**Helping your children with reading**

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“Access to books and the encouragement of the habit of reading: these two things are the first and most necessary steps in education and librarians, teachers and parents all over the country know it. It is our children’s right and it is also our best hope and their best hope for the future.” –Michael Morpurgo

**HELPING YOUR CHILDREN WITH READING**

**10 Instant ideas for helping your child to love reading:**

1. Let your child choose what to read, rather than choosing what you think they should read.
2. Encourage your child to read magazines, comics, newspa­pers and the internet as well as books.
3. Talk to your child about books or magazines you haven’t enjoyed, as well as things you love.
4. Make time to read together if you can. Try picking reading material about interests or hobbies you share, like your football team or a place you have visited together. 10 minutes a few times a week will make a difference.
5. Buy books as presents. Don’t forget TV tie-ins and books about interests such as computer games or bands.
6. Help your child to find books they will enjoy by joining the public library, if you are not already members.
7. Chat about which books or magazines your child might read, to learn more about the subjects they will be doing at secondary school.
8. Buy a book, book token or magazine as a present/reward.
9. Try making time to: borrow picture books from the library in French or Spanish, depending on which language they will be learning, or ask a librarian or bookseller about the Horrible Histories or Mur­derous Maths series and other funny books about school topics.
10. Go online to have a look at sites that might be useful for different subjects.

**SUPPORTING KS3 READING**

Your child studies a range subjects at secondary school, and will be working with many different types of reading materials, from newspaper articles and adverts to scientific explanations and instructions. Parents who support their children’s education make a real difference to how well their child does, and there are lots of quick things you can do to help.

**Instant ideas**

* Try some skimming and scanning together. Skimming is when you read through a piece of text quickly to find out what the main idea is; scanning is glancing through a piece of text to find a specific piece of information. You can do this with a newspaper – perhaps ask your child to find something out for you. Why not ask them to scan a newspaper for news about a favourite footballer or to find out the weekend weather, or get them to skim read a recipe to tell you the basic steps?
* Help your child to work out what an unfamiliar word means by getting them to read the rest of the sentence and look for clues.
* Help by testing your child when they have spellings to learn, and by encouraging them to look up words they don’t know in a dictionary.

**Try making time to:**

* Build up the number of words your child knows – their vocabulary. As they go through secondary school, your child will need to know specialist words and recognise them when they are reading. To help them learn these words, you could ask your child to explain to you what they mean.
* Read books or plays that your child needs to study for school. It can really help them if you read these together, and talk about the language and characters. Why not learn a few short quotations together as a competi­tion?
* Watch and discuss the film version of any plays or novels your child may be studying in their English lessons.

***QUESTIONS***

**Can read, won’t read. Help! What can I do?**

Lots of children and teenagers don’t read – here are some hints and tips from parents with reluctant readers:

* Talk to your child to find out what they do and don’t like reading.
* Go to the library together and encourage your child to borrow something that interests them. Many libraries lend magazines as well as books for free. Don’t forget graphic novels (novels that are like comics), cartoons and comics.
* Don’t force your child to read something they are not interested in, even if you are worried about their reading.
* Set your homepage to a website your child might enjoy, if you have internet access. For example, you could try a skateboarding site or the homepage of a favourite TV programme. It is a good idea to check sites first to see that you are happy for your child to visit them.
* Encourage your child to read by finding reading material about their interests. Any reading that your child does is a good thing.

**I am really busy and don’t have time to read with my child. What can I do?**

10 minutes a day or even a few times a week will make a real difference to your child’s reading. Why not have a look at the ‘instant ideas’ at the beginning of each section for quick things you can do to help.

**My son doesn’t like reading. What can I do?**

Try to find things for him to read that are about his interests and let him choose what he wants to read as much as you can. Magazines, comics and non-fiction (fact) books might be more interesting to him than stories. Other reading activities, like completing a task using written instructions can also develop reading. Don’t forget that using the internet requires reading skills too. If he is interested in computer games, there are lots of books on how to play the games and ‘cheats’. Praise your son for any reading he does and make sure he sees you reading too. Keep any reading you do together short and fun. Even though it is worrying, pushing your son too hard or making reading a chore will put him off even more.

**My child has problems with reading. How do I help?**

If you are worried that your child is struggling with reading, it is best to speak to Curriculum Support, or one of your child’s teachers. You can do this by email or phone.

**I have/my partner has problems with reading. Can I still help my child?**

Research has shown that talking to children about what they are reading, and having books and magazines at home make a difference to children’s progress even if parents have problems with reading themselves. If you want help with reading or have a friend you think needs help, check your local library for information on local classes and support.

**My child keeps reading the same books over and over again. Is this normal?**

Children often re-read books they have enjoyed or will stick to a particular genre (for example, horror) or series. Reading the same books or same type of books over and over helps them to build reading confidence, and children will usually move on at their own pace. Don’t stop them reading books again – interfering with what children choose to read can often put them off. If you are worried, you could make some suggestions for other books they might enjoy based on what they are already reading. For example, a child who enjoys Goosebumps might enjoy the Series of Unfortunate Events books. Ask your child’s teacher, a librarian or a bookseller for advice on suitable titles.

**My child will only read magazines, not books.**

Don’t worry. Evidence shows that children who enjoy reading for pleasure perform better at school, whether they are reading magazines, newspapers or fiction. You could always try suggesting books that they might enjoy based on the magazines they read or their interests. Look at websites for advice or ask a librarian or teacher for suggestions.

**What sort of books should I choose for my child?**

Ideally, you should let your child choose books for themselves, as they are much more likely to want to read if they have been able to choose for themselves. If you want ideas for books, visit a website which has reviews of books for 10-15 year olds, by 10-15 year olds, or ask your child’s teacher, a librarian or a bookseller.

**Help – useful organisations and websites**

Below is a list of organisations and websites where you can get more information about reading with your child.

* *Achuka* is an independent children’s book site that has something for everyone.www.achuka.co.uk
* *Barrington Stoke* is an award-winning publisher that makes books for reluctant, dyslexic, disenchanted and under-confident readers.www.barringtonstoke.co.uk
* *Booktrust* promotes children’s reading and produces a wide range of information for young readers including booklists. www.booktrust.org.uk (website for teenagers)
* *British Dyslexia Association* is the national organisation for specific learning difficulties. It represents over two million dyslexic children and adults. It is one of the world’s leading dyslexia organisations.www.bdadyslexia.org.uk Tel: 0333 405 4567 (helpline)