**Encouraging Reluctant Readers**

Some children are not always motivated to read stories, or to read at length. Even when they are older and have become effective 'decoders of print', many children are still reluctant to read at length. They may skim-read magazines or factual texts, or search for specific information on a computer screen. This selection of information is, in itself, an important skill. But for children to engage fully with a text, their curiosity needs to be roused, or a bond formed with the author. It is important for the rest of their lives that they become fluent in reading, or they'll find it a difficult obstacle to overcome in later years.

**Alternatives to story books**

There are all sorts of alternatives that you can use to encourage them to get interested in reading - comics, instructions for computer games, packaging, TV guides - anything you like. You can read and discuss newspapers, information books or catalogues. The trick is to pick something that will help them pursue something they are interested in. For example, if they are interested in wildlife, space or fashion, there are many fascinating and well-illustrated factual books around. Buy them a magazine about their hobby - even though the text may be pitched at an older reader, you can encourage them to read it with you. Or if you find an interesting newspaper article, ask them to read it and then ask their opinion on it.

There is an incredibly rich choice of children's literature in a range of genres, from ancient myths to stories of modern life. The key issue is to make them accessible, and help children find relevance in what they read.

If you encourage your child to read stories - or to read them with you, it can help their learning development.

**Should they read alone?**

At West Lane, we use all kinds of reading strategies, from silent reading to shared and guided activities. You can do the same. Some texts should be read as a social activity, even as a performance, and you can read with your child and have fun doing the voices for the different characters.

Talking about reading is also one of the most effective ways of developing readers. Children begin to see the processes of understanding at work, and they will realise that all kinds of interpretation can exist for one text, that readings are different. They will also begin to learn that a book often does not reveal its full meaning on the first reading.