



North East
Learning Trust

Supporting your child's reading in secondary school



Why does reading matter?

Reading isn't just for primary school: it is very much for secondary school. It remains a crucial skill for secondary school and beyond. Strong reading abilities are essential for academic success. That's because they enable students to access the curriculum, expand their vocabulary, and cultivate a lifelong love of learning. In a nutshell, the stronger a reader your child is, the more likely they are to gain strong GCSEs in all subjects – not just English. Further, reading has been shown to support mental health and wellbeing in children. As a parent, you play a vital role in supporting your child's reading journey during these formative years.

12 parental tips for supporting reading

1. Encourage diverse reading materials

Allow your child to explore various reading materials that align with their interests, such as fiction, non-fiction, poetry, comics, magazines, newspapers, and high-quality online content. Exposure to different types of content enhances their vocabulary and comprehension skills.

2. Engage in conversations about reading

Discuss books and articles with your child. Share your own reading experiences and engage in conversations about what you enjoyed or found challenging. This helps them develop critical thinking and analytical skills. When your child reads, ask them to summarise the story or information. If it's a story, ask about the characters and plot. If it's an informational text, have your child summarise and then explain the main ideas. This will help improve their reading comprehension skills and develop their confidence when meeting complex texts.

3. Make reading a regular activity in your home

Incorporate reading into your daily family life to help your child develop a love for it. Set aside dedicated time where everyone puts away their devices and reads. Make it enjoyable by discussing the books afterwards or watching film adaptations of books you've read. The key is to make reading a fun, regular part of your family routine.

4. Listen to your child read aloud

When your child reads aloud, provide gentle feedback and support. If they struggle with a passage, encourage them to re-read it or model good, fluent reading for them. Repeated reading out loud of the same part of a text, even at home, has been shown to improve reading skills.

5. Have frequent conversations with your child

Engage your child in discussions on a variety of topics to expose them to a wide range of vocabulary and language. Reading is, above all, a language activity, so the more words and language your child knows, the better their reading skills will be.

6. Visit libraries

Explore local libraries and bookshops together, allowing your child to browse and discover new titles. Encourage your child to borrow books and explore different genres to expand

their reading horizons. Remember that we also have a library here in school your child can use: encourage them to visit it and ask them about the books they bring home.

7. Download the free BorrowBox reading app

BorrowBox is a free app that can be downloaded and used if you are the member of a local library. It's a fantastic, free reading resource that is not to be missed. Through BorrowBox can download books, audiobooks and more, all for free. All that is required is your library card and pin number. You can also join your local library online, if you aren't able to visit them in person and it takes just a few minutes. Using BorrowBox will enable your child to access a diverse range of great reading material on any electronic device, all from the comfort of your home.

8. Be a reading role model

Let your child see you reading books, newspapers, or high-quality digital content. Model the reading habits you want them to learn. Your enthusiasm for reading can inspire them to develop a similar passion.

9. Create a comfortable reading environment

Ensure your child has a comfortable space for reading, with good lighting, cosy seating, and minimal distractions. A welcoming environment contributes to an enjoyable reading experience.

10. Encourage independent reading strategies

Help your child choose books they will enjoy and equip them with a toolbox of reading strategies to help themselves when they encounter difficulties, such as re-reading, using clues in the text to clarify their understanding, asking questions about what they are reading or making predictions based on what they know.

11. Celebrate reading achievements

Acknowledge and celebrate your child's reading milestones and accomplishments, such as finishing a challenging book or achieving a personal reading goal. Recognising their efforts encourages them to continue their reading journey with pride. Show them that developing their reading is something to be proud of.

12. Reading for mental health

Encourage your child to read books to promote their mental well-being. Reading can be a powerful tool for reducing stress, increasing empathy, and providing a healthy escape. Books that feature characters overcoming challenges or exploring emotions can help children navigate their own experiences and feelings. Discuss how reading makes them feel and how the stories might relate to their own lives or experiences.

By implementing these tips and providing ongoing support, you can empower your child to become a confident and enthusiastic reader through secondary school and beyond. Your involvement and encouragement are key to fostering academic success and a lifelong love of reading in your child, but also in supporting their mental health and wellbeing.