

UKLA Primary Reading Fact Cards

The current DfE emphasis on a narrow view of teaching reading in England continues to be a concern, particularly for the primary years. In the interests of stimulating a more informed debate on the key issue of reading, UKLA has put together a set of Fact Cards on centrally important topics. Each of these cards contains statements of fact supported by reputable research evidence. Here we present the cards in an easily printable format.

These might be used for developing professional dialogues in schools and higher education institutions, or as a basis for discussions with MPs and other key decision-makers in education. There is a separate document with suggestions about how the Fact Cards might be used for professional development and in ITE. It can be accessed here: https://ukla.org/ukla_resources/reading-and-writing-fact-cards-professional-development-activities/

See UKLA Viewpoints: *Early Reading and Phonics*: https://ukla.org/ukla_resources/ukla-viewpoints-early-reading-and-phonics/ and UKLA Viewpoints: *Reading Comprehension*: https://ukla.org/ukla_resources/ukla-viewpoints-reading-comprehension/ for succinct and comprehensive summaries of current research.

UKLA Fact Card 1 Successful schools and reading

Really successful primary schools:

- use a balance of phonics and approaches which focus on content and meaning to teach children to read
- give children plenty of experience of using different kinds of reading materials
- attend to individual children's literacy skills, experiences and interests
- create high levels of engagement and pleasure in reading
- provide rich and supportive reading resources and experiences
- have teachers who see themselves as readers.

Sources: Pressley *et al.* (2001); Taylor and Pearson (2002); Cremin *et al.* (2015)

All schools should offer their children a rich and balanced experience of reading.

UKLA Fact Card 2 Phonics and early reading

Despite DfE insistence on systematic synthetic phonics as the 'the most effective way of teaching young children to read' (DfE, 2015 p.5), reputable research emphasises that "phonics, as one aspect of the complex reading process, should not be over-emphasized." (Camilli *et al.*, 2003 p.2)

On its own, phonics:

- won't give reliable help with high frequency words such as *one, many, some, two, or word*
- won't tell you whether *Gove* should be pronounced like *move, love or wove*.

Children learning to read effectively:

- sometimes work out new words letter by letter
- sometimes look at groups of letters, such as *ast*, that they know from another word.

An analysis of the effect of systematic phonics instruction on reading comprehension has failed to find a statistically significant positive difference.

Sources: Camilli *et al.* (2003); Torgerson *et al.* (2006); Goswami (2015); Clark (2017)

Schools should not be restricted to synthetic phonics, but encouraged to teach phonics systematically as part of a rich and balanced introduction to reading.

UKLA Fact Card 3 Catch-up programmes

There can be a tendency, especially in the light of the phonics check in England, to focus on a narrow range of skills to help children who are struggling with reading. This can be counter-productive because 'more of the same' won't necessarily help. Other strategies may be more supportive.

Effective catch-up programmes:

- connect with ongoing classroom teaching and give opportunities for reading meaningful text
- are 'home grown' and rigorous, in that they are tailored to the needs and strengths of the children involved, but also take account of reputable research findings
- involve attention to making sense of text as well as getting the words right.

Sources: Allington (2001); Taylor and Pearson (2002); Allington *et al.* (2010); Cain (2010); Hempel-Jorgensen *et al.*, (2017)

All struggling learners should receive support of this kind, tailored to their needs.

Fact Card 4 Reading and schools in challenging circumstances

Successful schools in areas where there are challenges to learning:

- value the knowledge and experience of reading all children bring to school
- encourage choice in reading materials
- have high expectations of all children
- teach the necessary technical knowledge about literacy explicitly
- make the children fully aware of the satisfactions of reading and its relevance to their present and future lives
- make connections between home and school literacy experiences
- encourage book ownership.

Sources: Twist *et al.* (2007); Hattam *et al.* (2009) Cremin *et al.*, (2015);

Schools in challenging circumstances should be supported to provide children with rich and satisfying reading experiences.

Fact Card 5 Reading for pleasure

Regular reading for enjoyment is more important for children's educational success than socio-economic status.

Discussion of the practical purposes of literacy should accompany discussion of how reading feeds the imagination.

A supportive classroom reading community can be created through:

- offering frequent opportunities for children to read independently for pleasure, and giving them choices about what to read
- teachers who are knowledgeable about texts and share their own reading lives with children
- talk about reading, including books and digital texts
- reading aloud to the class for pleasure rather than for instrumental literacy teaching purposes
- opportunities, such as drama and role play, to help children explore and understand texts, including those with challenging content and theme.

Sources: Clark and Douglas (2011); ESRT (2012); Cremin *et al.* (2014)

Reading for pleasure is strongly influenced by relationships between teachers, teachers and children, children and families, and schools, families and communities.

Fact Card 6 Reading comprehension

Comprehension involves what the reader brings to the text as well as what the reader understands from the text. It is not a single mental process but a complex combination of component parts which work together to aid understanding.

Comprehension results from readers applying strategies that support and deepen understanding.

Teachers modelling the use of these strategies: *predicting, clarifying, questioning, summarising, connecting, noting text structure, visualising* and *thinking aloud*, help young readers develop the ability to use them independently.

Teacher questioning should offer models for questions readers might ask themselves when they read, and encourage young readers' independent questioning.

Sources: Duke and Pearson (2002); Nystrand (2006); Tennent (2015)

All kinds of texts – film, picturebooks, poetry, plays, fiction and non-fiction -should form part of the comprehension repertoire.

Fact Card 7 Young people's reading

Student performance in reading has not changed significantly in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales from 2009 to 2015.

Most young people read between one and three books in a month.

There is a relationship between the number of books read and reading attainment.

Many children who describe themselves as 'non-readers' still read a variety of materials.

Text messages, magazines, websites and emails have been found to be the most common reading choices for young people.

The more books young people read the more likely they are to read magazines, lyrics, newspapers, blogs, manuals and eBooks.

The quality of the reading experience or the reading materials is possibly more important to young people's wider literacy behaviour and skills than the sheer quantity of books they read.

Sources: Clark and Osborne (2008); OECD (2010 and 2016); Clark and Douglas (2011); Clark and Poulton (2011).

Encouraging a wide reading diet reading, including on-screen texts, should be a priority in all schools.

Fact Card 8 Reading in the home: working with parents/carers and families

Reading in children's lives outside school is 'complex, cultural and personal' (Gregory, 2007).

Working together, parents/carers and schools can support children's reading but there need to be genuine partnerships between homes and schools involving:

- discussion between parents/carers, families and teachers to promote greater understanding of the most effective ways to work together
- respect from schools for parents'/carers' home experience of language and literacy, particularly where families are considered vulnerable because of low socio-economic status
- grafting home practice on to school reading based on teachers' knowledge about children's home reading experience.

Expository texts, information material, magazines, wordless picture books and on-screen texts can stimulate as much discussion between parents/carers and their children as narrative picturebooks.

Pre-service teachers need to be supported in learning about home and family/community experience of literacy and language in order to build on this awareness in the classroom.

Sources

Li, (2006); Gregory, (2007 and 2008); Cremin et al., (2015); Fletcher *et al.*, (2015); Di Santo *et al.*, (2016); Reyes *et al.*, (2016); Robertson and Reese, (2017)

Well-intentioned teachers and schools can create tensions over reading if they are not aware of home and community literacies.

Fact Card 9 School libraries

Research has consistently shown that school libraries impact positively on:

- general academic attainment, reading and writing skills, plus wider learning skills
- attitudes towards learning, increased motivation, and self-esteem
- reading and writing enjoyment, daily reading and writing, seeing oneself as a good reader and writer, and positive attitudes towards reading and writing
- mental wellbeing scores (combines life satisfaction, coping skills and self-belief).

Disadvantaged students are shown to benefit more from library use.

The library space can play a significant role for pupils who find the school environment particularly unwelcoming.

Sources

Lance and Schwartz (2012); Williams *et al.*, (2013); APPG (2014); Clark (2016); Teravainen and Clark (2017); Clark and Teravainen-Goff (2018)

All schools need well run libraries.

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