

Secondary Focus -inspiring pupils to choose reading

As the summer holidays approach it's time to think about how we can nurture a love of reading beyond school.

Book Trust's Reading Rights report states that 50% of children start primary school without having been read to daily. There is evidence that not being read to leads to the 'million-word gap'.

Never read to = 4,662 words heard by the time they were 5 years old

1–2 times per week = 63,570 words

3–5 times per week - 169,520 words

Daily = 296,660 words

Five books a day = 1,483,300 words.

This US research was quoted in the UK Governments Reading Framework of 2023.

An OU report highlights that the word gap in secondary school is increasing.

Why is a wide vocab important? Express needs, emotions, generally linked to happiness/success.

To increase their vocabulary, they need to be exposed to more vocabulary, hearing and reading more books.

Children, even older children need to hear stories Reading aloud to children has been proven to change attitudes and to motivate reading. What opportunities are there for this to take place in a secondary school?

Create space Run a book club that focuses on chatting about books which removes the pressure of expectation (them reading) and aims to make reading fun.

For disengaged readers the Social Reading Spaces article is interesting reading. The focus is around associating reading with pleasure not learning "for some students with entrenched negative attitudes taking even the first step towards associating books and reading with fun and enjoyment was an achievement and positive outcome"

Ensure all pupils have access to books

Do they borrow books over the summer?

Are you planning to do any weeding? Can these be given away?

Promote the public library; advertise opening times, promote their Book Quest to y7, take groups to visit the local library, make sure they all have borrowers cards, have a bookmark with detailed instructions for downloading Borrowbox/Sora etc.

Have (genre specific) bookmarks of recommendations to look for, encourage them to ask the librarian. Helps make a public space less intimidating if they have some guidance, reducing overwhelm.

Help pupils to the right book

Organise weekly book clinics or questionnaires to get them thinking.

Have reviews available –print BFK

Back of loo door posters – from Books for Topics or make your own

Leave bookmarks promoting authors/genres around the school

Put up a summer reading display in the library, eg a beach with books to relax with, if you don't have wall space then a wicker basket and picnic blanket with recommended reads in or a skateboard/bike helmet with some relevant non-fiction
Put up photocopies of the first paragraph/page of several books around the school (lunch queue etc) with 'Want to read more? Ask in the library.'
Show author webinars at lunchtime

Motivational ideas. It's not about reading more, it's about building a lasting connection with reading.

Extreme reading photos to display in September

Create fan art inspired by a book

Create a play list inspired by a book

Set up a reading challenge, keep it small, achievable -read 3 books; NF/comic/fiction, reward with small prize of sweets etc.

Get parents on board

Use school announcement system

School/library newsletters

Interesting articles referred to:

[HCCB Farshore Insight Paper](#)

[word-gap.pdf](#)

[Social-Reading-Spaces-2025.pdf](#)

[Who should read aloud in class?](#)

[Bridging-the-Word-Gap-at-Transition-2020-Menzies-et-al-2020.pdf](#)

[Books For Keeps – The Children's Book Magazine Online](#)