**DEVELOPING READING**

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| Reading really is the gateway to learning and is an important skill across the curriculum. Reading widely and often helps to develop a better understanding of language and its uses. Pupils become more aware of literacy basics, such as sentence construction and grammar, as well as building a more varied vocabulary. Reading also helps pupils to express themselves more clearly and confidently, as well as having a positive impact on their writing skills and improving their general knowledge.It is important to foster good reading habits in children from a young age and to continue to encourage reading as they grow. However, in a world centred on the internet, computing and social media, getting children to read a book isn’t as easy as it might seem.Take a look at our top tips for helping your child with reading. |

**1. Read with your child**

From primary school, parents are encouraged to read with their children and this is no different when they arrive at high school, although it can take a new and different form.  For struggling readers, read along with them, taking turns to read a page each and help to sound out any tricky words. As your child grows in confidence, why not read the same book at the same time as them? This will help them to feel independent but still able to get support if they need it. If your child is already a confident, independent reader, then try to set aside some time for you both to read your own books at the same time.  Children learn by example, so seeing you reading will encourage them to do the same.

If your child is in the senior school and studying for their N5 or Higher English exam, why not read their class texts too? You’ll gain a much better understanding of what your child has to do and, in turn, will be able to offer more advice and support. It may also encourage them to study more if they see you doing it too!

**2. Talk about reading**

Reading a book is one thing, but being able to talk about it and explain it is a different thing altogether. In fact, talking about something you have read requires a much deeper level of understanding and makes use of higher order thinking skills.  In talking about reading, pupils have to be able to use summarising skills and also show an ability to understand and analyse language. Here are some questions you could ask your child about their reading:

**What’s the book about?**  (Get them to summarise the story)

**What type of book is it?**  (Get them to think about the difference between fiction and non – fiction, as well as the genre)

**Who is the main character?** (They can demonstrate understanding of characterisation)

**What are they like?**

**What do you think is going to happen next?**  (Make use of their skills in text prediction)

**What was your favourite part of the book?**

**Why did you like that?** (This will test their evaluative skills)

**Was it difficult to read?**  (Get them thinking about the language used)

**What words did you find difficult?**  (Talk about why they are tricky, what they mean and how they can be used in different contexts)

**Would you recommend it to a friend?**  (This uses skills in evaluation, but also gets them to engage with the text on a personal level)

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**3. Read everything and anything**

The old saying is absolutely true – it doesn’t matter what they read as long as they are reading. Some children will find the thought of reading an entire book daunting and will immediately be put off. But don’t give up! Try offering short stories or comics/magazines to start with and build your way up from there. Graphic novels are hugely popular with reluctant readers and can be a fantastic way of encouraging reading.  You can also make use of tablet computers or e-readers to promote digital reading.

For those who are already avid readers, try to encourage them to branch out in their choices of reading material and try new and different texts. It’s easy to get stuck in the comfort zone, reading books that we already know we can read with ease.  Yet it’s important to challenge children in reading, encouraging them to read longer and more sophisticated texts.  A visit to your local library or book shop should help to give you more advice on which books to choose.

Reading a newspaper is a great way to develop reading – especially a quality paper. It doesn’t have to be read cover to cover, but even just a single, well chosen article can have a significant impact.  It exposes children to more sophisticated ideas and language, broadens their knowledge and understanding of world events, and exemplifies the style associated with non – fiction, informative, discursive writing. For pupils studying for N5 or Higher English, this can be particularly helpful as preparation for their RUAE exam paper.  Reading an article a day (or even a week) can have a huge impact on their success in this section of the exam.

**4. Join your local library**

It may seem like an old fashioned thing to do, especially in a digital world where books can be easily downloaded for pennies from places like Amazon, but nothing even comes close to the experience you get from visiting a library – not to mention, of course, the vast knowledge of the librarian. More than that, libraries often run fun days or events that cater to children and promote reading. Even just the physical experience of being in a library can be a good way of preparing children for what they might encounter should they continue on in further or higher education.

**5. Make time**

It can be hard to find time in our busy day to day lives to just sit down and read, but even just 20 minutes a day can make a big difference to your child’s reading skills – not to mention their emotional wellbeing. Try to build reading time into your daily routine. Remember to remove all distractions; turn off the TV and put phones and iPads out of sight.

**6. Make reading fun!**

Perhaps the most important tip of all, reading should be fun.  Children who see reading as boring or a chore will make little progress and are much less likely to choose to read independently.  Encourage children to read books that link with their interests or things they enjoy.  You could even try books that are based on films or computer games.  Have fun with reading and play games with books or stories. Read aloud to your child and be sure to ‘do the voices’– even older children admit to enjoying being read to. Reward children for good reading habits so they see it as something positive and enjoyable, and allow them to choose their own books as well as you choosing for them.

