

## Shared reading

**By Kelly Challis**

Why is it important for parents to read with their children at home?

The following poem by Dr Seuss sums it up well.

‘The more that you read,  
the more things you will know.  
The more that you learn  
the more places you will go’.

Parents and carers should be informed that reading with their child can broaden their child's vocabulary and increase their knowledge which supports both word recognition and language comprehension. By helping to develop their child's literacy skills, parents and carers have the potential to improve outcomes for their children.

The Education Endowment Foundation -also known as the EEF - state that overall, there is consistent evidence that the level and quality of parental involvement in learning is linked to a child's communication, language, and literacy capabilities and supporting parents to help their children learn has the potential to improve outcomes.

Promoting shared reading is one way to engage parents and carers in the education of their children. Research indicates there are benefits of reading to children *before* they can read themselves and reading *with* them when they do begin to read.

What approaches are useful for parents?

Approaches that focus on how to read effectively with children appear to be more successful than those which focus more broadly on the promotion of reading or on the provision of books according to the EEF.

It might be helpful to share with parents that successful reading is made up of many processes, which can be categorised into two strands: word recognition and language comprehension. There are also reading strategies that you can share with parents to support their child's reading development.

Firstly, you can encourage them to ask a range of questions about the book to check for understanding such as:

- Asking questions using the five W's - who, what, where, when and why.
- Asking a mixture of closed and open questions.
- Asking about and discussing the meaning of vocabulary - what does that mean? When else might you use that word?
- Asking their children to *summarise* what has happened so far and *predict* what might happen next.

Secondly, you can encourage them to support their children to see links between what they are reading and the real world, which can help children develop their understanding of ideas in the

book itself. For example, while reading about Cinderella going to the ball, a parent might discuss the similarities between a ball and a birthday party.

You can share these strategies with parents and carers and encourage them to read with their children at home by proactively seeking out interactions during school drop off or collection, or, if you don't see parents regularly, then you can use parents evening as a good opportunity to talk to them about the importance of their children reading at home and provide them with approaches to do so.

All children can benefit from shared reading regardless of their age or reading ability. Sharing stories can stretch a child's understanding of the world, fuel their imagination and expose them to a more sophisticated range of vocabulary and language structures which may not always be available to them in the books they can read alone.