

Helping Children to Read in Key Stage 2



A Handbook for Parents



YSGOL BRO PLENYDD

GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS - HOW I CAN HELP MY CHILD TO READ

The purpose of this pamphlet is to bring us as teachers, and yourselves as parents, together to promote the process and practice of reading.

INTRODUCTION

Research shows that you as parents have a valuable role to play in your child's educational development. This is especially true with reading.

After all, you are your child's first teachers and you will have supported his/her development from the cradle. Your role is just as crucial when your child attends school.

A healthy relationship between parents and teachers is essential to the child's development at school.

Reading is a core skill, and is the foundation of everything else the child does at school. Unless a child reads successfully, the likelihood is that he/she will encounter difficulties in other fields too.

Many believe that the time to help a child to read is right at the beginning when he/she is learning to read, and that once the child has learned to read and is a good reader, there is no need to help any more. This is a misconception. Reading does not merely consist of reading words correctly without making mistakes - reading comprises understanding and enjoying the text. Therefore, you as parents can do a great deal to further develop your child's reading by reading with the child and discussing what he/she is reading in order to promote his/her comprehension of the text.

YOUR CHILD LEARNING TO READ

You are your children's first teachers. What you do at home is vital to your child's reading development. Here, we offer ideas and information to enable you to help your child with this important skill.

WHAT WILL HELP MOST?

TALKING to your child about everyday things and events. **The importance of talking cannot be overemphasized.** There is room to believe that parents spend less time talking to their children due to the influence of television and modern technology. Asking questions and encouraging develops a child's language, extends his/her vocabulary and aids the process of learning to read. Good spoken language creates fluent and correct writers in due course.

LISTENING to what they have to say. It is important to give children the opportunity to tell their stories and to express their experiences and also important that we respond. Language improves through use. As the child's language grows, it will influence his/her writing work at school for the better.

READING to them. It is believed that fewer parents now read to their children - television is much too convenient. Children cannot be given a better preparation than to have a number of interesting stories read to them. Books are a mine of information and enjoyment for children. Reading a book can develop the imagination, create a healthy attitude towards books and, as already mentioned, acts as a highly effective preparation for your child's work at school.

WHEN SHOULD I START?

Now! Let the child see you enjoying a book. Read signs in shops or in the street with your children. If a child shares the pleasure of reading with his/her parents, that child receives a good start. It is important that a child realizes that reading is not an activity solely associated with school work but that the skill of reading is required everywhere around us.

WHAT SHOULD MY CHILD BE LEARNING?

During his/her first years in the nursery and reception class, the child will have become used to hearing stories being read. As a result, he/she will 'play' or 'pretend' reading a book, turning pages and telling a story. The child will be able to show you where to start reading and how to hold the book correctly. He/she will have already learned some things about books and will have received a good start. Remember that every child learns at a different pace. Some children show very little interest in books - however, there are plenty of ordinary, everyday ways, of nurturing and encouraging them.

WHAT STEPS SHOULD I THEN TAKE?

Choose a favourite book, containing only a few sentences, and put the child on your knee so that he/she can see the words. Read slowly, placing your finger underneath the words. Do this a number of times and ask the child to repeat one or two words after you. As the child shows an interest, you can read more.

Another way of encouraging interest is by preparing a number of words on card (**with lower case letters**), e.g. *mam, dad, mae, a, yn, y, car, tŷ, gwely, Elen, Siôn, dyma, nain, 'rydw i'n hoffi (mum, dad, is, and, in, the, car, house, bed, Elen, Siôn, this is, gran, I like)*. The words can be rearranged to form sentences. In this way, the child remembers the whole word and obtains meaning from the sentence. Memorising a number of words in this way provides a good start.

REMEMBER NOT TO...

- ... force your child to read.
- ... use the sound of a letter to read the word at first - children are not ready for this.
- ... use capital letters.
- ... do too much, making the work uninteresting.

REMEMBER TO...

- ... praise and encourage the children sensibly.
- ... respond to their efforts in an encouraging and positive way, as you did when the child was starting to speak (e.g. Excellent! Brilliant! Very good! Well done!).
- ... refer to a single letter, if there is a link between that letter and the child's world, e.g. it is contained in his/her name.

AFTER MY CHILD HAS STARTED, WHAT NEXT?

- Continue to encourage and praise.
- **Do not compare your child to his/her elder brother or sister or to another child** - remember that everyone is different.
- Do not hide the pictures in order to focus attention on the words; pictures are important.
- Read books together, sharing the pleasure.
- Try to get the child to guess what comes next - **this is very important.**

WHAT IF MY CHILD MAKES A MISTAKE?

If the child is reading with meaning, do not correct him/her. If, for example, the child says, "*Mae'r dyn yn y goedwig*" (*The man is in the woods*) instead of "*yn y goeden*" (*in the tree*) - don't attempt to correct him/her. But if he/she reads, "*Mae'r dyn yn y fferm*" (*farm*), the child could be shown that a word beginning with 'g' is needed. This can be difficult work. If a child does not know a word, it is easier to tell him/her that word in order to keep the flow of the story.

You and reading

- Let your son or grandson see **YOU** reading – this is especially important for dads and grandads.
- When your boy is with you at home, ask him to help you – for example by checking out instruction leaflets, or choosing what to watch on tv. Boys like to know that reading is not just for fun but also that it helps them with everyday tasks.
- Talk about the sort of reading and writing you have to do in your work (dads especially) – and show your son examples of what you have to do.

Read to and read with your son or grandson

- Read to your boy. (Dad – this includes **YOU**.)
- Ideally, start reading to your boy when he is very young but it's never too late to start. (There are some great books for babies!) Carry on even when your boy is getting near his teens (providing you and he are still enjoying it.)
- Let your boy choose what he wants to have read to him as well as what he wants to read for pleasure.
- Look around for something which you think will appeal to his interests. Not all boys like fiction. Many boys like adventure and science fiction stories. They also like real life stories about real men. A good book for a boy is one he wants to read!
- Comics, websites, newspapers, sports programmes, joke books and instruction booklets are all good for reading practice.
- Give your son or grandson book tokens for presents so he can choose what he wants to read at home.

If your boy struggles with reading

- Spend a short time (say 10 minutes) each day getting him to read to you, and helping him with tricky words. Make sure these sessions are short and fun and not a sort of punishment!
- Let him choose what to read. It might be something on the web rather than a book. If he chooses something which may seem too easy this is probably because he is unsure of his reading skill and needs to be reassured and encouraged.
- Encourage him to work out the tricky words by using the sense of the sentence, by breaking up the word into smaller bits, or by sounding out the word.
- If he struggles to read a tricky word then don't let him struggle on-tell him what it is.
- Praise your son when he gets it right and encourage him when he struggles.
- Share the reading in these short sessions – you read some and then get him to read a bit. If the reading is too hard for him but the story is good then just read it to him
- If you have time, round off these sessions with you reading to your boy or talking to your boy about what you like to read and why.
- Ask your son's teacher how else you can help him improve his reading.

WHEN MY CHILD HAS LEARNED TO READ

HOW CAN I HELP?

It is easy to assume that the child does not need much help with reading after he/she has learned to read. **However, this is untrue. Your child needs help and encouragement with his/her reading during primary school and afterwards.**

When a child is able to read well enough to read independently, there is a danger that his/her development as a reader will slow down, unless he/she continues to read regularly, gets hold of enjoyable and exciting books, and gains pleasure and enjoyment from reading.

The child's teacher and parents have an important role to play in ensuring the continuation of development. The school and home should keep a close eye on the child's reading, ensuring that the child has a book which he/she reads every day and enjoys.

At the school, the form teacher will:

- ensure that a variety of attractive contemporary books are available in class for the children to choose from.
- make sure that he/she knows what a particular child likes, e.g. perhaps one child likes football novels and another novels about horses.
- ensure that every child has a reading book suited to his/her age and reading level - not too easy and yet, challenging without being too difficult.
- make certain that the child reads regularly.

(In this, the parents' support is all-important. A teacher may ensure reading experiences for the child at school, but **you as parents are the only ones who can ensure that your child reads at home.**)

HOW CAN THE PARENT PROMOTE THE CHILD'S READING?

- By taking an interest in the book he/she is reading; talking about it with the child - what is happening in the book/who the characters are/is it good?/are you enjoying it?
- Listening to the child reading.
- Reading with the child - the children reading some pages and the parent reading the others.
- Accompanying the child to look for books which interest him/her, either to a library or book shop.
- Placing importance on reading - show the child that you consider reading to be important and a valuable pastime. **The messages conveyed by parents influence a child more than anything else.**
- Keeping a constant eye on how much he/she reads at home and what is being read.
- Helping the child with the difficult parts in books by reading those parts to the child so as to enable him/her to follow the story.
- Ensuring that the child chooses suitable books to read.
- Reading books to the child that are slightly too difficult for him/her to read on his/her own at present.
- Completing the comment forms that the child brings home from school, so as to enable us as teachers and yourselves as parents, to nurture an understanding of your child's reading in order to further develop that reading. Remember that developing your child's reading is a partnership between the school and home.

WHAT IF MY CHILD IS RELUCTANT TO READ?

If the school and home are doing their best to promote a child's reading from the start, the child should turn to books voluntarily. However, this does not always happen.

Some children are natural readers, they love books and read at any given opportunity. On the other hand, there are children who are reluctant to turn to books at all.

In cases such as these, it is crucial that the school and home co-operate in an attempt to solve the problem. The child has to be asked why he/she does not like reading. One of the problems, perhaps, is that he/she is unable to get hold of a book which grips and excites him/her.

Whatever the problem, the school and home can do a great deal to ensure that the child reads a little, regularly.

BEFORE CONCLUDING - GENERAL POINTS

- Try to listen to your child **reading every day if possible**.
- Children must **practise regularly - the more practice, the better**.
- It is not possible for the form teacher to spend more than a few minutes every day with individual children but you can promote your child's reading a lot by sharing the work.
- It is also important that a child experiences success.

HOWEVER ...

- do not be over-eager, especially with young children - you can ruin the desire.
- try to make the work pleasurable for both of you.
- avoid books which are too difficult.
- do not attempt to move to a higher level too soon.
- read a page alternately so as to sustain interest.
- if the child tires, finish the story yourself.

COMPLETING THE COMMENTS' FORM

Completing the comments box in your child's reading record book is a worthwhile practice. The KS2 child will also be expected to write a little of his/her impressions of the book. This exercise is important. One of the objectives of teachers in the two older classes is to get children to **think** about their reading - to give an opinion on a book and judge the story and characters. Therefore, during the year, the child's comments are expected to develop. As parents, you have an important role to play in ensuring this. You should discuss with your child what he/she wishes to write about the book, and then take a quick look at the comments after the child has written them down. It is important that you collaborate with the school to encourage the child to write with meaning and not repeat his/her comments week after week. It is also excellent practice for you to ensure that the child respects the record book by writing in his/her neatest handwriting and looking after the book.

THE PARENT COMPLETING THE COMMENTS BOX

This is a convenient way for the parent to communicate with the school on the child's reading. The form teachers will read the child and parents' comments regularly; these are extremely valuable to them.

What you can Write

- How did your child read?
- Did he/she encounter difficulties?
- What caused the difficulties?
- Was the book too difficult/easy?
- Did he/she enjoy the story?
- Did he/she read with enthusiasm?
- Was he/she unable to put the book down?
- Does the child want to read more books of this type?
- Was the book boring?
- Did the child have difficulty going through it/was the child reluctant to turn to the book?

REMEMBER ...

- that the school will officially report to you on your child's reading at the beginning of the school year (Autumn Term) and then in January (parents and teachers' meeting) and again at the end of the year (parents' meeting and annual report).
- that the school is **very eager** to discuss any concerns the parent has about his/her child's reading. You are welcome to contact the form teachers at any time to arrange a discussion time.
- that the teachers, too, are willing to offer advice.
- that there is a wide choice of different books available at the school. The aim is to add to the stock every year, so as to ensure a vast collection of excellent books for the children.
- that the school will be holding an English-language books fair in the Autumn and a Welsh fair in the Spring, to provide parents with an opportunity to take a look at the latest books with your child. An annual books' week is held where books are given a high profile through various interesting activities.
- Every child gets to borrow a book from school every week.

In order that this works successfully, I must appeal to you to ensure that the books are respected and returned. If it is raining, it is a matter of courtesy to place the book in a plastic bag.

BEFORE CONCLUDING

No matter how well the child reads, it is important that you continue to read stories to him/her. Hearing a good story is a way of promoting intellectual and emotional development and enhancing every child's life.