



LANGSHOTT PRIMARY SCHOOL
Smallfield Road, Horley
Surrey, RH6 9AU
Telephone: 01293 776341
Facsimile: 01293 821540
Email: www.langshott-surrey.co.uk
Headteacher: Mrs S Mackintosh

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The Importance of ... Reading!

Dear Parents and Carers,

Yes, this is a rather long letter but please **read** to the end ...

We want to do everything we can to help your child to become confident and successful in their reading and writing. We work incredibly hard in school to make this a reality for every child under our care and we take this privileged position very seriously indeed. However, this is not something that we can achieve without your support and involvement as parents and carers.

Year on year we, together with other teaching professionals across the country, are noticing a startling decline in children's vocabulary and ability to communicate effectively. This lack of vocabulary has a massive impact on children's progress and attainment in school. There is not one clear answer as to why this is happening, although the ever growing prevalence of the digital environment and less time spent reading must surely play a significant part in this. We know from research that children who read widely and often read better at school than children who don't. Children who read daily at home are five times more likely to read above the expected level. Children and teenagers who enjoy reading are three times more likely to read above the level expected for their age. Please also note that the best writers are those children who read avidly and immerse themselves in the richness of the English language.

Developing a love of reading and the ability to read successfully is absolutely crucial to your child's development, but not only in English. Please bear in mind that your child will need to apply their reading skills to all areas of their learning for many years to come – they will need to read word problems in Mathematics, analyse a piece of historical text in History and investigate theories in Science. They will be asked to think about difficult ideas and offer their opinions. If your child reads a broad range of books, they will start to think about such things as part of their general reading. In school, we want your child to ask questions, wonder about things, be curious and interested. Again, if they read widely, they will do just that.

As a school, we recognise our fundamental role in supporting your child in their reading journey. Our vision for every child is that we will create an environment in which they will develop and sustain a love of reading. However, we cannot achieve this without your support at home. The single most important thing you can do at home with your child is to read with them and to them. Simply enjoy reading and develop your child's awe and wonder at the power of the English word and the excitement of discovering new facts about the world around them!

Reading Lists

Reading lists for each year group will be handed out at parent evenings in the week commencing Monday 15th October 2018. Please encourage your child to read as many of the books on their list as possible. There will be prizes for those who have read all or most of the books by the end of the year. In EYFS and KS1, this will be an invitation to 'Six O'clock Stories' – a PJ & story session in school with hot chocolate and cookies. For KS2, as well as endeavouring to read all of the books on their list, your child will also need to produce a

book review for their favourite book from the list (details of when the reviews should be submitted will follow at a later date). The book reviews will be judged by the Senior Leadership Team and the winners will be invited to go on a trip to the world famous British Library in London where they will also have the opportunity to take part in a special workshop. Irrespective of age, your child will also receive a star point for every book from the list that they read.

Below you will find some of the other initiatives that we are implementing in school this year in order to boost the love of reading – the significance of this goes far beyond data and league tables!

- Private opening hours in the school library for our EYFS children and parents
- All classes will visit our school library regularly
- Cross-year group reading opportunities
- Guest readers to read to your child's class
- Enhanced reading corners in all classrooms
- Daily reading for pleasure – 'Escape Time'
- World Book Week
- Visiting author
- A learning environment rich in vocabulary and vocabulary building activities

Let us leave you with 'Television' by Roald Dahl, a poem which not only summarises the content of this letter but also encapsulates the power and beauty of the English language:

Television – a poem by Roald Dahl

The most important thing we've learned,
So far as children are concerned,
Is never, NEVER, NEVER let
Them near your television set -
Or better still, just don't install
The idiotic thing at all.
In almost every house we've been,
We've watched them gaping at the screen.
They loll and slop and lounge about,
And stare until their eyes pop out.
(Last week in someone's place we saw
A dozen eyeballs on the floor.)
They sit and stare and stare and sit
Until they're hypnotised by it,
Until they're absolutely drunk
With all that shocking ghastly junk.
Oh yes, we know it keeps them still,
They don't climb out the window sill,
They never fight or kick or punch,
They leave you free to cook the lunch
And wash the dishes in the sink -
But did you ever stop to think,
To wonder just exactly what
This does to your beloved tot?
IT ROTTS THE SENSE IN THE HEAD!
IT KILLS IMAGINATION DEAD!
IT CLOGS AND CLUTTERS UP THE MIND!
IT MAKES A CHILD SO DULL AND BLIND
HE CAN NO LONGER UNDERSTAND
A FANTASY, A FAIRYLAND!

HIS BRAIN BECOMES AS SOFT AS CHEESE!
HIS POWERS OF THINKING RUST AND FREEZE!
HE CANNOT THINK - HE ONLY SEES!
'All right!' you'll cry. 'All right!' you'll say,
 'But if we take the set away,
 What shall we do to entertain
Our darling children? Please explain!
 We'll answer this by asking you,
 'What used the darling ones to do?
How used they keep themselves contented
 Before this monster was invented?'
 Have you forgotten? Don't you know?
 We'll say it very loud and slow:
THEY ... USED ... TO ... READ! They'd READ and READ,
 AND READ and READ, and then proceed
To READ some more. Great Scott! Gadzooks!
 One half their lives was reading books!
 The nursery shelves held books galore!
 Books cluttered up the nursery floor!
 And in the bedroom, by the bed,
 More books were waiting to be read!
 Such wondrous, fine, fantastic tales
Of dragons, gypsies, queens, and whales
 And treasure isles, and distant shores
Where smugglers rowed with muffled oars,
 And pirates wearing purple pants,
 And sailing ships and elephants,
And cannibals crouching 'round the pot,
 Stirring away at something hot.
 (It smells so good, what can it be?
 Good gracious, it's Penelope.)
The younger ones had Beatrix Potter
 With Mr. Tod, the dirty rotter,
 And Squirrel Nutkin, Pigling Bland,
 And Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle and
 Just How The Camel Got His Hump,
 And How the Monkey Lost His Rump,
 And Mr. Toad, and bless my soul,
 There's Mr. Rat and Mr. Mole
Oh, books, what books they used to know,
 Those children living long ago!
So please, oh please, we beg, we pray,
 Go throw your TV set away,
 And in its place you can install
 A lovely bookshelf on the wall.
Then fill the shelves with lots of books,
 Ignoring all the dirty looks,
The screams and yells, the bites and kicks,
 And children hitting you with sticks
Fear not, because we promise you
 That, in about a week or two
 Of having nothing else to do,
They'll now begin to feel the need
 Of having something to read.
And once they start -oh boy, oh boy!

You watch the slowly growing joy
That fills their hearts. They'll grow so keen
They'll wonder what they'd ever seen
In that ridiculous machine,
That nauseating, foul, unclean,
Repulsive television screen!
And later, each and every kid
Will love you more for what you did.

Kind regards,

Mrs Watanabe
English Leader