

## One Side Guide to... English Ofsted Research Review Reading

Source: Research Review Series: English (Ofsted, 2022)

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/curriculum-research-review-series-english/curriculum-research-review-series-english>)

- Urgency is necessary to ensure that pupils learn to decode accurately and with automaticity at the start of primary school
- Reading comprehension is supported by practising strategies to uncover the meaning of texts. However, teaching these strategies is time-limited in its usefulness and unlikely to benefit pupils before they can read sufficiently fluently
- Once pupils' word reading is automatic, any barriers to understanding a text are more likely to relate to difficulties with language comprehension than work-reading problems
- Considerations of the knowledge necessary for comprehension need to take account of the texts that pupils might be required to comprehend, progressing over time to increasingly complex texts
- For example, the primary curriculum should prepare pupils to read independently in different subjects and to read a wide range of fiction and non-fiction texts
- Vocabulary:
  - There is a lot of evidence that shows that vocabulary knowledge is important for comprehension. It is through reading that most vocabulary will be encountered
  - There is evidence that it is beneficial to identify and explicitly teach some vocabulary
  - Teachers should consider 'tier 2' words – words that pupils are likely to encounter across written texts and in more formal situations than everyday conversation
  - An effective curriculum is likely to teach pupils the meaning of roots, prefixes and suffixes. Building knowledge about morphemes (the smallest meaningful units of language) support pupils to link new words with familiar ones
  - Knowledge of etymology (history of words) can also support pupils' vocabulary and reading comprehension
- Knowledge of context:
  - Readers with good topic knowledge will have better comprehension of texts related to that topic than of texts they know less about. Weaker readers often have less relevant knowledge than their peers
  - Giving pupils a rich variety of accessible texts can gradually broaden pupils' horizons and their knowledge of words, phrases and ideas
- Knowledge of narrative structure:
  - Different texts have their own structures (e.g. compare and contrast; cause and effect)
  - Pupils should become increasingly familiar with the structures and features of narrative texts, such as character, plot and conflict
- Knowledge of syntax:
  - Comprehension also depends on the knowledge needed to understand sentences. This allows for reading with accuracy and fluency
  - This includes understanding whole sentences and the connections between them. This includes recognising referents – words that refer back to an earlier part of the text

- Pupils should increasingly encounter texts that contain more, and more complex, multi-clause sentences
- When pupils understand the meaning conveyed through a sentence structure, they are better able to read aloud with appropriate phrasing, expressiveness and stress of sentences (known as prosody)
- The most important factor for explaining variation in reading fluency is amount of exposure to text. If children are to become fluent readers, 'they need to read a lot' (Stanovich and Nathan)
- One of the most effective strategies to develop fluency is repeated reading of texts. Research has also found that simultaneously listening to and reading along with texts was a valuable strategy with struggling readers
- A third strategy was discussing the wording in a text before reading it, so that pupils practice key words in the text before they read it for themselves.
- A final strategy is to provide opportunities for pupils to perform and read aloud
- Continual teaching of comprehension strategies is unlikely to be useful for most pupils, because they are not skills that can be honed through repeated practice regardless of context. Rather, they are useful metacognitive strategies
- Therefore, progress comes from developing the knowledge needed to understand increasingly complex texts
- This also supports pupils' ability to make inferences. This requires the reader to make links between different parts of a text and fill in details not explicitly stated by the author
- Research suggest a positive correlation between pupils' engagement with reading and their attainment and motivation to read, as well as more positive attitudes to writing
- If pupils struggle with reading early on, they may not be motivated to read more. Getting children off to successful start is the strongest predictor of later motivation
- A strategy for developing reading for pleasure may include:
  - Developing teachers' knowledge of children's literature and other texts
  - Establishing a 'reading for pleasure' pedagogy, including reading aloud and time for pupils who read fluently to read independently
  - Creating social reading environments
    - Supporting staff to read widely and reflect on their own and others' reading
    - Creating reading communities, both in and out of school