

Supporting reading comprehension



Driver Youth Trust

What's the idea?

According to leading academic Professor Maggie Snowling, 'Strong foundations in oral language are the key to educational success globally'. (Snowling, n.d.) Without good spoken language, children can struggle to read and write. Supporting reading comprehension through the development of spoken language skills can ensure that children have an in-depth understanding of what they have read. If we support them to understand the spoken word in all its complexity, they can then apply this to words they read on the page.

What does it mean?

We know that early spoken language skills are good predictors of later reading comprehension. Children who are good at understanding the

written word tend to have good spoken language skills, including: good understanding of words; understanding of grammar and word order; understanding of inference and verbal reasoning; narrative skills; comprehension monitoring and pragmatic language skills to help make sense of context.

Conversely, we know that children with low levels of spoken language are at risk for reading difficulties. Despite being able to read accurately and fluently, around 10% of children in the upper primary years struggle to understand what they have read (Nation et al., 2010). For many of these children, difficulties with text comprehension are associated with lower levels of spoken language, often dating back to the Early Years Foundation Stage.

We also have research evidence to show that a focus on teaching spoken language skills can improve reading comprehension for children in Key Stage 2 and early language intervention not only supports spoken language skills, but impacts on reading comprehension later (Clarke et al., 2014).

What are the action points for teachers?

We can improve reading comprehension by teaching pupils how to develop their verbal understanding, alongside sharing strategies for monitoring understanding and knowing what to do if they are struggling.

Vocabulary is important, as children need to understand word meanings quickly and link these with the context of the passage.

THE DRIVER YOUTH TRUST IS A CHARITY COMMITTED TO IMPROVING THE OUTCOMES OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO STRUGGLE WITH LITERACY.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

- » Have a look at the Read Oxford blog.
- » Read the EEF's literacy guidance reports for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.