

Foreword by Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP, Minister of State for Schools

We published the first Reading Framework in July 2021. In a recent survey, 92% of schools reported having read it and 66% reported having made changes as a result.¹ This updated version discusses how reading continues to develop for pupils in key stages 2 and 3.



Importantly, it also discusses how to help pupils who still need to learn to read fluently, whatever their age.

Over the last two decades, there has been a deepening recognition of the fundamental importance of improving reading standards on a child's future academic achievement, well-being and success in life. 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 pass them by. Reading is also a key indicator for success in further education, higher education and employment.

Even more significantly, being a highly engaged reader has the potential to allow a child to overcome their background. In 2000, results from the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) showed that:

while the degree of engagement in reading varies considerably from country to country, 15-year-olds whose parents have the lowest occupational status but who are highly engaged in reading obtain higher average reading scores in PISA than students whose parents have high or medium occupational status but who report to be poorly engaged in reading. This suggests that finding ways to engage students in reading may be one of the most effective ways to leverage social change.²

This finding remains pertinent, with a 2021 OECD report stating that "PISA data consistently shows that engagement in reading is strongly correlated with

¹ Department for Education (February 2023) 'School and College Panel – January 2023 Research report' London. This report presents findings from the January 2023 wave of the School and College Panel. Reading Framework results from this survey are based on the answers of 310 primary school leaders.

² OECD (2002). '[Reading for change. Performance and engagement across countries. Results from PISA 2000](#)' Paris: OECD

reading performance and is a mediator of gender or socio-economic status”.³ Research by the Institute of Education has also found that the benefits of reading continue as children get older, with the combined effect on children's progress at 16 of regularly reading books and newspapers and visiting the library “four times greater than the advantage children gained from having a parent with a degree”.⁴ In short, reading can achieve something teachers and policymakers have been attempting for decades: to lessen or even eliminate the impact of early life disadvantage.

Children do not just ‘become’ readers, however, and reading engagement is not possible if children struggle with the basic mechanics of reading. Fluency, comprehension and enjoyment are the result of careful teaching and frequent practice. Ensuring children become fluent and engaged readers at the very earliest stages also helps avoid the vicious circle of reading difficulty and demotivation that makes later intervention more challenging.

Instead, we can create a virtuous cycle where children learn how to read early, our curriculum gives them the knowledge of the world they need to understand what they read, and they are motivated to read more and learn more.

That is why my focus since I became the Shadow Minister for Schools in 2005 has always been on reading. I welcomed the Rose Review in 2006 which recommended that all schools use systematic phonics to teach reading. The evidence for phonics is indisputable, with the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) considering it the most secure area of pedagogy. In the nearly 20 years since the Rose Review, we have moved on from the ‘reading wars’ that used to dominate discussion. All primary schools in England now use systematic phonics to teach reading and thousands of teachers are ensuring more pupils are learning to read because of their daily teaching of systematic phonics in schools across England.

We introduced two fundamental changes to make this happen: the National Curriculum published in 2013 required primary schools to teach reading using systematic phonics, and the phonics screening check introduced in 2012 shows how many pupils are on track. These efforts have begun to pay off. Before the pandemic, in 2019, 82% of pupils in year 1 met the expected standard in the phonics screening check, compared to just 58% in 2012. For disadvantaged pupils, this figure rose from 45% to 71%. England's scores in international assessments such as the Progress in International Reading

³ OECD (2021). [‘21st-century readers: Developing literacy skills in a digital world’](#) Paris:OECD

⁴ UCL IoE Centre for Longitudinal Studies (2015). [‘Reading for Pleasure Impact Case Study’](#)

Literacy Study (PIRLS) have also improved notably, particularly for boys and the lowest-performing pupils. In PIRLS 2021, only 11 countries, including England, did not experience a significant drop in attainment.⁵ Our ability to maintain a steady score shows that England was able to withstand disruption from the pandemic due to the solid foundation in reading given to pupils.

Phonics, although essential to the teaching of reading, is not sufficient on its own to develop fluent readers who love doing so. The very best schools in our country are achieving near to 100% in the phonics screening check and actively creating a culture in their schools where pupils become readers who choose to read.

Reading can be the great equaliser, allowing all children access to the best of what has been thought and said. Key stage 2 is the time they can start to see themselves as readers and discover the pleasure they can get from books that they chose to read. Our schools should be places where they have the opportunity to do so and where spending time reading whole texts is prioritised over predicting and inferring from extracts. Key stage 3 is when pupils can read widely in all subjects, but especially in English from our rich literary heritage and elsewhere, without the expectation that they analyse these texts in the depth that is needed, rightly, at GCSE level.

I would like to thank all involved in producing and commenting on this document, including reading and language experts, educational organisations, English Hubs Council members, and the 34 English Hubs and partner schools whose expertise has been vital in building an evidence base of what works in teaching reading.

I encourage all primary and secondary schools to use this guidance to ensure their pupils have the strongest possible proficiency in reading.

Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP

Minister of State for Schools

⁵ Lindorff A. and others (2023). [‘Progress in International Reading Literacy Study \(PIRLS\): National Report for England’](#) London: Department for Education