

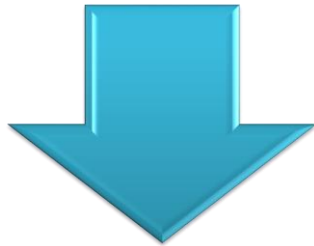


Importance of reading



Confident reading

- access to the curriculum and beyond
- pleasure
- self-actualisation
- moral and intellectual growth
- educational achievement



Weak reading

- difficulty keeping up with peers
- low self-esteem
- poor mental health
- frustration, avoidance and aggression
- social inequality and isolation

One of the key things that has brought reading across the secondary school into the spotlight is Ofsted's focus on it, but the importance of reading is much more fundamental than that. Making sure that our schools have a reading culture that addresses the difficulties that weaker readers face and celebrates the worth of strong, confident reading for both academic progress and for pleasure is an educational imperative.



Whenever we talk about the reading culture in a school with the majority of teachers and leaders, the first thing that comes to mind is the celebration of reading for pleasure and the motivation to read – most schools have an approach that encourages students to read independently and to have a personal reading book. That might be based on a recognised approach such as ‘drop everything and read’ or ‘accelerated reader’, which does communicate the value that a school places on reading because time is regularly given over to it. Some schools have chosen class readers for tutor time and are ensuring that students are exposed to a range of challenging and enjoyable texts, both in this arena and through the literary curriculum in English. But of course, the reading culture of a school brings in far more than this – when we consider how much we read in any given school day and how much we see that as part of the expectation of students, we have to recognise that the role of reading in the secondary school goes far beyond ‘DEAR’ and other reading encouragement approaches.

Leadership of reading



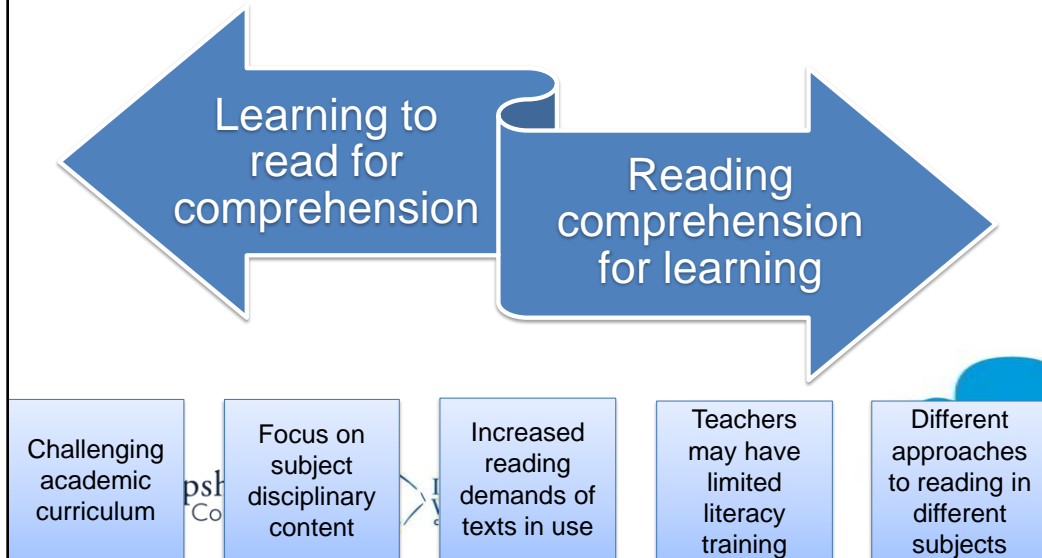
Schools have been thinking about a more holistic view of reading and the school's reading culture for a while now and the leadership of reading in the secondary school is becoming a more crucial and high profile job. While a few years ago, in many schools, leadership of literacy across the curriculum was the province of an up-and-coming young English teacher who needed a little TLR to stop them from leaving for promotion, this is now often the province of SLT and encompasses a lot more. Leaders with responsibility for reading are always trying to avoid Geoff Barton's warning, *'If you want a sure way to provoke a collective groan in your staffroom, announce that you are intending to hold a training day devoted to whole school literacy,'* and one of the important ways to do this is to establish the expectation that this is a key responsibility of all members of staff, not just one person's job. Understanding the teaching that supports students to access the reading that they need for secondary school is one of the key elements of teaching standard 3 *'demonstrate an understanding of and take responsibility for promoting high standards of literacy, articulacy and the correct use of standard English, whatever the teacher's specialist subject'*

High expectations for all

- Addressing the unconscious motivation for teachers to reduce reading demands in lessons
- Reading as an element of all lessons within the context of the subject
- Provide scaffolding to enable student to access the reading required for the curriculum

It can be a temptation for teachers who know that some of the students in their classes will struggle to cope with the reading demands of the subject to reduce those reading demands, but this simply pushes more and more responsibility back onto the English department where reading is a prerequisite. Raising expectations for all in all subjects means that students are less likely to opt out and that they will get used to the demands being made of them. Plus, they will have many more opportunities to practise.

The reading gap between primary and secondary school



We often expect students to arrive in secondary school ready to use their reading as a tool for learning other material rather than as a core element of learning in its own right, but many students are not yet at that stage and still need to continue learning to read. The structural differences between primary school and secondary school mean that each subject teacher has a substantial amount of subject content and process knowledge to teach and may therefore feel pressured if asked to continue to teach students to read. But if we do not teach them to read within our own subjects, how will they learn?

Progression from KS2 to KS3 in reading

KS2

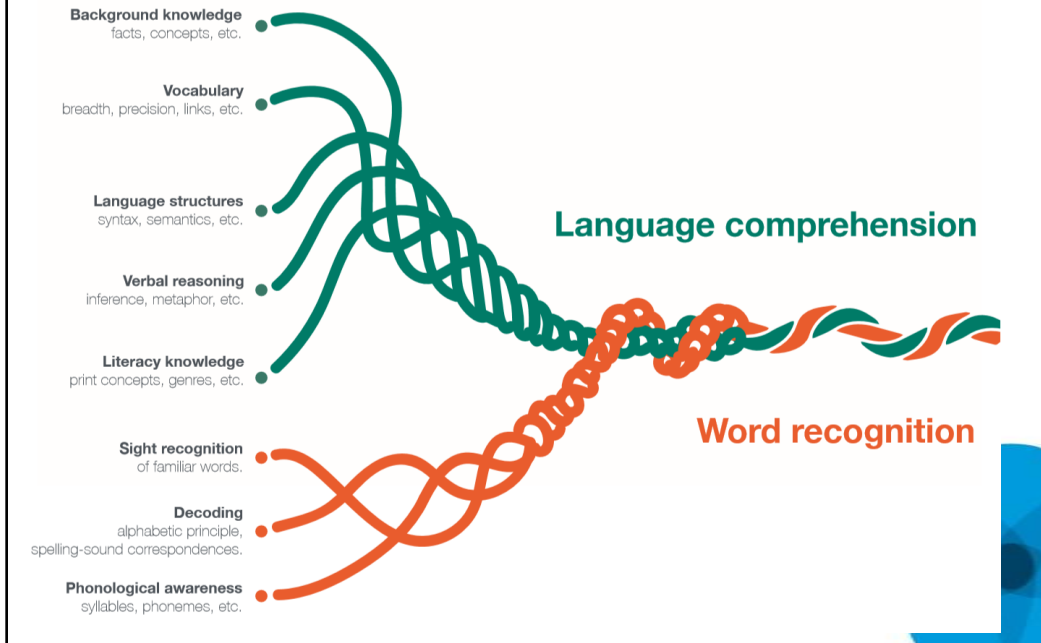


KS3



Key differences between KS2 and KS3 in terms of emphasis when teaching reading, particularly within English lessons

Scarborough's Reading Rope



Primary school have already delivered on the red strands and are aiming for these to be increasingly automatic and for the green to be increasingly strategic. This graphic is taken from the EEF's guidance document, Improving Literacy at KS2. The EEF has also produced guidance for improving literacy at KS1 and KS3-4.

[Education Endowment Foundation | EEF](#)

Differences between ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ readers

Skilled readers have...

- competent working memory
- active desire to make sense of the text
- motivation to fill knowledge gaps
- ability to monitor comprehension and repair inconsistencies
- a rich vocabulary
- wide background knowledge
- * the same cultural background as the text? *

Less skilled readers are less aware...

- that the text should make sense
- that they should be monitoring their understanding for inconsistencies
- of the strategies that they can use when inconsistencies occur
- of the need to draw inferences to understand and interpret the text
- of the kind of information that is relevant to the drawing of inferences

One of the key differences between stronger and weaker readers is their level of (a) expectation that a text can and should make sense and (b) conscious application of reading strategies and skills in order to make sense of the text.

The note around the idea of having the same cultural background of the text is not a prerequisite for being a skilled reader, but reflects the awareness that students are more readily able to draw thoughtful and sensible inferences and to make sense of a text that reflects the world that they know – texts that reflect their own cultural background are often easier to understand.

What does progression in reading really mean?



TEXTS GET HARDER?



IDEAS GET MORE SOPHISTICATED?



INCREASINGLY SOPHISTICATED VOCABULARY?



EMOTIONAL THEMES GET MORE MATURE AND DEMANDING?



INCREASINGLY CONNECTED UNDERSTANDING?



ITEMS OF EQUAL VALUE AND DIFFICULTY FIT INTO PLACE?



INCREASING INDEPENDENCE?



REPETITION AND REUSE?



Plan to include reading in all lessons



- Reading is a very efficient way of transmitting knowledge
- Signal to students that reading is essential and unavoidable
- Students need to be given opportunities to practise in a meaningful context – if we avoid reading in lessons, students don't get this chance
- Even short pieces of reading throughout each day can support improvements in reading



The expectation that students read as part of a lesson should not be confined to their English lessons – that would mean that a maximum of around 4 hours per week includes meaningful reading and 20 or more hours do not. The expectation of including reading, even in short bursts, in every subject means that students have far more frequent opportunities to practise and develop their skills in reading.