



Engaging parents and carers: Home reading

It is essential that parents and carers understand the importance of home reading and how to support their children's reading in a positive and enjoyable way. Investing time to develop reading relationships between home and school is crucial.

Schools should provide a balance of books to send home for early readers, including:

- **a reading practice book** matched to the child's phonic stage that they can read independently
- **a sharing book** that they can talk about and enjoy with their parent/carer.

It is important that schools explain to parents/carers the difference between the child's reading practice book and the book they take home to share.

The reading practice book

It is the school's role to teach reading. However, parents/carers play a vital role, too. It is important that children have plenty of practice reading at home in order to become fluent, confident readers.

Parents' or carers' support is needed to help their child practise reading and develop fluency with a book they have already read at school. This book needs to be matched to their phonic stage and be fully decodable. If books are sent home that the child cannot decode, it will lead to frustration for the child and the parent/carer.

To ensure that reading at home is an enjoyable experience and does not feel like a chore, schools need to send home reading practice books in which the child can read 95% of the words. It does not have to be a different book every time; it may need to be the same book if the child still needs to develop fluency.

Parents/carers need to be given a clear explanation as to why these reading practice books are at the right level for their child to develop fluency and are not 'too easy'.

The children should be able to read the practice book with developing confidence and fluency without any significant help. The parent/carer's role is to listen with interest and, most importantly, to encourage and praise, enthusiastically acknowledging the child's achievement (even if, at the early stages, this is only small).

After the child has read the book, it may be helpful to talk about the book, but only so far as the child is interested. The parent/carer should keep the experience positive and avoid turning it into a test.

The sharing book

If children are to become lifelong readers, it is essential that they are encouraged to read for pleasure. The desire of wanting to read will help with the skill of reading. To help foster a love of reading, children should take a book home that they can share and enjoy with their parent/carer.

Involving the children in the choice of this book is important. These books offer a wealth of opportunities for talking about the pictures and enjoying the story. It is important to offer a variety of books, including non-fiction, so they can enjoy a range of writing.

Parents/carers need to understand that they should not expect their child to read this book independently and certainly should not try to get their child to do so. The book is for the parent/carer to read to or with the child.

Again, it is good to talk about the book with the child, but important not to turn the discussion into a test. The goal is enjoyment.

Frequency of sending books home

Ideally, children should take their reading practice book and a sharing book home two or three times a week. It is essential that children have read the reading practice book at school before it is sent home.

Workshops for parents/carers

Workshops for parents/carers are an ideal opportunity to provide clear messages about reading. It is better to have bite-sized workshops more frequently so that parents/carers can understand each step.

The following information is useful to include in workshops:

Why learning to read is so important

- How reading is essential for all subject areas and improves life chances.
- How positive attitudes to reading and choosing to read have academic, social and emotional benefits for children.

How children learn to read

- What phonics is and why phonics is the only route to decoding.
- How to say the phonic sounds.
- How to blend phonic sounds to read words.
- How to increase their child's fluency in reading sounds, words and books.

Reading fully decodable books

- Why children must read books consistent with their phonic knowledge.
- Why it is essential not to use other strategies to work out words (including guessing words, deducing meaning from pictures, grammar, context clues or whole word recognition).
- Why books must be fully decodable.
- Why children need to read books in a progressive sequence until they can decode unfamiliar words confidently.

Parents' and carers' roles in home reading

- The positive impact parents/carers can have on their child's reading.
- The importance of reading practice to develop fluency.
- How children take home books they have read at school to re-read at home to build fluency.
- The difference between books for reading practice and books to share for pleasure.
- The importance of reading to their child to encourage a love of books, along with developing vocabulary and discussion.
- Top tips on how to read stories well – use of voices, expression, discussing unfamiliar vocabulary, how to talk about the pictures, predicting what might happen next.
- How to complete the home reading diary (see overleaf).

Home reading diary

It is important that this diary is easy for parents/carers to complete. Schools must ensure parents/carers understand what they are being asked to comment on and give a clear message if there is a specific aspect the child needs to practise at home. Schools should be specific if they would like parents/carers to comment on other reading taking place at home, such as other books they are reading for pleasure and encourage parents/carers to make their comments as positive as possible.

Additional support for a child

Where it has not been possible to engage a parent/carer with home reading, other alternatives should be considered to provide the child with additional practice.

These include:

- reading at home with another person, such as a sibling, grandparent or relative
- volunteer helpers during lunchtimes or at a convenient time in the school day
- reading buddies from Year 5 or 6 during the lunch hour.