

Reading should be explicitly taught even in secondary schools

Press release

Today Ofsted has published a research report looking at how high-performing secondary schools provide targeted support for struggling readers.



Reading is essential to every subject and children who cannot read well will find it difficult to keep up with the demands of secondary school.

Each year around one quarter of 11-year-olds do not meet the expected standard in reading at the end of primary school. Fewer than 1 in 5 of these pupils can expect to get a GCSE grade 4 in English. Being unable to read well can often also lead to poor behaviour. The consequences of poor reading extend beyond school, as evidence shows that adults with low literacy are likely to have fewer job opportunities and a lower income.

The aim of our study was to explore how schools make sure that pupils who leave primary school unable to read age-appropriate books fluently can become proficient readers and keep up with all their other curriculum subjects.

The 6 schools we visited for the research were chosen because a higher-than-expected proportion of their initially poor readers achieved a pass in English language at GCSE.

In these schools, we found that:

- Senior leaders prioritised reading by investing in additional, bespoke help for struggling readers and training for staff who taught reading
- Teachers accurately identified gaps in pupils' reading knowledge
- Staff who taught reading had expertise in teaching weaker readers
- Clear procedures were in place to monitor this teaching and its impact on struggling readers
- As pupils' reading improved, they gained confidence and became more motivated to engage with reading in class

Ofsted's Chief Inspector Amanda Spielman said:

The ability to read is a fundamental life skill. However, secondary school leaders and teaching staff should be aware that a significant number of their pupils are lacking the basics.

All children, with very few exceptions, should leave school proficient readers. That's why it's essential that children who leave primary school unable to read well get the additional teaching they need to participate both academically and in wider society.

The research visits to the 6 secondary schools took place in March 2022.

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