

[Reading at Home – a Guide for Parents](#)

Children enter Bishop's Castle Primary School from a wide range of backgrounds, facing very different challenges, and learning to read well is the most important thing we can help them with so that they can thrive and achieve their potential.

Reading widens horizons, opening children's eyes to the wider world. Children learn new ideas from reading which helps them develop their own creative skills. Reading helps them link up ideas between subjects, enabling them to see the bigger picture. Learning to understand what has been written helps your child develop thinking skills. Reading well is fundamental to life in the 21st Century and the better a child reads, the better their outcomes are in school.

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What the school wants children to do at home

All children at Bishop's Castle Primary School are expected to read out loud to an adult at least 5 times a week for 10 to 15 minutes.

This is their most important homework. However, what they read at home is up to you.

School can provide children with school reading books. Children can borrow school library books. For younger children in Class 1, we have Story Bags which come complete with a story book and a range of props. Also children in Class 1 can take home picture books which are perfect for sharing at bedtimes. Younger children in the early stages of phonics will have a book given to them to read. Early readers will be expected to read a book more than once.

However, you might have favourite books at home, comics or graphic novels. Re-reading a favourite book is one of the joys of reading. Encourage children who play video games to read text out loud (this really does help their reading and comprehension).

The key is to spend the time with your child, enjoying the time together. To help with this some great advice can be found on the [Book Trust's website](#), which we have used to help prepare the rest of this guide.

The Book Trust regularly publishes a list of the best children's books of the year. [Click here](#) for the latest.



Help with Phonics

At Bishop's Castle Primary School the children begin to learn to read using our structured synthetic phonics programme from the start of Reception and this continues all the way through Key Stage 1 into Year 2 (or further if your child requires it).

Phonics is a way of teaching children how to read and write. It helps children hear, identify and use different sounds that distinguish one word from another in the English language.

Click on this link at [Oxford Owl](#) which has a fantastic explanation of phonics with examples of how to say the sounds themselves.

You can also watch this [video](#) by Oxford Owl for a demonstration of how the sounds of phonemes in phonics are pronounced. We use this pronunciation in school to help your child.

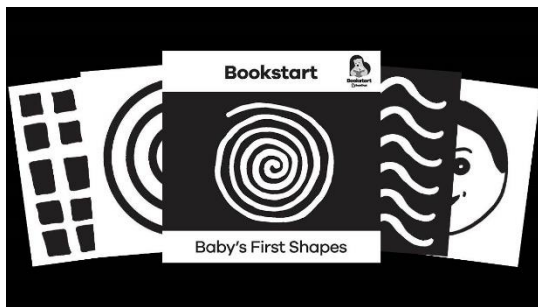
What else can parents and carers do to help?

To encourage reading for pleasure, consider the following:

Sharing a book

This is just fun for both parent and child. It's a time for closeness, laughing and talking together. If you're not feeling confident about reading aloud or sharing books, don't worry – there's no right or wrong way to enjoy a story together.

It's never too early to start sharing books with them – they might not understand the words, but they will love cuddling up, hearing your voice, and looking at the pictures. You can even do this with your baby bump. Your baby can hear sounds as early as 18 weeks and talking regularly to your bump will help them recognise your voice and be comforted listening to you even before they're born.



Choose the right book

Give black and white books a go when they're little. These are perfect in the early days when their eyes are still developing. The Book Trust has more [advice](#) on this.

Children will often want to read what friends are reading. If they find things too hard, encourage them to try something easier. All reading practice is useful, but if the words don't make sense, it's just not fun. Try to get your child to choose books rather than choose for them.

Join [Bishop's Castle Library at Enterprise House](#). Alison and Tara are full of great advice and recommendations so that you'll have a new supply of books to enjoy. They have a packed programme of activities for children of all ages that will have your children hooked to reading before you know it.

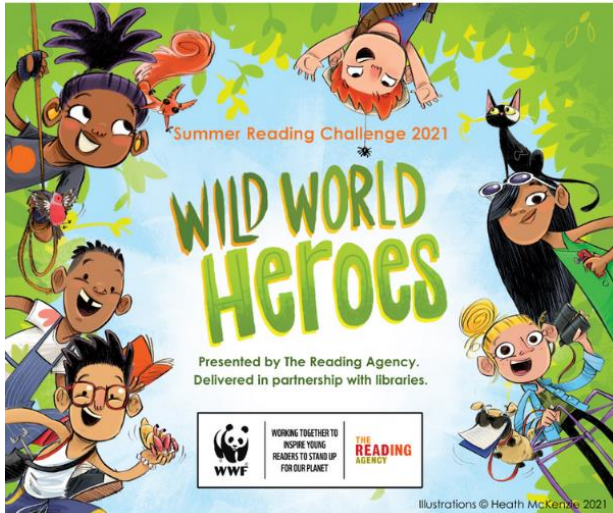
Top tips for getting more from story-time together

- Ask your child to choose what they'd like to read. They'll feel more interested in the story if they've picked it out themselves.
- Turn off the TV, your phone, radio and computer so there are fewer distractions. Sit close together. Encourage your child to hold the book themselves and turn the pages, too.
- Take a look at the pictures and talk about what you can see. You don't just have to read the words on the page.
- Ask questions and talk about the book. Picture books can be a great way to talk through your child's fears and worries, or to help them deal with their emotions.
- Have fun! There's no right or wrong way to share a story – as long as you and your child are having fun. Don't be afraid to act out situations or use funny voices... your little ones will love it!



Top tips for encouraging older children

- Read yourself! It doesn't matter what it is – pick up a newspaper or magazine, take a look at a cookery book, read a computer manual, enjoy some poetry or dive into a romance or detective novel. And get your children to join in – if you're cooking, could they read the recipe? If you're watching TV, can they read out the listings?
 - Give books as presents.
 - Visit the local library together. Bishop's Castle Library is a fantastic place for children, especially during the long Summer holiday where they have a packed programme to support the [Summer Reading Challenge](#).
 - Encourage children to carry a book at all times. That way, they'll never be bored.
- Have a family bookshelf. If you can, have bookshelves in your children's bedrooms, too.
 - Keep reading together. Just because your children are older, it doesn't mean you have to stop sharing stories – perhaps you could try the Harry Potter series or A Series of Unfortunate Events.



What if my child finds reading hard?

All children are different. Some take to reading very quickly, some go a little slower. If you have a child who finds reading hard and is becoming discouraged, then firstly discuss things with their teacher (if they have not already approached you). In school, we have a wealth of experience and can really help.

Reading is always learned through practice. The more that you do, the better you get. However, a struggling reader is not learning how to read, but how to avoid reading. They need encouragement, reassurance and praise but only through practising will they make the progress.

When reading with your child, reassure them if they find a word hard. Encourage them to try to work it out the way they have learnt in school – trust them, they'll know how to do this. Praise them when they get it right, but mostly just reassure them if they find it too tricky.

Encourage them when they are reading. If they make mistakes, then gently help them but don't let them continue with a book that is far too hard. They will get nothing from it.

Make sure that they have things to read that they want to read. Things that are fun. Comics like the Beano and the Dandy are great at getting struggling readers to want to read. Your child may prefer non-fiction about dinosaurs, or instructions on making a cake. Some video games like Animal Crossing, which regularly have short pieces of text to read, have helped children become better and more enthusiastic readers. Just make sure that they read it out loud to you.

Reward them for completing their reading homework with you. We find that the simplest rewards are often the most effective: getting to watch a favourite TV show; having a friend round to play; having a favourite meal for dinner. Often the pleasure of just getting better at reading is the best reward.

If you think that your child is struggling because they may have dyslexia, then please arrange to talk to your child's teacher. There is plenty that we can help with.

Recommended books by year group

[Books for Topics](#) is a fantastic resource for keeping on top of the best children's books available. Click on the links below to view a selection for each year group. Each title listed links to an Amazon page where it can be ordered. Alternatively, order it in at Bishop's Castle Library at Enterprise House if we don't have it in school.

[Year 6](#)

[Year 5](#)

[Year 4](#)

[Year 3](#)

[Year 2](#)

[Year 1](#)

[Year R](#)

[Preschool and Nursery](#)

Useful websites

<https://wordsforlife.org.uk/>

An amazing website packed full of advice for helping children of all ages with their reading and writing.

<https://www.booktrust.org.uk/books-and-reading/have-some-fun/storybooks-and-games/>

Great online story books.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/school-radio/nursery-rhymes-songs-index/zhwdgwx>

Nursery rhymes and songs from BBC School Radio

<https://www.lovereadng4kids.co.uk/>

Great recommendations and some opening chapters of the latest books.

<https://www.worldbookday.com/>

Not just information on World Book Day but tons of activities and recommendations.

<https://booksforkeeps.co.uk/>

Reviews of the latest releases from this long-established British children's books magazine. Over 12,000 reviews!

<https://home.oxfordowl.co.uk/reading/common-reading-issues/struggling-readers/>

Great advice on helping children struggling with their reading.

<https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/>

Specific advice on dyslexia.