

CELEBRATING WORLD BOOK DAY: WHY READING IN THE EARLY YEARS MATTERS MORE THAN EVER



A SHORT BLOG INTRODUCING INTERACTIVE READING IN THE EARLY YEARS



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On March 5th, we saw the nation's children dress up as their favourite book character to celebrate World Book Day 2026. This is always a good time to reflect upon the importance of books and storytelling for young children.

For children especially, stories are more than just entertainment; they are the foundation for future success. In the early years, reading plays a crucial role in shaping not only a child's academic future but also their imagination, confidence, and understanding of the world around them.

WHY READING IN THE EARLY YEARS MATTERS

Research strongly supports the importance of introducing reading from the very start of a child's life. The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF, 2023) highlights that early literacy is built on a combination of language comprehension and decoding skills, both of which are developed through rich experiences such as storytelling, conversation, and shared reading.

These everyday interactions help children build vocabulary, understand language structures, and develop the background knowledge needed to become confident readers.



CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION ON SUPPORTING INTERACTIVE READING, SEE:

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/early-years/evidence-store/early-literacy?approach=interactive-reading-in-early-literacy>

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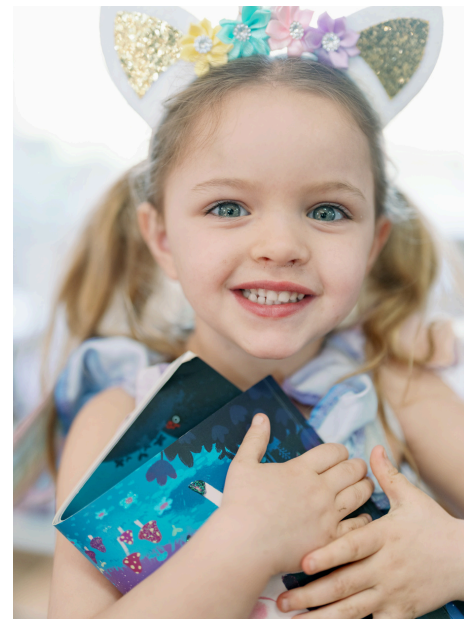
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MORE THAN LEARNING TO DECODE WORDS

Reading in the early years is about more than learning to decode words. The National Literacy Trust (NLT, 2022) stresses that a child's earliest experiences with books shape how they feel about reading later in life.

When children develop a love of reading early on, they are far more likely to choose to read independently and gain the wide-ranging benefits this brings, from improved learning outcomes to better wellbeing. Children who struggle with language at age five are five times more likely to fall behind in English by age eleven.

This underlines just how vital early reading experiences are and the key role it plays in communication development. Language, speaking, listening, reading, and writing is interconnected, and strengthening one area supports the others (EEF, 2023). Through stories, children hear new vocabulary, learn how language works, and begin to make sense of the world around them.



BOOKS OPEN DOORS TO IMAGINATION AND EMOTIONAL GROWTH



Beyond academic outcomes, books open doors to imagination and emotional growth. Stories allow children to explore new ideas, understand different perspectives, and develop empathy (NLT, 2021). Shared reading moments, whether at home or in early years settings, also help build strong relationships and create positive associations with books that can last a lifetime.



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WORLD BOOK DAY 2026

On World Book Day, we celebrate not just books themselves, but the evidence-backed impact they have on young children's lives. Encouraging reading in the early years is one of the most powerful investments we can make. It supports language development, reduces disadvantage, nurtures wellbeing, and lays the foundation for lifelong learning.

So whether it's a bedtime story, a shared picture book, or a visit to the library, every reading moment matters. By fostering a love of reading from birth, we are not just teaching children to read; we are giving them the tools to thrive.



References

Education Endowment Foundation (2023) Early Literacy Evidence Store.

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National Literacy Trust (2022) Early Words Matter: The Importance of Early Language Development.

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