

HIAS OPEN RESOURCE

# **The challenge jump between primary and secondary**

***Supporting all readers in the secondary school***

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Final version

# Overview

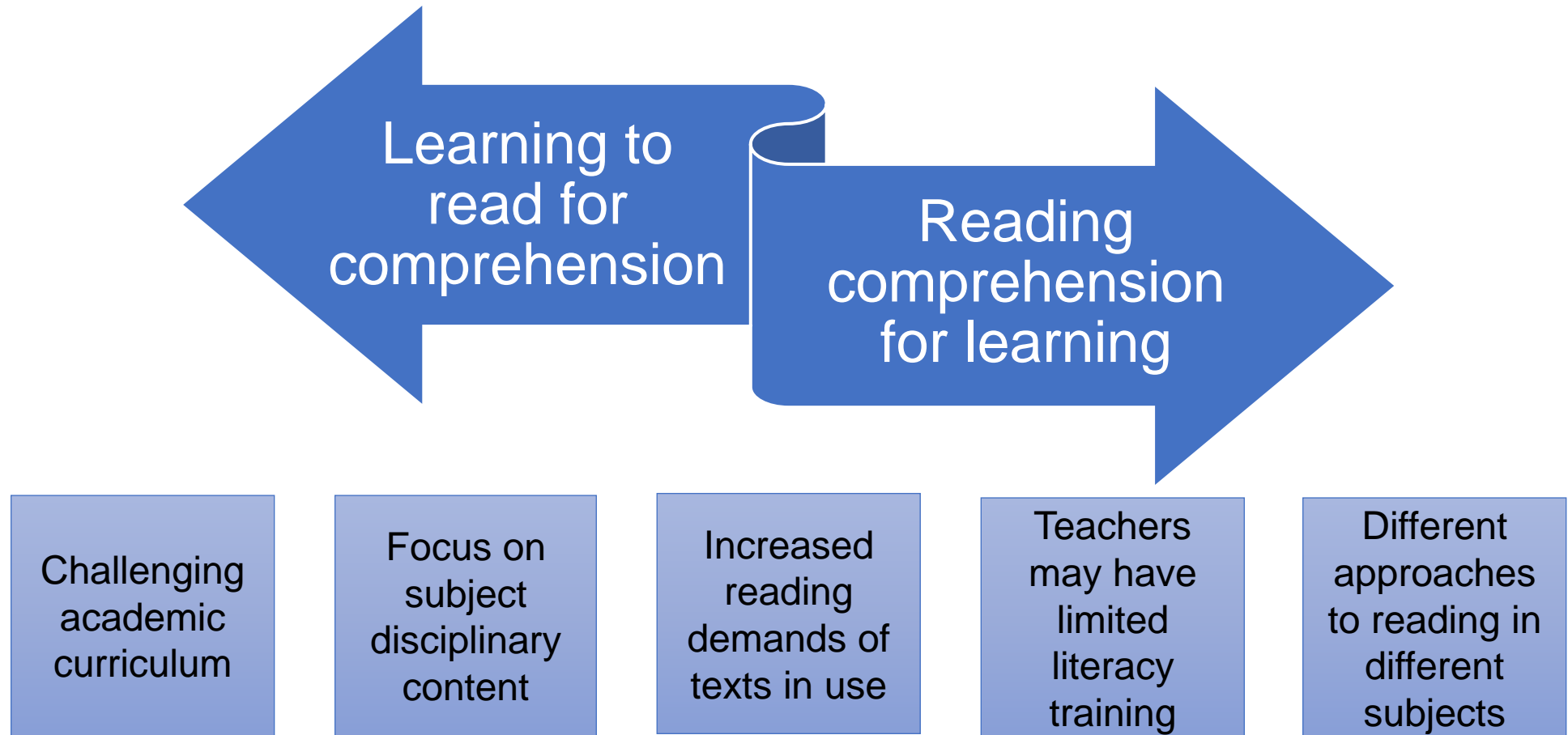
## **This document contains...**

Slides that could be used as part of a CPD sequence for teachers in school, supporting understanding of reading in secondary schools

## **Points to consider when using this resource**

The resources in this series are intended as a companion piece to the DfE's series of training videos and guidance [\*Supporting all readers in secondary school\*](#), providing additional detail. This resource expands on ideas shared in video 3, [\*Reading in secondary students\*](#) and provides links to research.

# The reading gap between primary and secondary school



# Examples of texts and questions from KS2 papers

- 3 Look at page 4.
- Pandas can grow up to 1.5 metres and weigh up to 150 kilograms.
- What else in the text tells us that giant pandas could be dangerous animals?

1 mark

This is an example of the most easily accessible level of text on the KS2 reading test papers. From the 2018 paper, this extract has a reading age of roughly 11-13 and is therefore generally intended to be accessible to most pupils; those pupils who pass the reading test are likely to have answered most of the questions on this text correctly.

## The Giant Panda Bear

Panda bears are very popular animals, partly because of their unusual appearance and partly because there is something mysterious and fascinating about them. However, their numbers are falling. It is thought that only around 1600 giant pandas still survive in the wild.

### Appearance

Giant pandas have the same type of body shape as other bears. They have thick black and white fur, which some scientists think may be to disguise them in the snowy and rocky surroundings where they live. An adult can grow up to 1.5 metres and weigh up to 150 kilograms. They might look cute but they have razor-like claws. They also have powerful jaws for crushing and grinding bamboo!

### Habitat

Giant pandas in the wild live on mountainous slopes in western China. Their habitat is densely populated with fir trees and bamboo. It is the forests in these mountains that attract the panda as bamboo is their favourite food.

### Diet

In the wild, their main diet is bamboo. To survive, they need to eat for most of the day. In fact, they eat 15 to 30 kilograms of food every day and spend 10 to 16 hours feeding. In zoos, they have a specially prepared diet of bamboo, eggs, fish and honey.

# Examples of texts and questions from KS2 papers

15 Look at the section headed: **Save our bees.**

Complete the table below with **one** piece of evidence from the leaflet to support each statement.

	Evidence
The Bumblebee Conservation Trust is worried about bees.	
The leaflet makes readers feel hopeful for bumblebees.	

2 marks

Many pupils in 2019 found the questions on the extract about bumblebees fairly challenging. This text has a reading age of 13-14 years and was the second text on the paper, providing a reasonable level of challenge. Pupils who passed the test are likely to have answered at least half of these questions correctly, but even those who passed tended to find some questions difficult.

## Fact Sheet: About Bumblebees

At the Bumblebee Conservation Trust, we are passionate about saving bees. Here is why.

### Save our bees

Bumblebees are among the most loved and familiar of garden insects. The sight and sound of them buzzing from flower to flower is an essential part of summertime, but sadly these fat, furry little creatures are struggling to survive.

At the time of writing, 24 bumblebee species are found in the UK, but unfortunately, in the last 80 years, two UK species have become extinct and others have declined sharply. In our modern world of paved gardens and intensive farming, our bumblebees find themselves hungry and homeless. The reason for this is simple and clearly visible: there are now far fewer flowers to provide bees with the pollen and nectar that they need to survive. But all is not lost – you can take action today to help save these hardworking pollinators. This fact sheet explains how.



### What's so different about the bumblebee?

To most people, bees are instantly recognisable but there are distinct differences between the appearance and lives of bumblebees and honeybees. Bumblebees are larger and hairier than their cousins which makes them perfectly suited for colder climates. Bumblebee nests are small and they do not store large quantities of honey, so their extra furry coat allows them to venture out on cold days to collect pollen and nectar when honeybees stay inside.



# Examples of texts and questions from KS2 papers

- 30** Look at the paragraph beginning: *Then, in 2005...*
- Find and copy one** word or group of words that shows that scientists were not sure what happened to most of the animals during the drought on Mauritius.

1 mark

Probably the most challenging text that has been included on a KS2 reading test and called out by many teachers for being *too hard*, *The Way of the Dodo* has a reading age of approximately 14-15 because of the complex vocabulary, the proportion of longer sentences, the lack of helpful organisational features such as subheadings and the requirement for a substantial amount of background knowledge. This was the third piece on the 2016 KS2 reading paper and was intended to provide stretch and challenge for the strongest readers. Many children will have only answered a proportion of the questions in this section and even those who achieved the higher standard in the test would not have expected to secure all the marks available.

This is an article about the dodo,  
a bird that is now extinct.

An artist's impression of the  
dodo from 300 years ago.



## The Way of the Dodo

The dodo was first sighted around 1600 on an island in the Indian Ocean. It was extinct by 1680. Since then the phrase 'dead as a dodo' has been used to describe something which is lifeless or has disappeared from the world completely. Because of its rapid disappearance, a number of myths developed about the dodo, for example that it was a fat, silly creature that brought its fate upon itself.

But what is the **truth** about the dodo?

For thousands of years the island of Mauritius was a paradise. It was spat out of the ocean floor by an underwater volcano 8 million years ago. With warm sun, plentiful food and no predators to speak of, the isolated island became a haven for a variety of unusual species, including reptiles and flightless birds.

Then, in 1598, humans descended on this paradise, accompanied by their own animals – dogs, goats, cats (and a fair number of rats!). Curious and unafraid, the animals of Mauritius offered themselves up for slaughter and, within just a few decades, much of the island's unique wildlife had been wiped out forever.

One of the victims was a large, flightless relative of the pigeon. The island invaders started to call the bird a 'dodo', which meant 'silly bird'.

# What to bear in mind about KS2 reading

- KS2 reading tests are one hour long and pupils have to read three texts (between 1300 and 2200 words) and answer up to 40 questions. Many children do not finish the test in the time.
- The tests focus on vocabulary knowledge, comprehension and inference.
- Most questions are worth one mark; the maximum number of marks for a question is 3.
- Extended written answers are not required – the most that would be expected would be for a child to fill in a table.
- In most years, the tests include two fiction and two non-fiction texts.
- The emphasis in the KS2 reading curriculum in the majority of primary schools is on reading fiction. Many primary schools are working hard to improve their coverage of non-fiction reading.
- Pupils are very rarely asked to respond to texts in an analytical written form (essay style) at KS2. It is likely that this would be a new written form for pupils at KS3 and therefore needs to be taught explicitly.
- The pass mark for the KS2 reading test tends to be between 52-58% of questions correct; a pupil who has achieved a scaled score of 100 (the pass mark) has missed or answered incorrectly almost half the questions on the test.

# Thinking about reading in the secondary school

- There is limited difference between the reading ability (specifically, the ability to decode a text) of a Year 5 and a Year 8 pupil, and yet the expectation of reading **for academic purposes** is significantly higher as pupils move through secondary school.
- Creating links between primary and secondary curricular approaches is a way to support pupils as they move through transition. This does not mean that pupils should not be asked to read challenging material within the curriculum for each subject.
- It does mean:
  - Teachers need to think about the level of challenge of the texts that they want to use in the classroom and the level of support that pupils may need to access the text, particularly those pupils who struggle more with reading.
  - **Teachers need to give class time to understanding the text itself before asking pupils to use the information within the text for academic purposes.**



# Curricular reading

- **Findings of the study:**
- Reading an appropriately challenging text about a topic being studied
- **and**
- using the information from the text in order to complete a task
- **leads to**
- improved understanding of the topic
- **and**
- improved reading

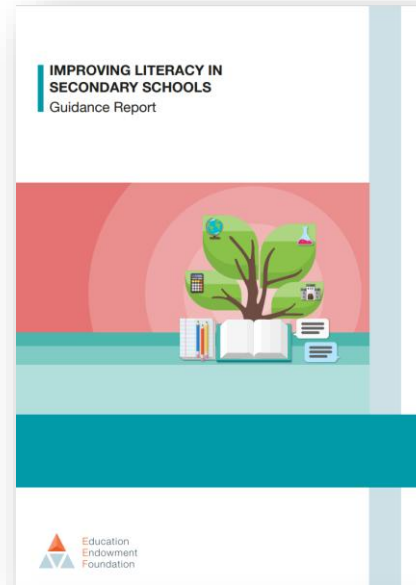
**Implications of a Cognitive Science Model Integrating Literacy in Science on Achievement in Science and Reading: Direct Effects in Grades 3–5 with Transfer to Grades 6–7**

Nancy Romance<sup>1</sup> • Michael Vitale<sup>2</sup>

*“A curricular approach integrating literacy within in-depth science instruction has the benefit of increasing student academic achievement in science and reading comprehension—on both a direct and transfer basis—in a far more effective manner than traditional reading/language arts programs”*

# We want...

- Students to be taught and supported to read complex text that will move them forward, both in their subject studies and in their reading
- Teachers to include challenging reading material in their lessons
- Plenty of opportunities to read challenging material in supportive and meaningful contexts in lessons, every day



## HIAS English Team

Please contact Joanna Kenyon [Joanna.Kenyon@hants.gov.uk](mailto:Joanna.Kenyon@hants.gov.uk) for support with secondary reading, whole school literacy and English.

For further details on the full range of services available please contact us using the following email: [htlcdev@hants.gov.uk](mailto:htlcdev@hants.gov.uk)

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