

READING ASSESSMENT AND BOOK BANDS: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

The PTA have recently funded the purchase of some new reading books to supplement our well-loved Oxford Reading Tree book scheme. As a result of this, we have decided to move towards using the universal 'Book Bands' used by other schools. Book Bands are a proven approach to developing successful readers. The Book Band system helps schools to carefully grade their books by difficulty level. Most reading scheme books are given a Book Band colour by their publisher, which will be based on the book's level of difficulty. A Book Band reading scheme provides a comprehensive structure for teachers and parents, which helps them to follow each child's reading development, whilst accommodating a whole-school reading programme.

Please see below general guidelines about which book bands should be covered within each year group.

In Reception the children start at **lilac** band where they learn to use images to tell stories and understand events. This is essential to enable development of early language skills. They then move on to **pink** and **red** bands which includes simple text where they are able to apply their phonic knowledge to decode words. They also begin to make the connection between the text and the image and are able to share their opinions on different books. By the end of Reception children's knowledge of letter/sound correspondences has increased and they apply their skills to books with simple stories. Decoding is still the most important aspect at this stage as well as recognising many of the high frequency words (common exception words) that cannot be phonetically decoded, by sight.

By year 1 the children have been introduced to all 44 phonemes and they are now learning the alternative graphemes for each of these. They practise these skills in their reading and begin to answer simple questions using picture clues as well as the text. At this stage inference is often linked to images.

By the end of the Autumn Term in year 2, children are generally expected to be reading books in **turquoise** or **purple** bands. Please remember however that children learn in different ways and make progress at different times.

As a simple guide, children are expected to reach the **lime** book band at seven or eight years old. Children who read above **lime** band are reading fairly fluently and although some books are still graded above this band, children are reading such a wide range of material that the banding becomes less important.

From year 2 there is a much greater emphasis on inference and a deeper understanding of language and style used by the author. Children begin to appreciate the impact that text structure, punctuation and language have on the reader. They are expected to use examples from the text to justify their thoughts and opinions, and to make comparisons between books.

The books will vary in a number of ways, including layout, size, vocabulary and length, to give the children a rich diet of literature. The difference between each colour band/number stage is very gradual, so that children do not experience great difficulty moving up through the scheme.

A Word of Caution!

Working through the book bands is a journey, not a race! Every child is an individual – try not to compare your child's progress with other children or with brothers and sisters. Children learn at different rates just as they do when learning to walk, dress themselves etc. If children are rushed through the books they will not develop the necessary level of understanding needed for longer texts. Books that they find too difficult may also put them off reading!

Things to Remember

Do you hear your child read every day?

Do you read to your child?

Do you read in front of your child - are you a role model for them?

Reading little and often can be more beneficial than a long session once a week. Think about how long you are reading for - the amount of reading time shouldn't exceed your child's span of attention. Pick your timing carefully - it's best not to embark on a reading session when your child is tired.

Phonics Phase	Colour	School / Year Group Expectation
	Lime	
	White	End of Year 2
	Gold	
	Purple	
Phase 6	Turquoise	
Phase 5/6	Orange	End of Year 1
Phase 5	Green	
Phase 4/5	Blue	
Phase 3/4	Yellow	End of Reception
Phase 3	Red	
Phase 2	Pink	
Phase 1	Lilac	