

# 'A Portsmouth Approach to Reading'

*"Reading is the one ability,  
that once set in motion, has the ability to feed itself, grow exponentially  
and provide basis from which possibilities are limitless." Michael Morpurgo*



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Acknowledgements

## **Rationale**

With the introduction of the Portsmouth Education Partnership Education Strategy 2020 - 2023, a new group was established to drive forward the key priority of improving early communication, language and literacy. "We know that by the age of four, a child from a disadvantaged background has heard 30 million fewer words compared to their more advantaged peers. We know that a child with a poor vocabulary when they are five is more than twice as likely to be unemployed in their thirties and one and a half times more likely to have mental health problems compared to a child with a good vocabulary. There is also significant research linking poor speech and language skills to a range of poor outcomes including offending." (Hart and Risley 1995)

Some of the most disadvantaged children in Portsmouth start school months behind their peers and the gap can grow through their school years. As a result of Covid-19, several national lockdowns and the impact of children being educated at home, the likelihood is that disadvantaged children in Portsmouth will have lost more ground in their language development, exacerbating the situation.

In order to support our schools and education settings to promote improvement towards the very highest standards in literacy, the Early Language and Literacy Development Group advocate a Portsmouth Approach to Reading, where information, research, evidence-based practice and resources can be referenced and shared across the Partnership. The work of this group falls under the umbrella term of 'Portsmouth Reads' to drive the improvement of outcomes and enjoyment in this area for children, young people and families.

## **Guiding Principles**

We believe

- ✚ Everyone is, or can be, a reader
- ✚ Reading is a life skill
- ✚ Reading can be enjoyable and a pastime in its own right
- ✚ Reading is about making links, sense and meaning
- ✚ You can read almost anywhere
- ✚ Reading can take you places (in reality and in your imagination)
- ✚ Reading isn't just about books (magazines and newspapers, e-book, comics, flyers, road signs, menus, shopping lists, ingredients on packaging, musical scores)

Whilst it is vital that we engage families and the youngest children, literacy is a key to successful learning across all subjects in secondary schools and impacts upon

outcomes in adult life. Therefore, the promotion of early language skills and the teaching of reading are of specific focus.

Therefore, there are two key strands for us:

1. Reading is for everybody
2. The teaching of reading in our schools and educational settings must be targeted and of the highest quality

Over-riding and over-arching commitments that weave into our beliefs about the teaching of reading:

- We need to do the 'basics' really well
- We need to be consistent, within and across our city
- We need to be relentless

### **Planning for pedagogy and progression**

- The use of high quality texts at all ages will challenge and promote reading skills.
- Oracy and vocabulary development will support our youngest children to have a knowledge of words to use and to recognise.
- Phonics is a system which provides children with a 'code' enabling them to segment and blend words, but it does not necessarily work for all children.
- Key skills need to be built upon sequentially e.g. What does prediction look like in Early Years compared to Year 6? What poetry/nursery rhymes would we want children to experience so that they will support more complex language acquisition later?
- Improved fluency is a driver for accessibility and enjoyment.
- Never assume that the meaning of words is understood by the reader.

### **Links**

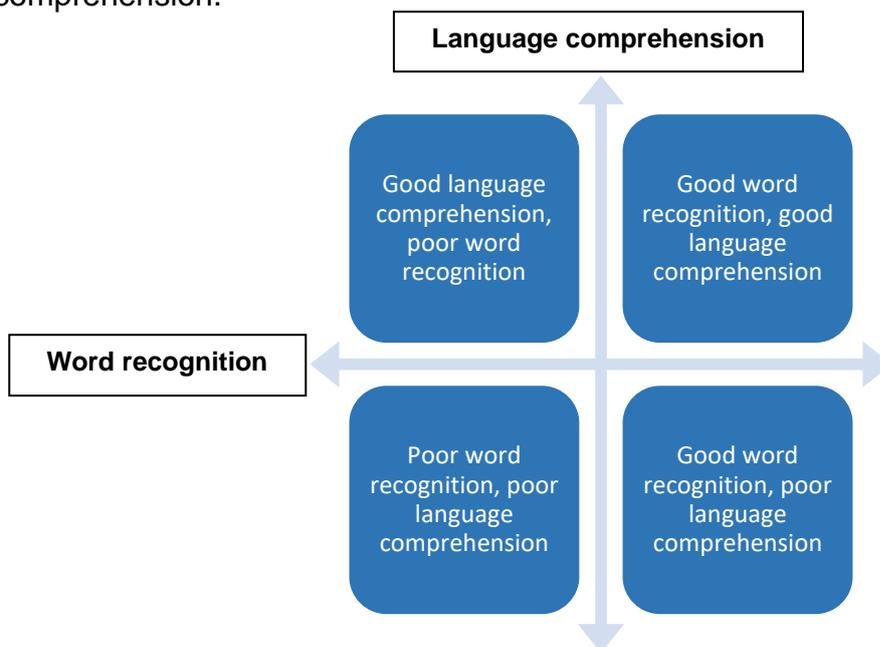
- Hart, B. & Risley, T.R. (1995). *Meaningful differences in the everyday experience of young American children*. Baltimore. Paul H Brookes Publishing.
- EEF
  - [Preparing for Literacy](#)
  - [Improving Literacy at KS1](#) with summary of recommendations and a self-assessment guide
  - [Improving Literacy at KS2](#) with summary of recommendations
  - [Improving Literacy at Secondary](#)
- Other references
  - [Read Write Inc. Phonics](#)
  - [Destination Reader KS2](#)
  - [Reading Recovery](#)



**The simple view of reading** was originally described by psychologists Philip Gough and William Tunmer in 1986 and has led to the development of our understanding of reading comprehension. It is a scientific theory that argues learning to read and making meaning from this i.e. reading comprehension, consists of developing skills in two critical areas: 1) Decoding and 2) Language Comprehension.

$$D \times LC = RC$$

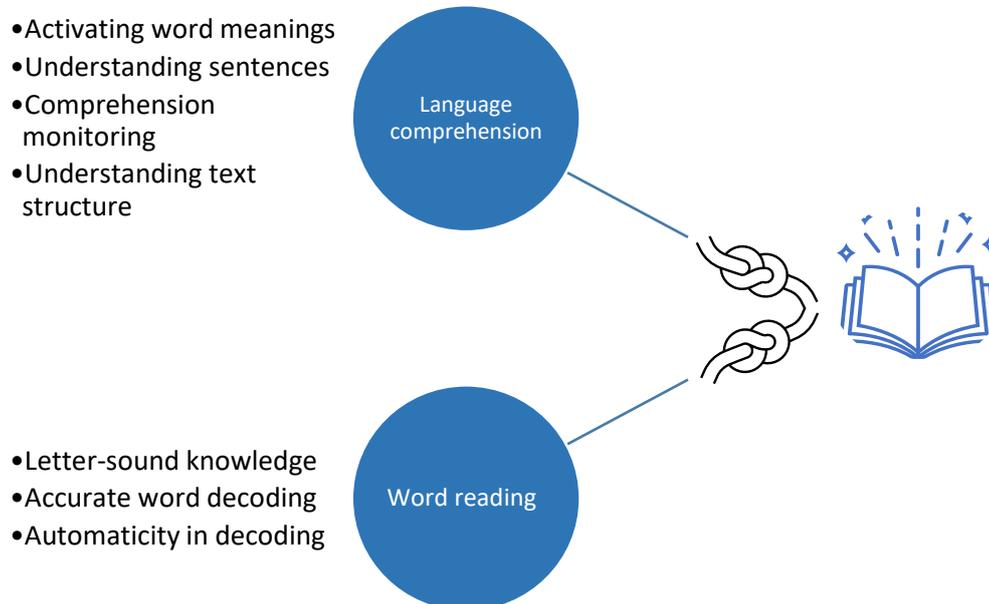
This is deliberately expressed as an equation involving multiplication rather than addition, as if either decoding or language comprehension is low or zero, it significantly impacts on the overall outcome. For example, if you can decode a word in a foreign language but do not know what it means, you won't comprehend it. Alternatively, a very young child may understand simple spoken English but not be able to decode the printed symbols on the page, therefore won't have any reading comprehension.



However, learning to read is highly complex and beyond the obvious difficulties that may present in the first years of reading, other specific difficulties affecting reading comprehension may present in a number of ways, such as:

- Reading may be slow and laborious, but accurate
- Reading may sound fluent but be inaccurate
- Reading may be fluent and accurate, but the reader is unable to recall what has been read, even maybe immediately afterwards
- The ability to read silently may be delayed or not developed at all
- The same word may be read in a variety of different ways, sometimes even correctly
- Words may be misread but lost meaning is not noticed

Hollis Scarborough's Reading Rope (2001) gives us more insight into the ideas the Simple View of Reading represents, with many strands in the two significant elements being unpicked even further. As the child's word recognition becomes increasingly automatic and language comprehension becomes increasingly strategic, then skilled reading emerges.



Skills need to be taught explicitly at every level, when appropriate to age and stage of the child. We should not assume that because a skill or strategy has been successfully applied at one stage, that it will automatically be successfully transferred to meet more the advanced demands of another.

We acquire new vocabulary through reading. Weak inference may mean that children do not develop the understanding of new words that they come across, but equally weak vocabulary can also prevent us from making inferences. Good comprehension involves going beyond the literal meaning of text. Links between sentences, use of book knowledge and background knowledge together can help to generate inferences.

*Where can I find more useful information?*

For further information and research, below are some links

- Oakhill, J.V. & Cain, K. (2012). *The precursors of reading ability in young readers: Evidence from a four-year longitudinal study*. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 16(20), 91-121.
- Snowling, M.J. & Hulme, C. (eds.) (2005). *The science of reading: A handbook*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Didau, D. (2014). *The secret of literacy: Making the implicit explicit*. Independent Thinking Press.
- Oakhill, J.V., Cain, K. and Elbro, C. (2014). *Understanding and teaching reading comprehension*. London: Routledge.
- [Reading Rockets](#) - a national multimedia project that offers a range of research-based reading strategies and resources.



Phonics is defined as a method of teaching people to read by correlating sounds with symbols in an alphabetic writing system, such as English, Arabic and Russian. It is done by demonstrating the relationship between the sounds of the spoken languages (phonemes) and the letters or groups of letters (graphemes) or syllables of the written language.

Written language can be compared to a code, so knowing the sounds of individual letters and how those letters sound when they are combined helps children to decode words as they read. However, English can be seen as a highly complex code.

Some key points:

- English spelling is more complicated than some other languages, such as Spanish or Italian where there is nearly a one-to-one correspondence between sounds and the letter patterns that represent them.
- In English we are representing 40+ phonemes of the spoken language with an alphabet composed of only 26 letters and no accent marks.
- English has absorbed many words from other languages throughout its history and as a result includes the spelling patterns of many languages which means that the same sound can be spelled differently (e.g. 'say' and 'break') and the same spelling can represent different sounds (e.g. 'zoom' and 'look').
- Research suggests that phonics is particularly effective as an approach to the teaching of early reading, although this is most beneficial when embedded in a rich literacy environment and needs to be part of a wider successful literacy strategy.
- "Phonics improves the accuracy of the child's reading but not the comprehension." (Education Endowment Foundation) Developing phonological awareness will support children to become more fluent readers and by default of struggling less to decode printed words, this may enable them to expend more effort on the understanding of meaning. However, in itself it accurate reading will not improve comprehension.
- **Systematic** phonics is not one specific method of teaching phonics, it is a term used to describe phonics approaches that are taught **explicitly** and in a **structured, systematic** manner.
- **Synthetic** phonics is the most widely used approach associated with the teaching of reading in which phonemes (sounds) represented by particular graphemes (letters) are pronounced in isolation and blended together (synthesised).
- **Phonological awareness** is the ability to reflect upon and consciously manipulate the sound structures of language at each level—word, syllable, and phoneme.
- **Phonemic awareness** is one aspect of phonological awareness and refers to the skill of manipulating the smallest unit— phonemes.

The Education Endowment Foundation published a Guidance Report in 2020 on Improving Literacy in Key Stage 1 as part of a series of four guidance reports on the theme of language and literacy. Effectively implementing a systematic phonics programme is one of eight recommendations.

The DfE validate systematic synthetic phonics programmes (SSP) through assessment by a panel with relevant expertise and self-assessment. Complete SSPs provide all that is essential to teach phonics effectively to children, with fidelity to the teaching framework as key.

Note 6 of the DfE Guidance on the 'Validation of systematic synthetic phonics programmes: supporting documentation guidance' states that "the texts that children are asked to read independently should be fully decodable for them at every stage of the programme". The only exceptions being a small number of common exception words that the child has learned as part of the programme up to that point.

However, the EEF recommend "Use a balanced approach to developing reading, teaching both decoding and comprehension skills" as "children will need a wider range of wider language and literacy experiences to develop their understanding of written texts in all their forms."

Therefore, schools should be extremely clear and explicit when they are teaching phonics in line with their chosen SSP with related resources and when children are being exposed to strategies, materials and learning that will support their development of wider reading knowledge, skills and understanding.

A key aspect of phonics teaching is that schools should check that the approach they select is sustainable and works for all children, including the most disadvantaged. Appropriate resources, including decodable books matched to pupils' phonic knowledge and high quality staff training are vital in driving strong results.

It is important to access the right resources, information and support with any systematic synthetic phonics programme such as:

- Fully decodable texts and books
- Flash cards
- Friezes
- Word cards
- Grapheme wall posters

It is required that all of the above match the grapheme-phoneme correspondences and progressions in any programme for it to be validated by the DfE.

*Where can I find more about resources and useful information?*

To support the development of knowledge and understanding of phonics and the implications for teaching and learning, below are some helpful links

- DfE policy paper [Choosing a phonics teaching programme](#) (April 2021)
- [EEF Improving Literacy in Key Stage 1](#) (full guidance report, summary recommendations and four additional files in support of the report)



In order for children to develop a clear knowledge and understanding of a plethora of texts, children need a comprehensive understanding of reading skills and strategies. Some, with a focus on comprehension, are covered below and others such as phonics, in various sections of this document. Skills should be taught to children and young people in an explicit manner e.g. Read Aloud, Think Aloud strategies.

### Skills

The skills that readers need to master, with explicit modelling of each from the teacher/adult, are:

- **Word meaning** – e.g. context clues where words or phrases can be used to support unfamiliar vocabulary; definitions of unfamiliar vocabulary; using synonyms and antonyms to make links between words and their meaning; studying the origin (etymology) of words; categorising words to gain a deepening understanding of words
- **Retrieval** – e.g. developing skimming and scanning skills to locate information quickly; identifying 'key words' in a question; understanding how organisational devices can support retrieval; using knowledge of synonyms to locate key words; re-reading the part of the text and read around the words to help understand the context; understanding how retrieval questions are written
- **Summarising** – e.g. identifying the key points in the text; developing skimming and scanning skills to order key events in a text; identifying and understanding what the key parts of a text are
- **Inference** – e.g. building knowledge and life experience to understand inference; combining what they read with what they know; identifying key words and concepts; identifying synonyms; skimming and scanning the text; re-reading part of the text; understanding that more than one answer is likely to be correct; answers must be supported by the text
- **Predicting** – e.g. using the text to support answers; using personal experience or knowledge (schema) to make predictions; using clues the author provides in the text; identifying key words; re-reading the text to identify key ideas; using evidence from the text to support the answer
- **Comparison** – e.g. analysing and identifying key words in a question; understanding how organisational devices can be used to compare and contrast texts; developing skimming and scanning skills; understanding different genres; gathering supporting evidence from the text
- **Exploring language** – e.g. developing knowledge base of a wide range of words; understanding and identifying figurative and emotive language and the effect it has on an audience

In order for the skills above to be mastered, learners should be exposed to reading based activities using one or more of the above skills on a daily basis.

## Methods

It is clear that using the following methods, provide a clear and progressive framework for children to learn the skills, understand their application and apply them in a variety of contexts effectively.

- **Scaffolding** – ensure that scaffolds are planned for, and are also planned to be removed; scaffold questioning, modelling, feedback, vocabulary and linked texts, for example
- **Explicit instruction using high quality whole class and parallel texts** – e.g. verbalising the thinking process; breaking information into chunks; providing opportunities to practise; using specific success criteria
- **Use of technology** – use of e-books; tablets/digital devices to support children in finding definitions to unfamiliar vocabulary
- **Modelling of the cognitive & metacognitive strategies (Skills for reading)** – e.g. developing retrieval practice and memory strategies; understanding how students learn; using self-questioning skills as a means of obtaining knowledge or overseeing what you have read; identifying what children know and what they don't know; rephrasing questions; connecting new information to former knowledge; evaluating the thinking process by using paired or group discussions

*Where can I find further information about the teaching of reading skills with a focus on reading comprehension?*

- [Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring](#) - 10 essential reads to improve reading comprehension
1. Cain, K. (2010). *Reading Development and Difficulties: an introduction*. BPS Textbooks in Psychology, Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford.
  2. Beck, I. L., McKeown, M.G., Kucan, L., Pikulski, J. & Silverman, R. (2013). *Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction*. Guildford Press, New York.
  3. Castles, A., Rastle, K. & Nation, K. (2018). 'Ending the Reading Wars: Reading Acquisition from Novice to Expert'. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 19(1), pp. 5–51.
  4. Harrison, C. (2003). *Understanding Reading Development*. SAGE Publications Ltd, London.
  5. Oakhill, J., Cain, K. & Elbro, C. (2014). *Understanding and teaching reading comprehension: a handbook*. Routledge, London.
  6. Tennent, W. (2014). *Understanding Reading Comprehension: Processes and Practices*. SAGE Publications Ltd, London.
  7. Oczkus, L (2018.) *Reciprocal Teaching at Work: Powerful Strategies and Lessons for Improving Reading Comprehension*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development, Alexandria.
  8. Clarke, P., Truelove, E., Hulme, C. & Snowling, M. (2013). *Developing Reading Comprehension*. Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford.
  9. Tennent, W., Reedy, D., Hobsbaum, A. & Gamble, N. (2016). *Guiding Readers - Layers of Meaning: A handbook for teaching reading comprehension to 7-11-year-olds*. UCL IOE Press, London.
  10. Carroll, J.M., Bowyer-Crane, C., Duff, F.J., Hulme, C. & Snowling, M.J. (2011). *Developing Language and Literacy: Effective Intervention in the Early Years*. Wiley, Chichester.



Quality texts provide readers with an approachable and engaging context, making it easier to inspire and spark the interest of children, then be able to equip them to write from different perspectives and about abstract situations.

The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education summarise the elements within a high quality text in the following bullet points:

- Protagonists that children can identify with
- Plots that allow opportunities to explore dilemmas, challenge, morality and ethics
- Emotive storylines
- Humour
- Rich language
- Powerful illustrations
- Blurs lines between reality and the world of the book ..... 'a book that you can lose yourself in'

Others, from the world of academia suggest that quality texts are created by people with background experience and life expertise, in other words, written by experts in their field. This is reinforced by the National Foundation for Educational Research, who also cite that quality texts are often written by authors with clear credentials in terms of writing for the target age group and have potential for longevity (e.g. recently published books by well-regarded authors, or books that have clearly stood the test of time).

Lists of quality texts for different ages are an incredibly useful guide but are not exhaustive nor merely always books. Picture books with a few carefully selected word choices can be just as effective as longer texts and are also accessible to a wider age-range as they can be accessed at different levels. When considering the target audience, we should also be mindful of the suitability for the audience, including readers of different ages and abilities, genders and backgrounds, reflecting inclusion and diversity.

*Where can I find lists of high quality reading texts?*

To support the use of high quality of texts, below are links to some

- [Centre for Literacy in Primary Education](#) - CLPE publish a free online list that is updated every two years.
- [Primary Texts](#) - publish lists of books that teachers and educational publishers have found to be appropriate and enjoyable for children of different ages.
- [Pie Corbett's Reading Spine](#) - published by Scholastic. Well-known literacy advocate Pie Corbett suggests key texts as 'essential reads', a store of classics "creating living library inside a child's mind."
- [BookTrust](#) - the UK's largest children's reading charity review new books each month and publish booklists to help find 'a book for every occasion'.

## Reading in the Early Years



The act of reading to your child can start even before birth! The parent who exposes their unborn child to the rhythmic sounds of a story read aloud or the flow of a nursery rhyme is not only taking the first steps towards early reading development, but also establishing a pattern and routine for reading and placing a high value on the act of reading. However, if the start is not made this early, it is never too late to start reading and enjoying books!

In 2019 a study from the children's reading charity Book Trust, found that only a third of children have a bedtime story with a parent and many children are now being given technological devices to use for story time instead of quality book time shared with an adult. The positive interactions that come from a shared reading experience are crucial to all round development and the focus for many practitioners within the Early Years is to help parents to understand this and take up the reading challenge.

Early reading can be a gateway to successful lifelong learning. We know that within the Early Years, reading is intrinsically linked to a young child's ability to communicate effectively and to having secure listening and attention, understanding and speaking skills. When children become readers, they can see tangible success for themselves which impacts significantly on their self-esteem and confidence. And early reading opens up avenues of learning, it ignites creativity and sparks young children's curiosity and imagination. All early years settings must place a high focus on reading and the joys that reading bring to both the children and the practitioners.

Some key points:

- ***Speech, language and communication skills are fundamental to being successful in reading***  
As a prime area of learning, communication and language needs to be a high priority for Early Years settings. Reading should be used at every opportunity to support children's acquisition of language through regular and planned story times, opportunities to act out stories and exploration of what is happening within storylines. Communication and language supports children's thinking and underpins future learning. Talk is vital and there needs to be effective modelling of accurate talk patterns and structures by adults, along with opportunities to enable, empower and inspire children to talk prolifically across the Early Years setting.
- ***Reading encourages role play***  
Active role play offers rich opportunities for language development. Participants will also be developing other skills such as empathy, problem solving and the ability to consider and respond to moral dilemmas.
- ***Reading is a gateway to vocabulary expansion***  
We know the word gap between children living in high and low talk households is 30 million words by the age of four. Gill Jones from Ofsted has stated that *"The most rapid way for children to increase their vocabulary is through listening to stories, rhymes and poems that they can then internalise, repeat and learn new words and meanings of new words through these stories"*. Practitioners and

parents should use books and reading opportunities to explore the meanings of words and take great care in selecting appropriately challenging books to read so that children can 'bump into' new words.

- ***The entirety of reading has to be considered***  
Practitioners need to understand and value the links between phonics, comprehension and fostering a love for reading, and be committed to supporting every child to develop the full range of reading skills and attributes.
- ***Breadth in reading***  
All genres and types of reading matter should be available for children to access. Practitioners should understand the interests and preferences that children have, but also ensure exposure to a wide range of reading materials as well as picture books e.g. comics, children's newspapers, maps, instruction leaflets, recipes, interactive stories, audio books, poetry and nursery rhymes.
- ***Application of phonics skills***  
For children to thrive when learning about early phonics, practitioners must make explicit links to books and reading to apply and consolidate key phonic skills in practical contexts. Can children apply their phonological skills within the classroom? Are children being directed towards key phonically decodable texts that support the skills just learnt?
- ***Partnership with parents***  
We may be teaching the specific word reading skills in our education settings, but fostering that love for reading and developing children's comprehension skills is something that parents can really focus on. Portsmouth's Early Years '***Read with Me***' project promotes partnership working between nursery and Year R settings, libraries and parents so that children can access high quality picture books and a range of reading skills before they start school.
- ***Storytelling***  
Sometimes we need to put down the book and tell stories from our imaginations or re-tell a known story in our own words. This powerful way of communication can support children's understanding and facilitate role play and drama. It also encourages children to tell their own stories and practise using the words and language that they are hearing.
- ***Regular and planned story times***  
Planned story times are effective in supporting practitioners to make links to prior learning and to introduce themes or to pre-teach a skill. Don't just dive for the book box, select a story so that it has meaning, connections and lots of talk opportunities. When the practitioner looks at the book in advance, consideration of how the story will be delivered can be made - the characters' voices, where to pause for suspense, key questions to ask to elicit information and develop prediction skills.
- ***Adults***  
When adults model reading, and show themselves as readers, this excites and inspires young children to find out more about books and reading.
- ***Wordless books***  
Wordless picture books take the pressure away from reading text and re-focus learning towards understanding. The visual story can be appreciated, new vocabulary and discussion can be explored, and basic story structure and sequencing of events can be emphasised through wordless books. These books are a key tool for families who have English as an additional language.

- **Core Texts and Over and Over stories**  
Children often develop that love for a story if it is read over and over. We know that familiarity with a book builds confidence and the repetition builds understanding and can support young children to join in and read alongside the adult.  
*“Children don’t necessarily need a vast quantity of books, but they do benefit from repeated exposure to those books” Dr Jessica Horst*  
Research has shown that when a group of 3 year olds were exposed to the same book they could remember the objects referred to in the stories. Children who had heard just one story were much better at recalling and remembering the new words than those who had been exposed to three different stories.
- **Dialogic book talk**  
This is a valuable method of enhancing language and literacy skills. It is a collaborative act of enquiry whereby the adult and small group of children use language for thinking, make connections to what they already know, ask questions of the book whilst exploring it at different levels and give reasons for their thoughts and ideas.
- **Children as authors**  
The reading process for young children can really be enhanced if they see themselves as authors in their own right. Do we place enough value, and provide enough time, for children to make their own books and celebrate this learning achievement?
- **The learning environment for reading**  
Reading opportunities should be everywhere in the environment and not restricted to a book area. Settings can consider the use of book nooks (small baskets with reading materials relevant to different areas of learning) and reflect on how the classroom supports reading in its entirety. Are children encouraged to read instructions, labels and lists as they go about their daily routine?

The Early Years Team provide training and support for settings to reflect on and develop their provision for early reading. We work in partnership with the School Library Service and Public Libraries to support parents and practitioners to access high quality texts and take part in the Portsmouth **'Read With Me'** project.

To support children and young people with reading, below are some helpful links

- **Read with Me** project link (waiting for this to be added to the PEP website)
- <https://www.booktrust.org.uk/>
- <http://www.wordsforlife.org.uk/3-5>
- [www.earlyreadingconnects.org.uk](http://www.earlyreadingconnects.org.uk)
- <http://www.literacytrust.org.uk>
- <https://clpe.org.uk/>
- <https://www.lovelybooks.co.uk>



We are currently working with secondary schools to help understand the barriers to literacy support at secondary level and how subject specialists can develop their confidence in being able to spot literacy issues. Enabling support for this in class using approaches such as combining reading instruction with writing instruction in every subject, paired reading and writing, support working memory and executive functioning by breaking tasks down into bite size steps and feel able to develop pupil's meta-cognition so that young people can take the necessary steps to help themselves.

This may include use of an ACE dictionary to define terms, technology to assist, reference to word mats providing subject specialist terms and assigning roles in group work that they can manage whilst others take on the reading tasks for example.

Focus groups with staff and pupils indicate that there is a concern amongst both groups that pupils will miss out on valuable learning opportunities when removed from class for targeted reading interventions and support.

It can be challenging for staff at secondary level to keep literacy on a rolling agenda due to other competing demands. Some subject specialists continue to identify behaviour difficulties where the underlying need is actually reading difficulties and not every subject specialist recognises that addressing literacy difficulties is in fact everybody's business and by meeting these needs, their pupils' performance in the their specific subject will also improve.

Further guidance for secondary schools will be circulated by the Educational Psychology Service and bespoke training based on completion of a self-assessment tool for schools will be offered free at point of contact.

*Where can I find more about resources and useful information?*

The Portsmouth Educational Psychology Team's Guidance on Supporting children and young people with reading difficulties.  
Gregg Brooke's evidence based interventions.

Communication, Access, Literacy and Learning (CALL) Scotland tried and tested literacy apps.



Comparing Literacy Interventions.docx



literacy apps.pdf

Please contact the Educational Psychology Team for further information and support:-

[EducationalPsychologyService@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:EducationalPsychologyService@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)



Children who have English as an additional language (EAL) face some extra challenges when learning to read or make progress in their reading skills than native English-speakers.

Barriers to reading for pupils with EAL include:

1. An over-reliance on letter/sound recognition (English is a very opaque language) so decoding is difficult
2. The meaning of words - both vocabulary and 'content' words, especially:
  - Subject specific vocabulary
  - Homonyms, homophones and homographs and contextual definitions of words (they may know meaning in only one context e.g. 'mean' - in maths, in personality, as a verb)
  - Hyponyms/ hypernyms and depth and breadth of semantic fields
  - Idioms, cultural references and imagery. Poetry is especially challenging.
3. Some specific aspects of grammar and syntax are also difficult, especially:
  - Modal verbs
  - Phrasal verbs
  - Collocation
  - Pronouns and tracking meaning across sentences
  - Auxiliary verbs and other function words
  - Passive voice
  - Text cohesion
  - Reference words
  - Connectives
  - Substitution words
  - Ellipsis
  - Lexical cohesion

The first three of these (modal verbs, phrasal verbs and collocation) are uniquely problematic for non-native English speakers.

Modal verbs (can, could, may, might, must, should etc.) have nuances of meaning often difficult to distinguish between for pupils with EAL. Phrasal verbs (a common verb followed by a preposition to form a new meaning e.g. 'bring up' a child = raise, a topic = introduce, your dinner = be sick) are used extremely frequently in English and are very hard to deduce from context. Collocations (where words have an agreed order that just 'sounds right' to English-speakers e.g. rhyme or reason, fish and chips, Ant and Dec) can only be picked up through exposure.

Some key teaching principles for EAL:

- Focus on vocabulary, building semantic fields, hyponyms/hypernyms, word roots, nuance and formality. Introduce, draw attention to and discuss these
- Explicitly focus on text cohesion (pointing out reference words, reconstructing texts, modelled and shared writing etc.) and local coherence (linking adjacent sentences)
- Teach and model inference and deduction skills and give tools to show how to comprehend beyond the literal

In addition, specific strategies to use include:

- The use of DARTs (Directed Activities Related to Text) with modified/unmodified texts to aid comprehension is a well-respected method of working with EAL pupils (see below)
- Talk...and lots of it! Oral rehearsal, collaborative activities, drama for engagement in literary activities etc. This MESH Guide is useful: <http://www.meshguides.org/guides/node/1148>
- First language use - continue to develop skills in L1 if pupils have them, use of dual-language texts, unpicking cognates and 'false friends', language-rich classrooms...acknowledge and celebrate reading in any language

Portsmouth EMAS can offer training sessions for teachers and support staff to build capacity in schools when considering the development of reading for pupils with EAL. Sessions can range from a brief introduction to half a day's INSET. Please contact Karen Thomas on [karen.thomas.emas@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:karen.thomas.emas@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)

We also have a wide selection of books in first language (including GCSE texts) and age-appropriate literature from a pupil's country of origin, both real and virtual, many bilingual stories for younger readers and bilingual dictionaries. The School Library service also has bilingual texts and books in other languages to borrow.

*Where can I find more useful information?*

To support children and young people with EAL linked to reading, below are some helpful links:

- NALDIC <https://naldic.org.uk> NALDIC is the UK's EAL professional association and has useful information and support (although some are behind a membership paywall)
- The Bell Foundation <https://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/eal-programme/> has collected resources and ideas for pupils who are EAL and have a specific section on DARTs (see above), collaborative activities, drama and reading for meaning within its 'Great Ideas' section
- MESH Guides have collated good underpinning research and support, including <http://www.meshguides.org/guides/node/124> and <http://www.meshguides.org/guides/node/125> for beginners and more advanced learners respectively



Children and young people (CYP) who have a visual impairment may face additional challenges when learning to read or in making developmental progress in their reading skills. Many read at a slower rate than their sighted peers and may have less stamina for reading longer passages. However, this does not always mean that they have not acquired the knowledge and skills to read, their eyes are not allowing them to 'see' print in the same way fully sighted children do. It may mean they take longer to develop the skills and may require different strategies and materials. Depending on their level of vision they learn through print or a tactile format e.g. Braille.

### Some key points to remember are:

- CYP with visual impairment will miss out on incidental reading experiences in their environment as they cannot see or see the detail of what is around them. This impacts on conceptual development and comprehension. Severe sight impaired CYP often talk early, however, the language can be 'empty' due to lack of vision to support their conceptual language development.
- This may also include missing out cues from illustrations.
- CYP with VI will need enriched learning and reading experiences to build and consolidate concepts.
- They often need to use a specific font type and size, magnification equipment, may read on an electronic device e.g. iPad or even use a screen reader.
- Therefore, they will also need to develop additional skills to support their reading, such as using specific technology, low vision aids, modified reading materials and lighting.
- Factors in the environment e.g. glare, lighting and noise can affect their ability to read. These should be monitored accordingly.
- Different eye conditions can lead to specific difficulties and strategies to support.
- They may also need interventions to develop visual tracking, visual discrimination and visual scanning skills.
- They should always have their own copies of any visual or reading material.
- The increased effort of looking will cause visual fatigue which often leads to mental and physical fatigue. They likely need rest breaks.
- Availability of larger print books can be limited. Locally, Portsmouth Schools Library Service and PCC Library do offer a range. Some children prefer to read electronic books, especially as they progress through school. These libraries (and others) do offer an electronic service.
- They can sometimes appear as 'reluctant readers' or lack motivation.
- Learning to read Braille requires a specific curriculum taught by Specialist Teachers. Braille readers face many additional challenges and need to develop additional tactile skills. It is important from an early age that they are exposed to emergent braille opportunities e.g. labels in their environment to give a meaning to Braille.

The Portsmouth Vision and Hearing Team's Specialist Teacher Advisers can offer advice to parents, families and educational settings to support the development of reading from babies through to college age. This includes ideas to encourage reading for pleasure, shared reading, alternative formats and support in accessing key texts and educational material used in schools and colleges. We can inform and advise on strategies for specific visual impairments, different eye conditions and signpost to appropriate sources of materials and information.

We want our visually impaired CYP to be motivated to read. We often promote audio stories, story bags and tactile books as this can develop a love of stories and desire to read. It also helps language development. Opportunities for shared reading can increase confidence and fluency. If they are struggling to 'see' the print or prone to visual fatigue e.g. through straining to read, they are more likely to lack confidence, become de-motivated and even have poorer reading skills. It is important that they are given the opportunity to access reading material in the format they need and use the necessary equipment that supports them to read. Strategies such as shared or repeated reading also build fluency and confidence.

*Where can I find more about resources and useful information?*

To support children and young people with visual needs linked to reading, below are some helpful links

- [RNIB website](#) - signposts many websites for reading resources
- [RNIB Bookshare](#) UK education collection - a free online resource allowing educators to download curriculum materials in a range of formats and adapt them to suit individual reading needs including braille, large print and audio.
- CustomEyes Books - Guide Dogs - range of large print books
- Bagbooks.org - multisensory books
- Livingpaintings.org - Living Paintings Trust - audio and tactile books.
- Clearvisionproject.org - books have print, braille and pictures to share.
- <https://www.booktrust.org.uk/booklists/v/visually-impaired-children/>
- Seeingear library - electronic books.
- Access to books [access2books.com](http://access2books.com)
- Audio books-Calibre audio library, Listening Books, RNIB Talking Books, Audible, Local Library
- Bookstart Bookstrust provide guides and books to encourage early reading experiences for young children with special educational needs
- Portsmouth Schools Library Service offer electronic and large print books.
- Key times of year there are resources available- e.g. for World Book Day you can request modified versions of the book selection.

Please contact the Vision and Hearing Team for further information and support:-  
[SensoryImpairmentTeam@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:SensoryImpairmentTeam@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)



Reading for pleasure has been identified by the National Literacy Trust as "reading that we do of our own free will, anticipating the satisfaction that we will get from the act of reading. It also refers to reading that having begun at someone else's request we continue because we are interested in it" (Clark and Rumbold, 2006). We cannot underestimate the importance of reading for pleasure when reading enjoyment has been reported as more important for children's educational success than their family's socio-economic status (OECD, 2002).

Reading for pleasure can be thought of in different forms providing varying benefits as identified by Jeffery D. Wilhelm (2017):

- **Play / immersive pleasure** when we lose ourselves in a text. It helps us to relate to characters and situations, to imagine, visualise meaning and engage in making meaning.
- **Intellectual pleasure** when we relish the challenge of having to think hard, learning, figuring things out, developing deeper understanding, experiencing new ideas and the opportunity to be resilient.
- **Social pleasure** when we are able to relate to authors, characters, other readers, exploring ourselves and our understanding of others.
- **Work pleasure** when we utilise reading to help us to achieve something functional, transferring knowledge or skills to help us in life.
- **Inner work pleasure** when the reader develops their thinking that can influence the person that they are or want to be, striving to change or become something more.

We might also add *emotional pleasure* to the list above. Being the purpose and benefit of seeking relaxation and experiencing gratification in a more sensory and fulfilling way than the play/immersive concept.

The arguments for promoting a love of reading are well documented with a wealth of research outlining the compelling impact that positive attitudes towards reading are likely to have on children and young people, through to life chances and adulthood. The link between being successful and the motivation to do something more is also clear, hence the crucial part that the teaching of early reading skills has to play.

*Where can I find more about resources and useful information?*

To support children and young people with reading, below are some helpful references:

- Clark, C. & Rumbold, K. (2006). *Reading for Pleasure a research overview*. The National Literacy Trust.
- DfE (2012). *Research evidence on reading for pleasure*. Gov.uk.
- OECD (2002). *Reading for Change Performance and Engagement Across Countries - Results from PISA 2000*.
- Wilhelm, J.D. (2017). *The Benefits of Reading for Pleasure*. Edutopia.

## Reading and Libraries a) Portsmouth School Library Service

Portsmouth School Library Service (SLS) is a traded service of Portsmouth City Council and provides a wide range of carefully selected books in physical, eBook and eAudio formats. We have a specialist team dedicated to meeting the needs of pupils in all key stages.



We offer practical staff training, hands-on support and reliable advice to help you grow your school library to the highest standard. Because of our extensive experience of school libraries and knowledge of children's books we save you time and money.

School Libraries play a vital role in helping children and young people develop their skills as readers and learners. A good school library which actively promotes a love of reading and offers an inspiring place to discover and research, will promote higher standards of literacy. Well-resourced and well-used book collections in a variety of formats have a strong impact on pupils' motivation to read both for pleasure and to resource the curriculum.

In 2019, the National Literacy Trust and Nottingham Trent University found that overall, **children and young people who used the school library had better levels of reading enjoyment, reading for pleasure, reading confidence, writing for pleasure, writing confidence, and reading attainment** than those who did not. They also tended to read and write a greater variety of material relative to non-library users.

For **children and young people receiving free school meals**, library users in this group showed higher reading enjoyment, increased reading and writing for pleasure, and tended to read and write a greater variety of material relative to non-library users.

[Understanding the Impact and Characteristics of School Libraries and Reading Spaces](#) Georgina Rudkin and Clare Wood, Nottingham Trent University October 2019

### **A service level agreement with SLS offers the following key benefits:**

- Easy access to a massive range of high quality books to support literacy and learning. We have the largest collection of children's books (113,000+) in the region.
- Use of a far greater range of resources to support the curriculum than an individual school can purchase and ability to swap stock as needed. Delivery of requested books usually takes place within a week.

- Peace of mind with our 'book loss guarantee', subscribing schools are not charged for lost books.
- The traditional book offer is now complemented by an eBook and eAudio book service.
- Access to specialist collections covering all aspects of equality and diversity; mental health and wellbeing.
- FREE access to online news services *The Day Explorer* (KS2) and *The Day* (KS3/4).
- A specialist library team who have extensive experience of supporting Portsmouth school libraries, providing ongoing support, training and networking opportunities.
- A service responsive to the needs of your school and aimed at improving outcomes for all pupils around reading, literacy and information
- SLS is a successful traded service allowing you to benefit from our economies of scale to save you time and money.

Portsmouth School Library Service  
 Cheltenham Rad  
 Portsmouth  
 PO6 3PL

023 9232 6612

- For more information email: [school.library@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:school.library@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)
- Check the Portsmouth City Council Traded Services website.

## Reading and Libraries b) Portsmouth's Public Libraries

### Portsmouth Public Library Service

Public Libraries welcome children from the very earliest months of life, helping parents and carers to support them as they grow and learn. Working with schools and other partners, libraries provide a range of activities, programmes and initiatives which introduce, extend and refresh the library experience for children.



**The Children's Promise** has been developed by Libraries Connected and The Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians. This ensures that children are actively involved in decisions about the services that affect them as well as being offered opportunities to volunteer. The Promise covers children and young people from birth to eighteen and sets out the "library journey" that children should experience as they grow.

#### Vision

- Every child and young person visiting a public library is inspired by an exciting accessible environment which makes reading for pleasure irresistible.
- They have the opportunity to engage with imaginative digital opportunities through public libraries, building their skills, knowledge and creativity.
- They will find a range of inclusive and diverse fiction and non-fiction books and other information resources to support growing confidence in literacy and formal and informal learning.
- They are able to take part in a wide range of literacy and cultural experiences including reading and book-based activities.
- They are actively involved in decisions about service developments and are offered opportunities to volunteer.
- They are supported through library services and activities to improve their health and wellbeing.

#### Aims

- Every child and young person in a public library is inspired by an exciting accessible environment which makes reading for pleasure irresistible
- Children have the opportunity to engage with imaginative digital opportunities and cultural experiences in public libraries, building their skills, knowledge and creativity

- Children will find a range of inclusive and diverse books and other information resources to support their literacy, learning, health and well-being.

### **Objective**

- Every child and young person in libraries is inspired to read for pleasure, has access to a diverse range of materials, can engage in a variety of digital activities and can take part in activities that improve their well-being.

There are nine public libraries in Portsmouth, plus a mobile library service. We stock an incredible range of books in a variety of different formats that support children's recreational and learning needs at all ages. Libraries provide a variety of activities during school holidays that support reading and literacy attainment, including the annual Summer Reading Challenge.

Our libraries are free to join and there are no fines for late return of books. Items can be requested free of charge if they are not on the library shelf. Books can be borrowed from one library in Portsmouth and returned to any other in the city.

A library card also gives children access to a wide range of eBooks, eAudiobooks and other online services.

All Portsmouth libraries provide children's computers with internet access and printing to help with homework support and they all have free Wi-Fi.

### **Portsmouth's nine public libraries:**

Alderman Lacey Library (Baffins)  
Beddow Library (Milton)  
Carnegie Library (Fratton)  
Cosham Library  
North End Library  
Paulsgrove Library  
Portsmouth Central Library (City Centre)  
Portsea Library  
Southsea Library

Search 'libraries' at [www.portsmouth.gov.uk](http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk) for more information.

Twitter: @PortsmouthReads

Facebook: Official Portsmouth libraries

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