



The Two Way Street

Welcome to the first edition of 'The Two Way Street' for the school academic year 2012/2013. The children have settled well and are now working at full speed!

We are currently reviewing our homework policy in line with recent research. As a school, we are constantly striving to make any activity worthwhile academically for the children in our care, so that progress is more rapid and fluid.

Historically, homework has been fairly well received at home, sending both literacy and mathematics work. The main aims of homework were; -

- To practice and reinforce skills being taught in school
- To develop a home/school link to keep you informed as to what your child is doing in lessons
- To prepare your child for his/her secondary school experience (and later employment!)



Up to now, we have had no way of measuring the impact of the homework being carried out. After looking into recent research, it seems that our time and yours as parents would be more beneficially used through reading with, speaking to and listening to your child. John Hattie (2012) suggests that homework in its traditional form is not in the "Zone of Desired Effects" that is to say, it does not have a visible influence on learning unless reading and speaking and listening are central to the activity. It is with this in mind that we are changing the type of homework that we set.

Reading is at the forefront of any academic subject in school, and once this process is started, developed and embedded, other areas can progress at a quicker rate as the children have the tools to access more information and are able to use this knowledge to enhance their own learning. We want to concentrate on this very important aspect so that they can reach their true potential in all areas at a quicker rate.

If you have any comments, concerns or questions - why don't you email us on our brand new address specifically for the 'Two Way Street'

Email address:

twowaystreet@st-johns.walsall.sch.uk



Why do we tell children to read?

We're always telling children that books and reading are good for them, but have we ever really thought about why that's true? Exactly what do older children get out of reading novels? What do younger children get from being able to read to? Does reading matter?

The purpose of this is to say that, yes, it's true, reading really is important, and that there are some solid reasons why that is so. Let's begin with the practical benefits and then move on to the less tangible rewards of a life filled with reading.



Books help children develop vital language skills.

Reading is an important skill that needs to be developed in children. Not only is it necessary for survival in the world of schools and (later on) universities, but in adult life as well. The ability to learn about new subjects and find helpful information on anything from health problems and consumer protection to more academic research into science or the arts depends on the ability to read.

Futurologists used to predict the death of the printed word but, ironically, Internet has made reading more and more a part of people's daily lives. The paperless society is a myth. To effectively utilize the web and judge the authenticity and value of what is found there, both reading and critical thinking skills are of prime importance.

The more children read, the better they become at reading. It's as simple as that.

...and the more young children are read to, the greater their interest in mastering reading. Reading out loud exposes children to proper grammar and phrasing. It enhances the development of their spoken language skills, their ability to express themselves verbally.

Reading, by way of books, magazines or websites, exposes children to new vocabulary. Even when they don't understand every new word, they absorb something from the context that may deepen their understanding of it the next time the word is encountered. When parents read aloud to children, the children also hear correct pronunciation as they see the words on the page, even if they can't yet read the words on their own.

Reading can open up new worlds and enrich children's lives.

Through books, children can also learn about people and places from other parts of the world, improving their understanding of and concern for all of humanity. This, in turn, contributes towards our sense that we truly live in a "global village" and may help us bring about a more peaceful future for everyone.

Through stories and novels children can try out new experiences and test new ideas, with no negative consequences in their real lives. Books also give kids the opportunity to flex their critical thinking skills in such areas as problem solving, the concepts of cause and effect, conflict resolution, and acceptance of

responsibility for one's actions. Even for very young children, a simple story with a repetitive refrain or a simple mystery to solve gives a confidence boost. Children can predict the patterns and successfully solve the riddles.



Children are influenced by and imitate the world around them. While a steady diet of violent cartoons may have a detrimental effect on children's development, carefully chosen stories and books can have a positive influence on children, sensitizing them to the needs of others. For example, books can encourage children to be more cooperative, to share with others, to be kind to animals, or to respect the natural environment.

Reading can enhance children's social skills.

Reading can be a great opportunity for adult and child to share some quiet, relaxed quality time together away from the rush and stresses of the business of daily living. They share a few minutes of precious time, plus they share the ideas that are contained in the story. In addition, older children can be encouraged to read aloud to younger ones as a means of enhancing their relationship.



Reading can provide children with plenty of good, clean fun!

I've saved the most important point for last. Reading can provide children with endless hours of fun and entertainment. Stories can free up imaginations and open up exciting new worlds of fantasy or reality. They allow children to dream and may give them a good start on the road to viewing reading as a lifelong source of pleasure, so read to your young children every day.

Inspire your older children to read. Give them access to plenty of reading material that they'll enjoy and discuss it with them.

If a child wants to hear the same story over and over again, don't worry about it. Children take comfort from the familiarity and predictability of a beloved story that they know by heart. There's no harm in that. Reread old favourites and, at the same time, introduce your children to new stories. Your child's mind and heart have room for both.

So reading really does matter after all !

There are so many ways in which reading continues to be both a vital skill for children to master, and an important source of knowledge and pleasure that can last a lifetime. Nurture it in your children. Make the most of all the resources that are available: printed books, online books, magazines and so forth. Encourage follow-up activities involving creative writing skills and the arts, as well, so that your children can reflect upon or expand on what they've absorbed and, at the same time, develop their own creativity. As you help your children appreciate the magic of reading, you'll find that there's a whole wonderful world full of children's literature out there that YOU can enjoy too.



Time To Talk

Information for Parents

Why is talk important?

1. The gift of speech is the greatest gift you can give to your child, apart from the gifts of happiness and good health.
2. We talk to get things we need or want: jobs, shopping, medical help, other help, friendship etcetera
3. Talk is our language on paper. The better we can talk, the better we can write. We write to get things we want or need: jobs, shopping, help or advice, friendship etcetera.
4. The more words we know and the richer the words we have, plus our confidence in using language for effect, influences how well we succeed in life.

What is Talk Homework?

1. Once or twice a week I will bring home a TALK homework slip.
2. The TALK homework slip will tell you what the talk topic for homework is. Please turn off the TV and spend 'special' time talking to me.
3. Could we have at least two meals a week when the TV is turned off and we all sit down together to eat (if we do not already). Then we could have a good talk as well.
4. The following are ways we could make our talk last longer and be more interesting:
 - Each give our own opinions on the subject
 - Use the 'because' word to explain why we think that.
 - Discuss why other family members not present might have a different idea.
 - Use the 'because' word to explain why they might have a different idea.
 - You could make links with how things were when you were young, or when your parents were young.
 - Discuss whether things may be different in the future.

What else can we do?

1. Use 'wow' words. These are big words or interesting words. Tell me what they mean if I do not know.
2. Play games with me, especially some of the more old fashioned games like board games and card games.
3. Play lots of word games with me. These are especially good when we are travelling or waiting for something. Here are some ideas:
 - Give a 'wow' word in a sensible sentence and I have to guess what it means
 - Give an adjective (describing word) and then in turn we have to give more that have a similar or opposite meaning
 - How many? Can we find? Take turns beginning with A...B...C... (Boys' names, girls' names, animals, countries, capital cities, seas and oceans)

Talk to me please!

What is a special bedtime?

1. Once or twice a week, have a 'special' bedtime (if bedtime is not like this already).
2. Snuggle on the bed beside me, or sit close by.
3. Talk to me about what I or we have been doing since school finished.
4. Talk to me about your day. Did anything funny happen?
5. Ask me about my day. Did anything funny happen?
6. What was the best thing about today?
7. Talk with me about something I or we watched on TV.
8. Talk with me about tomorrow or the rest of the week:
 - Is anything exciting or interesting going to happen?
 - Am I looking forward to something?
 - Am I a little bit worried about anything?

What is BIG Talk?

1. Big Talk is a part of the school day when we all talk in High Level Language.
2. In Big Talk we use 'wow' words (big or interesting words) and long, clever sentences.
3. When we do Big Writing we use our Big Talk Language.

When else might we talk?

1. In the supermarket talk about:
 - Things we can see
 - Places things come from
 - How things have changed over time
 - How you choose...
 - Guess how much things will cost and see who wins
 - Guess how much the final bill will be and see who wins
 - Who people you spoke to are and how you know them
2. At the doctors talk about:
 - Notices and pictures on the wall
 - Why there are magazines and toys
 - Look at a magazine together and talk about the pictures
 - Look at a story book / read a story
 - What we are going to do after the seeing the doctor
3. Travelling to the supermarket, school and other places, talk about:
 - What we see
 - Where we are going
 - What we expect to see or do
 - How we are feeling today
 - What we are looking forward to
 - Things that have happened in the news