

Help your child with literacy

Reading

One of the best ways you can help your child to develop skills in literacy and to do well at school is by helping them to enjoy reading for pleasure – whether they like magazines, newspapers, novels or comics. Research shows that children who enjoy reading do better at school, and that parents play a key role in helping to develop this love of reading.

Research findings: reading means achieving

Recent research into the reading skills of 15 year olds across the world found that children who are more interested in reading do better at school than those who don't read for pleasure. 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.

Some ideas to boost reading skills

- ✓ Let your child choose what to read, rather than choosing what you think they should read.
- ✓ Encourage your child to read magazines, comics, newspapers and the internet as well as books.
- ✓ Talk to your child about books or magazines you haven't enjoyed, as well as things you love.
- ✓ Make time to read together if you can – encourage your child to read to you to help develop fluency and expression.
- ✓ Buy books, book tokens or magazines as presents or rewards.
- ✓ Remember that your child is reading when they are looking at bus timetables, menu, instructions, TV guides and the internet.
- ✓ Try some skimming and scanning together. Skimming is when you read through a piece of text quickly to find out what the main idea is; scanning is glancing through a piece of text to find a specific piece of information. You can do this with a newspaper – perhaps ask your child to find something out for you. Why not ask them to scan a newspaper for news about a favourite footballer or to find out the weekend weather, or get them to skim read a recipe to tell you the basic steps?
- ✓ Encourage skimming and scanning of text books and source materials for a range of subjects.
- ✓ Help your child to work out what an unfamiliar word means by getting them to read the rest of the sentence and look for clues.
- ✓ Encourage them to look up words they don't know in a dictionary, internet. Build up the number of words your child knows – their vocabulary. To help them learn these words, you could ask your child to explain to you what they mean.

Useful websites:

www.teenreads.com

www.achuka.co.uk

www.barringtonstoke.co.uk

www.bookheads.org.uk

Writing

- ✓ If your child has written work to do as home, there are a number of things that you can do to help – some even before they start to write anything down.
- ✓ More ideas to boost writing skills
- ✓ Before your child starts to write, make sure that they have planned out what they want to say, using a mind-map or spider diagram or list of points.
- ✓ Talk over possible ideas with them as the pre-writing stage.
- ✓ It's important not to become too involved in the writing process – be supportive but let your child be independent.
- ✓ Encourage the use of a dictionary and thesaurus to support the development of vocabulary.
- ✓ If your child struggles with handwriting, get them to word process the piece on the computer and print it off.
- ✓ Encourage your child to proof read, checking expression, spelling, punctuation and grammar, and that everything that should have been included in the writing is there.
- ✓ Read over the piece when it is finished – point out what your child has done well and one or two areas that they could improve on before they hand the piece in to their teacher.
- ✓ Help by testing your child when they have spellings to learn that are listed in their homework diaries.

Listening

Babies and young children quickly acquire their first language by listening to those around them saying rhymes, singing songs, telling stories and teaching them new words by repetition. As children grow older, they still learn a huge amount about new ideas and concepts, new vocabulary and sentence structures, through listening to others. As a parent, besides talking to your child about a variety of subjects, you can do a number of things to develop their listening skills further.

- ✓ Encourage them to listen to news programmes, either on the radio or the TV and discuss the content with them afterwards.
- ✓ Audio books are a way of getting your child to engage with more challenging fiction or non-fiction.
- ✓ Encourage your child with English listening and viewing homework, which focuses on film, radio, television, theatre, live presentations etc.

Talking

From time to time, your child will be asked to deliver presentations in a variety of subjects. It is important that preparation is done for this in advance.

- ✓ Help your child prepare by getting them to run through the presentation a few times for you as the audience.
- ✓ Encourage them to maintain eye contact, vary tone of voice, use gesture and facial expression, speak at an appropriate pace and loudly and clearly enough.
- ✓ Make them feel confident by highlighting what they have done well.
- ✓ Give a few pointers on how they might improve the presentation before delivering it to the class or the group.

Encourage your child to visit the tedtalks.com website for some great examples of skilful talk presentations on a range of subjects.

Cathkin High School Editing Code	
Sp	Spelling
P	Punctuation
CL	Capital Letters
NP//	New Paragraph
FS	Full Stop
^	Word missing
DMS	Doesn't make sense

Difficulties with basic literacy

If you notice that your child is struggling with reading (with recognising words or with understanding) or writing (organisation of ideas, illegible handwriting, sentences or spelling), and they are not already receiving additional support at school, please contact your child's Pupil Support teacher who will discuss the matter with the Principal Teacher of Support for Learning.

There are many technological supports available to help pupils with literacy difficulties.

- ✓ Hand held spellcheckers
- ✓ Spelling and grammar checks within word processing packages
- ✓ Ivona mini reader – there are a range of free text readers available which can be downloaded onto computers, phones and tablets
- ✓ Dictaphone apps for tablets and phones which allow pupils to record verbal answers

