

Reading Support

Reading is such an important life skill and we recognise and respect the role of parents as a child's primary educator in this area. We have provided a guide to help those who are struggling to engage their children in reading. Please take a look and if you require any further support, then please contact Inclusion at George Spencer Academy

Reading Support

Why is reading so important?

Whether or not reading is something we enjoy, we cannot deny that the ability to read is a fundamental skill and to be able to read with confidence is very important. In a world where there are so many other things we could be doing with our time, reading often falls to the bottom of the pile. With a screen to entertain us, why would anyone take the time to pick up a book?

Reading increases vocabulary and helps to improve communication skills

Those who read tend to have a much better vocabulary than those who don't. Having a more varied range of words to express how we feel and get our point across often serves to make us a better communicator, so it's no surprise to see a positive correlation between those who read regularly and those who are better communicators.

Reading makes us better spellers and writers

Writing is such an important skill to have and having the capability to be able to write well and with ease is something which should never be undervalued. Reading exposes us to other styles, other voices, other forms and genres of writing. Importantly, it exposes us to writing that is better than our own.

The ability to spell is something that we often overlook, especially with spellcheck so readily available, but the truth is that in the current educational climate good spelling matters a great deal and is a significant aspect of the writing element of the curriculum. Aside from the statutory requirements, learning to spell well is extremely useful if we want to be confident writers.

Reading improves focus and concentration

Sitting down with a book often involves long periods of focus and concentration, which at first is challenging to do, in fact it's probably one of the main reasons we choose not to read in the first place. Being fully engaged with a book involves closing off the outside world and immersing yourself in the text. It is this exercise which will strengthen your attention span and improve your ability to focus.

Reading improves imagination

Our ability to imagine impacts everything we do, think about and create. It leads to elegant theories, complex dreams and intricate inventions in any profession. We are only limited by what we can imagine, and the worlds described in books, as well as other people's views and opinions, help us expand our understanding of what is possible.

Reading reduces stress

In a world where stresses and strains are ever present, reading often tends to take a back seat, and why not, when there's so much else that needs to be done? Well, actually studies show that reading helps to reduce stress. Taking a moment out of our busy schedule to read and enter the realms of escapism has been proven to slow down heart rate and ease tension in muscles.

Reading improves memory

Reading gives us a unique pause button for comprehension and insight. When we read, we have more time to think and contemplate. The benefits of this increased activity keeps our memory sharp and our learning capacity nimble.

Reading increases intellect and leads to academic success

It is a fact that children who enjoy reading are more academically successful. Books, whether fiction or non-fiction offer an incredible wealth of learning. Reading gives us a chance to consume a huge amount of research in a relatively short amount of time. When we read, we often don't even realise how much knowledge we are actually taking in. It's no surprise to learn that books at home have been strongly linked to academic achievement when we consider all the skills reading helps to develop and improve.

Reading increases capacity for empathy

Reading fiction has been shown to develop empathy by increasing our knowledge of others' lives and experiences, helping us to recognise our similarity to them. Literary fiction helps us to practise empathy because of its complexity. The interpretation and critical thinking involved in understanding literary fiction requires extensive mental processing; it has the power to disrupt our stereotypes making us contemplate and often reassess our position on a particular subject.

Reading is entertaining

Although mentioned last, this is probably one of the most important reasons for reading. If reading wasn't entertaining, then it would simply be a chore and that's probably how a number of people view reading, but it needn't be the case. Reading is not only fun, but it has all the added benefits that have already been mentioned. Much more enthralling than watching a movie or a TV show, a good book can keep us amused for hours while developing our life skills.

How can you support your child with their reading?

Reading at home

Studies show that the top 10% of students read more than 40 minutes a day, whilst the bottom 10% read less than 2 minutes a day. *Anderson, Wilson and Fielding (1988)* Research also indicates that students who read appropriately complex texts 25 minutes or more a day will grow at twice the rate of those reading less than 5 minutes daily. *Renaissance Learning (2014)*

A child that reads for 30 minutes a day at home reads for an extra 10,950 minutes a year. Over the course of their secondary school education that amounts to 54,750 minutes. Compare this to a child that doesn't read at home at all. Which child do you think will become the more confident, mature, successful individual?

We can't stress enough how important reading at home is! We recognise and respect the role of the parent as a child's primary educator in this area and want to support you in this role.

Struggling or reluctant?

Recognising the importance of reading is one thing, getting your child to do the same and start reading regularly is another.

Children who don't read regularly generally fall into two categories – struggling readers and reluctant readers. It is a very natural response to shy away from something you're not good at, or something that doesn't come naturally to you. If children can't remember the sound of letters or common words then reading becomes a slow and painful process, which is often quite distressing for both child and parent. We call these readers struggling readers. Sometimes children will pick up a book and be able to read all the words quite well, it's just that they don't want to, we call this group of children reluctant readers and often they are boys.

So how can we make reading more accessible for struggling and reluctant readers?

Reluctant Readers

Just because your child can read sufficiently well for their age, doesn't mean that they no longer need to read. As we've already discussed, the benefits of reading are numerous and reading isn't just about the correct pronunciation of a collection of words, it's a process of continuous development.

The trick to engaging a reluctant reader is to focus on what they're interested in already. It might be easier to start with non-fiction based magazines or blogs. At first it's about taking small steps and trying whatever works. Once they are open to the idea of reading, you can then slowly start to progress with the style and form of what they're reading.

As well as finding the correct reading material, you may also want to introduce a reward scheme where students are rewarded for their reading in and outside of school.

Read with your child and make it a special time. If they see you interested in a book, they're much more likely to be.

Struggling Readers

Children struggle with reading for various reasons, however a shared feature of many struggling readers is that they have difficulty in processing sounds in spoken words.

Here are the top ten tips from Jean Gross CBE, former teacher and child psychologist that may help you in engaging a struggling reader at home.

- Keep anxiety levels down
- Make time to share books
- Take turns to read
- Build Confidence
- What to do when your child gets stuck (see link)
- Play with sounds
- Convince them they are not stupid!
- Avoid blame
- Read to your child
- Use technology

For more information on each of these tips, please click on the link below.

<https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/for-home/advice-for-parents/reading-at-home/helping-struggling-readers/top-tips-for-helping-struggling-readers-at-home/>

Finding the right book

One of the first things to consider when finding an appropriate book is reading ability. In order to feel confident enough to pick up a book, especially when they don't enjoy reading, a child must feel as though they are not faced with an impossible task. However, in order to progress with their reading and not feel bored, children need to be sufficiently challenged.

All students at George Spencer Academy are tested at the beginning of year 7 in order to identify their current reading age. If the reading age is below age related expectations, then the parent is informed and the student is invited to a literacy intervention. Once you have this information there are a number of helpful websites which can help you to identify an age appropriate book.

<https://www.booktrust.org.uk/books-and-reading/bookfinder/>

<https://schoolreadinglist.co.uk/>

<https://www.lovereadng4kids.co.uk/>

If you're struggling to find suitable books for your child, George Spencer Academy are more than happy to help. Please contact the library for more information.

Another thing to consider is interest. If you're trying to get them to read a historical drama when they love watching science-fiction, then don't be surprised if they don't seem too keen. If they love watching science-fiction, then find them a science-fiction book! You may want them to broaden their horizons, but this will come in time. Here are some websites which you may find helpful.

<https://www.whichbook.net/>

<https://www.goodreads.com/>

We understand that often sourcing books can be quite expensive, but don't forget your school and local libraries, both of which are stocked with hundreds of books for your child to choose from. You can also access some eBooks for free on the Oxford Owl website below.

We hope that the information above has been of some help to you. If you require further support, then please contact the school library directly and we will be more than happy to assist you.

Useful links

<https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/for-home/advice-for-parents/reading-at-home/helping-struggling-readers/>

<http://www.readingrockets.org/helping/struggle>