



14 February 2025

Dear Parent/Carer

Literacy at Heanor Gate

At Heanor Gate Spencer Academy, we firmly believe that reading ability and vocabulary development is at the centre of our students' learning. Our continued aim is to drive literacy development forwards to empower students, and to prepare them for the future. With a strong foundation in reading and the inherent skills it helps our students develop, it will fully prepare children to succeed in their chosen career path, whatever that may be.

Reading more often will improve vocabulary and knowledge, broaden students' horizons and equip them with the skills to read for both pleasure and academic success. Having an age-appropriate reading ability will give our students greater access to literature. This includes examination papers, where the average reading age for a GCSE paper is 15 years and 7 months. Not only this, but reading for pleasure is also proven to support mental health and wellbeing.

A national study found that, in 2024, children were reading fewer, less challenging books. The amount they read tended to plateau after reaching year 6, and 'sharply drop' after reaching year 9. It suggested that children enjoy reading less because they are not reading age appropriate books, and therefore find them less interesting. The research analyst stated that: "the key takeaway from this report is that more reading practice at an appropriate level of difficulty improves pupils' reading performance, with more reading time in school leading to higher reading attainment".

As part of our continued literacy drive, the week commencing Monday 24 February will welcome the second of three **"Ready to Read"** weeks at Heanor Gate this academic year. This is an exciting initiative where every student is given the opportunity to read for pleasure at the beginning of each lesson.

In order to optimize their experience next week, all students must have a reading book ready for the start of each lesson. Throughout the week, students will be challenged to complete as much of their book as possible and to reflect on their reading as they go. If students need help finding an age-appropriate book, they need to see their English teacher or me in the school library.

Home Challenge

Whilst the students will be given approximately 200 minutes of reading time in lessons next week, we appreciate that they have significantly more leisure time at home than they do in school. Our challenge is for you to reciprocate our offer and encourage your child to read for a further 200 minutes, or until they have completed their book. Students will be carrying out a review of their book in school prior to half term.

Dates for the Diary:-

Ready to Read Week 2 - week commencing Monday 24 February 2025

Ready to Read Week 3 - week commencing Monday 30 June 2025

Further to our Ready To Read weeks, as a school we will continue to boost the literacy of our students through the setting of literacy-related learning goals in every lesson. We also have a comprehensive reading intervention programme and phonics specialists to help rapidly improve reading ages. For those who do read at an age-appropriate level, we have an increasing number of challenging texts made available throughout the school within faculties and in the school library.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G Ellis'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mr G Ellis
School Librarian