



St. Michael's
Church of England Primary Academy

**A Culture of
Reading**

Introduction

In the pursuit of social justice and academic excellence, St. Michael's CE Primary Academy has developed a culture of reading which promotes reading for pleasure, knowledge acquisition and fluent reading.

This includes:

- The entire school community reading for pleasure
- Developing teachers as readers
- Reflecting the reality of our school community in literature
- Initiatives which include home-school partnership
- Wider community involvement
- Strategies that develop fluency and comprehension

Early Words Together (National Literacy Trust)

Early Words Together helps parents support their young child's literacy and language development.

The vocabulary of children from low income families can lag behind their high-income counterparts by up to 19 months at age 5 (Gascoigne & Gross, 2017). However, the home learning environment (HLE) can have a positive impact on a child's communication and language development, and has been shown to have a greater impact on a child's intellectual, social and emotional development than the parent's education, occupation or wealth (Sylva et al, 2004). Our Early Words Together programmes give parents the awareness, skills and confidence to provide a language-rich home learning environment that supports their child's language and early literacy development.





Since 2011 Early Words Together has supported over 9,000 families in over 50 local authorities, focussing on areas of high deprivation. Delivered to small groups of families with children aged 3-4 over six weeks by practitioners and volunteers, it empowers parents to develop and enrich the home learning environment and support their child's early language and literacy. At St. Michael's CE Primary Academy, we run the National Literacy Trust's 'Early Words Together' group in the summer term on a weekly basis as a part of our transition programme.

An independent evaluation using standardised testing showed it to have a statistically and educationally significant impact on children's receptive vocabulary skills and it increased the home learning environment behaviours of the parent.

Programme Objectives

- Close the language gap among children of difference socio-economic status.
- Improved home learning environment for all children taking part as parents feel empowered in their role as their child's first educator.
- Educators and parents act in partnership to support the child's development.
- Networks of practitioners who use evidence-based strategies to support children's CLL and engage parents in their child's learning.

1:1 Reading Fluency Intervention

	Phonic Knowledge (3 mins)	Use phonic knowledge and skills as the route to decode words. (National Curriculum 2014)	Flashcards: respond speedily with the correct sound to graphemes (letters or groups of letters), including, where applicable, alternative sounds for graphemes (phase level dependent). Flashcards: read accurately by blending sounds in unfamiliar words containing GPCs that have been taught (phase level dependent). read common exception words/statutory spellings (year group/phase dependent). Flashcards: read words containing taught GPCs and -s, -ed, -ing, -er and -ist endings.
	Vocabulary (2 mins) Focus on 1 word per week that will be encountered in the text.	Vocabulary words should be those that the learner will find useful in many contexts. Instruction of high-frequency words known and used by mature language users can add productively to an individual's language ability. (Beck, McKeown, Kucan 2002)	Response definitions: introduce words through everyday language rather than dictionary definitions. Purposful variation: Provide several contexts in which the word can be used purposefully or for alternative meanings. Immediate Interaction: Build opportunities for pupils to interact with word meanings right away e.g. pair two target words, to support interaction with words in novel contexts: 'can you think of one he unpleasant to look at?' Active Interest: Provide examples, situations and questions that are interesting and create discussion. Repetition, Repetition, Repetition: Provide many encounters with focus words, including through various contexts and retrieval activities.
	Adult reading (2 mins) Model reading a 'passage' of the text with expert prosody.	Reading comprehension has come to be viewed as the 'essence of reading' essential not only to academic learning but to life-long learning. (Dunin, 1993)	Adult as Model: The adult reads the selected passage of the class text aloud as an 'expert model' of fluency whilst pupils follow the text with their own copy. This may be repeated multiple times as necessary. Echo Read: Children echo back the chosen section read by the adult, emulating their intonation, tone, speed, volume, expression, movement, use of punctuation, etc.
	Independent (child) reading (8 mins)	The goal of teaching reading is to enable children to comprehend written texts. To do this, pupils need to build both word reading and language comprehension skills. (Education Endowment Foundation)	Independent Practice: Children read with appropriate adult intervention to check for understanding, rephrase and reread where necessary.

Pupils in Years 2 to 6 who are assessed to be in Bands A to C receive daily 1:1 reading support from the St. Michael's Reading Intervention Coach. These 15-minute daily sessions incorporate phonics revision, language acquisition, comprehension and reading fluency. They are designed to improve reading fluency and comprehension with pupils who are working below the expected standard in reading. This programme is based on the principles of the 'Hertfordshire Reading Fluency Project', which utilises the following:

- Teacher reading with expert prosody
- Echo reading
- Independent reading

Book Club



At St. Michael's CE Primary Academy, we recognise that many of our children have an appetite for reading that extends beyond the classroom. To nurture this, we have established a Book Club within our school to cultivate a love for reading, foster a reading community and promote valuable learning experiences outside the traditional English Reading

lessons. We aim to create an inclusive space where students can explore the joy of literature, develop critical thinking skills, and build lasting friendships through shared literary adventures. Whether it's a classic, such as 'The Chronicles of Narnia', or modern works, such as, 'Anisha: The Accidental Detective' written by a local Brummie, children have a wealth of opportunities to express their opinions creatively and partake in discussions centred around literature. Our Book Club strives to inspire a lifelong passion for reading and the magic of storytelling among our children. This book group in association with 'The Federation of Children's Book Groups' allowing our children to vote for the winning authors of the 'Children's Book Awards'.

Storytime

Daily fifteen-minute sessions per week are used by all teachers to read a story to their class. Storytime is prioritised and timetabled and provided in a distraction-free environment, where children become enraptured by the text. Typically, this will take place at the end of the school day.




Additionally, our daily acts of collective worship are rich in biblical narrative reflecting the Christian distinctiveness of our school.

Background Knowledge in Reading Lessons

Our curriculum provides the knowledge that pupils need to access rich texts (background/content knowledge).

We recognise that reading comprehension hinges on children's acquisition of background knowledge so we provide additional reading in our lessons 'embedded texts', which are designed to extend the schema and provide a deep and broad background knowledge as well as content knowledge. For instance, our Year 6 children study a poem titled 'Sympathy' which is steeped in themes of injustice and freedom and set in the civil rights era. It is also a technical poem where contrast, juxtaposition and figurative language are used heavily.


Examples:

Text: Poetry Sympathy by Laurence Dunbar	INSIDE the Bull's Eye	OUTSIDE the Bull's Eye
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who is Paul Laurence Dunbar?• What's wrong with caging birds?• What is an Upland?• Juxtaposition• 'When I Rise Up' by Georgia Douglas Johnson.• 'The Gift to Sing' by James Weldon Johnson.• A 'review' of Sympathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wrongful Imprisonment – (Notably Mandela)• Poetry and the Civil Rights Movement• The Birth of Blues





Embedded Text: Poetry and the Civil Rights Movement

To retrieve and record information.

Poetry and the Civil Rights Movement



Poets influenced by leaders of the civil rights movement (a group that includes Margaret Walker, Nikki Giovanni, and June Jordan) used their work to instill a sense of pride in one's identity, to praise freedom fighters and honour fallen leaders, to chronicle acts of resistance, and to offer wisdom and strength to fellow activists.


	Explain	Explain the meaning of a word.	Find and copy one word which is a synonym of 'inspired'.
	Retrieve	Skim, scan and retrieve key information from the text.	Name one of the reasons that civil rights poetry was created.
	Infer	Infer using clues in the text.	'used their work to instill a sense of pride in one's identity.'
	Choice	Explain why the author chose a particular word, considering the impact that it had on the reader.	Why do you think the author refers to civil rights leaders as freedom fighters ?

E) Influence ✓
 R) Civil Rights Poetry was created to praise freedom fighters. ✓
 I) This suggest that the sense of pride of poet during the civil right era is that they did not not proud of who they were. ✓





Embedded Text: Juxtaposition

To retrieve and record information.

Juxtaposition



Writers use juxtaposition as a figurative language device in which contrasting ideas are placed side by side to highlight their differences or create an emotional impact. By placing two words or ideas next to one another, we can highlight the differences between them. Juxtaposition can be used between words or images, or between two characters or storylines. This adds depth and complexity and it helps readers connect with the text on a deeper level. Eg. a grandmother holding a newborn baby might be a very powerful image, juxtaposing birth and old age.


	Explain	Explain the meaning of a word.	Find and copy one word which is a synonym of 'juxtaposition'.
	Retrieve	Skim, scan and retrieve key information from the text.	What sort of literary device is juxtaposition?
	Infer	Infer using clues in the text.	Which word gives you the impression that juxtaposition may be a difficult device to use?
	Choice	Explain why the author chose a particular word, considering the impact that it had on the reader.	Why do you think the author refers to the grandmother and newborn as a very powerful image ?

E) Differ Contrasting ✓
 R) Figurative language ✓
 I) 'Complexity' ✓
 C) I think the author refers to the grandmother ^{and newborn} as a powerful image because it's juxtaposing birth and old age.





Embedded Text: Caging Birds

To explain the meaning of words in context.

What's wrong with caging birds?



All caged birds are either captured or bred in captivity. Driven mad from boredom and loneliness, caged birds often become aggressive and self-destructive. They pull out their own feathers, mutilate their skin, incessantly bob their heads and regurgitate, pace back and forth, peck over and over again at cage bars, and shake or even collapse from anxiety. They long for freedom and companionship.

	Explain	Explain the meaning of a word.	Find and copy one word which means 'to be caught'.
	Retrieve	Skim, scan and retrieve key information from the text.	What 2 things do caged birds long for?
	Infer	Infer using clues in the text.	How do you know that caged birds are unhappy?
	Choice	Explain why the author chose a particular word, considering the impact that it had on the reader.	Why do you think the author uses the word anxiety?

B) Captured' means to be caught.
 R) Caged birds long for freedom and companionship.
 I) I know that the caged birds are unhappy because the text it tells us that they pull out their own feathers and even collapse from anxiety. The birds are unhappy in cages.
 C) I think the author uses the word 'anxiety' to put to the reader just how lonely and anxious the birds are and it makes us feel sorry for them.

Handsworth Library



Our local library in Handsworth is an extension of the literary offer that we have for children in school. Our visits to the library include parents and classes where children use their own library cards to take out and return books. This is another element of our home-school partnership offer to encourage reading and book talk at home.

Sessions are linked to teaching children: (examples)

- How books are categorised (Dewey decimal system)
- Tour of the library
- Storytime and reading for pleasure

Cantatas



Our termly Key Stage 2 cantatas centre around our Christian Festivals (Christmas and Easter) which provides an opportunity for children to tell these important religious stories through music and readings. Children are given opportunity learn and rehearse readings before orally reciting them to an audience of parents, staff and members of the local and wider community.



St. Michael's

Church of England Primary Academy