

Q1: Is reading really that important?

Answer: The short answer is 'YES'. Reading provides us with the skills to learn, relax and generally get the most out of life!! We need to be able to read to access job opportunities, welfare opportunities and for our mental well-being. We all read every day - things like the tv guide, text messages, Facebook pages, birthday cards, letters, recipes etc etc, we just don't think of it as 'reading'!

Here are some quotes about reading which might help to convince you:

'Book-reading is . . . a strong marker of curiosity - a quality prized <<https://hbr.org/2018/09/the-business-case-for-curiosity>> by employers such as Google.'

<https://theconversation.com/why-reading-books-is-good-for-society-wellbeing-and-your-career-200447>

'Studies show a range of psychological benefits from book-reading. Reading fiction can increase your capacity for empathy <<https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.1239918>>, through the process of seeing the world through a relatable character. Reading has been found to reduce stress as effectively as yoga <<https://clutejournals.com/index.php/TLC/article/view/1117>>. It is being prescribed for depression - a treatment known as bibliotherapy <<https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2004-95164-009>>.'

<https://theconversation.com/why-reading-books-is-good-for-society-wellbeing-and-your-career-200447>

' . . . benefits to reading for pleasure include: text comprehension and grammar, positive reading attitudes, pleasure in reading in later life, increased general knowledge.'
(Clark and Rumbold, 2006)

'The ability to read is a fundamental life skill.'
Amanda Spielman, Head of OFSTED

'Reading is the gateway to learning. It is the key to pupils' future academic achievement and well-being.'
Gill Jones, Deputy Director OFSTED, Schools and Early Education

Q2: 'My child does not like reading books and is put off by their length. Do they have to read books?'

Answer: No. There is lots of reading material available which has nothing to do with reading a book. One of my favourite reads even now is 'The Beano' comic! There is a wide range of children's comics, magazines and newspapers available which can be read in short chunks. Similarly there are lots of small, general interest books which your child might find interesting rather than fiction books; again these can be read in small chunks - I call them 'dip into' books, for example: 'The Little Book of Football', 'The Little Book of Joy', 'National Geographic: A Fact for Every Day of the Year', '300 Crazy Football Facts', joke books, 'Interesting Facts for Smart Kids'. There are also books of short stories where you can read a story without reading the whole book, for example Terry Pratchett has written a range of short stories, the most recent released in 2023 after his death called 'A Stroke of the Pen: Lost Stories'. Reading how to play a game on the web also counts as reading!! The simple answer is that **ANYTHING** which a child will read is worth it as they are encountering vocabulary and building up their reading confidence and can then move on to the books that they found challenging!

Q3: 'My child's first language is not English. Can they read books in their first language?'

Answer: Yes, no problem at all!! It is worth trying to encourage them to read some material in English though as this will be the language that they will take their exams in and the more exposure that they have to the English language the better, in terms of acquiring vocabulary which they can use in their own writing across their subjects in school. They could also share stories told in their first language with their friends and classmates by translating them into English, thereby supporting their own development of the English language whilst their friends can experience some of the beautiful stories from other countries.

Q4: What help is available if my child is struggling with their reading?

Answer: Lots!!! Reading can be broken into recognising the words and understanding what those words actually mean (comprehension) and there is support for the whole reading process. Sometimes readers struggle but do not really want to tell anyone for fear of looking silly. That is why all requests for help are confidential. Your child could speak to their form teacher about where to get help; their English teacher might also be able to provide practical help. The school librarian (Miss C Smith) can also help as can the academic mentors; we can be found in the library and can be emailed or your child can just pop down to see us and explain the help that they feel they may need; this help is not formally recorded but rather is provided to help the child gain confidence in their literacy skills.

Throughout the year teaching staff can make formal referrals for academic support for any child who they feel is struggling with an aspect of their subject work or with reading. At lunchtimes and after school there are also informal literacy based activities in the LRC – word puzzles, Scrabble etc which aim to help all pupils and each evening there is support between 3.35 and 5pm for homework and studying. If you would like to request help for your child then please do email me and we can work something out.

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