

A CATHOLIC ACADEMY FOR ARTS AND SCIENCE



ST BERNARD'S HIGH SCHOOL



Supporting Reading
(A Guide for Parents/Carers)

Supporting Good Reading Practice (A Guide for Parents & Carers)

At St Bernard's we believe that reading is a vital skill for students to master and an important source of information, knowledge and pleasure. The ability to learn about new subjects, locate useful information whether for academic research or everyday life all depends on the ability to read well. Therefore, good reading practice is central to an effective all round education. Reading helps young people to learn more vocabulary. It opens your imagination. Your attention span becomes larger. In order to support this philosophy, the school has adopted numerous initiatives to encourage reading amongst staff and students alike.

This booklet aims to introduce those initiatives to Parents and Carers of students in Year 7 and to provide information and support to those wishing to access further guidance and resources to encourage their child's reading at home.

Contents

1. Whole School Reading Initiatives
2. How students can make best use of the school library
3. The role of the School Librarian
4. An introduction to the Accelerated Reader programme
5. An introduction to whole school reading time
6. General guidance on encouraging your child to read.
7. How to support reluctant readers
8. How to support the voracious reader
9. Resources on reading on the VLE
10. Guided reading booklet used in English lessons
11. Benefits of reading on accessing the GCSE curriculum
12. The National Literacy Trust
13. The Carnegie Award
14. Visiting Authors
15. The role of the Link Governor
16. Volunteers
17. Key contacts
18. Useful web sites
19. Year 7 recommended reading list

1. Whole School Reading Initiatives

Every effort is made to provide students with the opportunity to engage in reading for pleasure and to develop a lifelong love of reading. This is encouraged through:

- 10 minutes silent reading at the start of each English lesson;
- dedicated *Accelerated Reader* lessons for all Year 7 students;
- whole school reading time every Wednesday morning;
- fortnightly Library lessons for Year 7;
- reading at home each day; and
- completion of reading logs.

2. How students can make best use of the school library

The school library is open from Monday to Friday from 8am until 4:30pm enabling students to access the facilities both before morning registration and after school.

The School Librarian is always on hand to provide reading guidance and to make book recommendations for students according to their age, ability and interests.

Benefits of the school library include:

- Access to 11,000 fiction and non-fiction books as well as a wide variety of magazines, journals, biographies, reference materials and more than 10,000 on-line resources.
- A suite of 30 computers as well as printer facilities for students to complete assignments and research projects.
- All Year 7 students receive a Library Orientation lesson at the beginning the academic year, however, the School Librarian is available to support students in locating relevant research and reading materials.
- For reluctant or struggling readers, the Library includes books such as the 'Right Now' series for teenagers with a lower reading age. The subject matter is appropriate for their age group but the text is minimal and complemented by bright illustrations.
- The Library also houses a growing collection of books in other languages including Polish, Spanish, Russian, Portuguese, Shona, Arabic and Chinese.

Locating suitable reading material – 'Young Adult' books

Fiction books in the school library are categorized according to their content and the age group for which they are deemed suitable. Books categorized as 'Young Adult' are available only to students in Year 10 and above unless prior parental permission is granted. This is because the language, subject matter or content is considered suitable for more mature readers only. A permission slip is included in the Year 7 Information for Parents pack at the beginning of the academic year.

3. The role of the School Librarian

The School Librarian plays an essential role in supporting students' development into effective, independent learners and readers. The role is central to the encouragement and support of reading at St Bernard's. The librarian is on hand to:

- provide reading guidance and to make recommendations of suitable reading material for students according to their age, ability and interests;
- direct students to reference material and resources across the curriculum; and
- encourage and direct students' ongoing reading practice.

The Librarian also:

- provides a comprehensive Induction Programme for all new students into the use of the Library and the location of resources and reading material;
- identifies, sources and categorises relevant and appropriate fiction and non-fiction texts;
- assists in co-ordinating the *Accelerated Reader* programme for Year 7 students;
- plays a vital role in promoting and supporting reading for pleasure across the school;
- is a partner in out-of-hours learning; and
- facilitates the use of technology. The Librarian plays an important role in teaching students to be discerning and discriminating users of information. Copyright and plagiarism are important issues when digital copies can be seamlessly integrated into student work.

Partnership with teachers

At St Bernard's, the School Librarian works in partnership with teachers to support the development of individual student's research and reading skills. The Librarian uses knowledge of the library stock together with the ability to access outside resources, to identify and provide appropriate material to support learning programmes and to achieve learning objectives. The Librarian:

- locates and acquires resources for each Key Stage.
- collaborates with teachers in the delivery of programmes as appropriate in order to enhance the learning experiences of students.
- in partnership with teaching staff, she also identifies and selects good age-appropriate and curriculum-specific literature. Working with classroom teachers the Librarian forms part of a comprehensive team designed to enhance students' reading practice in order to raise their academic achievement and critical thinking skills.

English as an Additional Language (EAL) Resources

St Bernard's library now houses an extensive EAL resource collection on behalf of all schools in the Southend area. This centralised collection is accessible by teaching and support staff across the Borough with a special interest in supporting students for whom English is a second language.

The library has a considerable collection of books in other languages as well as bilingual dictionaries in many European and World languages. Other EAL resources also include puzzles, games and educational materials for EAL teachers.

4. What is the *Accelerated Reader* Programme?

First introduced to St Bernard's in September 2011, the *Accelerated Reader Programme* aims to:

- motivate students of all ages and abilities to read more and better books;
- identify problems and guide students' reading;
- raise literacy standards amongst all students;
- engage students, helping them to achieve their full literacy potential; and
- develop a lifelong love of reading.

The programme combines two key elements: an initial reading assessment and a personalised reading programme to promote reading for pleasure and to encourage students to use reading to learn.

How it works

Each student begins by completing a *STAR Reading* computer-based assessment which establishes their reading age and National Curriculum level. The software identifies the actual reading level of individual students so that growth can be easily measured and tracked over time.

The information provided by the initial assessment is used to create a personalised reading plan for every student. In addition to identifying their National Curriculum level, the *Star Reading* assessment establishes a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

The ZPD identifies a Book Level (an appropriate reading range) for each student. The *Accelerated Reader* programme uses the *STAR Reading* results to offer fun, motivational quizzes based on the books identified as most suitable for students according to their individual ZPD. Using this system, the student is able to select reading material appropriate to their level that is neither too easy, nor too challenging; progressing at their own pace and developing a genuine love of reading. This encourages the students so that they can enjoy the text and gain the necessary reading practice to improve.

Once they have finished reading a text, the student takes a quiz based on the text they have read. It is important that the student takes this quiz no later than 24 hours after completing the book. In doing so, the test assesses their skills and understanding of the book they have just read rather than simply testing their memory.

Accelerated Reader includes popular books ranging from Roald Dahl and the Harry Potter series to the classics. In addition to the set comprehension quizzes, Vocabulary and Literacy Skills quizzes are also available for many titles.

The student and teacher receive the results of the quiz immediately. The feedback report they receive identifies whether or not the student has achieved the recommended 85% pass level and highlights areas for improvement. In addition to providing valuable information for the teacher and student, it enables parents and guardians to be kept regularly informed of reading progress.

Students earn points each time they successfully complete a quiz, which count towards their individual and class targets set by the teacher. This competitive element of the programme engages and encourages students to pick up another book as soon as they have successfully completed the quiz on their last one.

Student success is recognised and celebrated by the school in a variety of ways including rewarding students with prizes and certificates for their achievements. These are awarded in school assemblies and are mentioned in the school bulletin.

5. An introduction to Whole School Reading Time

As part of our ongoing commitment to raising reading standards and the encouragement of reading for pleasure, St Bernard's has introduced 'Whole School Reading Time'. This takes place every Wednesday during morning registration. For 20 minutes, all students, staff and visitors are encouraged to read a book of their choice in silence.

6. Encouraging your child to read – tips for parents

Some children enjoy reading while others find it difficult or a chore. However, reading is an important life skill. For all these groups encouragement and praise are important.

If your daughter falls in to the first category and is an avid reader make sure that you are still involved with their choice of books, giving guidance and advice on what is "good" literature and sharing information on books you have enjoyed.

For those who do not enjoy reading it is important to make them aware of the vast choices of books that are available ranging from biographies, reference, historical and fiction. Find the genre and work from there.

For those girls who find reading difficult, it may be necessary to hear her read aloud to an adult. This requires undivided attention from the listener, with the T.V. turned off, both sitting comfortably side by side, no other people in the room and the listener doing nothing else but listening.

You are then ready to be involved in parenthesis paired reading. This can be done by taking turns to read aloud or by reading in unison. This way the child would not be so self-conscious about mistakes. Alternatively, you can look for speech patterns and each take a role.

To support your child with their reading, try to sit and read with them several times a week. Ideally, it is better to keep such sessions relatively short initially. Try to set aside a regular 20 minute session three times per week to help them develop the 'habit' of reading.

7. How to support reluctant readers

Children may be reluctant readers for a variety of reasons. Some find it difficult because of fundamental problems such as dyslexia or visual impairment. Others, however, simply prefer to do other things in their spare time. The important thing to get across to your child is that reading can be fun and the key to this is finding the 'right' book. Some of the following strategies may be useful to encourage a reluctant reader:

- books need to be appropriate for the reader's age, ability and interests;
- try encouraging your child to select books with illustrations making them more visually appealing, easier to follow and less intimidating;
- try selecting shorter books or abridged versions of classic tales. This way they will experience the satisfaction of completing a book sooner;
- books with humour or comic books can be a good way to encourage reluctant readers;
- graphic novels can help build confidence in a reluctant reader as they are less text heavy and more visually appealing;
- audio books and podcasts can also be a good place to start as they can help build confidence by enabling the child to follow a storyline or follow along with the text as the story is read;
- to help build confidence in a reluctant reader, try reading together to help them with areas they find difficult. Alternatively, find opportunities in daily life to read together to access information so that there is a sense of achievement in the task.

8. How to support the voracious reader

Whilst an enthusiasm for reading is a great place to start, it is important to encourage children to read as wide a variety of literature as possible. This exposes the child to different writing styles, more expansive vocabulary, more varied sentence structures and good grammar. This can challenge keen readers of all ages and abilities to develop both their reading and writing skills. Students could be encouraged to try reading:

- different genres such as mystery, romance or humour;
- a wide variety of authors rather than sticking to one or two favourites;
- different types of texts: fiction, non-fiction, poetry, biographies, podcasts, magazines, journals and newsletters etc.;
- Children's classics: many classic children's novels feature more complex sentences structures, grammar and extensive vocabulary than popular modern novels.

9. Reading Resources on St Bernard's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)

The Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) is accessible via the school website. The VLE contains access to a wealth of reading material and subject specific information.

Students can search the Library database by simply using the library search facility on the VLE. This system works in much the same way as a search engine (like GOOGLE) on the Internet.

If a student wishes to see which books they have borrowed and when they are due back, they can do so through the VLE by logging in to the Library system, for which they will need their username and password. Books included in the *Accelerated Reader* scheme are identified by a blue icon to the right of the title.

10. Guided Reading for Year 7

As part of their timetabled English lessons, Year 7 students spend one English lesson per fortnight in the school library focusing on Guided Reading activities. The Guided Reading tasks aim to:

- engage and motivate students to read for pleasure and to understand what makes a 'good' book;
- encourage students to read a wider range of material and to critically analyse the texts they select; and
- assess student's comprehension of selected texts.

The Guided Reading activities challenge students to practise a series of skills including: writing plot summaries; using the library to identify and locate similar types of literature; analysing the craft of the writer specifically the choice of vocabulary and how they build suspense or interest in their readers; setting the scene, characterisation and tasks to expand vocabulary.

Students complete a reading journal in which they critically analyse two books of their choice. The aim is to evaluate the setting, plot, characterisation, identify strengths and weaknesses in the text and complete a personal review. This culminates in a persuasive writing task in which the students aim to persuade their peers to read a book they have read, reviewed and enjoyed.

During the Guided Reading lessons, students work in small groups under the supervision of the teacher. This helps to:

- build confidence in students especially those who are reluctant to volunteer their ideas in front of a whole class;
- build a rapport between the student and teacher; and
- provide an opportunity for teachers to ask focused, personalised questions to suit each student's ability.

11. Benefits of reading on accessing the GCSE curriculum

Good reading skills are essential if students are to access the GCSE curriculum and to ensure students are fully engaged in active learning. Being able to read and understand new information builds students' self confidence in the subject. It helps them to decode new, technical or subject specific vocabulary essential for their understanding.

The ability to read well improves comprehension, analytical and problem-solving skills. Similarly, to efficiently use the internet and assess the value, credibility and reliability of information found there both good reading skills and critical thinking skills are vital.

12. The Literacy Trust

As part of our ongoing commitment to raising literacy standards, St Bernard's is also a member of the National Literacy Trust Schools Network. This organisation aims to support school professionals to raise literacy attainment across the whole school, specifically by improving attitudes and behaviour towards literacy. The Network offers schools access to a bank of resources, case studies and competitions. These resources are written in

partnership with experienced teachers and literacy consultants. Every term, the National Literacy Trust runs a competition around a particular area of literacy. Resources are also available for Parents and Carers to encourage good reading practice at home and can be found at www.literacytrust.org.uk

13. The Carnegie Award

The Carnegie Medal is awarded annually to the writer of an outstanding book for children. Medals are awarded by CILIP: the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals. St Bernard's School Library contains many past winners and short listed titles. Through the CILIP shadowing scheme, accessible through their website, children may read reviews of these books or write their own reviews and submit them to the Children's Book Awards website. Find out more by visiting: www.carnegiegreenaway.org.uk

14. Visiting Authors

St Bernard's has an annual programme of visits by authors both fiction and non-fiction books aimed at engaging, motivating and inspiring our students. In the Spring term science and science fiction writers visit the school as part of S.T.E.M. week.

15. The role of the Link Governor

The Governor with specific responsibility for the English Department is Ms Jacqueline James. Her role is to provide a link between the Board of Governors and the English Department, providing support to departmental staff, ensuring the curriculum meets the required standards and overseeing policies and procedures.

16. Volunteers

St Bernard's welcomes the involvement of Sixth Form students as volunteers to support reading. Our team of volunteers assist with paired reading activities during Year 7 library sessions supporting students of all abilities.

17. Key contacts

- Head of English Mrs L Barrett-Porter
- School Librarian Mrs B Middlemast-Neal
- Head of Year 7 Miss A Clancy
- EAL coordinator Mrs L Joyce
- Head of Inclusion Mrs Austin
- PA to the Head Teacher Mrs S Clancy

The above staff may be contacted via the school website: head@stbernards.southend.sch.uk. or via the school's main line telephone number: 01702 343583.

18. Useful web sites

www.carnegiegreenaway.org.uk
www.literacytrust.org.uk
www.ransom.co.uk
www.stbernards.southend.school.uk

19. Recommended Reading List for Year 7 Students

It is advisable to check the *Accelerated Reader* book level for each title to ensure the text is appropriate for your child's reading ability.

Books (Suitable for students in Year 7)

The Wizard of Oz, L Frank Baum
Famous Five series, Enid Blyton
The Secret Garden, Frances Hodgson Burnett
The Little Princess, Frances Hodgson Burnett
Alice in Wonderland, Lewis Carroll
Alice Through the Looking Glass, Lewis Carroll
James and the Giant Peach, Roald Dahl
Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Roald Dahl
Bad Dreams, Anne Fine
Oracle Series, Catherine Fisher
Elidor, Alan Garner
The Sheep-Pig, Dick King-Smith
War Horse, Michael Morpurgo
Tom's Midnight Garden, Philippa Pearce
The Harry Potter Series, J K Rowling
Family Fan Club, Jean Ure
Fizzypop, Jean Ure

Some of these books may be on the reading list for Years 8 & 9 and could be challenging reads for the more able student.

Little Women, Louisa M Alcott
The Jungle Book, Rudyard Kipling
Chronicles of Narnia, C S Lewis
The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, Douglas Adams
Watership Down, Richard Adams
The Black Cauldron, Lloyd Alexander
Skellig, David Almond
Carrie's War, Nina Bawden
Pig-Heart Boy, Malorie Blackman
The Princess Diaries, Meg Cabot
Artemis Fowl, Eoin Colfer
Coraline, Neil Gaiman
Private Peaceful, Michael Morpurgo
His Dark Materials Trilogy, Philip Pullman
Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire, J K Rowling
A Series of Unfortunate Events, Lemony Snicket
Blitzed, Robert Swindells
Percy Jackson Series, Rick Riordan
The Phantom Tollbooth, Norton Juster
Ballet Shoes, Noel Streatfield

Non-fiction titles:

Chinese Cinderella, Adeline Yen Mah
The Diary of Anne Frank, Anne Frank

