



Guidance

Curriculum and  
Standards

# Primary

## National Strategy

# Raising standards in reading – Achieving children's targets

(Primary Leadership Programme,  
Intensifying Support Programme, Primary  
Strategy Learning Networks)

**Primary Strategy  
Consultant Leaders,  
Primary Strategy  
Managers, Head  
teachers**

Status: Recommended

Date of issue: 03-2005

Ref: DfES 1317-2005



## Reading for purpose and pleasure

In December 2004, Ofsted published a report on reading (*Reading for purpose and pleasure: an evaluation of the teaching of reading in primary schools*, HMI no 2393, available from [www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications)), which sought:

- to identify reasons for the wide range in attainment in reading among primary-age pupils;
- to disseminate schools' effective practice in reducing underachievement and developing pupils' positive attitudes to reading;
- and to describe key features of the successful teaching of reading.

Whilst recognising effective practice in schools with high standards in reading, the report also identified concerns about the leadership of reading as well as aspects of teaching reading and the reading curriculum itself. This leaflet highlights the support available from the National Strategies to help schools in their continued drive to raise attainment and increase motivation and engagement in reading for all children across the primary phase. All those who are part of programmes supported by the Primary National Strategy have a key role to play. This leaflet, which forms a companion to the *Raising standards in mathematics – Achieving children's targets* leaflet (DfES 1075-2004) and *Raising standards in writing – Achieving children's targets* leaflet (DfES 1316-2005) also identifies some key priorities for headteachers and schools as they focus on raising standards in reading at both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

## Primary National Strategy support

The **Primary Strategy** supports the work of literacy consultants and provides targeted support for schools and children through a range of literacy training and guidance. It also has three substantial programmes, all designed to support schools in raising standards in English and mathematics. Information, support and teaching resources are available at [www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary).



In 2004–5, some schools in the **Primary Leadership Programme** have identified reading as a priority for development and will receive targeted support to address the issues they have identified. This support will involve literacy coordinators working alongside headteachers to raise standards in reading. It may also include specific support from Primary School Consultant Leaders (PSCs) and wider LEA support from leading literacy teachers and/or Advanced Skills Teachers (ASTs). LEAs will also be including a reading component in the associated training programme for participating schools.

The **Intensifying Support Programme** has developed materials that support a whole-school approach to teaching and learning, involving the setting of curricular targets in mathematics and literacy and professional development materials. Leaflets for parents, carers and teachers, *Using curricular targets in Y2* (DfES 102-2004) and *Using curricular targets in Y6* (DfES 022-2004) are on the Primary Strategy website [www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary), together with a case study: intensive Y2 reading support.

**Primary Strategy Learning Networks** are being introduced and initial start-up funding is now available for groups of schools to establish themselves as a learning network. Reading development will be a key priority for some learning networks. The specific focus may be on raising attainment in reading at Key Stage 1 or developing an enriching and creative reading curriculum, for example. As part of the planning process, consider carefully how the network will have an impact not just on the quality of learning and teaching of reading, vital though that is, but also on the leadership standards and expectations and the quality, breadth and depth of the reading experiences the children will be offered.

## Background

In 2001, an international study, PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study), showed that, overall, English ten-year-olds achieve very highly in reading compared with children in other countries.

However, the study also showed that English children had less positive views on reading for enjoyment and that, despite the success of the National Strategies in addressing standards of reading, there remained a significant level of underachievement. The 2004 end of Key Stage 2 tests show that one in ten boys still leaves primary schools below Level 3 in reading.

At Key Stage 1, levels of reading at 2+ and 2B+ have remained broadly static over the last four years and there are some 1000 schools where fewer than 70 per cent of children attain level 2+ in reading and fewer than 50 per cent attain level 2B+ at the end of Key Stage 1.

While celebrating the attainment and progress in raising reading standards since the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy and the development of the Primary National Strategy, we believe that some children could be doing substantially better and that we need to pay specific attention to those low-attaining and under-performing individuals and groups of children whose life chances are significantly reduced without a secure grasp of essential reading skills.

We share the belief that to benefit from a broad and rich curriculum and progress to a fulfilled life, primary school children need a secure grasp of the core skills of reading, writing and speaking and listening. As the literate expectations of society and the use of technology increase, we need to ensure that our children are well prepared to meet the challenges they will face. How, then, can we continue to work together to provide all our children with the literacy education they deserve?

The Ofsted report identifies the following key priorities that schools should address in order to raise attainment, reduce the level of underachievement and improve pupils' attitudes to reading.

- Raise teachers' expectations about the standards pupils can achieve in reading.
- Exploit the full range of reading opportunities across the curriculum.
- Improve teachers' subject knowledge, including familiarity with phonics.
- Teach pupils a broad repertoire of strategies early on, alongside phonics, to support their decoding and understanding.
- Identify pupils' needs early, intervene effectively and monitor the impact of support through assessing pupils' progress.
- Involve parents actively in supporting their children's reading.

Strong leadership, with headteachers engaged directly in articulating the vision for reading and setting high expectations, features strongly in those schools identified by Ofsted as particularly effective in teaching reading.

#### **In schools which are effective in raising attainment in reading:**

- headteachers are actively engaged in leading reading with vision and high expectations;
- teachers place great emphasis not just on children acquiring specific reading skills but also on promoting engagement and pleasure in reading and they know what to do when a child does not seem motivated to read;
- teachers understand the concepts and strategies that develop both decoding skills and textual understanding and teach those concepts and strategies systematically and frequently;
- assessment for learning is used to find out how well children are reading and how to help them to improve;
- children's progress in reading is regularly monitored and evaluated;
- intervention programmes are used to support children who are falling behind. Evaluation of those interventions is used to make improvements in the way in which the school provides for such children.

## Raising expectations to give children access to more creative work

Through the National Literacy Strategy, schools responded to the need to strengthen children's reading skills, identified across word, sentence and text level objectives. As schools and teachers develop their reading curriculum, it is essential that, in order to continue to make progress, children are encouraged to engage with a wide range of reading, fiction, non-fiction, ICT and other multi-modal texts, and to develop their critical and creative thinking as part of this wider whole reading experience.

Reading is a creative process. Within *Excellence and Enjoyment: Learning and teaching in the primary years* (DfES 0518-2004G and CD-ROM DfES 0519-2004G): creative thinking is identified as a key aspect of learning. It involves children in:

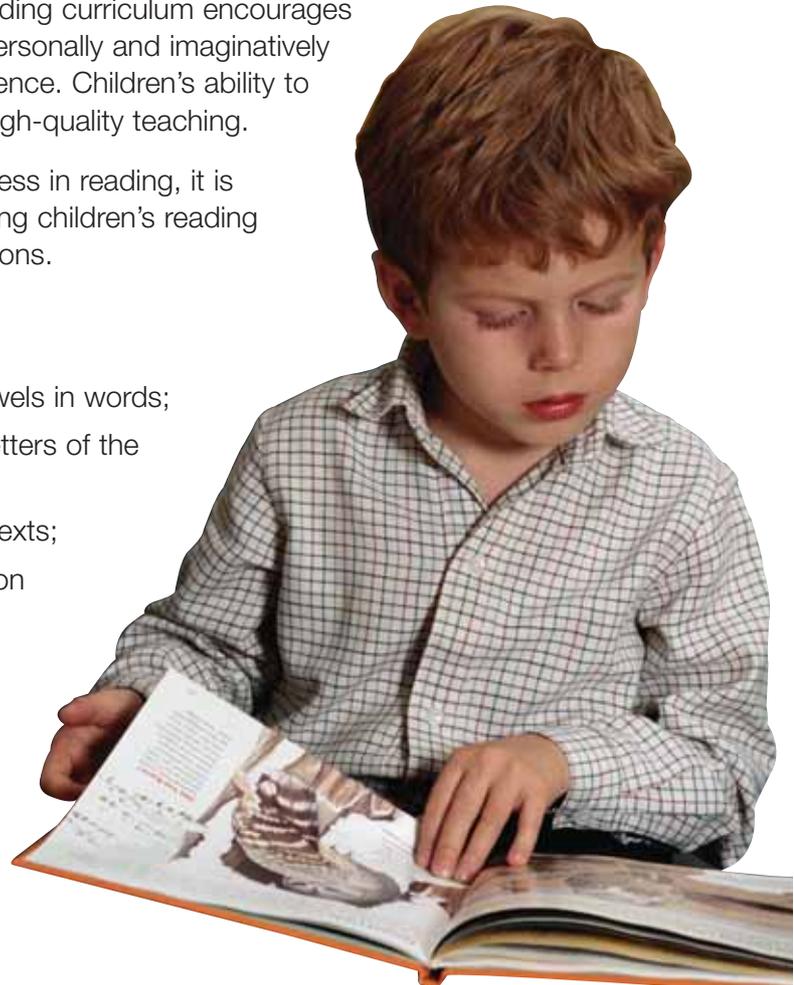
- **generating imaginative ideas;**
- **discovering and making connections;**
- **exploring and experimenting;**
- **asking questions;**
- **trying alternative or different approaches;**
- **looking at things from other points of view;**
- **making connections and seeing relationships;**
- **reflecting critically on ideas, actions and outcomes.**

Children who engage with reading demonstrate these creative skills, alongside the skills of decoding. The ability to make meaning, to question and interrogate texts, to extend beyond the literal, reading between and beyond the lines, lies at the heart of reading. A wide-ranging, challenging and creative reading curriculum encourages children to become involved with texts, to respond personally and imaginatively and to explore worlds beyond their immediate experience. Children's ability to understand and discuss texts is enhanced through high-quality teaching.

In order to ensure that children make expected progress in reading, it is important that all involved with teaching and supporting children's reading development have a clear sense of national expectations.

### As they enter Key Stage 1, many children can:

- hear and say initial and final sounds and short vowels in words;
- link sounds to letters, naming and sounding the letters of the alphabet;
- explore and experiment with sounds, words and texts;
- retell narratives in the correct sequence, drawing on language patterns of stories;
- read a range of familiar and common words and simple sentences independently;
- know that print carries meaning;
- show an understanding of the elements of stories and how information can be found in non-fiction texts, to answer questions about where, why, what, when and how.

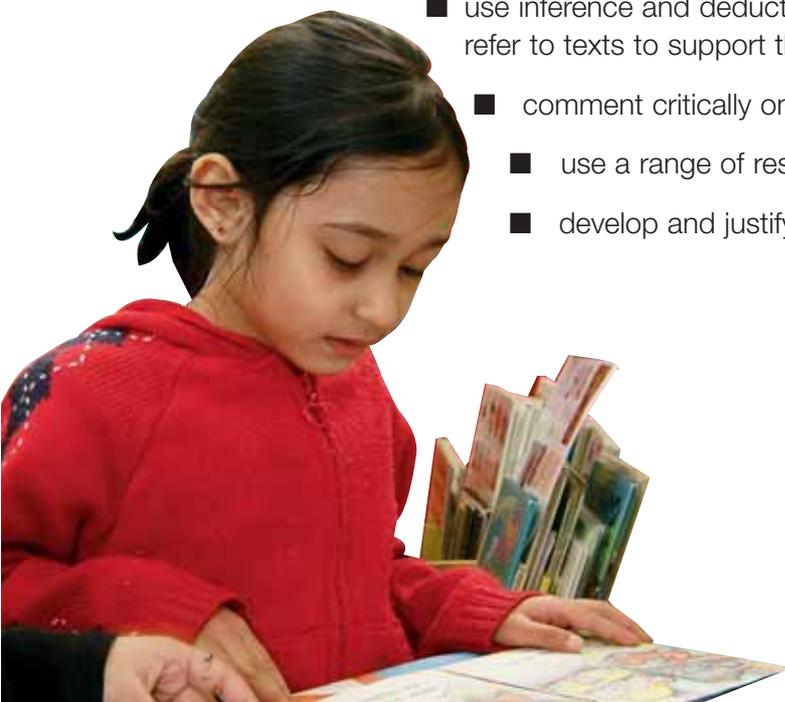


**By the end of Key Stage 1, children working at age-related expectations can:**

- read, on sight, most high-frequency words they encounter;
- apply phonic knowledge of vowel digraphs and trigraphs to their reading;
- identify syllables and common prefixes, suffixes and verb endings;
- read aloud with intonation and expression, taking account of punctuation;
- read silently at a more rapid pace, developing reading stamina when reading independently;
- make predictions as a result of increasing knowledge and experience of fiction and non-fiction texts;
- understand how texts work, e.g. themes, settings and characterisation in narrative texts or organisational devices in non-fiction texts;
- interpret and respond to different types of texts – go beyond own experience, e.g. discuss the actions of characters and justify views by referring to the text, generate a set of questions prior to research and evaluate the success of the text in answering them;
- draw on their increasing knowledge of books and authors to inform their choices.

**By the end of Key Stage 2, children working at age-related expectations can:**

- use knowledge of word derivations and word formation to construct meaning of words in context;
- read fluently, taking account of grammatical features and punctuation;
- have a secure understanding of the language conventions and features of different text types;
- distinguish between implicit and explicit points of view and comment on the success of texts;
- use inference and deduction to analyse how writers convey their meaning and refer to texts to support their arguments;
- comment critically on the overall impact of literary texts;
- use a range of research skills;
- develop and justify personal preferences for writers and types of text.



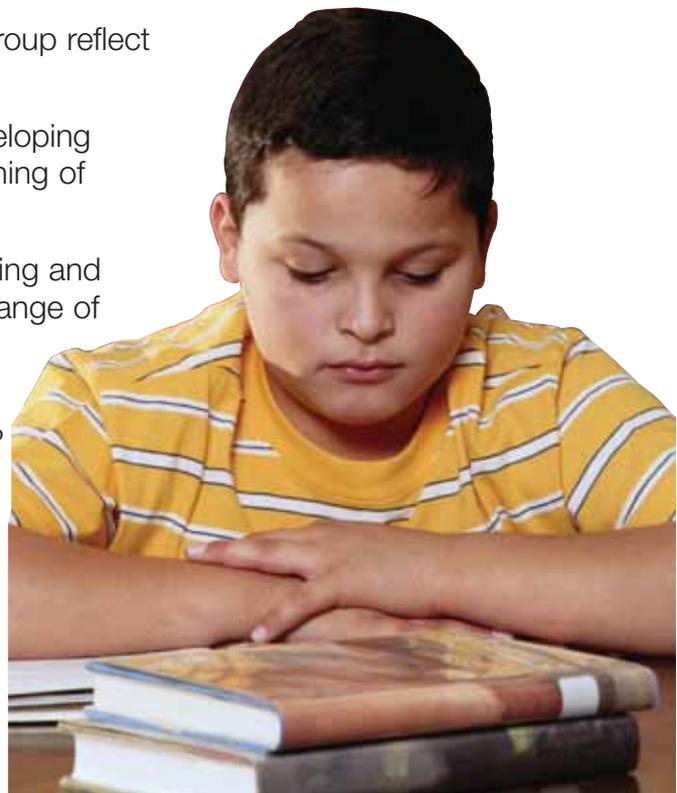
**Providing more consolidation and practice** leads to greater precision and personal confidence and **extending application** leads to deeper more secure understanding. Across the primary years, reading is taught in a number of ways and specifically through:

- shared reading, where teachers are highly skilled in using demonstration reading to show how texts work and how the range of skills and strategies should be orchestrated to read, understand and respond to text and children are supported in using these reading skills and strategies in an encouraging and stimulating environment;
- systematic and rigorous teaching of phonics, within the broader range of reading skills and strategies;
- regular guided reading sessions, which provide planned opportunities for children to be taught and supported in small-group sessions that create time for independent reading, self-evaluation and critical discussion, using texts specifically chosen to take children through structured levels of challenge;
- independent work that offers children the opportunity to practise their reading skills and develop a personal response to texts;
- cross-curricular activities where children's reading is planned for in a way that ensures time and opportunity for the full range of reading experiences – including personal reading for pleasure;
- relevant and integrated oral language development;
- the shared experience of listening to a book being read aloud;
- home–school reading opportunities.

### **Leading reading: some prompts for reflection**

- What does the reading curriculum in my school 'feel' like to a learner in, for example, the Foundation Stage, Y2, Y3 or Y5? How do I know?
- How do reading standards at the end of each year group reflect national age-related expectations? How do I know?
- How are teachers and other adults supported in developing subject knowledge and pedagogy to inform the teaching of reading?
- How does my school promote the enjoyment of reading and ensure all children engage in the pleasure of a wide range of stimulating reading experiences?

What are my short- and long-term priorities for leading reading, in the light of responses to the questions above?



## Working together to address the key priorities

Helping children to achieve higher standards in reading and to make the progress of which they are capable requires attention to the key priorities set out above. We hope that headteachers, literacy coordinators, LEA consultants and PSCLs, working with schools individually or within a network, will ask the challenging questions that focus on these areas of learning.

In particular, where reading standards remain too low, schools will need to:

- carry out a full analysis of data to identify strengths and specific areas for development – this analysis then underpins the selection of curriculum targets;
- audit and review the curriculum to ensure that children are offered stimulating and challenging reading, not just in literacy lessons but across the full curriculum, to understand the pleasure and enjoyment that reading brings and the role of reading as a gateway to exploring further learning;
- ensure that children are taught key reading skills and strategies effectively to enable them to succeed as readers and that their progress is monitored closely;
- review practice in the teaching of phonics to ensure that as many children as possible reach age-related expectations by the end of Key Stage 1;
- ensure that individuals/groups of children are supported as needed;
- involve parents in encouraging children to see themselves as readers and to enjoy reading;
- ensure that ICT is used effectively to support the learning and teaching of reading.



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Textphone: 0845 60 555 60  
e-mail: [dfes@prolog.uk.com](mailto:dfes@prolog.uk.com)

**Ref: DfES 1317-2005**

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Department for Education and Skills

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