**Early Reading audit**

***The School Inspection Handbook (July 2022) - Evaluating the quality of education: Ofsted’s approach to evaluating the curriculum***

*Section 245. In reaching an evaluation against the ‘quality of education’ judgement, inspectors will consider whether:*

* *stories, poems, rhymes and non-fiction are chosen for reading to develop pupils’ vocabulary, language comprehension and love of reading. Pupils are familiar with and enjoy listening to a wide range of stories, poems, rhymes and non-fiction*

*Evaluating early years provision;*

*Inspectors will consider how well:*

* *Staff develop children’s love of reading through reading aloud and telling stories and rhymes*

**This audit does not explore how schools teach early reading through the use of a systematic synthetic phonics programme.**

**Home learning and parental engagement**

*Becoming a fluent, skilled and attentive reader starts at the earliest stages, before children encounter a book for the first time, partly driven by the quality of their parents’ talk with them that expands their vocabulary.*

*All talk is useful, especially when directed to the child specifically.*

*However, talk about books brings particular advantages.*

*First, parents who engage their children in books prepare them to become committed and enthusiastic readers: they can transform their attitudes to reading.*

*Second, book-related talk introduces children to language that they might not hear in ordinary conversation, especially the vocabulary of the book itself.*

*(Above taken from The Reading Framework July 2021)*

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| How do you promote and explain the benefits of reading to children to parents? Is this through information sessions or perhaps a regular reading event like a reading café? |  |
| How do you support parents to access high quality texts to share with their children? Can parents loan books/ story sacks? How do you encourage those reluctant to do so? |  |
| Do you recommend high quality stories to parents e.g. a reading list on your website? |  |
| How do you support parents to talk about the books they read with their children? Do you suggest questions they could ask or activities they could do linked to the book? |  |
| How do you model good story telling to parents? Do you have an open door story time? A recorded story time? A story telling event? |  |
| How do you promote reading to families who have English as an additional language? Do you access or signpost to dual language books from the library service? |  |

**Choosing books**

*Literature is probably the most powerful medium through which children have a chance to inhabit the lives of those who are like them. All children need to imagine themselves as the main protagonist in a story: celebrating a birthday, going shopping, being ill, having a tantrum, having their hair cut, worrying about a new sibling, being the superhero, going camping, visiting the seaside and having adventures. Children also need to learn about the lives of those whose experiences and perspectives differ from their own. Choosing stories and non-fiction that explore such differences begins to break down a sense of otherness that often leads to division and prejudice. (The reading framework July 2021)*

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| Do you have a core set of books, both fiction and non-fiction, for each year group? Does it show progression and link to your curriculum? |  |
| When choosing the above core list have you picked stories that elicit a strong response e.g. anger, excitement, laughter, empathy? |  |
| Will the stories extend children’s vocabulary and do you talk about the meaning of words when encountered? |  |
| What are the illustrations like? Are the engaging? Do they reflect different cultures and backgrounds? |  |
| Are some books relatable to your cohort of children? Can they see themselves in the book? |  |
| Do some books reflect different cultures, places and backgrounds? |  |
| Do books represent diversity? |  |
| Does the selection appeal to both boys and girls? However not stereotype genders into roles? |  |

**Reading stories**

*Everybody loves a good story. Even small children who have difficulty focusing in class will sit with rapt attention in the presence of a good storyteller. But stories are not just fun. There are important cognitive consequences of the story format. Our minds treat stories differently than other types of material. People find stories interesting, easy to understand, and easy to remember.*

*When teachers read aloud to a class, they try to replicate for children what it feels like to have someone’s undivided attention while sharing a story. This is why reading aloud should be a priority*. *(The reading framework July 2021)*

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| Do you have a dedicated daily time for stories? When is it? Do children look forward to it? Is story time a priority and not a holding activity? |  |
| Do all staff convey a love of reading? Verbally and through their body language? |  |
| Are all staff confident story tellers who breathe life into the words? Do you ever record yourself reading aloud? |  |
| Do staff prepare for Storytime? Do they choose the story carefully and practice reading through? Thinking about key vocabulary? |  |
| Do you ever have guest storytellers? E.g. other members of school staff, parents etc? |  |
| Do you allow for repetition of a story? The first reading with no questions, explanations or predications? |  |
| Do you re-read stories to add in questions, voices, actions and explore meanings of words? |  |
| When children know stories well do you add in role play? |  |
| When you’ve read a story or non-fiction book with children do you leave it in a place where children can re-read it themselves? |  |
| Do you timetable extra small group storytimes for children with speech, language and communication needs? |  |

**Displaying books**

The books themselves are the most important aspect of any book corner.

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| Where is your book corner? Is it somewhere where a child can be comfortable and cosy and explore a book? Is it a main throughfare where books get stood on? |  |
| Do children get the opportunity to spend time in the book area? Can they share books with their friends in there? |  |
| Is every book worth it’s place in the book area? |  |
| Do you display some favourite books in the book area when children transition into the class? (e.g. from nursery or favourite stories from home that you may have found about before a child starts?) |  |
| Do you display sufficient books to entice children but not too many to overwhelm? Are favourite books easy to find? Do you display key books forward facing or on tables so they are easy to find and put away? |  |
| Do you refresh and rotate the books to highlight authors, titles or themes? |  |
| Do you remove torn or very dog-eared books unless it is a very much favoured story/ non-fiction book? |  |
| Can books be found in other areas of provision where appropriate e.g. in the construction area or inspirations for art? |  |
| ‘Decodable’ books matched to the school phonic programme should be stored separately |  |

**Poems and rhymes**

*Through enjoying rhymes, poems and songs, and reciting poems or parts of longer poems together as a class, teachers can build children’s strong emotional connection to language. (The reading framework July 2021)*

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| Do you have a core set of poems for each year group? Do they include rhyming poems, poems with alliteration and traditional songs and rhymes? |  |
| Do you have a daily poetry, rhyme or signing session? Do you allow for lots of repetition so children can learn the rhymes and poems and join in? |  |
| Can children access the poem from the poetry book in the reading area? |  |
| How do you support parents to share rhymes and songs with parents? E.g Do you promote ‘Chat, play share’ ideas? [Early years advice and guidance | Cumberland Council](https://www.cumberland.gov.uk/schools-and-education/learning-improvement-service/early-years-education/early-years-advice-and-guidance) |  |