Understanding Your Child’s Reading Progress at St Mary’s.

Learning to read is a very complex process. It involves many aspects including the learning of the roles and skills of being a code breaker, a text user, a text participant (making meaning) and a text analyst.

The Teachers at St Mary’s are highly qualified, skilled and experienced educational professionals, in the very important task of teaching, developing, monitoring and assessing reading in infants and primary years.

We feel that it is very important to clarify a number of points in regard to our reading program at St Mary’s, because we would like to ensure community understanding of how reading progression occurs. These points are taken from the “Read On” Document – the reading Policy Document for the Canberra Goulburn Diocese and from the “First Steps Reading” Document, both of which form the basis of our practice at St Mary’s.

What is the PURPOSE of Home Reading?

- Home Reading is designed to help to develop a love of reading and texts should be easy and familiar, with minimal problem solving. The purpose of Home Reading is not instructional, but to encourage and enjoy a shared love of reading, to provide a positive fun and enjoyable association with reading.
- For this reason, Home Reading Texts are meant to be a few levels lower than the texts that your child uses in class for guided reading. If your child is reading around a guided reading level of 9 in class, their home reading books will be at levels 6 and 7. The reading is meant to be enjoyable – not difficult or challenging.
- Chapter books should be read over several nights – not in one night.

Teaching Reading Tips:

1. Make it fun
2. Make it fun
3. Make it fun

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How is my Child's Progress Assessed and Monitored?

- The learning and progress of your child is based upon a broad range of assessments conducted in class – it is not based upon their Home Reading, which is conducted at a lower level.

- There are many aspects of reading to be assessed before a child can be moved up in levels. Information is collected in class in a range of ways, including:
  - Focused observations - formal and informal
  - Conversations - interviews, conferences
  - Products - work samples, running records, self-assessments, test results.

Listening to a child decode words is just one very small part of reading. It is very important to recognise that a child can often decode words WITHOUT the other skills that are required for successful and meaningful reading and comprehension. For example, if we look at the text below:

The Wave Function: In 1926, just weeks after several other physicists had published equations describing quantum physics in terms of matrices, Erwin Schrödinger created quantum equations based on wave mathematics, a mathematical system that corresponds to the world we know much more then the matrices. After the initial shock, first Schrödinger himself then others proved that the equations were mathematically equivalent. Bohr then invited Schrödinger to Copenhagen where they found that Schrödinger's waves were in fact nothing like real waves. For one thing, each particle that was being described as a wave required three dimensions. Even worse, from Schrödinger's point of view, particles still jumped from one quantum state to another; even expressed in terms of waves space was still not continuous. Upon discovering this, Schrödinger remarked to Bohr that "Had I known that we were not going to get rid of this damned quantum jumping, I never would have involved myself in this business."

- We can read the words, but unless we are a physicist, it means nothing to us. This is the same with children – there are many and varied skills and knowledge and experiences required to meaningfully read and comprehend a text, to gain full understanding. Decoding words – which is home reading, is just one skill.
When Should My Child Be Moved Up Reading Levels and How Does This Occur?

- At St Mary’s, following best practice in reading, teachers ensure that reading and comprehension skills are very competent before a child is moved to a higher level. Racing and pushing up reading levels can disadvantage children in their reading and comprehension progress in many ways. It is not something that is meant to be competitive and children should always have the understanding that everyone travels along their reading journey at their own pace and that it is not a competition to see who can reach the highest level.

- It is very important to be guided by your child’s teacher. Teachers at St Mary’s will thoroughly and professionally assess students regularly and move students to the appropriate level they have progressed to, until they reach level 30. This may mean a move of one level or more after each assessment period. No child will miss out on the level they are supposed to be on.

- Please understand that we cannot move children up reading levels without thorough ongoing assessment and monitoring and your child will be assessed on a scheduled rotating basis and observed on a daily basis.

- This will mean that a child will remain on a level until the teacher can ensure thorough comprehension and establishment and consolidation of all reading skills and experiences. To be fair to each child, and in understanding of the demands of the daily classroom, our in class, rotational assessment, daily observations and many other assessments, provide the basis for reading level progress.

- All Parents and Guardians are very welcome to discuss their child’s progress at any time with their teacher, but please understand that (1) to maintain fairness to all children and (2) understanding that there are up to 25 other children in the class, and (3) that specific reading assessments take at least 15-20 minutes per child; teachers need to keep to their rotational schedule, rather than attempt to do on request levelling of individual children. No child will miss out on their reading progression.

Please remember that fluent reading of a home reader at easy level (it is not instructional) does not necessarily mean that your child is comprehensively ready to move up reading levels.

- At each level, there is a need not only to master reading and comprehension skills, but to experience and become accustomed to understanding a wide variety of text types.
What Are The Reading Benchmarks?

- The CEO “Read On” Document sets out the following benchmarks to be attained by students from year to year. These are a standard level of expected achievement. **IMPORTANT!!** Within these standards, there is a range of progress expected and acceptable on both sides of these standards. For different reasons, all children learn and grasp concepts at different times.
- **Level 8** by the end of Kindergarten
- **Level 15 - 17** by the end of Year 1
- **Level 20+** by the end of Year 2
- **Year 3 and 4** Moving towards and reading at, an independent level of **Level 26 – 27+.** Reading at an independent level across a WIDE RANGE of Texts with thorough comprehension.
- **Level 30 and 30+** by end of year 4.

There is no rush to reach Level 30 and our aim is to ensure full understanding and experience of all the roles, skills and knowledge that good readers need to have in fictions and non-fiction texts.

**Finally: A Valuable Partnership**

- The teaching of reading happens at school, where children are fresh and not fatigued after a day of work. Support at home is crucial to developing positive attitudes to reading as well as practising and applying known reading skills and knowledge. Reading at home should be a positive, enjoyable and fun experience.