



HOLT COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

## Helping your Child with Reading & Writing

*A Guide for Parents and Carers*

For the earliest years of your child's life you have been their teacher. Now that they are starting school it is natural that you should want to continue being closely involved in their education.

Reading and writing are two areas in which parents want to help but are often unsure about the best way to do this.

***There are many simple ways for you to help your child acquire these important skills.***

Children feel secure with you at home and this means that you can provide the three most important factors for reading and writing -

- ❖ ***interest***
- ❖ ***enjoyment***
- ❖ ***success***

Children learn best when they can see a purpose for what they are doing. This is true for both reading and writing.

- ❖ Involve your child in any reading and writing you do at home - reading traffic signs, street names, birthday cards, names of favourite television programmes, food packages, writing shopping lists and notes, filling in forms.
- ❖ When your child sees you using reading and writing skills they will naturally want to be able to do what you do.



***Remember to make this an enjoyable and fun activity so that your child will approach learning to read and write happily and confidently.***

## USEFUL ACTIVITIES TO SHARE AT HOME

- ❖ Visits to the library
- ❖ Pointing out signs - road signs, shop signs
- ❖ Writing and using shopping lists
- ❖ Reading and writing letters and cards
- ❖ Playing matching and colour games
- ❖ Playing 'I Spy'



*Whenever possible, share print with children -*

Newspapers, comics, magazines, story books,  
nursery rhymes

- ❖ Read stories to your child
- ❖ Talk to your child about things you are doing together.

## BEGINNING TO READ

When your child first brings home a reading book, please don't expect them to be able to read every word to you straight away.

*Reading is a complex activity which takes time to learn.*

Try to make sharing this book together an enjoyable experience. Here are some ways to encourage your child:



- ❖ Begin by reading the whole book to your child, talking about the pictures, the story, the characters. Encourage your child to ask questions or express an opinion of what is happening.
- ❖ Read each page pointing to the words as you read them. Then encourage your child to read this to you.
- ❖ If your child gets stuck on a word, give them time to think about it - then tell them the word, repeating the whole sentence so that overall meaning is not lost.

## READING WITH YOUR CHILD

- ❖ Create a relaxed atmosphere
- ❖ Find somewhere quiet where you will not be disturbed
- ❖ Make it fun, not homework
- ❖ If your child is tired or doesn't feel like reading, don't force them
- ❖ Keep it short - a few, uninterrupted minutes each day is best
- ❖ Give lots of praise
- ❖ If your child doesn't like a book, ask for it to be changed
- ❖ If your child gets bored or loses interest - stop
- ❖ If you are unsure about anything, ask your child's teacher.



## MAKING PROGRESS

Once you feel that your child is beginning to read, you may not need to read every page with them first - ask them to read to you instead.

It is important to talk about the pictures and the story - ask questions like "What do you think will happen next?" "What do you think Kipper is thinking?" "How do you think Mum feels now?"

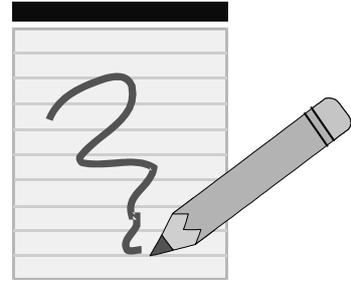
Your child is now at the stage when they will be learning ways to work out words they do not already know. They may do this by using a variety of methods which you can encourage them to develop:-

- ❖ Your child may try to 'sound out' the unfamiliar word using the letter sounds they are learning at school. Remember that this does not always work for all words - e.g. 'bought' and 'sugar' do not follow the rules - so don't let your child struggle; tell them the word, re-reading the whole sentence to maintain meaning.

- ❖ Your child may often miss out a new word and read on to the end of the sentence. They will then try to work out what the new word might be from the meaning of the sentence. This is a very useful technique which you should encourage.
- ❖ Your child may also use the pictures to give them clues to unfamiliar words, again a very useful technique to develop.
- ❖ As your child becomes a more fluent reader they may not need to point to every word as they read. Encouraging your child to read some of the book silently in their head will also help to speed up reading.
- ❖ Once your child is reading longer books, it is not always necessary to hear them read every page. Ask them to read their favourite part aloud to you or ask them questions about what they have read.



## BEGINNING TO WRITE



Just as reading is a complex skill that takes time to learn, so is writing. In fact, writing is even more complex since children need to learn...

- ❖ how to decide *what* to write and how to make it interesting
- ❖ how to *spell* words correctly
- ❖ how to use *punctuation*
- ❖ how to *set out* their work correctly
- ❖ how to form their *letters* correctly

***This is obviously not going to happen instantly!***

It is important to remember that

- ❖ children learn to write by writing
- ❖ they will not get everything right straight away.

## WAYS TO HELP YOUR CHILD TO WRITE

There are some simple ways in which you can encourage your child to begin the writing process:

- ❖ Let your child see you writing as often as possible - they will naturally want to copy you.
- ❖ Write lists and notes and show your child how they are used.
- ❖ If possible, give your child different types of pencils, crayons, felt tips, chalk and paint to experiment with.
- ❖ Try to provide them with scrap paper, old diaries, colouring books, forms, notebooks or anything else that they can 'write' in.
- ❖ If your child draws a picture, offer to write about it for them, writing down what they say and reading it back to them.



*Please remember to use capital letter only for the beginning of sentences and names!*

- ❖ If your child wants to have a go at writing, encourage and praise them, even if their early attempts at writing look like squiggles or shapes. Try to encourage your child to 'read' what they have written.
- ❖ If your child wants to learn to write their name, again remember to use a capital letter only at the beginning.
- ❖ If possible, when helping your child to write their name, show them the correct way to form the letters - bad habits are **very** difficult to overcome later. (Letter formation sheets are included in this booklet for your information.)
- ❖ Show your child how to hold a pencil or paint brush correctly in whichever hand they use to draw and write with - remember some children may use both left and right hands in the earliest stages of writing.

Activities such as colouring, painting, and using playdough, doing jigsaw puzzles can all help your child develop the pencil control they will need in writing.

*Again, above all, make writing with your child relaxed, fun and enjoyable for both of you.*



## PROGRESS IN WRITING

Your child will be learning letter formation, letter sound and spellings as well as grammar, punctuation and sentence formation at school. As children grow more proficient and confident in these skills, they will want to try them out in their writing, both at school and at home. Indeed, they often feel more comfortable about trying these out in the secure and safe environment of their home than at school where they may feel that there is pressure to 'get things right'.

It is important to be positive about your child's writing and to recognise new achievements. To you, your child's writing may look untidy and badly spelt and you may find it difficult to read, but remember that they are just beginning to learn a complex skill in which they need lots of practice. Learning to write is like learning to drive a car - you need to learn all the skills necessary to control the car but the only way you can learn road sense is by getting out on the road and practising!

If your child does some writing at home, look at it with them and talk about it. They may have written just the beginning sounds of words - show them how to write the rest of the word and write it at the bottom of the page for them. Your child may have written words phonetically - that is, as they sound. Don't worry about this as it shows that they are beginning to use their knowledge of letter sounds in their writing. Just show them how you would spell that particular word. Children also love to copy writing whether it is yours or something they have found at home - a book, a list, a comic etc.

Eventually, all the strands involved in writing will come together and your child will be writing simple sentences but, please remember:

*It takes time and practice.*

The most important factor in learning to write is developing your child's confidence so that they are willing to 'have a go'.



We hope that this booklet will be useful in helping you to support your child in learning the very important skills of reading and writing. Learning is a partnership between children, parents and school and together our aim is to give your child the basic skills and a confident approach which will enable them to enjoy reading and writing.

## Letter formation for right-handed children



## Letter formation for left-handed children

