



Alphington Primary School

Newsletter

04/10/2024



Message from the Deputy Headteacher

Dear Parents / Carers,

It has been a busy few weeks! Parent meetings are approaching and we are looking forward to sharing your child's achievements with you all.

Our newsletter this week is focusing on reading.

We believe that the teaching of reading is crucial to a child's understanding and appreciation of the world around them; a platform which allows our children to see beyond what they know, share in experiences and develop the vocabulary they need to effectively express themselves.

We place great importance in developing a love of reading and are proud to have a dedicated whole school reading time every day. During this time pupils will read independently, with an adult or in a guided group. As well as this, adults in our school read high-quality and carefully selected stories and texts to their classes daily.



Phonics

We passionately believe that teaching children to read and write independently, as quickly as possible, is one of the core purposes of a primary school. These fundamental skills not only hold the keys to the rest of the curriculum but also have a huge impact on children's self-esteem and future aspirations.

How do we teach phonics?

We use a programme called Little Wandle which includes teaching synthetic phonics, sight vocabulary, decoding words and spelling using accurate letter formation.

Nursery

In Nursery we provide a balance of child-led and adult-led experiences for all children that meet the curriculum expectations for 'Communication and Language' and 'Literacy'. These include:

- sharing high-quality stories and poems
- learning a range of nursery rhymes and action rhymes
- activities that develop focused listening and attention, including oral blending
- attention to high-quality language.

Reception and Year 1

We teach phonics for 20 minutes each day. In Reception, we build up from 10-minute lessons, with additional daily oral blending games, to the full-length lesson as quickly as possible. Each Friday, we review the week's teaching to help children become fluent.

In Year 1 and 2, we also have 'Reading Squad' sessions twice a week.

These:

- are taught to small groups of approximately six children
- use books matched to the children's secure phonic knowledge using the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised assessments.
- are monitored by the class teacher, who rotates and works with each group on a regular basis.

Each 'Reading Squad' session has a clear focus, so that the demands of the session do not overload the children's working memory. They have been designed to focus on three key reading skills:

- decoding
- prosody: teaching children to read with understanding and expression
- comprehension: teaching children to understand the text.



Home Reading

The decodable reading practice book is taken home each week to ensure success is shared with the family. In addition, reading-for-pleasure books also go home for parents to share and read to children.

Please write in your child's Reading Record each time you hear them read to help us to track their progress.

Year 2

We start Year 2 by consolidating the phonics children have learnt previously. In addition to these lessons, we timetable regular interventions for children who are not yet fully fluent at reading or not passed the Phonics Screening Check. These children urgently need to catch up, so the gap between them and their peers does not widen. We use the Rapid Catch-up assessments and resources for this. These short, sharp lessons last 15-20 minutes and have been designed to ensure children quickly catch up to age-related expectations in reading.

Moving on from Phonics to AR:

When children are at the required level, they will begin using Accelerated Reader (AR). Accelerated Reader is a reading programme that helps teachers support and monitor children's reading practice.

Your child picks a book at their own level and reads it at their own pace. When finished, your child takes a short online quiz to measure how much of the book they understood.

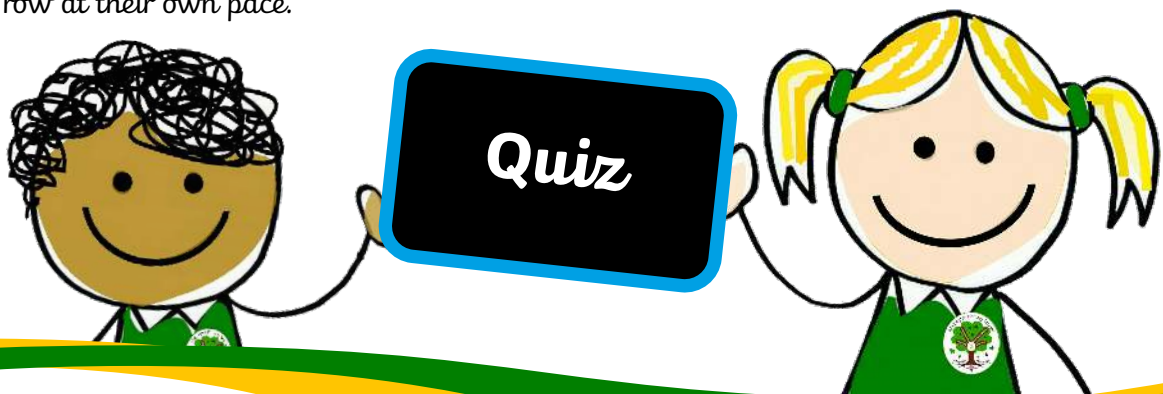
Each week teachers will monitor children's word count and quiz scores and will celebrate children's progress.

Children using AR have a free choice of the books they read, rather than having one assigned to them. This makes reading a much more enjoyable experience as they feel in control and can choose books that are interesting to them. Staff will help your child choose books that are at an appropriate reading level. These will be challenging without being frustrating and will also be at a level at which your child can pass the quiz and experience success.

If your child does not do well on the quiz, they may be supported by:

- Being supported to choose another book that is more appropriate
- Asking more probing questions as your child reads and before he/she takes a quiz
- Pairing your child with another pupil or even having the book read to your child.

In most cases, children really enjoy taking the quizzes. Since they are reading books at their own reading and interest levels, they are likely to be successful. This is satisfying for most children. Best of all they learn and grow at their own pace.



How much will my child read during the day?

According to Renaissance Learning's research, children who read at least 20 minutes a day with a 90% comprehension rate on AR quizzes see the greatest gains. Therefore, your child should have at least 20 minutes set aside for reading during each school day. We do this straight after lunch each day but reading at home can really help with this.

How can I help my child become a better reader?

As with anything, performance improves with practice. Encourage your child to read at home for at least 20 minutes a day. You or your child can continue to record this in their Reading Record.

Create a culture of reading in your household by reading with your child; visit your local library or bookshop on a regular basis and by letting your child see you reading. When reading with your child, stop and ask questions to be sure your child comprehends what they have read and in general make a habit of discussing books that you and your children have read.

How does the school determine my child's reading level?

Teachers assess your child's reading level by asking children to complete a STAR Reading test. STAR Reading is a computer based reading assessment programme that uses computer-adaptive technology. Questions continually adjust to your child's responses. If the child's response is correct, the difficulty level is increased. If the child cannot answer a question or answers incorrectly, the difficulty level is reduced. The test uses multiple-choice questions and takes approximately 20 minutes.

What is a Book Level?

Children are directed to the relevant level on completion of the Star Reading Test which gives a ZPD – which is a suggested starting point. If a child regularly passes a book quiz with 100%, they are moved to the next level of book.

What is a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)?

In independent literature-based reading, ZPD is the range of books that will challenge a child without causing frustration or loss of motivation. Your child will receive a ZPD range after taking a STAR Reading test or teachers can use their best professional judgment to determine a ZPD. It is important for children to read with a high degree of comprehension and within their ZPD. ZPDs should be adjusted based on the needs and ability of your child.

What are points?

Every book that has an AR Reading Practice Quiz is given a points value. AR points are based on the difficulty of the book and the length of the book.

Complete Comprehension

In addition to AR, children will access our whole school reading comprehension programme: Complete Comprehension. This programme has been carefully crafted by a team of expert authors and breaks down the complex process of reading into separate skills linked to the National Curriculum requirements for each year group. Teaching units focus clearly on one skill at a time to develop confident well-rounded readers.

In Other News...

Staff Update:

You might have already met our lovely new administrator, Mrs King! She is dropping in to do some introductory mornings before she officially starts after half term.

Please bear with us whilst Mrs King gets up to speed! I am sure it won't take her long but you'd be amazed how much there is to learn!



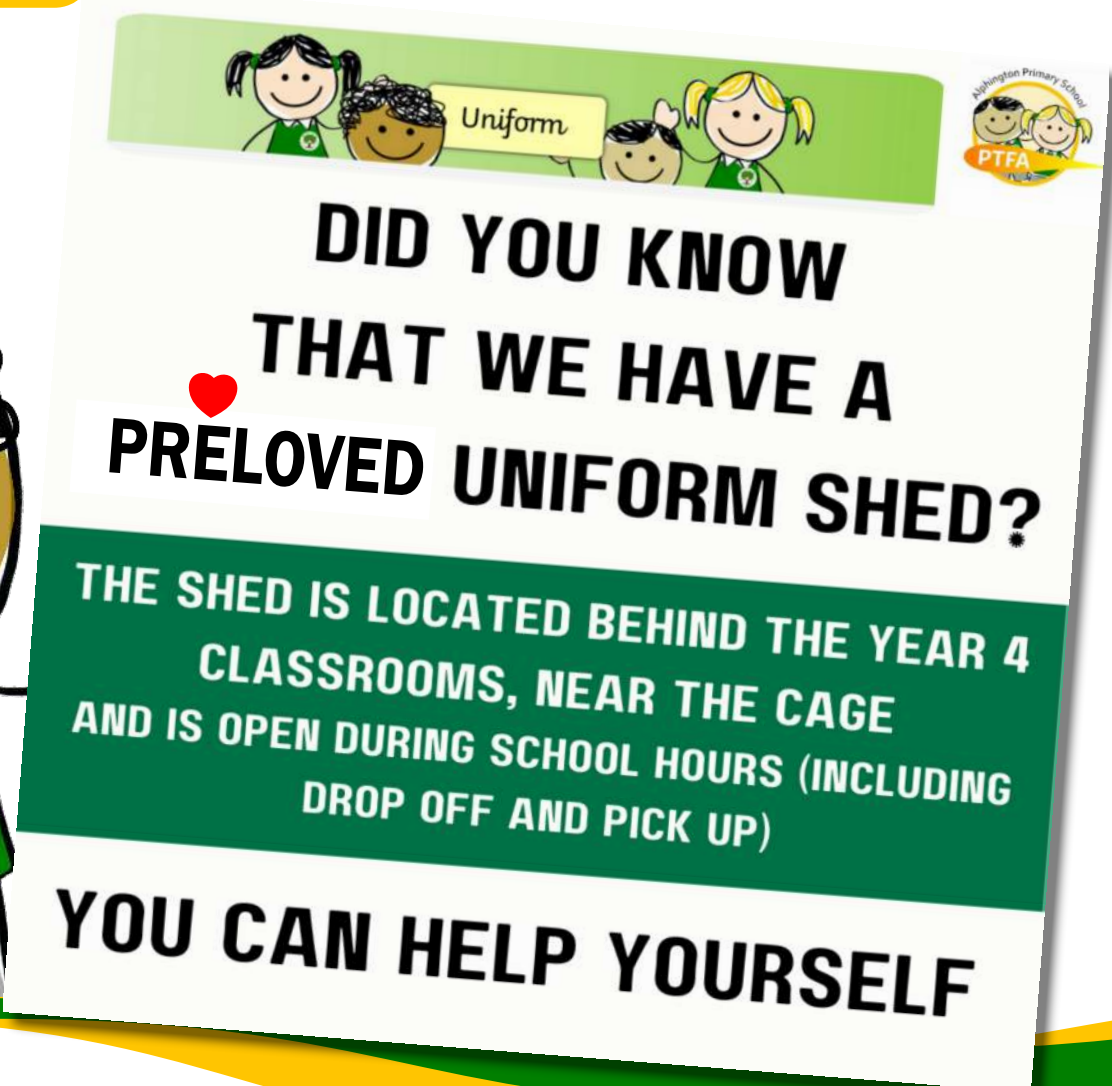
Parents Meetings

Parents and carers of children with a SEN Support Plan should have already received an invitation to a meeting next week.

All other Parent Meetings will be scheduled for the week beginning 21st October.

Information regarding how to book these meetings will follow soon.

PTFA Uniform Shed



Clubs

There are still places up for grabs in some of our Afterschool Activity Clubs. Please visit Premier Sports for further information.



EXTRA-CURRICULAR CLUBS AT YOUR SCHOOL!

Monday - Football

Wednesday - Archery

Friday - Dance

All ages, abilities and experience welcome!

For queries, contact ofrost@premier-education.com

Book at premier-education.com



Extra-curricular clubs are the perfect way for children to build confidence, burn energy and learn new skills. Our sessions feature a huge range of sports and games, from classic favourites to brand new experiences we are sure they will love.

Each coach has received high quality training to make sure that every session is educational, and every child feels included.

Book now for a memorable extra-curricular club with Premier Education.



My sons absolutely love the after-school clubs with Premier Education. They always come home with smiles on their faces!

Hannah - Parent



CLUBS ARE BETTER WITH FRIENDS!



TREAT YOUR FRIENDS TO 20% OFF...AND GET 20% OFF TOO!

*Ts&Cs apply. Refer a Friend discount on new bookings only.



Based on over 20,000 reviews



Key Dates:

Week beginning 7th October – SEND Support Plan Meetings with parents

Week beginning 14th October – Bikeability for Year 6

21st, 22nd and 24th October – Parents Evenings

25th October – Last school day before half term

4th November – First day back after half term

5th November – Flu Immunisations

14th November – School Photos – Individuals and siblings

Week beginning 11th November – Anti-Bullying Week

15th November – Children In Need

20th December – Last day of term

