

## Reading at home – working with parents/carers

Parents and/or carers are children's first and continuing teachers. It is well known that parents who regularly read with and to their children, and who act as good 'model readers' themselves, play a vital role in children's development as readers.

A home or care situation in which a wide variety of reading material – books, magazines, newspapers, the internet, and so on – is seen and valued as a part of every day life makes a huge difference to children's attitudes to reading.

Of course, not all home backgrounds provide these 'ideal' conditions. Some parents/carers may need your support to become actively involved in helping their child understand the pleasures and purposes of reading. It is important, too, to be sensitive to those parents/carers for whom English is not a first language (or indeed, where English isn't spoken at all) or who may struggle with literacy themselves.

Your approach to parent or carer needs will, to some extent, depend on your individual school situation. But whatever the circumstances, the vast majority of parents do want to help their children learn and there are many exciting and innovative ways schools can encourage this. You could, for example:

- Have reading induction meetings where you explain how parents/carers can help with reading, role play 'hearing a child read' and show a range of literacy resources that involve enjoyable reading activities.
- Offer parents, or loan out to parents, the NIACE/Basic Skills Agency family literacy resources such as *Read and Write Together*, *Learning with Grandparents*, *Fun at home*, *Fun outdoors* and so on. See <http://archive.basic-skills.co.uk/>
- Involve children and parents/carers in national projects such as Dads and Lads, Reading Champions, Family Learning Week and so on.
- Arrange special family induction trips to the local library or arrange for the mobile library to come to the school playground once a week.
- Involve parents/carers in creating Story Sacks and Curiosity Kits – fiction and non-fiction book bags with related artefacts and toys – to use in the home.
- Have a library of reading games that can be taken home to play.
- Have family quiz events to generate discussion and enthusiasm around reading, or create a supermarket word trail.
- Involve parents/carers in celebrating events such as World Book Day, Children's Book Week, National Storytelling Week, National Poetry Day and so on.
- Run your own book awards event and have parent/carer votes as well as children's.
- Run a regular 'book swap' stall where both parents and children can swap books, comics and magazines.

Inside the cover of each **Project X** book are notes for parents/carers that point out tricky vocabulary, encourage talk about books, and suggest some fun activities that parents/carers and children can enjoy together.

Opposite you will find a sheet of simple tips and practical advice for parents/carers on how to support their child with their reading. This can be photocopied or adapted for your own Home-School programme.



## Reading with your child

Here are some simple tips to help you help your child with reading

### Enjoy it!

- Make book sharing a fun time that you both enjoy – snuggle up with a book!
- When your child reads to you, show them that you are proud of what they can do.
- Even though your child has started to read it's still important that you read to them. Read them old favourites – even if they do seem 'easy' – as well as longer or harder books that they can't manage themselves.
- If you have a shared interest or hobby, look at books and magazines on the topic together.

### Make time and space!

- Make reading a special part of your day. Try to find a time when you aren't busy doing other things so you can spend 'quality time' reading together – even if it's only for a few minutes.
- Try to find a quiet place away from distractions like the television or the computer.
- Try to find some time every day for reading together – 10 to 15 minutes each day is better than a long session once a week.
- If your child is reluctant to read you could offer a small reward such as playing a game they enjoy. If they are tired or very reluctant to read to you, read to them instead. Don't force them.



### Be positive!

- Give your child lots praise, encouragement and support when they read to you. Focus on what they did well, not what they did wrong. Even small successes are important.

### Find out what they like to read!

- Sometimes we read for pleasure but most of the time we read for a reason. Read lots of different things together – stories, information books, comics, magazines, websites, cereal packets, TV listings – anything you and your child enjoy reading or need to read.
- Let your child make his or her own reading choices sometimes. They need to develop their own personal likes and dislikes. It is OK not to like some books! Don't worry if they choose an 'easy' or favourite book over and over again. This is normal and helps children build their reading confidence and enthusiasm.
- Join the local library and let your child choose from the great range of books on offer.

### Talk about it!

- Talking about books will help your child become more involved and interested in reading and can help them understand more.
- After you've read a book together – or anything else you choose to read – talk about it. What was it about? How did it make you feel? What did you like or not like about it? What did you learn? Spend some time looking at the pictures and talk about what they tell you. Never cover the pictures while sharing a book.
- You can talk with your child about anything – games, TV programmes, films or other things you do together.

