

Donington Cowley Endowed Primary School – Reading spine rationale

(Taken from [BooksForTopics: Best Books by Year Group](#) as recommended by English Hub)

Reception

Sharing books with children in the Early Years provides a gateway into a **world of imagination, empathy and delight**, as well as being crucial for developing **language and literacy skills**. Children in Reception will often explore books with their hands and eyes before being able to read the words accurately for themselves, and making available **a range of high quality books with a strong visual interest level** is key. Storytime is a treasured time of day for children of this age. **Positive experiences with books** for 4 and 5 year olds can lay the foundations for an enjoyment of reading for years to follow.

Year 1

Year 1 is a delightful year group with which to share books and at the moment there is a brilliant range of engaging books available for this age. Often at the ages of 5 and 6, children are **learning to read short texts independently**, while still relying on **strong visual elements**. Many Y1 children **treasure storytimes** when adults read aloud, and shared reading experiences remain an **important part of language and literacy development** both in the classroom and at home. Children at this age often love handling books, and make a bee-line for texts that offer **engaging illustrations, interactive elements** or **memorable characters**. Children in Year 1 are increasingly able to **identify themes of interest** and **empathise with characters** in familiar settings. Many 5-6 year olds begin to be able to sustain attention for longer stories that take place over a number of sittings, making **early chapter books** an appealing option for storytime.

Year 2

There is a wealth of brilliant books to share with children in Year 2. Now old enough to sit and listen to longer stories, many 6 and 7 year olds start to **enjoy chapter books** at this age. **Picture books** remain important at this age too, both for independent reading and for shared storytimes with adults, where the words and pictures can be discussed and enjoyed together. Children at this age are often able to **handle an increasing complexity of themes**, including **learning to empathise** where characters experience a **range of emotions** and new experiences. **Funny books** are hugely popular with this age group, as are visually appealing and highly **illustrated non-fiction texts** covering topics of interest.

Year 3

Reading for pleasure in Year 3 can provide **entertainment and delight** as well as **opening up a host of new worlds to children**. Books provide children of this age group with opportunities to stretch the imagination as well as to consider what life might be like in a myriad of different settings and situations. Stories about the lives of others can help children to **develop empathy** and **understand emotions**, while at the same time increasing children's **language skills and vocabulary**. Furthermore, research shows that reading for pleasure in childhood is **a more powerful indicator of future educational attainment than parental socioeconomic status**. In order to facilitate the enjoyment of reading, getting the right book into the right child's hands at the right time is the key. At the age of 7-8, many children have learned to read short books by themselves and begin to exercise a greater **freedom of choice** over their independent reads at school and home. **Funny books** are very popular with this age group, as are **short chapter books with illustrated elements** and **visually appealing non-fiction texts**. In addition to independent reading, **story time with adults** remains important and treasured in Year 3, too - both at home and in the classroom.

Year 4

The growing range of excellent books for this age group makes the task of encouraging reading for pleasure in Year 4 as delightful as it is essential. It is indeed an essential task - as children's laureate Cressida Cowell puts it, *'Decades of research show a reader for pleasure is more likely to be happier, healthier, to do better at school, and to vote – all irrespective of background'*. When children choose to read, they gain access to **a host of exciting ideas and worlds** and this helps to **flex the muscles of the imagination, develop empathy** and **better understand the lives of others**, as well as **boosting language skills, vocabulary and comprehension**.

In order to facilitate the enjoyment of reading, the provision of books that are age-appropriate, high quality and appealing is key. At the ages of 8 and 9, many children have learned to read **short chapter books** by themselves and have gained enough experience of books to **articulate preferences** about styles, themes and formats. **Animal tales, fantasy adventures, funny stories, comic-style books** and **illustrated chapter books** are popular at this age, as are non-fiction texts covering topics of interest like **science or history**. In addition to a wide choice of independent reads, **stories being read aloud by adults** continue to be an important - and much-enjoyed - aspect of the reading for pleasure journey at this age.

Year 5

Helping children in Year 5 discover a love of reading is most successfully achieved when a wide range of appealing and age-appropriate books are available. Research on reading for pleasure shows that children who choose to read for enjoyment are more likely to achieve **higher academic outcomes, to have improved mental health** and **to gain economic success** later in life. What's more, when children choose to open a book to read, they are able to **discover new worlds** beyond their own experiences, to learn about **different people** and to develop **critical thinking and crucial empathy skills**, as well as advancing their **language and vocabulary**.

Getting the right book into the right child's hands at the right time is absolutely key to sparking a love of reading. At the ages of 9 and 10, most children are able to **read longer chapter books** and **handle stories with an increasing complexity of themes**. Popular with this age group are **thought-provoking books about relevant social issues**, as well as **laugh-out-loud funny books, graphic novels** and **non-fiction that covers topics of interest**. As well as having a wide range of styles and formats to choose from for independent reading, an essential ingredient in developing a lifelong love of books at this age is when adults protect shared reading experiences and continue to read aloud at storytime well beyond the age that children can read for themselves.

Year 6

At the very centre of inspiring **reading for pleasure in Year 6 is the element of choice**. Readers who are motivated to choose to read are often the ones who are best able to exercise agency over where, when, what and how, knowing that they can read at their own pace in their own way. Key to this is providing a **wide range of appealing and age-appropriate texts** for readers to explore. Being exposed to different styles, formats and genres helps children to define themselves as readers, to have a range of alternatives to choose next if something they read is not for them and to make choices about the books that will give them the reading buzz. This process is crucial for children to develop the **intrinsic motivation to read** and to lay the foundations of a **lifelong love of reading**.

At the ages of 10 and 11, most children are able to **read chapter books and to think critically** about what they read. They begin to enjoy multi-layered stories that present **different characters' viewpoints** about key issues, and to think deeply about books that **explore relevant social issues**. Also popular with this age group are **graphic novels, funny books** and **illustrated non-fiction** that delves deeply into a particular topic of interest. **Storytime with adults** continues to be important and enjoyed at this age - despite the high level of independence at the ages of 10 and 11, nothing can replicate the magic of a shared reading experience.