

Reading for pleasure

Children who read for pleasure are most likely to succeed. The National Curriculum promotes 'reading for pleasure' and so too do many schools, but what does it mean? 'Reading for pleasure' is not a slogan; it is not a poster; it is not a display. We know when a school is effectively cultivating 'reading for pleasure'; the children all love reading and read avidly.

Finding the right authors

Page-turners nudge children in the direction of different authors who write accessible and exciting stories. Ideally, we want to see children developing their tastes by latching onto a series such as the *Artemis Fowl* books. A knowledgeable teacher will then guide them towards the *Alex Rider* series by Anthony Horowitz (Walker Books). Readers of Michael Morpurgo might be nudged on to books by Kiran Millwood Hargrave or towards Emma Carroll's wonderful stories. In this sense, the books become 'stone-steppers', leading children from one enthusiasm

to another. Of course, to do this effectively teachers really need to know their books. Book knowledge matters.

Teacher as a reader

The idea of the teacher as a reader is essential to developing reading for pleasure. The heart of turning children on to reading comes from the three-way relationship between schools having great books to share, a teacher who is an enthusiastic and knowledgeable reader and a child who is ready to listen. Teachers who love books make reading a vital experience. Knowing about books means that the teacher can recommend what to read next, matching books and authors to broaden children's taste.

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Reading for pleasure

Develop 'reading for pleasure' by reminding your staff of the joys of reading. Start each staff meeting with teachers sharing favourite books from their childhood:

- *Which books helped them to become a reader?*
- *Who turned them on to reading?* (There is almost always a significant adult.)
- *Where do they like to read?*
- *What do they associate with reading?*

The answers to all these questions suggest much about how to help children become readers. The key questions will be:

- *Are you the significant reader in your children's reading life?*
- *Are you a teacher that creates readers?*

The key is to bring reading alive so that it is utterly essential and totally engrossing for the children. ■

Simple ideas

- Buy each teacher a book, wrap it up and give as a present.
- Give books as rewards.
- Send home lists of books to be read each term.
- Check out authors' blogs, social media accounts and invite authors in to school.
- Provide lists of key books that children should read in the year and display the books, such as 50 books to read in Year 3.
- Set reading challenges, for example can you read a million words?



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