



Friday 9th October, 2026

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I thought I would make contact with you at this stage to provide some information and to ask for your continued support as our young people progress through their GCSE studies.

As a department, we are committed to helping every pupil grow in confidence and achieve their potential in GCSE English. Many of us are parents too, and we understand the challenges young people face today. Mobile phones, gaming, streaming services and social media compete constantly for their attention, making it increasingly difficult to develop and maintain positive reading habits.

We would therefore like to ask for your support in helping us ensure that our pupils' literacy skills continue to flourish in today's fast-paced digital world.

Our Year 11 and Year 12 classes are currently taking part in **Take 20**, a reading initiative designed to promote reading for pleasure and improve literacy skills. Pupils are encouraged to read for **20 minutes each day**, following a reading schedule and recording their progress in a reading log containing reflective and comprehension-based activities.

Why Read for 20 Minutes a Day?

Reading remains one of the most important skills a young person can develop. It not only improves performance in English but supports achievement across the entire curriculum.

Recent evidence shows that:

- Pupils in **Northern Ireland are among the best readers in the world**, significantly outperforming pupils in 52 of the 56 countries that participated in the international **PIRLS 2021** reading study.
- However, despite high attainment levels, young people in Northern Ireland report lower levels of reading enjoyment than many of their international peers. Only **28% of 10-year-olds** stated that they enjoyed reading "very much", compared with an international average of **42%**.

- Research from the **National Literacy Trust** found that only **one in five** children and young people aged 8-18 now read daily in their free time, while only **one in three** say they enjoy reading.
- Reading for pleasure has been linked to higher academic achievement, improved wellbeing, stronger vocabulary development and better life opportunities.

As pupils move through GCSE courses, strong reading skills are increasingly important. Examination questions are often longer and more demanding than ever before, requiring pupils to process complex information quickly and accurately. A good reader is more likely to succeed not only in English, but also in subjects such as History, Geography, Science and Mathematics.

How You Can Help

I want you to be aware of what your child is experiencing in school and, if possible, become involved in the process. Life is busy, and we understand that finding time can be challenging. However, even small actions at home can have a significant impact on a young person's literacy development.

Here are some simple ways to encourage reading at home:

- ✓ Talk about what your son or daughter is reading. Show genuine interest.
- ✓ Read alongside them. Shared reading isn't just for younger children.
- ✓ Encourage a wide range of reading materials, including:
 - fiction and non-fiction
 - biographies and autobiographies
 - graphic novels and comics
 - newspapers and magazines
 - blogs, podcasts and sports journalism
- ✓ Help them find topics and genres that genuinely interest them.
- ✓ Use social media positively. Platforms such as **#BookTok** have inspired millions of young people to discover new books.
- ✓ Establish a regular reading routine, perhaps before bed or after homework.
- ✓ Lead by example. Young people are far more likely to read when they see the adults around them reading.
- ✓ Consider books as gifts, rewards or treats.

Working Together

Parents play a crucial role in developing lifelong reading habits. The most recent international reading studies found that children in Northern Ireland whose families engaged regularly in literacy activities from an early age showed stronger reading outcomes.

By working together, we can continue to develop confident, capable readers who are equipped to meet the demands of GCSE and beyond. Even twenty minutes a day can make a remarkable difference over the course of a year.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information and for your ongoing support. We greatly appreciate everything you do to help your child succeed.

Yours sincerely,

Heather Peoples

Head of English

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