

Issue 12

December 2021

Merry Christmas!

The Kite
Academy
Trust
Flying high
together

Dear Families,



As we approach the end of term, and indeed 2021, I would like to sincerely thank you for your continued support. In September, we had hoped for the return school to be much more 'back to normal' but the number of COVID absences across the Trust has sadly meant that this has not been the case. Your understanding, support and co-operation has helped us ensure that everyone continued to be safe at school - **Thank You!** I would also like to recognise the continued hard work and dedication of our staff and thank them for their commitment and flexibility in juggling the necessary organisational changes on a daily basis. Each of our academies seems to have had different times when absences have peaked, for both staff and children, which has resulted in some challenging times. The pandemic has really highlighted the true strength of our Trust where, as one organisation, our academy staff, central staff, Governors and Trustees have collaborated and supported each other to ensure that the needs of our children have remained our focus.

It is disappointing that our usual Christmas festivities for families have been affected for another year, however I am sure it is appreciated that our Head Teachers must evaluate and assess the risks in their individual academies to make the best decisions for all. Nonetheless, children have enjoyed celebrating Christmas in school in different, creative ways and Head Teachers have considered ways to involve families as well.

At this time, it is not clear how guidance for schools may change in January however we will ensure that any further guidance is communicated to you as soon as is possible.

Now that we are reaching the Christmas break, I hope that you will all be able to enjoy some family time. Following a recent survey of children and staff, we are dedicating this newsletter to reading to support and encourage parents to read aloud more with their children at home. This is part of a Trust-wide project to help all children to improve their reading skills. We know that there are many demands on your time but our aim is to let you know why reading to your child is so important and the real difference you can make to your child's reading skills. We hope some of the ideas in this newsletter will help to re-charge reading with your children, starting this Christmas!



Wishing you all a Happy Christmas and New year - Keep safe!

Christine Dickinson

CEO



During the last 21 months of COVID disruption, the number of children reading at a level below expected for their age has fallen to 20% across our Trust. We carried out an urgent review with these children and their teachers to find out what was impacting on the low outcomes.

We found that the large majority of children enjoy reading and they think that reading is important. They enjoy the books their teachers read to them and almost every child likes the books they can choose in school.

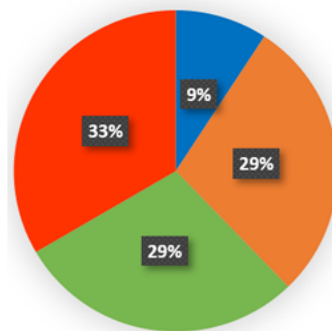


However, our survey revealed some worrying statistics- while more than 75% of children are reading to some extent at home, **only 20 % are reading a lot and only 25% of them regularly share books at home with adults.**
40% of the children never have an adult read to them at home.

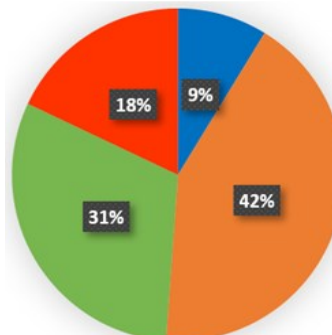
More children are read stories at a young age than those higher in Key Stage 2



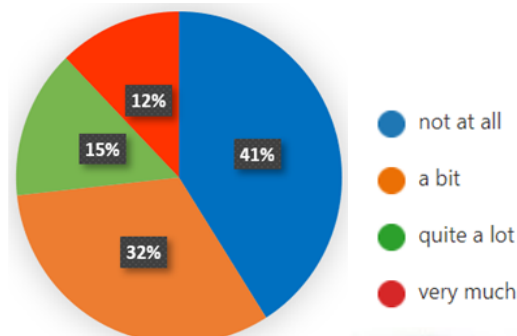
Q1. Do you enjoy reading?



Q2. Do you read at home?



Q3. Do adults read to you at home?



- not at all
- a bit
- quite a lot
- very much



What difference could I make as a parent?

The short answer is: **a lot!** Parents are by far the most important educators in a child's life and it's never too young for a child to start. Regular reading to a child gives comfort and reassurance, confidence and security, relaxation, happiness and fun.

It can also give children a flying start in life and help them become lifelong readers.

Evidence suggests that children who read for enjoyment every day not only perform better in reading tests than those who don't, but also develop a broader vocabulary, increased general knowledge and a better understanding of other cultures.

In fact, there's evidence to suggest that reading for pleasure is more likely to determine whether a child does well at school than their social or economic background.



“Reading for pleasure is the single biggest factor in success later in life, outside of an education.

Study after study has shown that those children who read for pleasure are the ones who are most likely to fulfil their ambitions.

If your child reads, they will succeed – it's that simple.”



Bali Rai

So, why don't more parents read to their children?

Regular reading for entertainment and relaxation is challenged by hectic family lives, lack of time and it can often take a backseat to screen time. Sometimes, it also feels like a chore.

Parents are aware of how important reading is as a skill in relation to children's literacy and academic performance, but what about reading for pleasure? There can be too much emphasis placed on reading as a skill and not as a pleasure.

Regularly reading to a child for the love of it provides a connection between parent and child from the very early days and helps build strong family ties... ❄️

What can parents do to support their child's development?

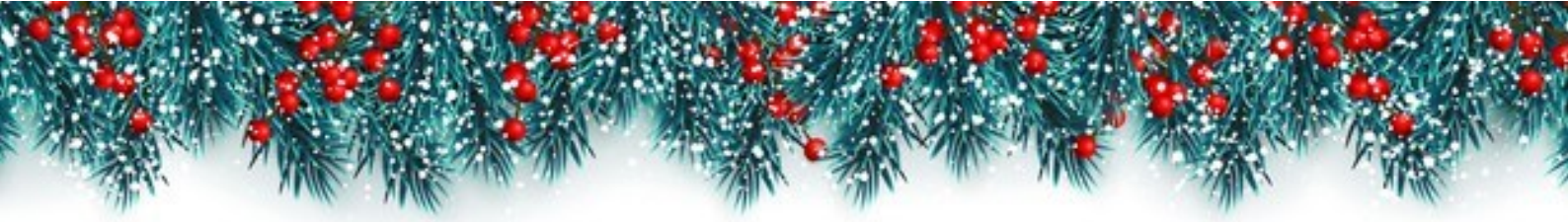
Giving a child time and full attention when reading them a story tells them they matter. It builds self-esteem, vocabulary, feeds imagination and even improves their sleeping patterns. Research shows that parents who read regularly with their children find that sharing a story is a deep joy for them as much as for the child. Reading is a great habit that needs repetition and regularity to establish itself. Because it needs quiet time, and our lives today are very short of this, parents need to create it for their children. This means consciously making time and keeping interruptions to a minimum.



“Reading is great for everyone, and loving books is something that can start when you’re very young. We can learn about people and life from stories, poems and non-fiction, and if you read to your children regularly for fun you will definitely be helping them in so many ways.”



Tony Bradman



Helping your child become familiar with language and books helps them see how enjoyable reading is. Here are some things you can try:



Reading aloud to your child

Talking about the words and pictures, and sharing ideas about the book






Reading Yourself

Children who see adults reading, and enjoying reading, are much more likely to want to read themselves



Surround them with books

You don't need hundreds of books at home, but make regular trips to the library or bookshop, not just to borrow books but to spend time together browsing and learning to make choices. In this way, reading becomes a habit.



For most of us, reading aloud isn't part of everyday life, so the thought of reading a story to your child may be a bit daunting - but don't let this put you off! Your children will be enjoying themselves too much to criticise your performance! There's no right or wrong way to enjoy a story together.

Tips for reading to your child

Be consistent



Whether it's one book per day or 15, try to make reading a part of your regular routine. And while you're at it, you don't have to read different books each time you sit down. Children love hearing the same stories over and over again — and they learn through this type of repetition.

Take your time

Be sure to leave enough time to read versus sneaking it in or - worse - making it a chore. Of course, you won't have loads of time each day to read, so some quickies are just fine. However, your child should see reading as a dedicated activity and one that you give your full attention to.

Make it fun

Use different voices for characters, pauses, songs, or other dramatics to make the story come to life. Reading with flair will help your child better understand the story. It also provides a good model of expressive and fluent reading for children who have begun reading by themselves.

Point out connections

Children love applying stories to their own lives. It not only makes the text more meaningful, but it also may help your child cope with different situations they encounter in their everyday experience. Point out those connections to your child. Note where the character was brave about that monster beneath their bed. Applaud the character who used the potty for the first time.

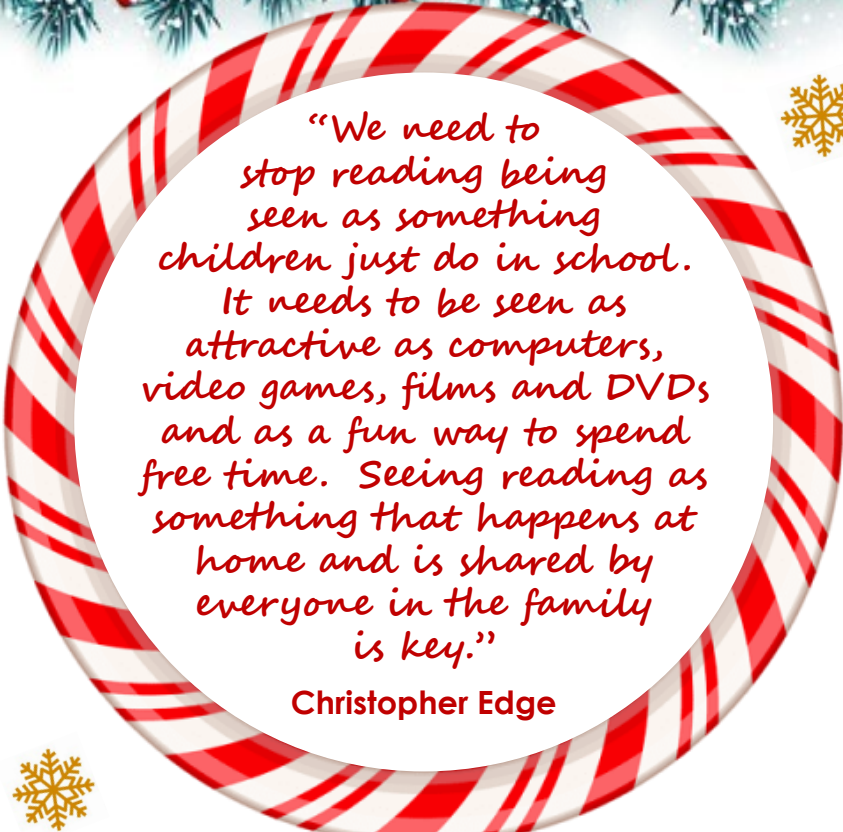
Don't stop with books



Any exchange of words is beneficial to our children. So, if you're uninspired by books one night, turn to telling stories. You can also look at pictures and talk about what you see or ask your child to be the storyteller. Anything that gets language flowing between you and your child is golden.

When it comes to early literacy and language skills, both the quality and quantity of the words you speak to your child matter. Books provide an excellent opportunity to get talking, telling stories, and connecting

... and DO join your local library- it's FREE!



"We need to stop reading being seen as something children just do in school. It needs to be seen as attractive as computers, video games, films and DVDs and as a fun way to spend free time. Seeing reading as something that happens at home and is shared by everyone in the family is key."

Christopher Edge





Would you like to find out more?

For more information and tips on reading to your child at different ages (including older children), please visit our [website](#).



What should I read to my child?

With hundreds of books available, it can be hard to know where to start when choosing a book for your child. Remember that as adults we like to re-read favourite books, relax with a magazine or tackle something challenging. Children are the same, so encourage choices – maybe a familiar book for re-reading as well as something new. Don't show disapproval if your child returns to old favourites.

Looking for ideas for Christmas shopping?

Take a look at the **Recommended Reads for Christmas** accompanying this newsletter. It has suggestions of great books for children of primary school age.

Finished your Christmas shopping? Hang onto the list for ideas of books to read in the new year.

For more book ideas:



<https://wordsoflife.org.uk/activities/give-the-gift-of-reading-book-list/>

Sharing stories in 18 different languages

You don't always need to read the words in books. If you speak another language at home, talk about the pictures and story in your own language:

<https://wordsoflife.org.uk/activities/sharing-stories-together/>

So why don't more parents do it?

<https://literacytrust.org.uk/blog/reading-children-so-powerful-so-simple-and-yet-so-misunderstood/>

Reading aloud to older children

<https://www.best-books-for-kids.com/reading-to-older-children.html>

Brilliant top tips

https://www.redbridgeprimary.org.uk/docs/PARENTS/Importance_of_reading/A_Parents_Little_Guide_to_Helping_Children_Read.pdf

Reading with your child:

<https://wordsoflife.org.uk/parent-support/reading-your-child/>

