**Helping your child to learn their HFW**

Each week your child has been coming home with a set of high-frequency words that they have been learning in class. These words are an important part of your child's phonics journey. Below is information to help guide you through the importance of these words as well as what you can do to help your child learn the high-frequency words that they have been given and taught in class.

***What is a high-frequency word?***

High-frequency words are also referred to as a main type of 'sight words'. They are words which occur most frequently in our written and spoken language. Examples of high-frequency words are "the", "and", "it" and "is". On their own these words don't have much meaning or value, but when placed in a sentence they are invaluable.

There are some high-frequency words that can be sounded out with the phonic sounds your child has learnt, for example - "and" or "it".  However there are many that cannot be sounded out and are therefore difficult for your child to read, especially at the beginning of their phonics journey.

You will also hear some high-frequency words being referred to as 'tricky words' as these are not only difficult to sound out but also difficult for children to understanding the meaning of the word as they cannot be linked to a real object.

***Why are high-frequency words important?***

If your child is able to identify high-frequency words by sight, without sounding out, it makes reading a quicker, smoother and more pleasurable experience for both your child and the person they are reading to! They are able to read longer sentences or texts without becoming quickly exhausted, lose enthusiasm or flow, and be able to understand the text more readily.  Children will also use these words in their writing and can help make writing complete sentences less daunting and more engaging.  Knowing high-frequency words by sight can also boost your child's confidence in reading and writing, and help them to see progress in their own abilities.

Children who are confident with recognising high-frequency words by sight tend to move through reading book levels faster and become more secure in their reading abilities. This is because they spend time on learning new content rather than consistently having to break down words that they have learnt or been exposed to frequently before.

***Why does my child come home with sets of high-frequency words?***

All phonics schemes and approaches will teach high-frequency words at certain times. The most common come first and then it gradually grows as they move through the scheme. We have looked very carefully at our approach and have structured our scheme to best suit our reading books that your child bring home and our phonics teaching that we deliver in class. We spend time during phonic sessions and through our class provision to learn these words, but the difference you can make to your child's progress is huge when practising these words regularly at home too can be staggering.

**What do I do with the sets of high-frequency words that you send home?**

Each high-frequency word has been made into high-frequency flashcards. We strongly advise that you take these out and regularly juggle them around and use them in the game ideas we give you as many children will learn by rote/memory the order of the words rather than the actual words itself - meaning that when they come to use the words in a different context they won't be able to recall these with accuracy or speed.

We will give a suggestion for an activity that you could complete each week to help your child learn their high-frequency words. These ideas build up as a bank of activities that you can use to teach all of the high-frequency words sent home. We added these to help you find learning high-frequency words as engaging and active as possible as this is the best way for a child to learn.

Once you think that your child has learnt these words add them to the others you have learnt at home...but don't forget to use these daily before focusing on the new ones they have been sent home with to learn otherwise these can be forgotten.

**How often do I need to look at these high-frequency words with my child?**

We ask that you use these high-frequency word cards as much as possible. In an ideal world we would love for you to practise these HFWs at home daily. At such a young age children quickly forget new content and rely on regular exposure to help embed this. Going more than a day can often make learning more challenging or frustrating for you and your child. You don't have to spend hours doing HFWs...that is actually counterproductive, just a short burst of five to ten minutes is most effective! Learning is to be fun, not a chore. If either you or your child are finding it hard work...change tactics!

You will find that there are at least two new words a week being taught - there isn't a massive amount of time to practise and rehearse new words which is why we have to find as much time as possible to keep up with these words. You will often hear of the term '100 high-frequency words'...there are lots of them to work through!

**How can I help my child make the transition from sounding out high-frequency words to recognising them and recalling from memory? How can I teach my child new high-frequency words for sight recognition at home...where do I start?**

**1. Games!**Playing games is a fun way for children to rehearse and practise high-frequency words. Memory games in particular are great for instant recognition. For example, face your child's HFW flashcards down on the table. Children can chose a card to turn over, they have three seconds to recognise it. If they do they get to keep it, if they don't they have to return it face down on the table. You take it in turns with your child, or ideally with a sibling. Whoever has the most HFWs at the end is the winner.

**2. Keeping the words in sight.** Dot them around your home, have a high-frequency word station/word wall, put them on the ceiling above your child's bed, wherever your child will see them. You will need to move them around and change them as otherwise they have the wallpaper effect and don't get noticed. Regular exposure helps your child to become familiar with what the words look like, and with support from you as to what the word is, they soon become more conditioned to recognising high-frequency words.

**3. Reminders in reading.**When your child brings home a reading book you will find that the book will often have a number of high-frequency words in it - some that they haven't even learnt yet. Instinct is to launch straight away into reading the sentence but before you start, take time to look at the sentence as a whole. Can your child identify any high-frequency words by sight? Perhaps tack a sticky post it note underneath it to remind your child not to sound out this word or if they start to sound it out have a buzz word like "sight word" to remind your child to look at the word as a whole. This can take a while to begin with, but as your child does this more and more they will soon begin to distinguish between words that they need to sound out and those that they 'just know'.

**4. Be high-frequency word detectives.**Your child doesn't have to just use high-frequency words in their reading books - they are everywhere! From other story books they own, texts and books around the home, and even texts when out and about! Sides of buses, in shops, cafes and restaurant menus. The more children see these words in different contexts, the more engaged they can become. Can they spot any high-frequency words they know? Perhaps they could get a point for each one they find. If they get to five high-frequency words without sounding out maybe they can chose a treat or reward...an extra five minutes before bedtime, their choice for what flavour squash they have at dinner, whatever works for you!

**5. Make the most of online resources too!**We know that many parents have a tough, difficult balance between work and home and that time is incredibly short. It is not realistic to expect that you can devote time daily to this one-on-one and that in order to make it manageable to cover high-frequency words daily that you would turn to electronic devices to help. This is perfectly fine, as long as it doesn't completely replace you. Your child will benefit most from your support.  Below is a list of resources that you could access online to help you with high-frequency word recognition. You may also feel like you are running out of ideas that suit you or your child so again, get googling! There are some great tutorials on youtube, picture ideas on pinterest and lots of websites offering ideas and advice. Never be afraid to spice it up!

It can feel daunting, overwhelming or you simply may not be that interested in high-frequency words as a parent, but we promise that it can be an exciting, fun part of your child's learning and the feelings that you and your child will get when they achieve new high-frequency words by sight is not only motivating, but will spur you on to do more. We love seeing the journey your child makes with phonics, we hope you do too!