Today we have begun taking home small “reader” books. This can be a daunting process for parents and children. Teaching children to read confidently and accurately takes years of practice and patience. There is a lot to know about reading. Hopefully this information will give you a good starting point.

At this stage of the year your child should not be expected to read the books on their own without your help. I am a strong advocate of the To, With and By approach as I believe it takes a lot of stress off both parents and children. At home you can choose to do any or a combination of the following each night:

- **To** – read the story to your child. They can then read it back to you or tell you what it was about.
- **With** – read the story with your child, sharing the workload, read a page each.
- **By** – your child may be confident enough to read the story to you by themselves with or without the first two steps.

As reading is a complex process, no one strategy works each time. There are three strategies that I am focusing on and wanting the children to use as beginning readers. These are:

1. **Look at the picture** – Meaning is the ultimate goal of reading. Readers predict words based on clues gained from the picture. (Please do not cover up the pictures in the books)
2. **Does it make sense?** – Readers use the picture to determine if what they read makes sense.
3. **Get your mouth ready** – Pictures alone will not provide enough detailed information. Readers initially concentrate on the beginning sounds of words.

To implement these strategies at home you may wish to follow this process, using prompts to assist your child:

1. **Discuss the cover** – Read the title and ask your child to predict what the book might be about. For example, if the book is called ‘Green’ you might say, “This book is called ‘Green’, what can you see on the cover that is green? What other things can you think of that are green?”
2. **Do a picture walk** – Flick through the book page by page discussing the pictures. “What can you see in this picture? What things are happening in this picture?” Praise your child’s attempts. This approach is very effective as it gives children lots of clues before they start reading the book.
3. **Go back to the cover and begin reading, title first** – At this stage you may wish to read the story to your child or have them read with or to you. Please make sure that your child points accurately to each word to make the oral language and print connection. You may need to hold their finger to guide them to point to each word or demonstrate for them first.
4. **Prompt your child when they are unsure of a word** – Try these suggestions to help your child when they are having difficulty reading by themselves:
   - Pause for a few seconds to give your child a chance to work it out.
   - Ask what would make sense in that sentence.
   - Tell the word and go on.
5. **It is most important that children understand what they read** – Once finished, discuss the story and ask your child some simple questions about the book. For example, “Can you tell me something in the story that was green?”

Best of luck and enjoy this new experience with your child,

Jody Thomas