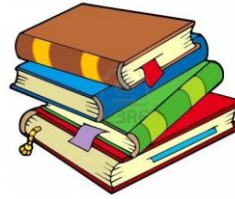


Core Activity for Year Four Pupils – ‘The Basics’



- Do some times tables every day or at least five times a week
- Read every day
- Do two sessions of paired reading every week
- Keep a personal words list and revise it every week (at the end of the year you should have 52 sheets with 20 words on each which your child did not know at the beginning of year three. The identification and revision process you have been through will mean those 1000 odd words are now fully known)



The results of doing the work above will be as follows:

Times tables:

- Sticking with this work will ensure you child has the foundations necessary to do well in Maths. The mistake children and parents often make is that they believe their child knows their times tables because they can recite them.
- Pick one at random (say 7x6) out of the blue, see if they are as fluent if you ask the question the other way round (42 divided by 7) and do they instantly know the answer if you put it in a sum ? x6= 42.
- The truth is that this work is often stopped too early and, as a result as children get older they find they make ‘silly’ mistakes in calculations or with fractions work.
- Nine times out of ten these are not ‘silly’ mistakes, they are mistakes which reveal that under pressure their times tables work is not good enough. Sadly when it dawns on them that this is the reason behind the dropped marks or behind the slightly slow working it’s often too late to fix.
- Going back to times tables in year six feels remedial, it’s hard work, it knocks a child’s confidence. Better to get things right first time in our view and ensure times tables learning happens properly in years three, four and five.

Use the resources we have suggested if you like for times tables – [Year 4 Books](#)

We urge everyone to stick with times tables learning. If it gets boring then find a new way to do it. Children with better times tables skills will be better at Maths throughout their lives.



Reading every day:

- Children who read every day in year four benefit hugely from their reading fluency.
- They do better in comprehension tests; they will have a wider vocabulary and will be better at both spelling and punctuation. They understand Maths problems others don't; they do better in other subjects like geography or history or science.
- Reading is a core skill. The more children do of it the better they will become in all sorts of areas.



The old saying, 'those who read - succeed' is very true.

Paired reading:

- This works magically to improve reading skills. Because children follow the page as you read their eyes start to move at a speed closer to that of an adult. Rather than looking at each word individually they begin to look ahead of the word they are saying. As their reading speed improves so they develop their vocabulary more quickly and enjoy reading and therefore read more.
- Not only that, the emphasis you place on punctuation and words helps to bring stories to life for them and helps them understand the use of punctuation. When they read by themselves they copy these things and so enjoy independent reading more.



[Free Resource – Paired Read Guide](#)

Personal words lists:

- Developing a wider working vocabulary is very valuable educationally. It helps children express themselves better; it helps them write better, it helps with comprehension work.
- Later in life a wide vocabulary is a building block which will help children get better grades in their GCSE's, better grades in their A levels and go to a better university.
- The problem with vocabulary is that is very personal- what one child knows; another child won't. This is why it needs to be built up on a personal words list.
- To build a vocabulary children need to do two things, firstly they need to discover new words and secondly they need a mechanism for learning those they don't know.



- The personal words list is a tried and tested formula. Children will find new words through their conversations with adults and in their reading. They will see or hear the word in context for the first time. Children need to note the word down on their personal words list making sure they know how to spell it, then they must either write down a word they already know which has a similar meaning or write down a word they know which has an opposite meaning (which won't always be possible) failing that they should write the word in a sentence and discuss the meaning of it generally.
- These words need to be revised at least every month (all of them). At the end of a year the child will have been through this process with over 1,000 words and while they may not know them all intimately they will be familiar with them all.

Free Resource – Personal Words List

Once started this is an easy process to stick to and is the only method we know of that really helps children to develop a wide vocabulary - vocabulary books have their uses from time to time- but the personal words list should be at the core of everything that is done.



Final Points to Remember

This all sounds technical and like hard work but it isn't and it shouldn't be.

- Five or ten minutes on tables twice a day, one of those sessions could be a game you play together or could be one of the free computer times tables games. You could do this in the car on the way to school; you could do it at home when they come back from school or later in the evening.
- The reading should be happening anyway and is often a good closing activity that both children and parents enjoy at the end of the day. Having the personal words list there to note down a word or two during each session doesn't add to the time involved and if done in the right way won't take away from the enjoyment.
- Paired reading could be done on two afternoons a week- 10-20 minutes with personal words list to hand using a different book than the one they are reading for enjoyment.
- When you look at it that way, parents need to be a little bit more organised and motivated but from a child's perspective there's really very little impact.

If you do nothing else then our advice is to do the work we have described - the cost is minimal whatever you choose to spend on times tables resources.

