

2 October 2023

Dear parents/Carers

Our Reading Culture - Year 7

We can all agree that reading is important to support every child's literacy development. Reading exposes us all to new things, new words, new ideas and new perspectives on the world. It helps develop critical thinking skills and expressive ideas.

In this letter we will outline how reading makes a real difference to self-esteem and future life chances and show you how you can support reading by keeping a daily reading record with your child.

Issues with reading we have identified

Many children hit the end of primary school and feel they have met expectations of their parents by learning to read independently. This is quite common, but also central to children ceasing to read. Parents reading to children is a great way to maintain the expectations of reading. It provides one to one time, something that the stresses and expectations of modern life often steal from us.

Reading to a child also affords them the opportunity to ask questions about things they don't understand in the narrative - like advanced concepts or new words. Having these things explained to them will help them continue to grow and learn.

How we support reading in school to give children a head start.

Being able to decode a text alone is not enough at secondary school. Children need to understand what they are reading and need to be taught key comprehension skills. We know that good readers question, check and engage with their own understanding. Our curriculum has a strong emphasis on learning and acquiring new vocabulary. Children need to know what words mean in order to understand what they have read. Texts are chosen carefully with this in mind so that children are exposed to a rich and wide vocabulary in

- Subject lessons
- Library lessons
- Tutor time reading sessions

Supporting reading at home

Sharing a book together with your child gives you the opportunity to escape into another world with your child. Reading for pleasure will help develop your child's vocabulary, communication, empathy, imagination and concentration. Whether this is sharing books by reading together or supporting your child to read independently, we advise that all children read for at least 10 minutes a day. Ideally, 20 minutes a day would be the most beneficial.

Reading for just 20 minutes a day = 1.8 million words a year!

Once a child is reading independently, they still need to be able to retell their texts coherently and confidently to a parent/carer using book vocabulary and answer questions about what they are reading.

Key ways to develop comprehension and understanding

- Read until your children ask you to stop
- Discuss what you have read together:
 - Ask questions about the plot of the book
 - Find out what they like about the characters or the book
 - Chat about an idea in the text - do they agree or disagree with the idea

What to read

Read what your child wants to read, follow their interests, and if they want to reread a text that's perfectly fine. Reading a book again will offer new and deeper insights into the text.

Opportunities to learn together.

Leading by example is the best way to encourage your child to learn. If you come across an idea you don't know, but you are willing to acquire the knowledge, this is a priceless experience for them.

- Start off with a web search. Search for the keywords of the thing you want to learn about
- Read articles from a reputable source. Sites like Wikipedia, .edu and .gov often provide a good place to start
- Discuss your findings and talk about what you have learned together.

Reading Records

Every child is provided with a Reading Record to record what they have been reading. You will soon start to receive a weekly email with a reading record in, enabling you and your child to record their reading. This record also provides an opportunity to comment on your child's reading.

Listed below are some comments which may help you when writing in your child's Reading Record. The statements below are just a guide; please feel free to alter the wording and write what best suits your experiences. For more information, or if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Read familiar words independently

- Able to predict what happens next in the text
- He/she made a number of errors because he was not looking carefully enough
- Showed good understanding of the text
- Read with good expression
- Self-corrected own errors independently
- Worked out new words independently
- Able to read this book with lots of help
- Discussed the story and characters well
- Struggled to work out a lot of the vocabulary
- Used good spoken expression
- Reading sounded robotic
- Enjoyed reading this book a lot
- Could not retell the story
- Read with fluency and expression

Reading materials suggestions

Recipes, TV guides, books and e-books - all of these are everyday things that we read. Short bursts of reading can be just as helpful for some children - simply encouraging children to help read the shopping list at the supermarket, or the ingredients list while baking, will help them to build fluency and confidence. For other students choosing and signing a book out from the library or reading an ebook is more interesting and enjoyable. We have more than 6000 books available to sign out and over 4000 ebooks on our SORA platform.

And finally...

a little advice and support from you to kickstart their child's reading journey at home.

- Find something that your child enjoys reading.
- Take turns reading aloud.
- Remember to ask questions and talk about what you've read.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K Jones', written in a cursive style.

Miss K Jones
Assistant Headteacher