



## A PARENTS' GUIDE TO BOOK BANDS

### *What are Book Bands?*

The Book Band system helps us grade our books according to their difficulty level. Each level is assigned a specific colour and consists of a variety of phonics scheme books as well as 'real' books. The transition between each band is gradual, ensuring that children do not encounter difficulties when moving from one level to the next. You can find details about your child's Book Band colour inside their Reading Record.

This chart gives an indication of which children the Book Band levels are aimed at.

|                    |   |                           |  |
|--------------------|---|---------------------------|--|
| Lilac              | Phase 1                                       |                           | Wordless fiction & non-fiction                   |
| Pink A             | Phase 2a                                      |                           | ULS fully decodable fiction & non-fiction        |
| Pink B             | Phase 2b                                      |                           | ULS fully decodable fiction & non-fiction        |
| Red A              | Phase 3a                                      |                           | ULS fully decodable fiction & non-fiction        |
| Red B              | Phase 3b                                      | ARE – Reception           | ULS fully decodable fiction & non-fiction        |
| Blue A             | Phase 4a                                      | ARE – Reception           | ULS fully decodable fiction & non-fiction        |
| Blue B             | Phase 4b                                      | Greater Depth – Reception | ULS fully decodable fiction & non-fiction        |
| Green A            | Phase 5a                                      |                           | ULS fully decodable fiction & non-fiction        |
| Green B            | Phase 5b                                      |                           | ULS fully decodable fiction & non-fiction        |
| Green *            | Application                                   |                           | Highly decodable fiction & non-fiction (variety) |
| Orange A           | Phase 5c                                      |                           | ULS fully decodable fiction & non-fiction        |
| Orange *           | Application                                   | ARE – Year 1              | Highly decodable fiction & non-fiction (variety) |
| Turquoise          | ARE – Year 1                                  |                           | Variety fiction & non-fiction                    |
| Purple             | Greater Depth – Year 1                        |                           | Variety fiction & non-fiction                    |
| Gold               | ARE – Year 2                                  |                           | Variety fiction & non-fiction                    |
| White              | ARE – Year 2                                  |                           | Variety fiction & non-fiction                    |
| Lime               | Greater Depth – Year 2 / early Year 3         |                           | Variety fiction & non-fiction                    |
| Copper/Brown       | Year 3  |                           | Variety fiction & non-fiction                    |
| Silver/Grey        | Year 4  |                           | Variety fiction & non-fiction                    |
| Sapphire/Dark Blue | Year 5  |                           | Variety fiction & non-fiction                    |
| Ruby/Dark Red      | Year 6  |                           | Variety fiction & non-fiction                    |
| Onyx/Black         | Greater Depth – Year 6 / Transition to Year 7 |                           | Variety fiction & non-fiction                    |

The chart displays the Book Bands for an 'average' group of children. However, it is important to remember that every child is unique and learns and progresses at their own pace. Therefore, this chart should be viewed as just a guide.

Think: stage not age!

In addition to periods of rapid progress, your child may also experience stages of consolidation, during which progress may not be as noticeable. While this might



seem worrying, it is actually an opportunity for your child to build confidence in using and applying their newly acquired skills.

It is crucial for children to develop their comprehension skills alongside their ability to read the words on the page. You may find that your child can read fluently but remains on the same Book Band colour for a while. This is to allow them to focus on improving their understanding. Teachers regularly assess the children's reading abilities and will only change their Book Band colour once they are confident that both comprehension and word reading goals have been fully achieved. Please encourage your child to view the Book Bands as more than just a race through the colours. Help them understand that each band consists of a variety of books that will help them to develop different reading skills.

**Remember, you will not see a note in your child's reading diary every single time they read in school.** Every day, your child will be given multiple opportunities to read and engage with high quality texts. This could be with friends, with an adult, in a small group, individually or as a whole class reading lesson. There is a reading handbook on our school website if you want to find out more about how we teach reading at St. Laurence's.

We sincerely appreciate your efforts in reading with your child at home. It is an essential part of their overall development, and you play a vital role in nurturing their love for reading.

Read on for information on the different coloured book bands and how you can help your child at home



## LILAC

Lilac includes wordless picture books that encourage young children to tell their stories. At this level, children are beginning to discover books and developing their core speaking and listening skills.

### **PUPIL TARGETS**

- Hold a book correctly
- Look at the pages in the correct order
- Know the differences between words and pictures
- Understand that each letter is different
- Say who and what the book is about
- Talk about the pictures and create their stories

### **How to support your child with Lilac level books**

Your child is beginning to discover the excitement of books. Although these books have no words, they are an important introduction to reading. Please encourage your child to:

- Look at the pages in order and talk about what is happening on the left-hand page before the right-hand page.
- Talk about what is happening on each page, rather than just talking about what they see in each picture.
- Tell you who or what the book is about.

### **Ask your child:**

- Can you tell me the story using the pictures?
- What/who is the book about?
- Can you point to the dog/boy/ice cream?
- I like the way the character helps people. What do you like about the book?
- How could the story be different?
- Which page comes first/next?



## **PINK**

Pink is perfect for introducing fundamental reading concepts and skills to early readers. The books are fully decodable and part of our Unlocking Letters and Sounds phonics programme.

### **PUPIL TARGETS**

- Listen carefully to stories
- Read their name
- Follow the words on a page in the right direction
- Tell a familiar story in their words
- Know that letters have different sounds
- Recognise high-frequency words

### **How to support your child with Pink level books**

Your child is beginning to learn how to read. As they read, please help them to:

- Read the words carefully. Ask your child to sound out and blend only the words they can't read yet, not every word. Eventually, almost all words will become part of your child's 'sight memory', and they won't have to sound out at all.
- On second and third readings of the book, encourage them to read with more pace and with less focus on sounding out the letters in each word.
- Make a story out of a whole book, rather than focusing just on what is happening on each page.
- Tell you about something that happened in the book or about something they found out in the book.

### **Ask your child:**

- What happens in the beginning, middle, and end of the story?
- Can you read your name? Show me where it is.
- Tell me about a part of the story that you found interesting or funny.
- What do you think will happen next in the book?
- Point to a word you can read on this page. What does it mean?



## RED

Red books will have an increased number of words on a page. Familiar characters are also introduced at this stage.

### **PUPIL TARGETS**

- Find the title of the book
- Use illustrations to help them understand what is happening in a story
- If they are unfamiliar with a word, try to think of a word that would make sense in that sentence
- Know what a full stop is
- Sing the alphabet song
- Use phonemes to read words such as 'cat', 'if', and 'up'

### **How to support your child with Red level books**

Your child is beginning to learn to read. As they read, please help them to:

- Read the words carefully. Most of the words can be recognised or sounded out. Ask your child to sound out and blend only the words they can't read yet, not every word. Eventually, almost all words will become part of your child's 'sight memory', and they won't have to sound out at all.
- On the second and third readings of the book, encourage them to read with more pace and with less focus on sounding out the letters in each word.
- Make a story out of a whole book, rather than focusing just on what is happening on each page.
- Tell you about something that happened in the book or about something they found out in the book.

### **Ask your child:**

- Find the title of the book. What does it tell you about the story?
- Can you think of a different word that could fit in a sentence you found tricky?
- What happens to the characters in the story, and how do they feel?
- Can you find a word with a full stop at the end? What does that mean?



## **BLUE**

Books at this stage will begin to get more complex, and children will depend less on pictures. The books in this stage also help children learn to read with greater understanding and motivate them to read with emotion.

### **PUPIL TARGETS**

- Select books to read from a library
- Start to read books from a mixture authors and on different topics
- Share stories from the books they read
- Start to understand a story without needing to rely on the illustrations
- Recognise and correct some of their mistakes
- Respond to questions to show that they understand what they are reading
- Start to read words such as 'some', 'little', 'when', and 'out'.

### **How to support your child with Blue level books**

Your child is now becoming a more independent reader. As they read aloud, you can help them by:

- Encouraging them to sound out words they don't know, without sounding out every word.
- Giving them time to recognise and correct their own mistakes.
- Asking them to read with expression.
- Asking them to talk about the characters' actions and feelings in the story.

### **Ask your child:**

- Choose a book from the library. Why did you pick that one?
- Talk about a story in your own words. What is the main idea?
- Can you read a sentence with expression, like you're telling a story?
- Why do you think the author used this word?



## **GREEN**

Books at the Green level introduce a wider selection of characters, different text types and more complex sentences. Additionally, there is an increased emphasis on the use of punctuation.

### **PUPIL TARGETS**

- Discuss the personalities and actions of characters in a book
- Read a book with expression
- Recognise rhyming words
- Understand stories that are written in different ways
- Use a contents page and a glossary
- Predict what might happen next

### **How to support your child with Green level books**

Your child is now beginning to read more complex books. As they read, you can help them by:

- Encouraging them to read more fluently.
- Encouraging them to notice punctuation marks and to use them when they read aloud.
- Encouraging them to talk about what the characters in the story are doing and why.

### **Ask your child:**

- What was the main event/problem?
- What word means the same as ...?
- What kind of things can we find out?
- Where is the contents page?
- What could I use to find the meaning of new words?



## **ORANGE**

At the orange stage, books introduce new vocabulary while reinforcing familiar words. Additionally, the number of words per page has increased although they will be highly decodable.

### **PUPIL TARGETS**

- Read longer sentences, including those with words such as 'if', and 'so'.
- Read multi-syllable words.
- Use punctuation when reading aloud, such as full stops and question marks.
- Divide a book into sections, such as the beginning, middle, and end.
- Begin to understand a story without relying on the pictures.
- Distinguish between factual books, fictional books, and books that contain both information and a story.

### **How to support your child with Orange level books**

Your child is now beginning to read more challenging books. As they read, you can help them by:

- Encouraging them to read more fluently.
- Encouraging them to use expression when they read aloud.
- Encouraging them to talk about the characters' feelings and actions in the story.

### **Ask your child:**

- What happened in the story?
- What happened in the end?
- What words describe the character?
- Which page should we look at to find ...?
- What does that word mean?



## TURQUOISE

Books at the Turquoise level feature more adjectives, descriptive verbs, and complex sentences. They contain fewer pictures and have extended text.

### **PUPIL TARGETS**

- Read silently to themselves.
- Read aloud with expression.
- Understand how punctuation influences the reading of sentences.
- Read long sentences and short paragraphs fluently.
- Infer the meaning of unfamiliar words by examining the surrounding context.
- Read a variety of books, including fiction and non-fiction.

### **How to support your child with Turquoise level books**

Your child is now beginning to read more challenging books. As they read, you can help them by:

- Encouraging them to read longer sections of a book.
- Encouraging them to read with expression.
- Encouraging them to talk about what has happened in a longer book, or asking them  
what they have found out in a non-fiction book.

### **Ask your child:**

- What type of story is this? Funny, scary, happy, mystery? How do you know?
- What other story have we read that is like this one?
- What do you think that character's voice would sound like?
- I'm not sure what that word means. How can I use the other words on the page to help me figure it out?



## **PURPLE**

Books at the Purple level are increasingly challenging. They feature longer sentences and a more extensive vocabulary. These books sometimes include shorter chapters.

### **PUPIL TARGETS**

- Read silently for extended periods.
- Read books with shorter chapters.
- Engage with a variety of books, including fiction, non-fiction, and poetry.
- Sound out most words.
- Use a dictionary to find word meanings.
- Discuss their opinions about books.

### **How to support your child with Purple level books**

Your child is now becoming a confident reader. As they read, you can help them by:

- Encouraging them to read longer chunks of text without stopping.
- Encouraging them to talk about the characters and the main events in the book.
- Encouraging them to talk about their own opinions of the book.

### **Ask your child:**

- What words did the author use to tell us about?
- What does that part make you think of?
- What happened in the story? Do you think that's fair? What would you do?
- What do you think of the book? Why?
- Summarise what you have read today.



## GOLD

Books at the Gold level incorporate more complex language and are designed to challenge readers.

### **PUPIL TARGETS**

- Read books aloud and silently.
- Read books featuring longer chapters.
- Explore a variety of book genres, including fiction, non-fiction, and poetry.
- Sound out the majority of words.
- Use a dictionary to decipher word meanings.
- Discuss personal opinions about books.

### **How to support your child with Gold level books**

Your child is now becoming a confident and fluent reader. As they read, you can help them by:

- Encouraging them to read silently as well as aloud.
- Encouraging them to talk about the characters and main events in the book.
- Encouraging them to talk about their own opinions of the book.

### **Ask your child:**

- Why did the author use that word?
- What other words are like this one?
- Tell me about where the story is taking place.
- Has anything similar ever happened to you? Tell me about it.
- Using the cover, what do you think will happen?
- Using the cover, what do you think you will learn about in this book?
- What can you use to find information quickly?
- How do the pictures/diagrams/labels help you?
- Thinking about the part that you just read in your head. Tell me a summary of what happened.



## **WHITE**

Books at the White level pose greater challenges and aim to build upon skills acquired in earlier levels. They feature more complex text and diverse themes.

### **PUPIL TARGETS**

- Read a diverse selection of books confidently.
- Recognise and discuss various characters and their motivations.
- Engage in extended periods of silent reading.
- Analyse and compare different books.
- Comprehend more advanced vocabulary.
- Employ inference skills to grasp characters' emotions and motivations.
- Debate the author's language choices and writing style.

### **How to support your child with White level books**

Your child is now a proficient reader. As they read, you can help them by:

- Encouraging them to read a variety of genres, including fiction, non-fiction, and poetry.
- Discussing the characters' motivations and the main themes in the book.
- Encouraging them to express their opinions on the author's writing style.
- Asking them to analyse and compare different books.

### **Ask your child:**

- What is your favourite part? Why?
- Where is the story set?
- Is this a place you could visit? Why/why not?
- What is the purpose of a glossary?
- What can you use to find information quickly?
- Thinking about the chapter that you just read in your head. Tell me a summary of what happened.



## LIME

Books at the Lime level continue to challenge readers with more complex language and themes. These books often have intricate plots and varied writing styles.

### **PUPIL TARGETS**

- Read and analyse books with complex plots
- Discuss and understand different perspectives in a story
- Read silently for an extended period, maintaining comprehension
- Use inference skills to explore characters' motivations in depth
- Identify literary devices such as similes
- Read and appreciate a wide range of genres

### **How to support your child with Lime level books**

Your child is now a proficient reader. As they read, you can help them by:

- Encouraging them to analyse complex plots and explore different perspectives in the story.
- Discussing the use of literary devices and their impact on the narrative.
- Encouraging them to read a variety of genres and appreciate different writing styles.

### **Ask your child:**

- Why has the author chosen this layout?
- Does this story have a message? Can you think of another story with the same message?
- What does this word mean?
- Which is your favourite adjective on this page? How would the description be different if the author changed this adjective?
- Can you spot a simile?
- How is the character feeling here? How do you know?



## COPPER/BROWN

Books at the Copper/Brown level provide advanced challenges, incorporating intricate plots, a broad vocabulary, and different writing styles.

### **PUPIL TARGETS**

- Interpret and examine books with intricate plots and detailed character developments.
- Discuss and assess the author's use of language and stylistic choices.
- Read and understand texts that contain multiple layers of meaning.
- Evaluate and critique various genres.
- Recognise and appreciate the cultural and historical contexts within literature.
- Develop and express well-reasoned opinions about books.

### **How to support your child with Copper/Brown level books**

Your child is now an advancing reader. As they read, you can help them by:

- Encouraging them to analyse complex plots and explore characters' motivations in depth.
- Discussing the use of language, style, and multiple layers of meaning in the book.
- Encouraging them to critique and appreciate different genres.

### **Ask your child:**

- How/why did the character change throughout the book?
- What type of author do you think wrote this book? What is their style?
- Which is your favourite/least favourite genre? Why?
- Which genre are you going to try next?
- Think about where/when this story is set. How does this impact the plot?



## SILVER/GREY

Books at the Silver/Grey level present challenges, featuring more sophisticated language, complex themes, and detailed character development.

### **PUPIL TARGETS**

- Delve into and critically examine books with complex plots and well-developed characters.
- Assess the use of various literary techniques and devices.
- Exhibit a thorough understanding of multiple genres.
- Identify and interpret symbolism other literary elements.

### **How to support your child with Silver/Grey level books**

Your child is now a skilled and thoughtful reader. As they read, you can help them by:

- Discussing the author's use of literary techniques and devices in depth.
- Encouraging them to formulate independent and insightful interpretations of texts.

### **Ask your child:**

- Were there any surprises or twists in the plot?
- How would you plot this story onto story mountain?
- How would the story be different if it was set in the past/future?
- What do you think the author's purpose for this book was? Why?
- Why did you choose this book?
- Would you choose this book/author again?



## **SAPPHIRE/DARK BLUE**

Books at the Sapphire/Dark Blue level offer longer, more intricate narratives, designed to challenge readers with advanced vocabulary and complex storylines.

### **PUPIL TARGETS**

- Read and critically analyse highly complex and challenging texts
- Evaluate the author's use of language, style, and structure in depth
- Demonstrate a clear understanding of various genres
- Formulate and articulate advanced and well-substantiated interpretations of the characters and storyline

### **How to support your child with sapphire/dark blue level books**

Your child is now becoming an analytical reader. As they read, you can help them by:

- Encouraging them to critically analyse highly complex and challenging texts.
- Discussing the author's use of language, style, and structure in depth.
- Supporting their comprehensive understanding of various literary genres.

### **Ask your child:**

- Who is this book written for? Why? How do you know?
- What can you tell me about the author's use of language? If they chose a different style, how would this change the text?
- What is the genre of this book? If we were to change the genre to horror/mystery/adventure/comedy/poetry how would this change things?
- Do you know anyone who reminds you of this character? What is similar about them?
- Does this storyline/plot fit into a traditional story mountain? How/why not?
- Would you want to read more books by this author? Why?
- What will you magpie from this book to use in your future writing?



## **RUBY/DARK RED**

Ruby/dark red books provide stimulating reads that feature sophisticated plots, rich vocabulary, and intricate character development to enhance critical thinking and comprehension skills.

### **PUPIL TARGETS**

- Read and critically analyse highly complex and challenging texts
- Evaluate the author's use of language, style, and structure in depth
- Consider the literary context of the book
- Formulate and articulate advanced and well-substantiated interpretations of the characters and storyline

### **How to support your child with ruby/dark red level books**

Your child is now becoming an analytical reader. As they read, you can help them by:

- Encouraging them to critically analyse highly complex and challenging texts.
- Discussing the author's use of language, style, and structure in depth.
- Supporting their understanding of different contexts in relation to time and place.

### **Ask your child:**

- Who is this book written for? Why? How do you know?
- What is the genre of this book? If we were to change the genre to horror/mystery/adventure/comedy/poetry how would this change things?
- What will you magpie from this book to use in your future writing?
- Thinking about the context of the book, how does the location/time impact the story?
- What would life have been like when the book was written?
- Do you know anything about the author's life that could have influenced them when writing this book?



## Onyx/Black

Onyx/black books contain engaging content with thought-provoking themes, requiring readers to delve into complex ideas and language, fostering advanced reading skills and analytical thinking. These books are for our most mature students who can handle complex storytelling as well as more grown-up themes which may provoke strong emotions or spark questions about prejudice. If you have any concerns or queries over a book that your child has brought home, please speak to their class teacher.

### **PUPIL TARGETS**

- Read and critically analyse highly complex and challenging texts
- Evaluate the author's use of language, style, and structure in depth
- Consider the literary context of the book and author's life – time, location, society
- Formulate and articulate advanced and well-substantiated interpretations of the characters and storyline

### **How to support your child with onyx/black level books**

Your child is now becoming an analytical reader. As they read, you can help them by:

- Encouraging them to critically analyse highly complex and challenging texts.
- Discussing the author's use of language, style, and structure in depth.
- Supporting their understanding of different societal and historical contexts.

### **Ask your child:**

- How is the societal/historical context of the book shown?
- Do you know anything about the author's life that could have influenced them when writing this book?
- Who would you recommend this book to? Why?
- If there were a sequel to the book, what would it be about?
- Where/How could you find more information about the context of the book?
- What will you read next? Why?