



St Christopher's

Reading Bulletin - Half Term 4

February 2023

'The reading and writing of Standard English, alongside proficient language development, is the key to unlocking the rest of the academic curriculum. Pupils who struggle to read struggle in all subjects and the wonders of a knowledge-rich curriculum passes them by unread.'

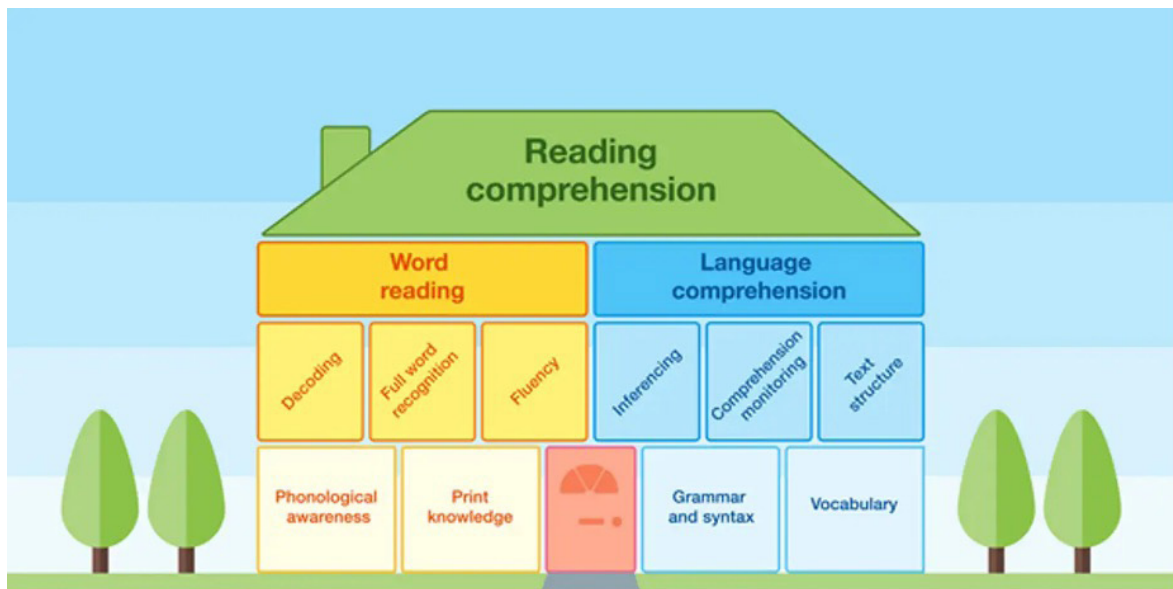
Ofsted Reading Framework 2021

The theme of this half term's reading bulletin is to revisit

'The Reading House'

and some of the common pitfalls of reading aloud with a class.

As always, try any of these top tips to engage our pupils to embrace reading.
Got a great idea? Share it with us!



The reading house, and some thoughts about the 'cement' – that may hold the house together - background knowledge:

We often ask students to make inference from what they have just read in class. In order to respond to this type of question, students will need to make successful coherence inferences: they will have to construct their understanding of the text based on the grammar, syntax and vocabulary.

That's often hard enough. However, elaborative inferences are the real sticking point. These require pupils to lean on their background knowledge and broader life experience in order to fill in the blanks where a text omits key details.

The background knowledge our pupils activate when reading emerges in that deft interplay of questioning where inference-making happens. It can prove the cement that holds together the blocks of the reading house.

Perhaps the question we should really be asking is how effectively do we teach background knowledge so that pupils can make successful inferences about the text as they read?

Adapted from an article by Alex Reynolds, EEF's Literacy Content Specialist, who discusses components of the 'Reading House' (Adapted from Hogan, Bridges, Justice, and Cain (2011))

Challenge: Following along with the text

Some schools insist on pupils using a bookmark or ruler to track the words on the page as the tutor reads. As with all teaching strategies, this requires a great deal of training and support to get this right in every classroom.

For some, asking pupils to follow written text alongside spoken word overloads working memory and is therefore undesirable. This critique makes a great deal of sense, as does the belief that pupils should be free to listen along as they see fit.

However, in most cases, the pupils who are not actively listening to the text and who are not focused on the reading, are the very pupils who need the reading support the most.

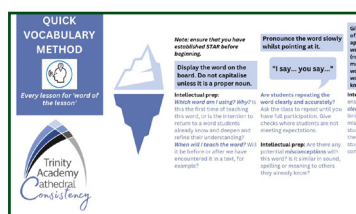
So, whilst there is a valid argument about cognitive overload, the need to ensure all pupils are paying attention to the reading - matching sounds to symbols; seeing new vocabulary and spelling - ultimately overrides idealistic notions of the arresting power of stories.

In many cases, where pupils are not following along, they are not sitting there immersed in the imaginary world of the text, but rather not listening at all. Often, they are engaged in subtle forms of opting out, packing and unpacking pencil cases, or just sitting there with books closed and minds wandering.

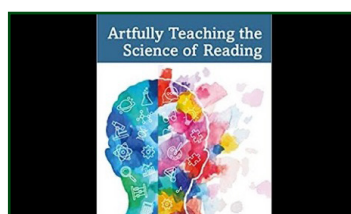
These are often the pupils we need to support - the ones who do not generally read for pleasure and who do not typically have homes where books and reading are championed: those who need to develop their reading. Training teachers how to address these quiet off-task behaviours in suitably non-evasive and efficient ways - whilst maintaining the continuity of the reading - takes a great deal of time and a set of very clear teachable strategies.

Adapted from [Tutor Reading: Why reading aloud may not... | Greenshaw Research School](#)

Want to know a little more?



What about vocabulary models from Trinity School's graphic that [summarises their method for introducing vocabulary](#)?

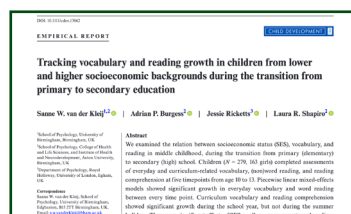


Or how about the science of reading? Watch this interview from two educational authors: [Artfully Teaching the Science of Reading interview @2022 - YouTube](#)



Perhaps you want to know about our reading test program and some of the challenges it presents? Try this blog on how testing older pupils is not always the answer: [Monitoring the Reading Comprehension of](#)

[Older Students | Shanahan on Literacy](#)



Another interesting article discussing research into the socio-economic background of pupils and perceived links to the reading gap created by the leap from Primary to Secondary education, [Tracking vocabulary and](#)

[reading growth in children from lower and higher socioeconomic backgrounds during the transition from primary to secondary education \(wiley.com\)](#) These researchers examined data and found there was not a vocabulary and reading 'slump' in Y7, but there was a curriculum 'jump'.

Check out our Library resources:

[Recommended Reading for KS3](#)

[Challenging Reading for KS3](#)

[A Guide to Support Reading at Home for Parents](#)