



# HOWLETCH LANE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Dear Parent/carers

As you undoubtedly know, there is a huge push countrywide at the moment to improve the reading skills of children. At Howletch Lane we are committed to this drive and are heavily focussing on reading as a core skill throughout school. It has been proven, however, that reading at home is one of the most important aspects of a child's education. With this in mind, we are hoping that a child can read *at least* three times a week, for a *minimum* of fifteen minutes each time, to an adult at home. Reading out loud to an adult, and practising the decoding skills that we teach in school, is essential for the development of a child's reading ability. As well as listening to your child read, it would be extremely helpful if – after hearing them – you could ask them a few simple questions to check their understanding of the text they have just read.

We often hear from parents that they don't know how subjects are taught in school so I thought I'd reach out and let you know. In school, we focus on 6 key areas of understanding when reading, summarised by the acronym VIPERS.

**V is for vocabulary.** Does your child understand the meaning of the words in context that they have just read aloud? It is not uncommon for a child to be able to read a word aloud yet not really understand it in the context of the text. Without a large and varied vocabulary, children are on the back foot when it comes to answering the more complex questions they get on texts but also reading to learn and enjoy. Words are the building blocks in English, like times tables are in maths. Simple questions you can ask to check understanding are things like:

What does \_\_\_\_\_ mean in that sentence?

Can you find a word on that page which means the same as \_\_\_\_\_ ? (Give a synonym for the word you want to check).

**I is for inference.** This is the hardest thing to teach and the thing that children struggle most with on reading tests. However, as adults we do it all the time. What is hinted at or implied in the text, but not written? Drawing inference is key to enjoying and understanding narratives and creative writing. The way to check understanding of this is to ask questions like:

How do you think \_\_\_\_\_ feels at this moment? Why?

Why is she crying/laughing?

How do you know he is upset? What evidence is there?

How would you feel if this happened to you?

**P is for prediction.** What could happen next? And why do you think that? Being able to reasonably say what might occur in the next section of a story shows that children understand what has happened so far.

**E is for explanation.** This is not really something that needs to be taught at home and can be left for school. These questions focus on layouts/styles of texts and it is not essential that you as a parent/adult listener go over these at home.

**R is for retrieval.** Retrieval skills are **always** tested in SATs and exams. They check that a child has read the text and that they are following the action. Retrieval questions often focus on the five Ws: Who, What, Where, Why, When. Questions for this might be:

What colour is the jumper?

Where does \_\_\_\_\_ come from?

When did the bus arrive?

Why did he put up his umbrella?

Who called the policeman?

**S is for summary or sequencing.** This is easy to check at home: just ask your child what they've read. Give five main points; what has happened in the bit you have read?

Every child at Howlatch Lane has a reading record. If the person reading could sign this book every time they hear their child read and put a quick note in saying, for example:

Sam read really well today. He answered an excellent inference question on \_\_\_\_\_. He summarised the couple of pages we read together.

This will go a long way towards helping your child become a better reader.

Any questions, please do not hesitate to send in a note in your child's reading record and your child's class teacher or I will get back to you.

Yours sincerely

Mr Craig

English Lead