can call struggling readers.

Reading at school

Your child's reading experience is much more than the reading book, which comes home from school. Reading is happening all the time in the classroom and in the school; it is taught in specific reading and literacy lessons and children are practising their 'reading' constantly across all subjects too.

Reading is one of the most important things your child will learn to do at school. Being able to read and developing a love of books and reading can have a hugely positive impact on your child's education, as well as bringing them lots of enjoyment. A copy of our Early Reading policy will be available on our website very soon.

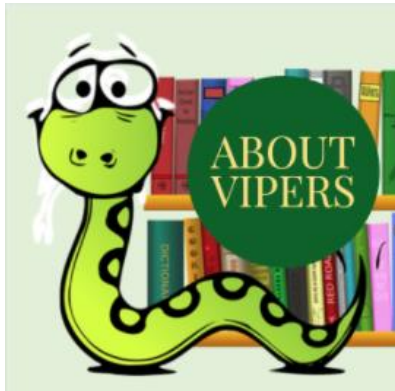
Early Reading

Children at Mill Lane are supported in their early reading through the teaching of phonics. We teach the children phonics using Little Wandle (Letters and Sounds revised). Our guide to phonics can be found here.

VIPERS

In KS2, we teach reading comprehension skills through VIPERS, but what are Vipers?

VIPERS is an acronym to aid the recall of the 6 reading domains as part of the UK's reading curriculum. They are the key areas which we feel children need to know and understand in order to improve their comprehension of texts.



VIPERS stands for

Vocabulary

Inference

Prediction

Explanation

Retrieve

Summarise

The 6 domains focus on the comprehension aspect of reading and not the mechanics: decoding, fluency, prosody etc. As such, VIPERS is not a reading scheme but rather a method of ensuring that children are asked and are familiar with, a range of questions. They allow the teacher to track the type of questions asked and the children's responses to these which allows for targeted questioning afterwards.

Attached, we have linked some question stems for you to use at home if you wish, along with a reading VIPERS printable bookmark.

Each week, your child needs to read aloud to an adult at home, this is especially important as your child gets older. Research has suggested that reading to a 4-5 year old more frequently (every day or almost every day instead of twice a week) had the same effect on children's reading at 8-9 years old as almost being 12 months older! (Kalb, 2013).

This doesn't always have to involve them reading and you listening. Every child is different and what works for one will not work for another! As long as the discussion or activity you complete links to reading, we are happy for you to adapt and manage the time to suit you and your child. Other ideas for reading can also include:

- Comics or Magazines
- Instructions or recipes
- Information books
- Newspapers
- Poems
- Recorded stories

The children will earn points and will be able to move their way up the champion's reading board, achieving their bronze, silver and gold reading awards. Please see the attached '*Reading at Home*' leaflet for more details and for more ways to help your child to read.

Bronze Award 60 reads	Silver Award 120 reads	Gold Award 200 reads	Platinum Award 300 reads
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If you have any concerns about your child's reading or would like any further information on how we teach reading, please contact your child's class teacher.

Yours sincerely
Amanda Moseley
Literacy coordinator