



professional development

creating a reading culture in your school



primary school



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Children's Books Ireland/Leabhair Pháistí Éireann

receives financial assistance from

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Children's Books Ireland is the national charity and arts organisation that champions every child's right to develop a love of reading. Our mission is to inspire a love of reading in children and young people in Ireland, to share our expertise and enthusiasm with the adults who guide and influence them, to champion every child's right to excellent books and live literature events and support the artists who make that goal possible across the island of Ireland.

Continue the conversation with us at www.childrensbooksireland.ie

where you will find more reviews, articles and up-to-the-minute news.

If you'd like advice about developing your reading culture, get in touch with our Education Outreach Manager, Becky Long on becky@childrensbooksireland.ie

Is é **Leabhair Pháistí Éireann** an carthanas agus eagraíocht ealaíon náisiúnta a thacaíonn leis an gceart atá ag gach páiste grá a chothú don léitheoireacht. Tríd an iliomad gníomhaíochtaí agus imeachtaí, tá sé d'aidhm againn suim i leabhair a spreagadh i bpáistí, tuiscint níos fearr a chothú ar a thábhachtaí is atá leabhair do dhaoine óga agus feidhmiú mar acmhainn thábhachtach do dhaoine a bhfuil suim acu i leabhair do pháistí in Éirinn. Is é an misean atá againn grá don léitheoireacht a spreagadh i bpáistí agus daoine óga in Éirinn, ár gcuid saíneolais agus díograise a roinnt leis na daoine fásta a bhíonn á dteorú agus ag dul i gcion orthu, tacú leis an gceart atá ag gach páiste ar leabhair den scoth agus ar imeachtaí litríochta beo, agus tacú freisin leis na healaíontóirí ar fud oileán na hÉireann a fhágann gurbh fhéidir an sprioc sin a bhaint amach.

Bí ag comhrá linn ag childrensbooksireland.ie áit a bhfaighidh tú tuilleadh léirmheasanna, ailt agus an nuacht is déanaí.



Creating a Reading Culture in your school

Who is this Guide for?

Children's Books Ireland wants to support schools on the island of Ireland to develop, sustain, and celebrate cultures of reading for joy. Everyone in the school, from pupils to families to staff, has a role to play in nurturing a nascent reading culture and sustaining an established one. With this in mind, this reading culture guide has been written for anyone in a school who has a role in reading promotion, whether they be individual teachers, literacy coordinators, principals or deputy principals. Teachers can embed reading for joy into their classrooms and support individual pupils to discover a love of books. Principals can see the bigger picture when it comes to the school's resources, funding for books, and all-important school policy, which can make huge, strategic change. The ideas in this guide offer a framework that is far from prescriptive and should be adapted to suit the needs of every pupil and staff member in a school.

Reading for Joy

Children's Books Ireland is the national charity and arts organisation that champions every child's right to develop a love of reading. We believe every child should be able to read for joy at home, in school and in their community, and we want to support teachers and educators around the country to make reading for joy a priority for the children they work with. One of the success criteria in Ireland's new *Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy 2024–2033: Every Learner from Birth to Young Adulthood* is,

‘Increased time learners in primary and postprimary schools spend reading and writing for enjoyment’,

... and that's where Children's Books Ireland comes in! With resources, ideas, knowledge and practical guidance, we'll support you to create and develop a culture of reading in your school.



What is a Reading Culture?

A reading culture exists in a school community when reading is valued, actively encouraged, supported and celebrated, and when staff and pupils alike can access excellent and appealing books, and have multiple opportunities to engage with those books.

Reading culture is, essentially, about offering children a variety of reading opportunities, or moments that are integral to the day-to-day life of the school. This could be independent reading time in class, read-alouds with their teacher, books on shelves in the corridors, chances for book-talk – the ideas are endless. When children and young people are given multiple and consistent opportunities to read of their own free will, and they take these chances, choosing their own books and sharing their opinions, a reading culture exists. Individual readers together make a community of reading, and school is often the best place to support such a community. If children see their peers and the adults they admire reading, they are more likely to open a book themselves and experience the power of storytelling.

Sometimes, it can be easy to lose sight of the importance of offering children the chance to read for joy when literacy milestones must be reached, and curricula criteria checked. But the joy of reading is what fuels literacy attainment. Any form of reading that is chosen by a child – fiction, non-fiction, comic books, magazines, poetry, anything at all – is reading for joy. It can mean bringing a book into school from home to show to their teacher and their peers, borrowing books from those peers and from the class or school library, or finding a moment in a busy school day to lose themselves between the pages of their favourite read.

Every classroom is different, and each term brings new challenges in terms of language and literacy barriers to be overcome, pupils not having access to a reading culture at home, individual pupils' learning needs and contexts. Whatever your role is in your school, and regardless of the budget and resources you have access to, you can have a powerful impact on your pupils' motivation to read, and on their opportunities to develop a love of reading. If you want your pupils to become skilled readers who enjoy the process of reading, you have to make sure that they have access to interesting and inspiring books that they actually want to read, texts that meaningfully reflect their lives and show them new things about the world. Put simply, children who are good at reading do more of it – children who are good at reading have been supported to find books that they want to read.

A positive reading culture is one which recognises that not every child can or will read quietly in a space with their peers, so Book Talk or Book Chatter should also be recognised as a valuable aspect of reading for joy. Neurodivergent pupils need to be supported to find ways to engage with independent reading time that work for them, and for their sense of self and wellbeing. Pupils with additional needs who may struggle with the mechanics of reading should be supported to engage in independent reading times, especially in terms of reading material. Picturebooks, comic books, and graphic novels, as well as audiobooks, should be celebrated as valid and meaningful reading material. These are complex, impactful narratives and no one, either pupil or staff, is ever too old to read a picturebook! These can be especially inclusive for children who have English as an additional language and can be a wonderful insight into pupils' cultures and backgrounds. Picturebooks and graphic novels can often be inventive, immersive and imaginative ways to explore diverse ways of being and thinking, and offer access points into language, stories and knowledge, to all kinds of readers.

A healthy, impactful, and inspiring culture of reading usually relies on the following key principles:

- School staff (and guest readers) reading aloud in class regularly and being seen by pupils to read in their own spare time.
- Promoting of book talk, not just during subject time, including shared recommendations from pupils and staff.
- Encouraging pupils and staff to join and visit the local library, and scheduling time regularly for classes to visit the school library, if this is a dedicated space, or to browse classroom shelves to choose books.
- Providing time for pupils (and staff!) to read books of their own choosing, in a quiet, relaxed environment, with no follow-up task to be completed – to read for the joy of reading.
- Having access to comfortable, accessible and sociable reading environments, either in a communal space, indoors or outdoors, or in each classroom, where pupils can read together and share books during break times or if they've completed subject tasks.
- Offering children guidance and support that enables them to see themselves as readers, regardless of the books they like or how many books they can read in a term. A culture of reading isn't based on competition or comparison and celebrates each child as a reader who contributes to the imaginative life of the school. A healthy culture of reading accepts that children have diverse and various abilities to develop and challenges to meet and that each child deserves and is entitled to a reading life within the school.

Creating a Classroom Reading Culture

As a Teacher, Where Do I Start?

As an individual teacher, your own practice is often the best place to start, and the easiest place to start making impactful changes that your colleagues can follow. Think of it as a chance to both reflect on and give yourself credit for what you already do to support reading for joy, and an opportunity to try something new. Children tend to read more when they see other people, especially trusted adults in their lives, reading. So, think of yourself and your colleagues as reading role models. What books did you enjoy as a child? What were you reading for fun, and where did you get your ideas from? Were you reading the books yourself or did someone read to you at home or at school? Did any of those books have a lasting influence on you? If they did, could you tell the story of your reading life to your pupils through those books? Allow these questions and your reflections to influence the way you communicate the joy of reading to your class, always being mindful of the contemporary, diverse and inclusive stories that should inform the reading lives of your pupils.

Classroom Reading

- For classes from first class upwards, if regular reading time – like Drop Everything and Read (DEAR), Everyone Read in Class (ERIC), or simply dedicated independent reading – isn't already built into your class's day, this is the place to start. Try not to schedule this reading time at the very beginning or very end of the day, as the former is often hectic when the class is trying to get settled, and the latter can mean a very rushed and unfulfilling session. This is time that should be entirely dedicated to reading, both for the class and for the teacher, so it's not a chance for anyone to catch up on work, rather it's an opportunity to explore new worlds of stories and information. In the best way, class reading time should be enjoyable, something regular and consistent that the whole class looks forward to, knowing they'll be able to settle down and get stuck into a book of their choosing, or get support in figuring out what to read. And that support is important, because simply asking the class to find a book and read quietly probably won't make reading time as effective and fun as it might be.
- Think about augmenting and enriching reading time by supporting your pupils to set personal reading goals for themselves. These won't just focus on numbers of books read, but maybe engaging with different genres, using books to work on their creative writing, learning more about a period of history through historical fiction. If children are allowed to exercise agency when it comes to what they're reading and why they're reading, they'll be more motivated.
- Look at the books on the shelves in your classroom. Do you think your pupils want to read these books? Talk to them about the books that are on offer and see how you can factor their opinions and ideas into a stock take. You could try hosting a book tasting where books are displayed on a table, and everyone can tuck into a book that they think they'd like to read. Better still, you could read a few pages or a chapter of a book to your pupils and bring them into the story, leaving them curious to discover what happens next. In this way, books are literally taken off the shelf of the school or public library and are brought into the classroom, becoming the subject of conversation and chatter.
- Book clubs and reading groups are a wonderful way to keep motivated readers engaged and interested and to support and nurture readers who lack confidence. For advice and guidance on starting book clubs and reading groups, see our dedicated resource on our website.

Reading Aloud

Reading aloud to pupils can be a wonderful introduction to the power of storytelling, as well as offering the class the chance to relax and become invested in a character or a plot, with the added bonus of it being a communal experience. Younger children love being read to, but it can also be a key way to support the development of older children as readers, even when they can read independently themselves. By reading aloud to your class you are:

- Making positive associations between reading and wellbeing.
- Giving your class the chance to engage with texts they might not have considered themselves.
- Modelling fluent reading, particularly for those children who might be less confident, as you bring the story to life.

When you're reading aloud to your class, you're essentially performing the story for them. There are lots of techniques you can use to make reading aloud as enjoyable and motivating as possible:

- Build up anticipation before the session by offering the class teasers, especially if you're starting a new book. You could also offer them suppositions about what you think might happen next in a story and see if they agree with you.
- As you're reading, try to adjust the pace of your performance to the rhythm of the story – if there's a tense moment coming up, you can try dramatic pauses to build the suspense.
- Not everyone is 'good at voices' but you don't have to be the perfect impressionist to put on a really convincing performance. Just think about the different kinds of voices you might use. For the narrator, a neutral, calm voice will work well, because of course, the narrator is supposed to know everything in advance. You don't necessarily have to give all the characters their own unique voice, but your class should be able to tell the difference between narrative language, dialogue and internal monologue from your reading.
- In terms of when to finish a reading session, you can go chapter by chapter or finish at an internal break within the chapter. Some teachers might like to read ahead so they know what's coming and can recognise a cliffhanger, but some like to be in the same position as their class, reading along to find out what's going to happen next.
- Don't forget to make it personal – if you're shocked by an event in the narrative, or if you find something really funny, show it! Those asides will mean a lot to your class, as they'll know you're really engaged in the story you're taking the time to share with them. And try to emphasise or draw attention to unusual or memorable words – these can be collected and displayed on the classroom walls so your pupils can start to use them in their own work.
- Don't be afraid of repetition or of re-telling the same story multiple times. Re-tellings offer children, especially younger children, extra chances to explore and savour the language, events, and images of a story, as well as helping them learn the classic narrative structure that informs so much of our lives and how we process information. Hearing a story multiple times gives children the chance to figure out what kind of story they like, to develop their own storytelling skills, and to focus on different aspects of the story they might have missed the first time around.

Creating a Whole-School Reading Culture

As a Principal, Where Do I Start?

As the school principal, you are in a wonderful position to set a positive, inspirational and supportive tone when it comes to reading for joy, both for your pupils and for your staff. Even policy changes that seem small can have a huge impact if they're instated on a whole-school basis, such as a Book in a Bag, where pupils always have a book they can read in their schoolbag; reading prose and poetry for joy over the intercom; a commitment to whole-school membership of the local library, including the staff – the possibilities are endless and exciting! You are your school's ultimate reading role model. If pupils and staff know that their principal values, celebrates and supports reading, they'll be more likely to do the same in their daily lives in school.

Making Your Reading Culture Visible

If a visitor walked into your school, would they have a sense that reading is celebrated by staff and pupils? Are there any visible signs that reading is a priority for the school community? If your reading culture isn't visible, you could try:

- Setting up displays of books in corridors and outside offices – these could be seasonal (e.g. Spooky books for Hallowe'en, Irish books for St Patrick's Day) or themed (e.g. Books about sport).
- Creating posters or drawings about favourite reads – you could invite the students to re-design the cover of a book they've enjoyed.
- Making staff and pupil book recommendations visible on notice boards.
- Putting up signs pointing to the school library if there's a dedicated space.
- Giving classrooms alternative names taken from books (fantasy books are perfect for this!)
- Having, 'We are reading *name of book*' signs on each classroom door to share the current class read, or having a sign to share what the teacher is reading, as a way of modelling reading for joy to students.
- Putting a Swap Box or Little Free Library near the entrance to the school so that students can donate books they're finished with and share them with their peers, and staff and families can do the same.
- Vocabulary charts featuring unusual words from specific books don't need to be confined to separate classrooms – they can adorn the corridors of the school!



Reading Culture Ideas

The KPMG Children's Books Ireland Awards – become a Junior Jury School!

Junior Juries is a unique programme for schools, libraries and book clubs, designed to raise awareness and encourage enjoyment of contemporary children's books, in both English and Irish, by Irish and Irish-based authors and illustrators. Participating classes or book clubs, sign up in January. They make their own selection of suitable titles from the books shortlisted for these awards in February, using a specially designed activity pack to guide them in their reading. At the end of this process each group is asked to collectively score the books they have read, just as our adult judging panel does. In May, the Junior Juries' Award is presented based on the cumulative scores from thousands of readers around the island. The programme is suitable for all ages and classes.

<https://childrensbooksireland.ie/what-we-do/kpmg-childrens-books-ireland-awards/junior-juries-programme>

'The entire class is in awe after meeting such incredible authors and illustrators. It was a dream come true for them, and the books from this year's Awards will forever hold a special place in their hearts, as will the memory of that remarkable day. I have already witnessed some of our reluctant writers picking up a pen and seeing themselves as authors. My heart is bursting with joy! I wish I had the words to fully express the impact being Junior Juries and attending the Awards had on our class.'

Junior Juries' primary school teacher from Rathkeale, Limerick

Reader of the Week and Reading Heroes

Pupils can nominate one of their peers for the Reader of the Week or Month title, and all of the winners can be considered for an overall prize at the end of the school year. This also offers a perfect opportunity to think about nominees for the KPMG Reading Hero Award, which runs alongside the Junior Juries' programme, where teachers can nominate a pupil from their class who has excelled in their reading, maybe by overcoming a challenge, focusing on reading outside their comfort zone or being a reading inspiration to their class.

<https://childrensbooksireland.ie/news-events/nominate-your-kpmg-reading-hero>

Connecting to Your Local Public Library

Your local library can be an invaluable support to your school's reading culture, especially in the context of the Right to Read campaign, which is a national programme to promote reading for people of all ages, and especially children. Even if it's not feasible to schedule regular class visits to the local library, either because of distance or staffing, or to have the mobile library come to visit, making a connection with a librarian will boost your access to new class novels. Every child in the school should be encouraged to become a library member and the idea of the local library as a family-friendly space should be communicated enthusiastically to the school community.

Author and Illustrator Visits

Arranging for an author or illustrator to visit your school and talk to different classes or run a workshop can be especially impactful if your pupils have read their work. It can also be a great way to introduce them to a new genre. Author and illustrator visits do require a budget and some planning but there is lots of advice and support available:

- You can apply to Poetry Ireland's Writers in Schools scheme which part-funds visits by writers, poets and storytellers to schools: (<https://www.poetryireland.ie/education/writers-in-schools>)
- If you have some budget to pay for a writer or illustrator to visit but are unsure of the appropriate fee, you can check out Children's Books Ireland's own rates of pay for similar events: (<https://childrensbooksireland.ie/what-we-do/supporting-artists/paying-the-artist>)
- You can also check out our resource on Event Guidelines for more information and ideas on event planning and management: (<https://childrensbooksireland.ie/resources-ideas/event-guidelines-venues>).
- Your local library might also host children's authors and illustrators for events throughout the year, especially during the Children's Book Festival throughout the month of October, so be sure to link in with your librarian to stay up to date: (<https://www.librariesireland.ie/services/right-to-read/childrens-book-festival>)
- You can apply to our annual book-gifting programmes. Selected schools can receive specially chosen books for their school and class libraries and author and illustrator visits. (<https://childrensbooksireland.ie/what-we-do/book-gifting>)

Reading Assemblies/Announcements

- Staff share what they're currently reading – and maybe give their class a clue for an upcoming book!
- Poetry readings, which could also include poems by pupils.
- Local figures from the community could talk to the school about the books they love and why reading is important to them. This could be a past pupil of the school, someone from a local sports club, a librarian from the local library.
- Theme for the week – this could be fantasy or adventure books, books about the environment, etc.



Participate in National Reading Celebrations and Challenges

- World Book Day takes place in March each year and its main aim is to promote the enjoyment of reading by providing children with the opportunity to have a book of their own. World Book Day tokens are distributed for free to primary schools. Reading resources can be found on the World Book Day website: (<https://www.worldbookday.com/about-us/ireland/>).
- Summer Stars is the free national reading programme for children that takes place in all public libraries and online each summer, from June through August. Children can sign up for library membership and for the programme free of charge and receive rewards when they return a completed Summer Stars card to the library: (<https://www.librariesireland.ie/services/right-to-read/summer-stars>)
- There are other, international celebrations of reading which could be a great opportunity to talk about children's books in pupils' home languages, or literature from around the world which is translated into English. International Children's Book Day is celebrated on Hans Christian Andersen's birthday, 2 April, and UNESCO's World Book and Copyright Day takes place on 23 April, a symbolic date in world literature, on which several prominent authors, William Shakespeare, Miguel de Cervantes and Inca Garcilaso de la Vega all died.
- The MS Readathon is a month-long campaign that takes place in November each year, which encourages children of all ages and abilities to read for a good cause: (www.msreadathon.ie)
- Ireland Reads is a national day each February dedicated to celebrating reading. The campaign builds momentum throughout the month of February, and is all about promoting the power of reading for enjoyment and wellbeing: (<https://www.librariesireland.ie/>)

Book Weeks

While national and international book events are great, there's nothing to stop a school hosting their own reading festival, across a couple of days or even a week! The sky is the limit when it comes to how to celebrate a book week.

- Older classes could read picturebooks with younger classes.
- Junior classes could have Snuggle Stories – they could have a pyjama day and bring in a teddy to share a story with, highlighting to families the importance of bedtime stories, or the class could 'adopt' a teddy which goes home with a different child each night to share a bedtime story.
- You could set up a Book Election where pupils vote for their favourite book – a bonus with this activity are insights into democratic systems and citizenship.
- The school could celebrate the work of an author or illustrator by reviewing their books, re-creating illustrations and displaying them around the school.



Wild Books or Lost Books

Maybe for a week, or for a whole term, leave books in different places around the school, distinct from the library or classroom shelves, so children will never be without a book if they want one. Discovering a Wild Book or finding a Lost Book could merit a prize – or the book could be a prize to keep! To protect the books in question, they could be kept in plastic zip wallets – each reader that encounters a book could leave a note for the next reader in the wallet.

Get Pupils involved in the School Library

Involve pupils in the development of the library collection and the planning of library activities and reading initiatives. Provide a suggestion box where pupils can submit their ideas for activities and requests for specific titles, task the student council with carrying out a whole school survey, or form a student reading/library committee. This fosters pupil engagement and a sense of ownership of their school library.

Create Attractive Displays

Use display spaces on walls in the library and around the school to post reading-relevant materials, such as the top ten most borrowed books, recommended reading lists created by pupils and book reviews written by pupils and staff. If students have read a book which has been made into a TV show or film, you could make a 'Bookflix' display, mirroring the layout of Netflix. Ask your local bookshop if they have children's books posters they'd be willing to part with and use these to liven up the library space. Create themed book displays by gathering a selection of books on a topic relevant to the curriculum or related to a current event and displaying them prominently in the school library or in classrooms. Change displays regularly to keep them fresh, interesting and relevant. If you need advice or to source particular books, contact your local librarian and browse our website.

Encourage Shared Reading between Older and Younger Pupils

Shared reading allows younger pupils to experience the joy of discovering new books while increasing the confidence and reading skills of older readers. Scottish Book Trust have put together this handy document that introduces the concept of shared reading and gives some suggested approaches: <https://www.scottishbooktrust.com/learning-resources>



Never Judge a Book by its Cover

This works across all classes and ages. Wrap a selection of books in recyclable brown paper, with a brief yet cryptic description of what they're about. Invite pupils to browse and choose the one that appeals to them, and talk to their peers as they make their decision. This is a great chance for children to try something new that they might not have read before – a fantasy book for someone who normally likes funny books or a sports book for someone who normally prefers historical fiction.

Engage Families in Reading

- Try putting together a reading newsletter, keeping families informed about events happening in local bookshops, arts centres, and libraries, or sharing what teachers and their classes are reading. This promotes a culture of reading outside the school and involves families in reading for joy.
- Ask parents and guardians to get involved in the school library (this can be a dedicated space or all the individual classroom library shelves). Invite them to participate in reading activities in the school and host book clubs for these adults to keep them informed about the latest children's books, and share resources. Remember, children who see the adults in their lives reading will be more inclined to read themselves.

Mystery Readers

Invite local figures from the community into the school for read aloud sessions. These mystery readers can be anyone from a local county councillor or nurse to a parent or guardian who's keen to display their performing skills. As well as seeing a new adult who clearly values reading, pupils will be able to ask these readers about their reading lives, their favourite books, their jobs. Classes can design invitations and posters to celebrate these sessions, and they can follow up with thank you letters afterwards. The Mystery Readers could all reunite at the end of the school year for a celebration.

A Summer Reading Challenge

Before the summer holidays, tell your class how much you're looking forward to reading books over the summer, and ask them what reading plans they have. You could:

- Share the books you're hoping to read and why.
- Talk about visiting the library (to make sure you don't run out of books!)
- Pick summer-themed poems or books for class reading sessions in the run-up to the holidays and make these teaser sessions to encourage the class to seek these books out themselves.
- Encourage your pupils to participate in the Summer Stars reading challenge in their local library and ask them to tell the whole class about their favourite book when they come back in September.
- Encourage the children to have a book swap, if they have books at home they would like to swap for the summer. It can be a good idea to have a stock of spare books to hand for children who may not have a book to bring or who forget on the day.

Conclusion: Reading for Joy in Your School

At the heart of every successful and impactful school reading culture is joy. If pupils and staff alike look forward to reading, talk about books together, and are excited to hear new stories, you have a joyful reading culture! We hope the ideas in this guide inspire and motivate you – you can use the reflection and planning tools below to take stock of where your reading culture is now and how you'd like to develop it going forward. We would love to hear about your school and what reading for joy looks like for your school community, so get in touch to tell us your story!



Reflection and Planning Tools:

Teachers as Readers

Teachers are uniquely placed to inspire their pupils to develop a love of reading – you are reading role models! In a school with a thriving reading culture, teachers are supported to think about the following:

Teachers as Readers	What it Looks Like in our School Right Now	Ideas
All teachers and staff in the school want to be reading role models and understand why it's important.		
Teachers read and are aware of the breadth of contemporary children's literature. Crucially, they know how to find out about new books.		Access reviews, reading lists and reading guides and find out about our annual international conference by visiting: www.childrensbooksireland.ie
Teachers know about their pupils' reading lives, their likes and dislikes, where they need supports, where they can be challenged.		Reading surveys and discussions at the beginning of the school year.
Teachers and staff's reading habits are visible and part of school culture – adults are seen to be reading by choice and for joy, when they can.		
Teachers are confident and enthusiastic when it comes to engaging their pupils in reading and promoting books. They talk about the joy of reading and not just literacy or English as a subject.		
Teachers can use their knowledge to incorporate real books across the curriculum, as well as engaging with reading for pleasure in playful and creative ways.		Access resources and ideas by visiting: www.childrensbooksireland.ie
Teachers and pupils alike see themselves as readers and understand the concept of reading identities or reading journeys. Books are a consistent topic of conversation in the classroom.		

Reading Culture

Every school is unique, from the pupils who arrive every morning, to the names of their classrooms, and a school's reading culture should reflect its diversity and inclusivity. Each class contributes to the holistic nature of the school's reading culture, and that means that each class (and their teacher!) gets to put their own spin on reading for joy.

Reading Culture	What it Looks Like in our School	Ideas
Classes of all ages are read to, and staff recognise the positive effect on literacy and wellbeing.		
Reading aloud is valued and prioritised and is a visible practice throughout the school.		Signs around the school could say, 'Come back later, we're reading!' Conversations about books appear on noticeboards and lead to exchanges between classes. Reading Aloud recommendations are shared.
Teachers are confident in reading aloud from excellent children's literature.		Connecting with local libraries. Applying for Children's Books Ireland Book Gifting programmes: https://childrensbooksireland.ie/what-we-do/book-gifting
Reading aloud, across all classes, focuses on reading for joy, supporting pupil choice, while offering engaging access points into different subjects.		
Regular time is prioritised for independent reading for pupils, who have time to browse and access to a wide range of books.		Pupils always have a book in their bag or on their desk and can read their book when their work is finished. Books are available to read during breaks and lunch, as well as in book boxes in the playground. Pupils have the opportunity to join Book Clubs or take part in Reading Buddy programmes (see our Book Clubs and Reading Groups resource for more ideas and information). DEAR time takes place regularly – this could be daily or weekly, as a whole school or at different times in each class. The school takes part in the Children's Books Ireland Junior Juries' programme: https://childrensbooksireland.ie/what-we-do/kpmg-childrens-books-ireland-awards/junior-juries-programme
Teachers enjoy independent reading too, at the same time as the class. There is no association between reading for joy and written tasks.		
Pupils have lots of opportunities to contribute to the school's reading culture.		Choosing books, both for their own reading and for their class or school library. Getting involved in the school or class library as student librarians. Acting as Reading Ambassadors who might talk about the book they're currently reading at assembly or on the intercom, or go from class to class with other Ambassadors talking about books.
Teachers understand the concept of a reading community and know that chat about books between pupils and staff is important.		Chatting with pupils about books. Sharing books across classrooms.
All staff in the school can regularly talk about books, reading, and storytelling interests with each other. Staff also chat about children's literature with each other.		Staff children's literature book club. Reading for joy on the agenda at regular staff meetings. Staff room noticeboard used as a place to share great book recommendations.
Staff understand the importance of encouraging reading for joy at home.		Book lists are available at parent/teacher meetings. Books and reading are a part of school community events and communications. Staff share tips, strategies and resources with families. Students can bring their books home from the class or school library, or from the public library if it is accessible through school.

Class Reading Time

The time pupils spend reading in their classroom is priceless. It helps them see that reading can be both a solitary and a communal activity, something you can do for yourself and something you can do with your friends. Each class is a reading community, so class reading time should be prioritised and tailored to the needs and interests of each group of pupils.

Class Reading Time	What it Looks Like in Our School	Ideas
All pupils in the class benefit from and are engaged in class reading time, especially those who need more support with reading.		
For every class in the school, class reading time is officially timetabled, and is carried out without interruptions. If something clashes with class reading time, it is moved to another slot that week, not cancelled.		
Classrooms are set up for independent reading – reading areas near the bookshelves – and pupils understand the importance of not disturbing others, while also being able to browse and chat.		
All teachers use class reading time to engage with pupils in the moment, supporting those who need guidance, and discussing questions as they arise. This requires knowledge of the books pupils are reading.		
Class reading time is scaffolded correctly, routines are established, and behaviour is discussed so that pupils spend as much time as possible reading.		
Pupils always have a book on their desk or in their bag, ready to read.		

Story Times

Story Times or Read Alouds are a wonderful way for pupils and teachers alike to relax and enjoy a good book, for the sheer joy of listening to a story and engaging in personal reflection within the familiar environment of a classroom. Opportunities abound for explorations of new topics, revisiting old favourites, and appreciating the beauty of words and images.

Story Times	What it Looks Like in Our School	Ideas
Children who work with resource teachers or SNAs/ANAs do not miss story times or read aloud sessions and are supported to enjoy them.		
Teachers can draw on a wide range of traditional and contemporary children's literature, especially diverse and inclusive picturebooks.		
Pupils from all classes are able to see their own lives reflected in books, and to learn about childhoods that are different to their own.		
Teachers recognise the importance and benefits of re-telling stories, and don't feel pressured to simply finish a book in one setting and move on.		
Especially with younger classes, picturebooks and classic stories are brought to life through drama once children know the story well. These books might also go home, so children can share these stories with their families.		
The school library and the class library shelves are well-organised and appealing to all classes.		
Children have time to browse, choose, re-read familiar stories, and re-tell those stories to their peers, and to their teachers.		

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