

The British School - Muscat

'An Outstanding School' - Inspectors 2009

Founded under Royal Charter, 1973



To: All Year One Parents

26th September 2009

Dear Parents

Many of you were able to attend the 'Meet and Greet' session before the Eid holiday. For those of you who missed the presentations on reading and phonics, we have included a brief outline below. We hope it will be helpful when assisting your child at home.

Guided Reading

In Year 1, the children are taught to read through our Guided Reading sessions. These consist of 3 x half hour sessions each week. One session is teacher led while the other sessions help to develop the childrens' independent skills, through follow up activities and games. In small groups the children learn to read and appreciate books, both fiction and non fiction. The books are specifically written in order to expose the children to phonics and high frequency words, and to engage the minds and emotions of the children. Through the texts, the children learn how to tackle unfamiliar vocabulary, how to use punctuation when reading for an audience and how different font styles are used for effect. The children are encouraged to discuss texts, make predictions as to outcomes of stories and to explore and relate their own feelings and experiences.

Home Reading

As a result of teaching reading through these sessions, in Year 1 the home reading book becomes the responsibility of the parent, and parent readers. These books are generally slightly less challenging than those used in guided reading and serve the purpose of applying and practising the skills taught in school. There is no pressure to read a book in its entirety in one evening, although we do encourage some reading every day.

Two books are changed each time, twice a week either on a Saturday and Monday, or on a Sunday and Tuesday. The reading books are monitored by the class teacher and the learning support assistant, in conjunction with the Guided Reading to ensure that your child's reading book is of an appropriate level for both their reading and comprehension skills. The weekend focus for reading should be sharing library books, or real books from home. The books are grouped to ensure a balance of fiction and non fiction and a range of genre. However, If your child has a strong aversion to a particular book, let them choose one of their own to read and inform us through a note in the organiser. After all, we are trying to promote a joy of reading!

There will be times where, for one reason or another your child may bring home a previously read book by accident. In this instance, choose a book from home for that evening and again, please just let us know and we will ensure that it is changed the next day.

It is important that the organiser is signed so that we know when books are ready for changing.

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Spelling

We will be following the Letters and Sounds approach to the teaching of phonics, a six phase scheme which prioritises the relationship between reading and spelling from an early age, such that the teaching of one reinforces understanding of the other. The program focuses on securing word recognition skills, as these are essential for children to decode (read) and encode (spell) words accurately and with ease in order to concentrate on comprehension and composition of text. Phonics is taught for 20 minutes, four days each week, and follows a review, teach, practise and apply method. At the end of each week, you are encouraged to download a series of flashcards to reinforce phonics / key words introduced in that week from the school website. We would suggest games and activities with these resources to be undertaken for around 10 minutes each day. As the phases progress, your child will be introduced to weekly spellings, re-enforcing spelling patterns taught.

However, it is important to remember that the main focus of the 'Letters and Sounds' program in the earlier phases is that of reading development, and this should remain a priority.

Numeracy Passport

In Year One we introduce the children to phase one of the Numeracy passport, where the children are set weekly targets to teach and re-enforce their number facts and mental maths skills. Phase one focuses on addition and number facts within 5 and 10, doubling, number bonds, telling the time to o'clock and half past the hour, and in the third term, the 2, 5, and 10 times multiplication tables.

Each day the children complete a set of questions to practise their relevant target – with the time reducing over the week. Once the children have been taught a target, they begin with 2 minutes to complete the task, reducing to 30 seconds at the end of a period of three weeks. The passport tasks will be sent home each day in so that you can monitor your child's progress and practise the targets each day for around 2 or 3 minutes. Once a child can complete the target within 30 seconds, they will be demonstrating secure mental recall of the number facts rather than relying on calculating the answers.

Numeracy Booklet

The Numeracy booklet is aimed at providing an insight into the methods used for teaching Numeracy in Year 1. It also includes resources and ideas for Numeracy games that can be played at home. It is available on the school website.

Handwriting

In Year 1 we introduce the cursive script handwriting, examples of which are attached. During the first 2 terms, the children will be taught individual letter formation, leading on to joining of letters to create whole words in cursive script. In term 3 all children should be familiar with the cursive script and we encourage them to practise and use joined up writing wherever possible, writing their names, dates labeling of pictures etc. By the end of Year 1 many children will be writing consistently in cursive script.

Tickled Pink and Growing Green

Throughout the Primary school, the children should be aware of 'tickled pink and growing green'. Pink is used to highlight work completed correctly, or that meets the success criteria for a specific task. Green highlights work that needs to be improved or looked at again.

www.sparklebox.co.uk

This website has a wealth of resources for both the 'Letters and Sounds' programme and other areas of the curriculum. We suggest that you browse the website and recommend printing off the following resources in particular to create resources to support your child's learning at home.

- 100 high frequency word flashcards
- 200 more common word cards
- alphabet / phoneme fans

We hope that you will find the above information useful. If you have any concerns or questions, please feel free to speak to your child's class teacher.

Sincerely,

The Year 1 Team

Mrs Fenton
Year 1 Leader

Mrs Ellman-Brown

Mrs Mabelson