

**Reading**

**for life**

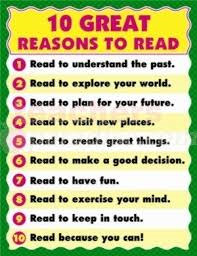
**Helping your teenager sustain a reading habit for life**

This leaflet is about helping young people to recapture or maintain their love of reading and to develop the reading and thinking skills they need to support their learning across the curriculum at secondary school and develop the literacy skills needed for life.

It provides simple and practical ideas about:

* Where to access book lists and recommendations
* How to support your teen’s reading at home
* Activities you and your teenager can do to improve close and critical reading skills

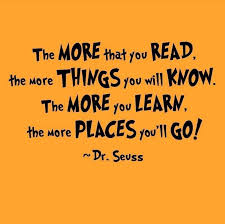
**Why read?**

At Strathaven Academy, we value reading for the impact it can have on pupil achievement and attainment in school. But we don’t want reading to be a chore; we want pupils to be enthusiastic about reading, to choose to read.

Research carried out by *The Reading Agency* concluded that: ‘reading for pleasure has a dramatic impact on life outcomes’.

In the U.K., however, most children do not have a daily reading habit and a third of adults do not choose to read for pleasure. But research suggests that reading for as little as 30 minutes each week can have an impact not just on education but on health and wellbeing.

Reading has many benefits, and research has found that maintaining a daily reading habit:

* Is a great form of engaging **entertainment**: it is a form of escapism and relaxation;
* Stimulates **mental activity**: it keeps our brains active and creates new neural pathways. When reading stories we create a simulation of the story in our minds and we blend this with our own memories and experiences to bring that story to life;
* Increases **general knowledge**: by reading a range of texts we learn about history, geography, science, other cultures, religious beliefs…….;
* Increases **vocabulary;**
* Reduces **stress** – there is strong evidence that reading can reduce and even prevent depression and memory loss;
* Can lead to a better quality of **sleep;**
* Improves **memory**, **focus** and **concentration;**
* Improves **thinking** skills;
* Improves **writing** skills – ideas, spelling, structure…;
* Boosts **confidence** and **self-esteem**. Research by The Reading Agency even suggests that reading can reduce loneliness, help us make life decisions, improve our ability to empathise with others, improve our relationships and can even lead to better parent and child communication.

‘The aim of writing is to enable the reader better to enjoy life or better to endure it.’ Philip Pullman

**Personal Reading**

In their English classes, pupils read a mixture of non-fiction, classic English literature and modern fiction that speaks to teenagers about their own lives or about things that interest or affect them.

We hope, too, that the texts we choose inspire pupils’ personal reading and English staff and our very knowledgeable librarian are always happy to recommend a suitably challenging text. Classroom teachers of all subjects across the school keep a display of what they are reading too which often provokes thought and discussion.

To make progress throughout secondary school, pupils should be reading widely – a varied and challenging mix of texts.

* Reading a complete work of fiction over a sustained period helps develop skills for English: understanding narrative, characterisation, developing vocabulary and syntax, and learning how writers create mood and setting.

It is easy to access reading lists of contemporary fiction for different age groups and reading abilities. Reading lists are available on the English and literacy pages of the school website and in the Reading Challenge booklets which are issued to all S1 to S3 pupils. But there are also many great resources online, for example

* + - <http://www.theguardian.com/books/guardianchildrensfictionprize>
    - <http://www.booktrust.org.uk/books/teenagers/booklists/244/>
    - <https://www.goodreads.com/list/tag/childrens>
    - <https://www.goodreads.com/list/tag/teen>
* Reading non-fiction is equally important, especially in preparation for National 5 and Higher subject work. The earlier and the more often pupils are exposed to complex non-fiction the better.
* The best way to improve comprehension, general knowledge and encourage higher order thought is by reading quality broadsheet journalism. Pupils in S4 to S6 have access to the Herald newspaper during registration; it is useful for pupils to practise reading non-fiction passages critically by asking questions like:
  + - What is the purpose of this article?
    - Who is it written for?
    - What is the writer’s stance on this issue and what are the writer’s key points?
    - What language techniques have they used to meet the purpose and the audience? Articles of appropriate challenge can be found at sites such as:
      * [**http://www.theguardian.com/uk/commentisfree**](http://www.theguardian.com/uk/commentisfree)
      * [**http://www.theguardian.com/observer**](http://www.theguardian.com/observer)
      * [**http://www.heraldscotland.com/opinion/**](http://www.heraldscotland.com/opinion/)
      * [**http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/opinion/**](http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/opinion/)
      * [**http://www.independent.co.uk/voices**](http://www.independent.co.uk/voices)

**Assessment of Reading**

****Reading is supported and assessed across the curriculum – it is the responsibility of all teachers.

Pupils are asked to read new and complex texts unaided every day in every subject.

The better equipped they are to meet new language with confidence and to use their word attack skills to unlock meaning, the better their progress and attainment will be.

Research clearly shows that there is a direct link between the amount pupils read and the quality of their performance in assessments. It stands to reason that the better a pupil’s vocabulary and general knowledge, the less fear that language and reading new and complex texts holds.

In English, reading is assessed primarily through:

* Close reading (answering questions on seen and unseen texts) and
* Critical essay – this is a form of writing introduced to pupils in S1. Skills in writing critically take time and practice to develop

But comprehension is an integral part of assessment in all subjects and comprehension depends on a pupil’s reading skills - linguistic skills (vocabulary, grammar etc.) and cognitive skills (response/inference and wider reading comprehension).

The more pupils engage with, and think about, what they are reading the better their skills and confidence in these areas will be.

Pupils can train their brains to read in ways that improve higher order thinking skills and comprehension by practising the following skills:

**PREDICT**

*Make a prediction when:*

• A title is given

• Headings are provided

• The author poses a question in the text

• The text suggests what will be discussed next

*Prediction stems:*

• Based on the title, I predict this is going to be about...

• I already know these things about the topic/story...

• I think the next chapter or section will be about...

• Based on... (a clue), I predict...

• Based on what \_\_\_ said/did,

I predict...

**QUESTION**

*Ask teacher-like questions:*

• Who is \_\_\_?

• What is/does \_\_\_?

• When/where is \_\_\_?

• Why is \_\_\_ significant?

• Why does \_\_\_ happen?

• What are the parts of \_\_\_?

• How is \_\_\_ an example of \_\_\_?

• How do \_\_\_ and \_\_\_ compare?

• How are \_\_\_ and \_\_\_ different?

• What is most important \_\_\_?

• What is your opinion of \_\_\_?

**CLARIFY**

*Clarify hard parts when:*

• You don't understand

• You can't follow the text

• You don't know what a word means

*Clarifying stems:*

• I don't really understand ...

• A question I have is ...

• A question I'd like answered by the author i...

• One word/phrase I do not understand is ...

**VISUALISE**

*Visualize a picture in your mind:*

• When I read this, I imagine that ...

• As I read, in my mind I see ...

**SUMMARISE**

*How to do a summary:*

• Look for the topic sentence

• Look for who, what, when, where, why, and how

*Summary stems:*

• This text is mostly about ...

• The topic sentence is ...

• The author is trying to tell me...

*A framed summary sentence:*

This story/passage about \_\_\_ begins with \_\_\_, discusses (or develops) the idea that \_\_\_, and ends with \_\_\_.

**Reading at Home**

At school, it is the teacher’s job to encourage, support and facilitate reading but much as we would want to, we can’t make all children love reading or force them to choose a book for pleasure. But we can provide a time and a space to read and strategies to encourage reading – and parents can help at home.

Time is given in English and during registration each week for reading and we ask pupils to read at home each evening as part of their ongoing homework.

There are lots of ways in which parents can support reading at home:

* + Most important is to be a reader yourself – to model reading, to be enthusiastic about reading and to discuss what you are reading with your child.
  + Reduce screen time where possible. Try to get them to balance reading with watching the TV or playing computer games.
  + You could get social media working in your favour by allowing older pupils to follow papers like The Guardian or The Scotsman and read articles online.
  + Get them to read to/with you – the act of paired reading can be incredibly powerful. To find out how to pair read effectively and to see it in action, follow the link on the Resources and Websites page.
  + Actively encourage your child to read for a minimum of ten minutes a day. You can help them to set and review reading targets.
  + Discuss what they are reading with them – for example
    - Was the plot easy to follow? If not, what were the reasons for confusion?
    - Did the book have an effective opening which got you immediately involved in the story? **How** did the author manage to get you involved?
    - Was there a major incident or event which proved to be the turning point in the story? Talk about this incident and say why you thought it was so important.
    - Were you concerned about what happened to the characters?
    - Did you identify with any of the characters?
    - Did you strongly dislike any of the characters? If so, say why you did.
    - Was it a satisfying conclusion to the story? Was everything resolved? Were any questions left unresolved?
    - If the ending disappointed you say why you found it so? How would **you** have ended it?
    - What emotions/reactions did you experience as you read the book?
    - Did the book make you think? What did it make you think about? What important and interesting ideas did the book deal with? What do you think you have learned from this book?
* Play word-based games like Scrabble, Boggle, crosswords, solving anagrams….
* Provide them with a quiet and comfortable place to read.
* Be persistent – it will pay off.

**Resources & Websites**

**Choosing a book**

Use the 5 finger method to choose an appropriate level of text.

**5-5-1**

To aid comprehension, this is a simple task you can get your teen to do with any short text (fiction or non-fiction) or you can do it together, comparing answers.

* Read the text.
* Using a highlighter, highlight the 5 most important sentences in the passage.
* Then reduce these 5 sentences to the five most important words, one from each sentence.
* Finally reduce these 5 words to 1 – discuss why you have chosen this as the most important/powerful word in the text.

**Paired reading**

To see paired reading in action:

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/scotland-reads-paired-reading-partners>

**Dyslexic readers**

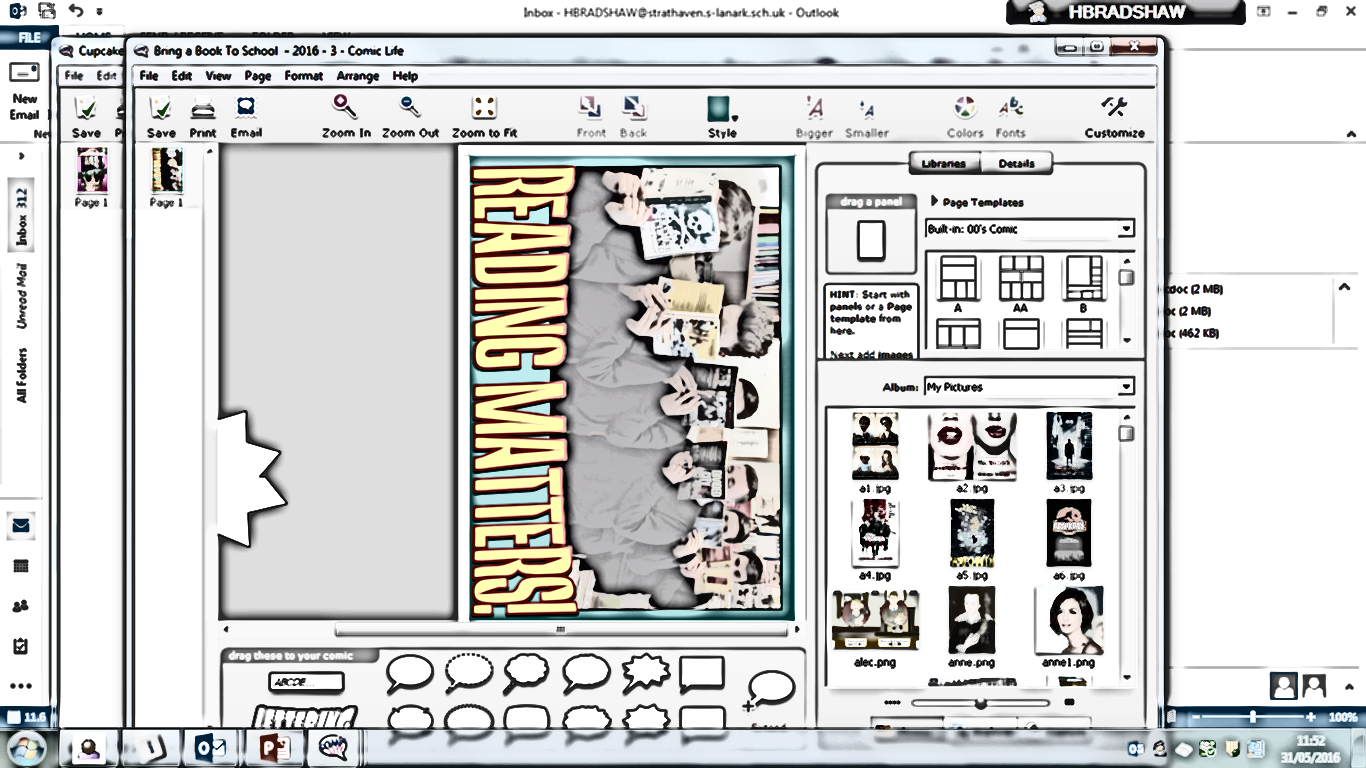
Dyslexic teenagers often struggle to find books aimed at dyslexic readers but with teen content. The publisher Barrington Stoke has an excellent selection of books for teen readers and many of them are available in school. They also provide tinted books and advice for reluctant readers. Access their site here –

<http://www.barringtonstoke.co.uk/>

The key reading targets for all pupils are to:

* + Read on a regular basis – at least 10 minutes per day.

* + Set themselves challenging but realistic targets
  + Read a variety of texts from a variety of genres: short stories, novels, non-fiction, newspapers….
  + Make sure that what is read is suitably challenging
  + Discuss what is read with others, often
  + Work out or look up the meaning of any words which are unknown
  + Think about and question what is read and how and why it has been written



* + Think about the plot/subject matter, characters, setting, structure, style, theme/purpose of what is read