

# Literacy Initiatives in Scoil Barra Naofa

## Literacy Lift Off

*Literacy Lift off* is an intensive intervention of reading and writing based on the principles of Reading Recovery. Members of the Special Education Team (S.E.T.), in collaboration with the Class Teacher and Special Needs Assistant, work in the classroom every day for six to eight weeks in four rotating sessions of approximately ten minutes. These activities focus on a range of literacy activities including re-reading familiar books, being introduced to and attempting to read a new book or continue with a novel, composing and recording stories or handwriting, exploring how words work and language development. At present we are carrying out *Literacy Lift Off* in Junior Infants, Senior Infants, First Class and Second Class.

## Jolly Phonics

*Jolly Phonics* is a thorough foundation for reading and writing and is introduced to our children in Junior Infants and continued through to Second Class. It teaches the letter sounds in a way that is fun and multi-sensory. Children learn how to use the letter sounds to read and write words. In *Jolly Phonics* the forty two main sounds of English are taught, not just the twenty six letters of the alphabet. In this way children get used to blending the sounds from the very beginning. Research has shown that *Jolly Phonics* is a powerful aid in the development of blending skills. A good awareness of sound and the ability to blend sounds together are strong predictors of reading success.

## Sharing Books

*Sharing Books* is our way of encouraging Parents to continue reading to their children throughout their time in Junior Infants and beyond. While children develop their reading skills they still enjoy the experience of being read to and sharing a book together. It is a fantastic way of developing language while fostering a love of books and reading as well as being a thoroughly enjoyable experience for Parent and Child. These are just some of the advantages of 'Sharing Books'.

- It helps children put their ideas into words.
- It helps them share and explore their feelings and ideas.
- It helps develop the thought processes.
- It encourages observation of pictures and illustrations.
- It develops the ability to predict events.
- It develops the ability to recall and relate events and stories.
- It develops the imaginative powers.

## Shared Reading

*Shared Reading* : In the critical stages of learning to read, children require much support and very carefully selected reading material to ensure a positive reading experience. Shared Reading aims to promote the reading levels of children in school through appropriate book provision, increasing awareness of the essential parental contribution to children's early reading development and fostering positive attitudes towards reading. Children in Senior Infants, First Class and Second Class choose books to take home four days a week, Monday to Thursday. Parents read with their children using Stage one or Stage two as appropriate.

### STAGE 1

- Sit with your child in a quiet place, at a suitable time for both of you.
- Hold the book between you and set the scene.
- Read the book together.
- Say any difficult word for your child. The child repeats it and you continue.
- Pause for questions etc.
- Use expression
- Keep it short. (7-10 minutes)
- Record progress.
- PRAISE YOUR CHILD.

### STAGE 2

- Sit with your child in a quiet place.
- Set the scene.
- Read the book together.
- The child gives a signal when he is ready to read alone.
- Say any difficult word for your child. The child repeats it and you both read together until the child signals.
- Keep it short. (10-15 mins. )
- Record your progress.
- PRAISE YOUR CHILD.

Shared Reading is a three-way partnership between pupil, parent and teacher which has been in use in Scoil Barra Naofa for a number of years and has proved to be very successful.

## School Library

Our *School Library* opened in 2012. Each class has an allotted time to visit each week, providing the children with an opportunity to engage in reading for pleasure and so promoting a culture of reading in the school. It allows children access to a wide range of genres and authors at an age appropriate level.

## Peer Tutoring

*Peer Tutoring* involves two children, one stronger reader (Reader A) and one weaker reader (Reader B), working together for thirty minutes a day (four days a week) over a six week period. It incorporates sight word practice through games, word definitions and reading practice. Pupils tested before and after Peer Tutoring show positive gains in reading performance. It can take place within one class or involve two classes.

## Building Bridges of Understanding

*Building Bridges of Understanding* promotes a whole school strategic approach to comprehension instruction. Research has consistently indicated that explicitly teaching children strategies for understanding what they read improves their comprehension. Through thinking aloud while reading, the teacher models and scaffolds use of the following key strategies : Predicting, Connecting and Visualising (J. Infs.), + Questioning (S. Infs.) + Declunking and Clarifying (First and Second), + Determining Importance and Inferring (Third and Fourth) + Synthesis (Fifth and Sixth).

- Predicting : Predicting is thinking about what might happen in a story, using the information or pictures you have. It can happen before, during or after reading.
- Connecting : Connecting is relating the reading material to the child's own life experiences and knowledge.
- Visualising : Visualising involves creating images in the mind in response to details in the text.
- Questioning : Questioning involves the reader asking questions before, during and after the reading.
- Declunking : This is the process of breaking up a word into syllables in order to pronounce it correctly and understand its meaning.
- Clarifying : This is where the reader identifies an element in the text which needs further explanation. It may be a concept or a word or a phrase.
- Determining Importance : This involves separating the essential from the non-essential information.
- Inferring : A proficient reader blends information from the text with his / her prior knowledge to create opinions that are not explicitly stated but can be inferred from clues within the text or illustrations.
- Synthesis : This is a complex process involving all the strategies. The reader can summarise the text in his / her own words and can answer questions based on the reading material.

## Spelling

Our *Spelling Programmes (Class Programme and Core Programme)* have been devised to ensure that each child is on a programme where he / she is experiencing success and progress is being made. If your child is experiencing difficulties, do come in and talk to your child's class teacher. Spelling should not be the cause of any worry for a child, or stress in the home trying to learn spellings that are too difficult.

### METHOD

It is most important that your child has a method to learn spellings. The method we teach is the *Look Say Cover Write and Check* method which is the one we find most successful.

1. **Look** involves studying the word with your child. It can involve many of the following :

- Checking to find smaller known words in the new word e.g. **ear** in **heard** (this could be highlighted with a coloured marker)
- Breaking the word into syllables e.g. dis / ad / van / tage
- Saying the word the way it is spelt e.g. **Wed** / nes / day
- Finding a familiar pattern in the word e.g. **and** in **gr**and** st**and** husband**
- Seeing a rule which applies to the word e.g. i before e except after c - **rece**ive****
- Making a picture of the word e.g. when = w + hen

2. **Say** the word aloud and then spell it, aloud and silently at least three times.

3. **Cover** the word.

4. **Write** the word. This is a very **important** step. A child can spell the word orally correctly and can write it incorrectly. Spelling is primarily a written skill and writing the spellings each night is vital. Spellings need frequent revision.

5. **Check** that the word is written correctly. If not, go back to Step 1.

**Remember:** Remember to encourage your child and praise him or her for their efforts in spelling. Some children have terrific visual memories and are fortunate enough to be brilliant at spelling with very little effort. These children are in the minority. There are many children who struggle long and hard with spelling. They can put in huge amounts of time and energy and this needs to be acknowledged, encouraged and rewarded. Some children can put enormous pressure on themselves by comparing themselves to other children, sometimes even their own siblings. Remind them that we are all individuals with our own strengths and weaknesses. Encourage them to set realistic targets for themselves and to measure success by achieving those targets and improving past performance. Following the guidelines given here will help your child spell to the best of his or her ability and this is our ultimate goal. Please remember that Spelling is not an end in itself. The **content** of a child's writing is **always** far more **important** than the spellings.