

Connecting children's home and school reading worlds



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Context

I am the Reception teacher at Hollingworth Primary school. I teach in a mixed Nursery and Reception unit where we plan and deliver teaching and experiences for children aged between three and five. Our school is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school. The vast majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds, with virtually no pupils having English as a second language. The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is broadly in line with the national average. Children start in our Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are generally well below those typically expected for their age, and our most significant area of weakness within the Early Years is Communications and Language.



Research and rationale

Research shows that children who read for pleasure improve their life chances, not just in education, but also in mental wellbeing and social relationships.

Kirsten Asmussen (Early Intervention Foundation blog, 2018) comments that “Book sharing introduces children to words and ideas that are decontextualized from the here and now and promotes reading as source of valuable information”.

This example of practice links to the following Teachers as Readers (TARs) themes:

Theme 2: Knowledge of children’s reading practices

Theme 5: Reciprocal and interactive reading communities

Aims

- To create an information pack which explains how aspects of early communication, language and reading are taught within the Early Years.
- To make developing a space where families can remotely access stories and reading support to create strong connections between children’s home and school reading worlds.
- To build reading relationships with family and to support a reading for pleasure culture.

Outline

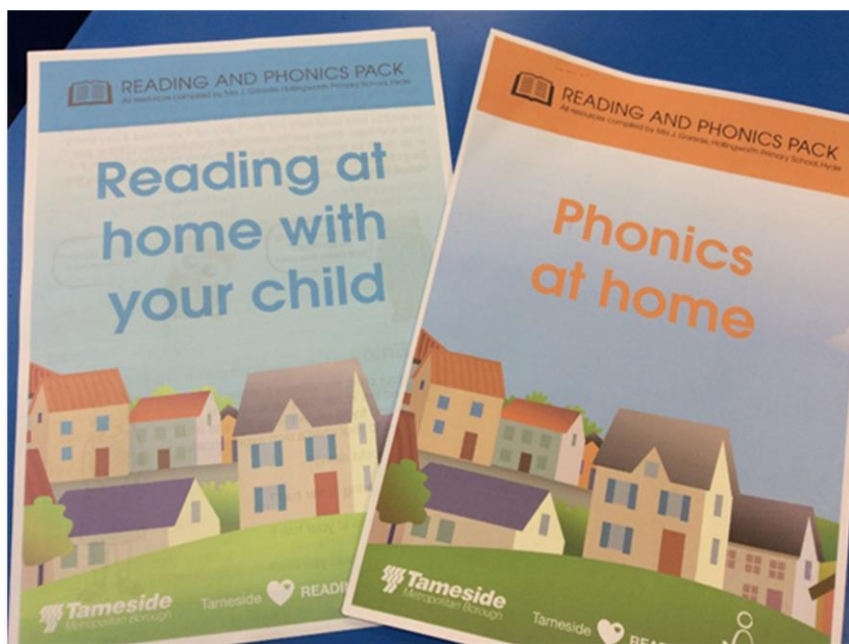
In order to create an information pack to support families helping their child to read, I firstly needed to research the variety of phonics resources available. My research indicated that not only there was a huge array of these and that it was easy to become confused and overwhelmed.

I decided that in order to engage my audience, I would need to tailor make a resource pack that was concise, easy to understand and contained quick, easy to pick up games. I wanted to

Firstly, I conducted a simple questionnaire and asked parents what they felt would be helpful and what they thought they needed to know in order to help their child. We discussed whether a pack, presentation, short video or a workshop would be the best method of conveying the ideas. The majority shared the opinion that whilst a booklet with fun games to play at home would be the most helpful, they were very honest and intimated that without being shown how to play some of the games, they may not be confident to use them in their own home.

For my Early Reading booklet to be successful, my next step was therefore was to take note of the requests of the families and to create a workshop and a take away booklet, which included the fun games from the session. I wanted to further ensure that families had every opportunity to share reading experiences by including some helpful hints, which might allow the children more chance to concentrate when playing the games and sharing stories. My aim was for the workshop and booklet to have a positive impact on parents' confidence and knowledge so that they would be more eager to support their child.

I completed the 7-page booklet, which supported families reading at home and created an additional small booklet of phonics games to play at home. I played some of the games with parents in the workshop and included videos of some of the games being played in the classroom too with their children. During the workshop, I taught parents/carers about phonics and the importance of phonics as a stepping-stone for reading. The workshop enabled parents/carers to play some of the games outlined in the pack. I provided parent/carer packs for them to take away with them and they were equipped to access them having already played them.



The reading booklet supports new families in creating a supportive reading environment in their home offering tips about where and when to read and how to foster a love of books. I created a fun acronym so that the seven letters spelled out the word reading!

R – Regular

E – Enjoy

A – Ask questions

D – Do it again

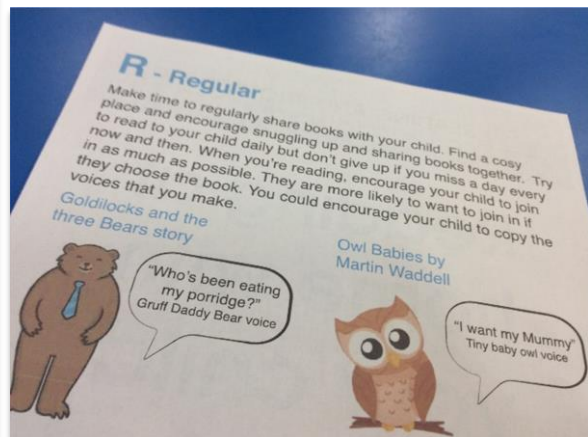
I – Imagination

N – No fear

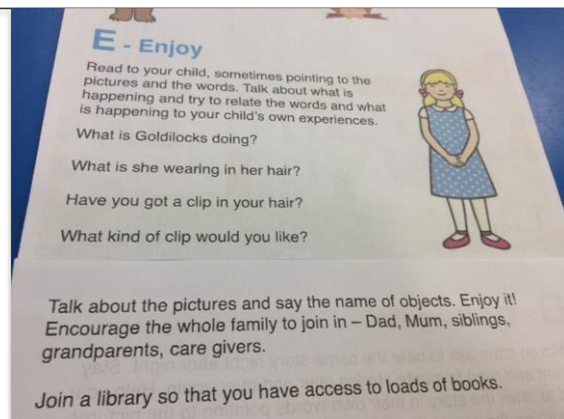
G – Games

Each section of the booklet is short and simple giving advice of how to foster a love of books.

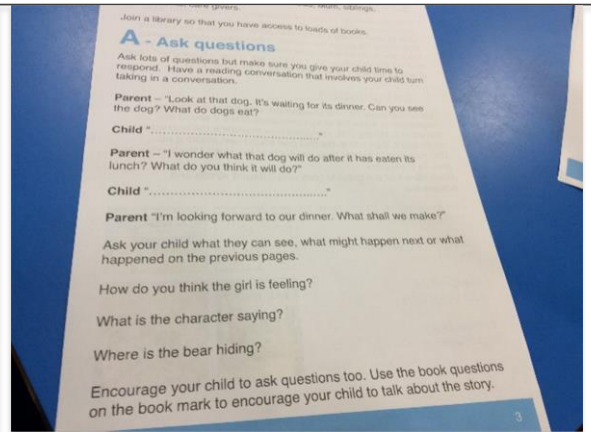
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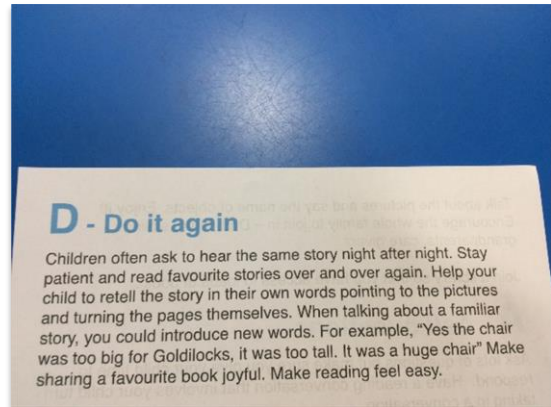
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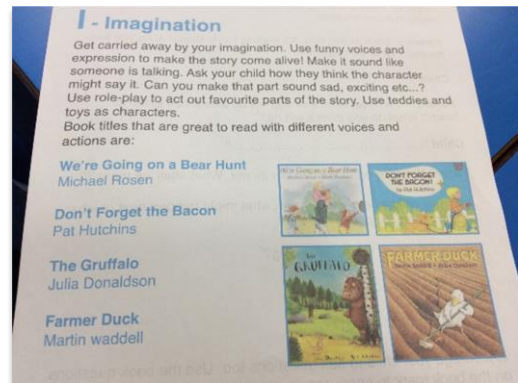
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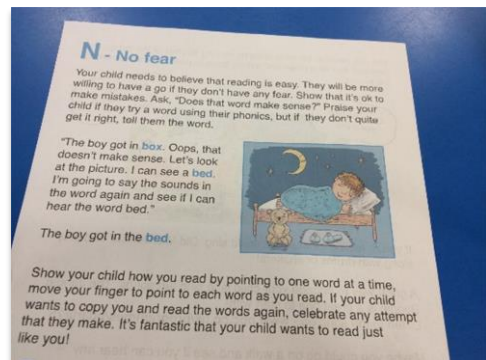
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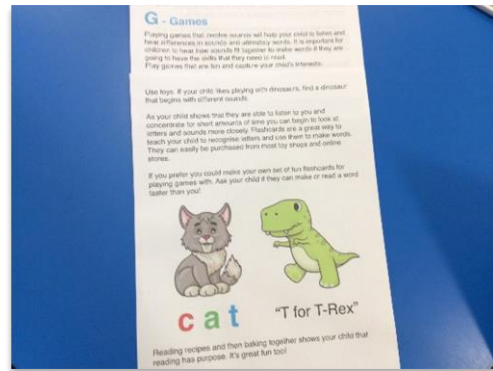
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G



The phonics at home booklet contains fun games, which equip the children with the phonetic skills, which help them to read. The feedback from Parents was very positive as many of them indicated that they enjoy playing games and their children would be learning whilst playing.

Conclusion

The main aim of this project was to ensure that families are able to understand how reading is taught in school and how they can support their child. My discussion with parents highlighted the fact that some parents can be reluctant to support their child with reading challenges because they are not confident and do not have the knowledge to tackle it. I was keen to provide opportunities for parents/carers to see how aspects of reading are taught in Reception. The workshop was well received with the take home booklet being handed out so that Parents could have a go at home themselves. The booklets allowed parents to access a bank of ideas to use with their children.

Many of the parents commented that they now understood what phonics means and that they will now have the confidence to play educational games at home to support reading.

"I get it now! It's good fun. I'm definitely going to do it home with my son."

"The workshop was useful. I do like getting booklets with information and stuff to help me at home as it makes it easier."

From this point, the partnership between school and parents went from strength to strength. I sent story videos and phonics games remotely and encouraged children to respond at home and send videos or comments back. The Reading for Pleasure (RfP) culture has been further strengthened by sharing the weekly enhancements for activities and play areas in our classroom and providing parents with resources and videos of new games when appropriate. The most recent demonstration video that I sent was linked to phonics blending playing a game called Metal Mike. The feedback from the parents has been that they are willing to support their child at home when they know how to.

I fully intend to continue making short video that demonstrate how to support children and to continue to send stories remotely.

As a school we now provide home-school reading diaries for Reception pupils giving more opportunity for parents/carers to comment on their child's reading and encouraging them to read routinely. Some parents were keen to share the reading that their child had engaged with and use the diary as an opportunity to seek advice regarding language and reading. As a school we remotely send videos of teachers reading and using a range of opportunities to enhance reading and embed a love of books through a range of activities.