

## **A Parents' Guide To Support Reading at Home**

Starting secondary school is an exciting time. Your child is becoming more independent and taking more responsibility with their learning. However, as a parent, you may be worried about how they are handling the new demands and wondering what you can do to help.

One of the best things you can do in KS3 is to encourage your child to read for pleasure. Reading habits that were established in primary school should not be stopped once they start Year 7. Research shows that children who enjoy reading do significantly better at school and parents play an important role in helping to develop a love of reading.

The study also found that parents who talk to their children about books, TV programmes and films help to keep their children interested in reading. Having books, newspapers and magazines around at home also made a difference to how interested children were in reading.

### **The Benefits of Reading**

Research shows that reading has benefits in many areas of education and life. In addition to the obvious benefits on reading comprehension and attainment, it also impacts upon:

- Vocabulary
- Understanding of grammar
- Spelling skills
- Writing attainment
- Attitudes to reading and writing
- Knowledge and understanding of the world and other people
- Achievement in other subjects, including maths
- Empathy and understanding of emotions
- Development of our sense of 'self' and identity

Because reading is so integrated into every aspect of modern life, teaching reading really is equipping children for the future.

If students struggle to read, then the texts they encounter at secondary school can be off-putting for them and then, understandably, result in low levels of enjoyment and therefore demotivation.

This creates a vicious cycle: as they struggle and don't enjoy it, they read less – and because they read less, they don't progress and then find that they struggle to acquire the necessary knowledge in many other subjects too.

Wellbeing and behaviour can also be affected as a result of this. It is, therefore, vital that we help students not just with their reading skill, but their perception of it as an enjoyable activity.

Research suggests that reading for pleasure makes the most difference to students' progress and attainment in reading. This applies to specific skills, as well as overall attainment in reading – for example, comprehension, vocabulary and grammar.

### **How can you support your child's reading at home?**

- Sharing your experiences about why reading is important for life and work, whilst being mindful not to add to any negative feelings, can help children to see that everyone struggles with certain things but it's worth persevering.
- Avoid reading being seen as a chore through requests such as 'if you read for 15 minutes, you can...'. Whilst this may work for some young people, it is unlikely to lead to reading being seen as an enjoyable activity.
- Research by the National Literacy Trust showed that reading for pleasure increased during the 2020-2021 lockdowns; one of the reasons young people gave for this was having the time to read and having fewer distractions. This would suggest that helping your child to balance their time and factor reading into their schedule in a quiet environment would be beneficial.
- Help your child to be proactive in their wider reading. For example, if they are covering World War II, explore age-appropriate texts on this through poetry, online articles or novels.
- Take an interest in what they're reading and studying at school by reading around topics as well so that you can engage in discussion about their texts/areas of learning, whilst modelling an interest in reading.
- Help your child to experience feeling successful with reading. Praise and encourage them, whilst showing interest in what they've read.
- Remember that it doesn't matter what they read: helping them to enjoy reading and find texts they want to read is the important thing. This might mean they find a book, collection of short stories or even a graphic novel, but it also might mean that they find a range of online articles, websites or magazines they enjoy reading.
- You could look at fiction books related to topics they are interested in, or encourage them to read about it online.
- If they've enjoyed a book before, encourage them to read another text by the same author.
- Be mindful about your child's reading level so that they can access the vocabulary the text contains. You may wish to discuss this with your child's teacher or hear them read, in a supportive way, before you start choosing texts.

### **Quick ideas for getting books back in their hands...**

- Let your child choose what they want to read, rather than choosing what you think they should read
- Encourage your child to read magazines, comics, blogs and websites as well as books; buy them a subscription to their favourite
- Talk to your child about books you have read that you haven't enjoyed, as well as ones you've loved
- Make time to read together if you can – 10 minutes a few times a week will make a big difference
- Talk about what they are watching on TV/film and see if there are any book tie-ins
- Let them choose some audio books
- Buy books, book vouchers or a magazine as presents/rewards
- Find out what they are studying in their different subjects and look through websites, magazines or non-fiction books relating to their topics
- Read yourself – set time aside at the weekend for everyone to down tools and read for 20 minutes.

### **Helpful questions to ask about what they are reading:**

- Do you like the main character?
- How do you think it is going to end?
- What impression do you get of character x or y?
- Do you think they are likeable? Trustworthy? Suspicious?
- Which words or phrases make you think that?
- Does this book remind you of anything you've already read?
- If you were that character, what would you have done differently in that situation?
- Where is the book set? What does it look like in your head?
- Would you like to visit?
- Why do you think the author wrote this book?
- Would you have ended the book differently? Did it end the way you thought it would?
- Did the problem of the book's plot get solved?
- If you could change one thing in the book, what would it be?