

Better readers = better students

I have been the school principal of several schools.

I believe that schools are part of a child's world and as such they should be full of fun, laughter, learning and happiness. Our task is to ensure we identify each child's talent (*yes, they all have one or two*) and help them to reach their potential.

The main purpose of writing this letter is to help you, help your child reach his/her potential.

If children are experiencing success at school then the school becomes is a place they look forward to visiting each day. A key to this success is reading ability.

There are a great many studies which show that reading for pleasure makes a **big** difference to children's educational performance.

- Broader vocabulary .
- Improved language and communication skills.
- Better analytical and problem-solving skills.
- Improved concentration and memory.
- Strengthened writing skills.
- Enhanced knowledge.
- Increased imagination and creativity.
- Improved concentration.
- More self-confident and independent.

Yes, they are more confident students because they are doing well at school.

What difference can I make as a parent?

How can I help my child?

You can make a **huge** difference! Parents are the most important educators in a child's life – more important than their teachers – and it is never too early to start reading together.

Good Readers are made on the lap of the parents or being read to each night.

1. Do try to read to your child a little each and every day. *I always found my kids and I, looked forward to our time reading together, tucked under the blankets before they went to sleep. A great bonding and night-time routine. I would also let my kids have the lights on for a bit longer if they were reading.*

The Library

2. Let them pick out their books. Be a regular visitor to your local library.
3. Ask the librarian for assistance. Most libraries have a children's librarian.
4. Borrow books on their interests.
5. Borrow more than one or two books. Take home a pile. Librarians don't mind. Our Library in Thames doesn't even impose fines on children's overdue books. They just want to encourage reading.
6. If your child likes football, guess what books you give him/her. Obsessed with animals? Oodles of animal books out there. Loves cooking? Encourage them to read recipes they want to try. Children will be keener to read about a topic they are already interested in and curious about.
7. Variety of material is important when it comes to wanting to read. There are joke books, picture books, comic books, history books, science books, even audio books! Make sure children know they don't just have to read stories.

Hooking a child onto books

I think the secret is to try and hook kids into books. I once had almost an entire class of reluctant boisterous boy readers. I got them started by introducing them to 'The Adventures of Tintin' and 'Asterix the Gaul' comic books. I had all the books ready for them to devour.

I started being a reader with Enid Blyton books – "The Famous Five' and 'The Secret Seven.' She is poo-pooed a tad now as an author – who cares! Whatever it takes to hook someone into reading. I loved her books.

8. When your child has finished and enjoyed a book, have another one and another one ready to hand over. Develop a reading habit.

Oodles of loot

9. Another idea tried by an anxious dad was to pay his son \$1.00 for every book he read. It cost him over \$120.00 before the lad was hooked. 'Money well spent, thought the dad.'

A special reading place

10. Establish a quiet reading place, without any distractions. A comfortable chair/ beanbag or a reading nook in their bedroom or lounge with their very own bookshelf or book box with a variety of reading materials available.
11. Create a reader-friendly home by limiting screen time.

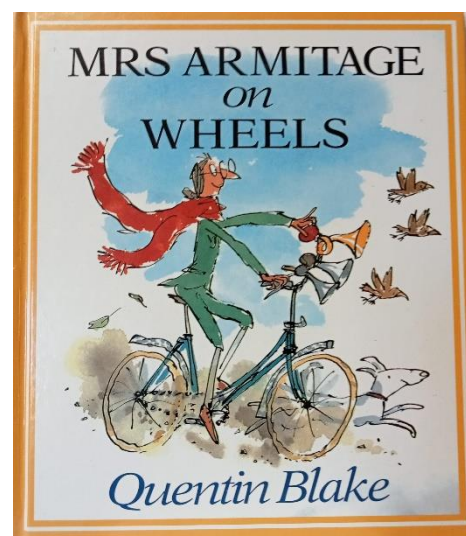
[There is no app to replace your lap.](#)

Fun Fun Fun

Make reading fun for your child. If your children likes to watch movies or play games, it's completely fine. Let your child read game guides if he or she likes to play games. The goal is to make reading fun. The more enjoyable reading appears to your child, the more they will read and develop a reading habit. Kids develop a habit if they like the activity. Therefore, figure out what's fun for them and use that to help them develop a reading habit in the process.

12. When you read from a book make it fun. Change the tone of your voice. Children love it when you use crazy voices. Sometimes it's hard to remember which voice you used. My kids would often have to say to me that is not how Mrs Armitage sounds. *From 'Mrs Armitage on Wheels,' by Quentin Blake.*

I had to read this book repeatedly and we all added extra things to the bike each night.



13.If they want you to keep on reading the same story each evening I would encourage you to dive into the book once again.



Reading Environment

14.Have a reading home with lots of books and magazines. Model reading habits yourself. If your children see you reading then they will value it more.

Digital Impact on Reading

15.Technology is bringing a great change to the methods of reading. It can have a positive outcome on kids and their reading habits. When children see things like tablet e-readers, they feel more confident about reading. This can be due to the fact that children nowadays are tech- and gadget-savvy. It's easier to build confidence in kids with the use of technology and you can use it to enhance kids' reading skills.

I still prefer books. I put my grandkids into my book 'Sponge Cake Man' - even then they did not read the book. Too hooked on digital mayhem – destroying zombies and blowing heads off aliens and they had not developed a reading habit, nor had they been hooked on books. It's not easy to turn kids into readers but if you really work at the suggestions I have outlined I guarantee you will see results.

Don't give in. Be strong. Be friendly and firm..."sorry, but it is reading time Henry...iPad/phone away please."

Don't forget, you are the big person in the house – you set the rules.

"I don't want to read a book!" "That's okay son. Lights out!"

"Yahooooo. It's reading time. Let's all settle down for 20 minutes with our books and relax. Who would like a cup of hot chocolate?"

Reading Should Be Fun, Not Frustrating!

Any book

I have used picture books (usually for 5 – 8 yr olds)with much older children. For instance a class of 9-10 yr olds loved 'Robert the Polar Bear,' and wrote great reviews for the book.

It's all about the types of in-depth questions you ask, probing stuff – well, not too probing. It depends on the age of the probee.

Questions like.... *Why do you think he did that?*

What do you think?

Questions that make them think for themselves.

Questions that are open ended requiring an explanation.

Not just Yes/No answers.

Mr Heff Books

I have tried to make all my books sparkle with imagination, humour and whimsical wackiness.

Books that are fun to read for all ages – hopefully adults will even get a chuckle or two.

Parent Help

All my books have additional [guidance sheets](#) for parents or teachers to use and contain questions and suggestions to booster:

Critical Thinking & Creativity & Imagination

Drawing Guides

My illustrations are also simple line drawings that children can attempt with the aid of my [drawing guide](#) pages.

Personalized message

I can also add a personalized message to the front of each book and usually tag on a small illustration. You can leave the message on the ordering form or just email me after you have placed the order.

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Warning

My books are full of what I call 'Heff Humour.' The wacky, whimsical characters and storylines reflect my own sense of humour.

I was not your 'normal' school principal. (*see photo below*)

I have taught in small country schools, large inner city multi-racial schools, exclusive private schools and Normal Schools- special schools associated with teachers' colleges where students visit frequently to view good teachers at work.

So, I know my stuff.

If you need additional help, please email me.

