

24th October 2024

Dear Parent & Guardian,

We are writing to you with regard to an exciting new initiative that we want to trial at Highcliffe School. We are all aware that many young people these days do not read enough and, at parents' evenings, teachers are often asked: "What can I do to get my child to read more?"

We will be introducing a 15 minute reading period after lunch for all students in Years 7 to 10. This means that, whatever subject students have after lunch, the first 15 minutes will be dedicated to "reading for pleasure" (with the exception of ADT and PE.) Teachers too will be participating!

What will this mean in practice?

First and foremost, every student in Year 7 to Year 10 will need to make sure that they have a book "on-the-go" and that they are ready to read it after lunch. Students are welcome to choose a book from the school library. However this cannot be done during a lesson. They can go to the library to select a book before school, at break or lunch.

However, this initiative is not simply about "reading for pleasure" – it's also about "taking pleasure" in reading. There will be times, for example, when teachers use this time to share with students something that they have read and think will be of interest to the students. This might be an article or extract from a book.

Therefore, this period of time will be not just dedicated to reading but to the discussions that reading can promote. Students too will be invited to share what they are reading and their thoughts about it.

Reading and Progress

It may not come as a surprise to read that frequent reading has a range of "academic, social and emotional benefits". But what we know through our own experience has also been endorsed by OFSTED as recently as 2023 in the report, "The Reading Framework".

Wider reading expands knowledge and language which has knock-on benefits in all subject areas, including mathematics. Furthermore, research suggests that regular reading leads to improved "social and emotional well-being." (OFSTED, 2023)

But in order to experience these benefits, children do need to put in the "reading miles".

We do, of course, recognise that our students are in all sorts of different places when it comes to reading. With this in mind, I should like to point out the following:

Firstly, the emphasis is on "reading for pleasure". Therefore, if some students would prefer an easier read, they should feel that they are reading that particular book because they are interested in the story. Nevertheless, students should also seek to challenge themselves with their reading, perhaps by trying different genres and authors.

Secondly, in various ways, we are providing opportunities for students to hear recommendations from both their peers and teachers, so that they have a better understanding of what's out there and what they might like to read.

Finally, students should feel free to read either fiction or non-fiction books. The key question a student should consider is: Is this a book I think I will enjoy and can get stuck into?

What can parents do to support this initiative?

Having a book “on-the-go” all the time is, of course, the students’ responsibility – and will be considered part of their basic equipment. However, anything you can do to make sure that they have a book “on-the-go” is very welcome.

In future student-parent bulletins, I will be providing more information about how you can help at home. For now, however, if you can be a part of the discussion about what to read with your child and help them make a choice, that would be much appreciated.

Here are some useful links to websites that have plenty of suggestions about books suitable for different year groups:

<https://schoolreadinglist.co.uk/category/secondary-ks3-ks4-reading-lists/>

<https://www.booktrust.org.uk/books-and-reading/bookfinder/>

This latter website also has a range of advice for families when it comes to reading, such as how to approach reading if your child has dyslexia.

We are very excited to be trialling this initiative at Highcliffe School, and look forward to the discussions that emerge from it, and the different connections that students will be able to make with each other and with their teachers as a result of their reading.

Yours faithfully,



David Bryden (Literacy Co-ordinator)

