



St Mary's Primary School Banbridge

Bedtime Reading Policy



June 2025

Our Vision

Safe. Valued. Empowered to Thrive.

Our Mission

We are dedicated to creating a **safe**, nurturing, and inclusive environment where every individual feels **valued**, respected, and empowered to reach their full potential.

We inspire a love of learning, foster a sense of belonging, and cultivate the skills, values and resilience needed to **thrive** in a diverse and ever-changing world.

Core Values

Family
Community
Respect
Resilience
Kindness
Tolerance
Perseverance
Responsibility

Our school's mission and vision align closely with our bedtime reading policy. Bedtime reading fosters a sense of safety through calm, predictable routines.

It helps children feel valued by giving them dedicated time and attention.

it empowers them to thrive by building language, confidence, and a love of learning.

Through shared stories, we nurture not just literacy, but the emotional and personal growth of every child.

A bedtime reading policy is more than a literacy initiative—it's a way to nurture the whole child.

Safe.

- Bedtime reading creates a calm, secure environment where children feel emotionally safe and nurtured.
- Familiar routines like reading before bed help children feel grounded and reduce anxiety.
- Stories often explore emotions and challenges in a safe, manageable way, helping children process their own feelings.

Valued.

- When families and schools prioritise reading together, children feel seen, heard, and important.
- Choosing books that reflect children's interests, cultures, and experiences shows them that their identity matters.
- Sharing stories together sends a powerful message: You are worth this time and attention.

Empowered to Thrive.

- Reading builds language, imagination, and confidence, giving children the tools to express themselves and understand the world.
- Asking questions and discussing stories empowers children to think critically and share their ideas.
- Developing a love of reading opens doors to lifelong learning, creativity, and success.

Purpose of this Policy

At our school, we believe that bedtime reading is a powerful opportunity to nurture a lifelong love of books, strengthen language development, and build emotional connections between children and their caregivers. This policy outlines our approach to promoting bedtime reading as a shared, enjoyable, and enriching experience for all children.

The Importance of Reading

Reading is fundamental to a child's development. It supports:

- Language acquisition and vocabulary growth

- Imagination and creativity
- Empathy and emotional understanding
- Cognitive and academic development

Bedtime reading provides a calm and focused time for children to engage with stories, helping them to unwind and process their day.

Sharing Books at Home and in School

We encourage families to:

- Read with their children every evening, even for just 10 minutes
- Choose a variety of books including picture books, chapter books, poetry, and non-fiction
- Re-read favourite stories to build familiarity and confidence

In school, we:

- Provide access to high-quality bedtime books through class libraries and take-home reading packs
- Recommend age-appropriate bedtime reads for each key stage
- Celebrate reading through events like bedtime story evenings and book-themed weeks

Modelling Positive Reading Behaviours

When children see adults reading and enjoying books, they learn that reading is valuable and pleasurable. Families who read aloud, talk about stories, and show enthusiasm for books help children develop positive attitudes toward reading.

Children learn by example. Families are encouraged to:

- Show enthusiasm for books and reading
- Talk about what they are reading and why they enjoy it
- Let children see adults reading for pleasure
- Use expressive voices and gestures to bring stories to life

Developing a Love of Reading Children are more likely to become lifelong readers when reading is associated with love, comfort, and fun. Family involvement helps make reading a natural and enjoyable part of daily life, especially at bedtime.

Our goal is to help every child see reading as a joyful and rewarding experience. You can support us at home by::

- Offering choice and variety in reading materials
- Creating cosy, inviting reading spaces
- Encouraging children to talk about their favourite books and authors
- Celebrating reading milestones and achievements

Fostering Understanding Through Good Questioning

To deepen comprehension and engagement, we promote the use of open-ended questions during and after reading, such as:

- What do you think will happen next?
- How do you think the character feels?
- Why did they make that choice?
- What would you do in that situation?

These questions help children to think critically, make connections, and express their thoughts confidently.

(See Appendix 1: Effective Questioning before, during or after reading)

Family Reading at Home: Family involvement in reading is one of the most powerful ways to support a child's literacy development and emotional well-being.

Builds Stronger Bonds: Reading together creates a special time for connection. It fosters warmth, trust, and communication between children and their caregivers, making reading a comforting and enjoyable experience.

Supports Language and Vocabulary Development: Hearing stories read aloud exposes children to rich language, new vocabulary, and varied sentence structures. This is especially important for children in early years and primary stages, as it lays the foundation for strong communication and comprehension skills.

Reinforces Learning from School: When families read with their children, they reinforce the skills and strategies taught in school. This consistency helps children feel more confident and supported in their learning journey.

Promotes Deeper Understanding: Families can ask thoughtful questions during reading to help children think critically about the story. Questions like *Why do you think that happened?* or *How would you feel if you were that character?* help children develop empathy and comprehension.

Builds Bedtime Routine and Calm: Bedtime reading helps children wind down, feel secure, and transition smoothly to sleep. It creates a predictable and calming end to the day.

Engaging Reluctant Readers at Home

Supporting parents in engaging reluctant readers at home is key to building confidence and enjoyment in reading. Here are some practical and accessible resources you can provide:

Parent Tips

- Use strategies for making reading fun (using voices, acting out scenes)
- Choose the right books (e.g. based on interests, reading level)
- Build reading into daily routines (bedtime, car rides, cooking)

Audiobooks and Read-Aloud Apps: these help children follow along with the text and enjoy stories without pressure.

- BorrowBox (via local libraries)
- Storynory (free audio stories)
- Audible for Kids
- YouTube read-alouds (with supervision)

Websites offering free and engaging bedtime reading resources for children:

Storyberries: A huge collection of over 1,600 free bedtime stories, fairy tales, poems, and picture books. Stories are sorted by age, theme, and length—perfect for quick bedtime reads.

Stories to Grow By: Award-winning short stories and fairy tales with positive messages. Includes classic tales and multicultural stories, ideal for creating meaningful bedtime routines.

Free Kids Books: A library of free downloadable children's books, including bedtime stories, early readers, and educational texts. Great for offline reading and printing.

(See Appendix 2: Book list for Reluctant Readers)

Conversation Starters and Question Prompts for reluctant readers

Simple questions to ask during or after reading, such as:

- What was your favourite part?
- Which character would you like to be?
- What do you think happens next?

Video Guides: use video clips on:

- How to read aloud effectively
- Encouraging reluctant readers without pressure
- Making reading a positive experience

Taking Care of Books: A Shared Responsibility

Books are precious tools for learning, imagination, and enjoyment. Whether they belong to the school library, a classroom collection, or your local library, it's important that we all take care of them so that everyone has the chance to enjoy reading.

Good Book Handling Skills

- Wash hands before reading to keep pages clean.
- Turn pages gently from the corner to avoid tearing.
- Use a bookmark instead of folding pages.
- Keep books away from food, drinks, and pets.
- Store books in a safe, dry place when not in use.

Borrowing Books Responsibly: when you borrow a book from school or the library:

- Treat it with respect as it belongs to everyone.
- Return it on time so others can enjoy it too.

- Let a teacher or librarian know if a book is damaged so it can be repaired.

Taking care of books helps:

- Keep our reading spaces tidy and welcoming
- Make sure books last longer for future readers
- Show respect for shared resources
- Encourage responsibility and pride in learning

Monitoring and Support: teachers will:

- Regularly check in with families about bedtime reading habits
- Offer guidance on book selection and reading strategies
- Provide additional support for children who may not have regular access to books at home

Conclusion

Bedtime reading is more than a routine—it is a cherished opportunity to bond, learn, and grow. By working together, school and home can create a strong reading culture that supports every child's journey as a confident, curious, and joyful reader.

Appendix 1: Effective Questioning before, during or after reading

Effective questioning techniques are essential for promoting deeper thinking, encouraging discussion, and assessing understanding—especially in educational settings. Here are some widely used and impactful techniques:

Open-Ended Questions: encourage children to think and express themselves freely.

- What do you think will happen next?
- Why do you think the character did that?

Probing Questions: help children expand or clarify their answers.

- Can you tell me more about that?
- What makes you say that?

Wait Time

Give children time to think before answering. A pause of 3–5 seconds can lead to more thoughtful responses.

Prompting: offer a gentle nudge if a child is unsure.

- Do you remember what happened when...?
- Can you think of a time when you felt like that character?

Reflective Questions: encourage children to relate the story to their own experiences.

- Have you ever felt like that?
- What would you do in that situation?

Prediction Questions: develop inference and anticipation skills.

- What do you think will happen next?
- How do you think the story will end?

Clarifying Questions: check for understanding and encourage explanation.

- What does that word mean?
- Can you explain what just happened in the story?

Summarising Questions: help children recall and sequence events.

- Can you tell me what happened at the beginning?
- What was your favourite part and why?

Choice Questions: offer options to support decision-making and preferences.

- Which character did you like best—why?
- Would you rather be in this story or another one we've read?

Encouraging Opinions: foster confidence and personal expression.

- Did you like the story? Why or why not?
- Would you recommend this book to a friend?

Appendix 2: Books for Reluctant Readers

Recommended **book list** for reluctant readers, grouped by type and age range. These books are engaging, accessible, and designed to build confidence and enjoyment in reading.

High-Interest, Low-Difficulty (Hi-Lo) Books

Ages 6–8

- Daisy and the Trouble With series by Kes Gray
- The Magic Tree House series by Mary Pope Osborne
- Flat Stanley by Jeff Brown

Ages 8–11

- Tom Gates series by Liz Pichon
- Planet Omar series by Zanib Mian
- Diary of a Wimpy Kid by Jeff Kinney

Graphic Novels and Comics

Ages 6–8

- Narwhal and Jelly series by Ben Clanton
- Bumble and Snug series by Mark Bradley
- Dog Man series by Dav Pilkey

Ages 8–11

- Hilda series by Luke Pearson
- The Investigators series by John Patrick Green
- Smile by Raina Telgemeier

Humorous Books and Joke Books

Ages 6–8

- The Dinosaur That Pooped series by Tom Fletcher and Dougie Poynter
- The Diary of a Killer Cat by Anne Fine
- Laugh Out Loud Jokes for Kids by Rob Elliott

Ages 8–11

- Barry Loser series by Jim Smith
- The 13-Storey Treehouse series by Andy Griffiths
- World's Worst Children series by David Walliams

Interactive and Choose-Your-Own-Adventure Books

Ages 6–8

- You Choose series by Pippa Goodhart and Nick Sharratt
- Press Here by Hervé Tullet
- Choose Your Own Journey books (various authors)

Ages 8–11

- Choose Your Own Adventure series by R. A. Montgomery
- Escape Room books by Gareth Moore
- Pick Your Path series by various authors

Appendix 2: **Bedtime Reading Lists**

Bedtime Reads Nursery Unit

Here's a comprehensive list of bedtime reads suitable for children in your Nursery Unit in Northern Ireland. These books are chosen for their gentle themes, engaging illustrations, and calming narratives—perfect for winding down at the end of the day.

Classic Bedtime Stories

- Goodnight Moon by Margaret Wise Brown
- Guess How Much I Love You by Sam McBratney (a Northern Ireland author)
- The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle
- Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak
- Owl Babies by Martin Waddell (another Northern Ireland author)

Gentle Rhyming Books

- Room on the Broom by Julia Donaldson
- Peace at Last by Jill Murphy
- Each Peach Pear Plum by Janet and Allan Ahlberg
- Time for Bed by Mem Fox
- Ten in the Bed by Penny Dale

Books About Sleep and Nighttime

- Can't You Sleep, Little Bear? by Martin Waddell
- The Going to Bed Book by Sandra Boynton
- Sleepyhead by Karma Wilson
- Night Monkey, Day Monkey by Julia Donaldson
- Hush Little Ones by John Butler

Books with Soothing Illustrations

- Little Owl's Night by Divya Srinivasan
- The Snail and the Whale by Julia Donaldson
- Bear Snores On by Karma Wilson
- Dream Animals by Emily Winfield Martin
- The Storm Whale by Benji Davies

Interactive and Repetitive Reads

- Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? by Bill Martin Jr. and Eric Carle
- That's Not My... series by Fiona Watt
- Dear Zoo by Rod Campbell
- Spot Goes to Bed by Eric Hill
- I Love You to the Moon and Back by Amelia Hepworth

Books Celebrating Love and Comfort

- I Love You Through and Through by Bernadette Rossetti-Shustak
- You're All My Favourites by Sam McBratney
- I'll Always Love You by Paeony Lewis
- Love You Forever by Robert Munsch
- The Kissing Hand by Audrey Penn

Bedtime Reads Foundation Stage

Here's a comprehensive list of bedtime reads ideal for children in **Foundation Stage** (ages 4–6). These books are selected for their calming tone, engaging illustrations, and age-appropriate themes that support early literacy and emotional development.

Soothing and Gentle Stories

- Goodnight Moon by Margaret Wise Brown
- Guess How Much I Love You by Sam McBratney
- Can't You Sleep, Little Bear? by Martin Waddell
- Time for Bed by Mem Fox
- I Love You to the Moon and Back by Amelia Hepworth

Books with Repetition and Rhyme

- Peace at Last by Jill Murphy
- Room on the Broom by Julia Donaldson
- Each Peach Pear Plum by Janet and Allan Ahlberg
- Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? by Bill Martin Jr. and Eric Carle
- The Gruffalo by Julia Donaldson

Stories About Night and Sleep

- The Going to Bed Book by Sandra Boynton
- Little Owl's Night by Divya Srinivasan
- Night Monkey, Day Monkey by Julia Donaldson
- Bear Snores On by Karma Wilson
- Hush Little Ones by John Butler

Books That Encourage Comfort and Security

- Owl Babies by Martin Waddell
- The Kissing Hand by Audrey Penn
- You're All My Favourites by Sam McBratney
- I'll Always Love You by Paeony Lewis
- Love You Forever by Robert Munsch

Interactive and Familiar Stories

- Dear Zoo by Rod Campbell
- That's Not My... series by Fiona Watt
- Spot Goes to Bed by Eric Hill
- Ten in the Bed by Penny Dale
- Where's Spot? by Eric Hill

Books with Gentle Life Lessons

- The Snail and the Whale by Julia Donaldson
- The Storm Whale by Benji Davies
- The Lion Inside by Rachel Bright
- The Invisible String by Patrice Karst
- Be Kind by Pat Zietlow Miller

Bedtime Reads for children at Key Stage One

Here's a comprehensive list of bedtime reads for children in **Key Stage One** (ages 5–7). These books are chosen for their engaging stories, emotional depth, and calming tone—perfect for winding down at the end of a busy school day.

Heartwarming and Reassuring Stories

- Guess How Much I Love You by Sam McBratney
- The Kissing Hand by Audrey Penn
- You're All My Favourites by Sam McBratney
- I'll Always Love You by Paeony Lewis
- Love You Forever by Robert Munsch

Books with Gentle Adventure and Imagination

- The Snail and the Whale by Julia Donaldson
- The Storm Whale by Benji Davies
- How to Catch a Star by Oliver Jeffers
- Lost and Found by Oliver Jeffers
- The Way Back Home by Oliver Jeffers

Stories with Rhyme and Rhythm

- Room on the Broom by Julia Donaldson
- The Gruffalo by Julia Donaldson
- Peace at Last by Jill Murphy
- Each Peach Pear Plum by Janet and Allan Ahlberg
- A Great Big Cuddle by Michael Rosen

Books About Friendship and Feelings

- The Lion Inside by Rachel Bright
- The Koala Who Could by Rachel Bright
- Ruby's Worry by Tom Percival
- Ravi's Roar by Tom Percival
- Be Kind by Pat Zietlow Miller

Books That Encourage Calm and Mindfulness

- The Rabbit Listened by Cori Doerrfeld
- Happy by Nicola Edwards
- I Am Peace by Susan Verde
- Slow Down by Rachel Williams
- The Invisible String by Patrice Karst

Classic and Timeless Tales

- Winnie-the-Pooh by A. A. Milne (short chapters work well for bedtime)
- Paddington by Michael Bond
- Frog and Toad Are Friends by Arnold Lobel
- Little Bear by Else Holmelund Minarik
- The Tale of Peter Rabbit by Beatrix Potter

Interactive and Predictable Texts

- We're Going on a Bear Hunt by Michael Rosen
- Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? by Bill Martin Jr. and Eric Carle
- Dear Zoo by Rod Campbell
- That's Not My... series by Fiona Watt
- Spot's Bedtime Storybook by Eric Hill

Bedtime Reads for Children In Key Stage Two

Here's a comprehensive list of bedtime reads for children in **Key Stage Two** (ages 7–11). These books are chosen for their rich storytelling, emotional depth, and calming tone—ideal for winding down while still engaging growing imaginations and reading skills.

Gentle Chapter Books for Bedtime

- Charlotte's Web by E. B. White
- The Owl Who Was Afraid of the Dark by Jill Tomlinson
- The Hodgeheg by Dick King-Smith
- The Twits by Roald Dahl
- The Worst Witch by Jill Murphy
- Flat Stanley by Jeff Brown
- The BFG by Roald Dahl
- The Hundred-Mile-An-Hour Dog by Jeremy Strong

Heartwarming and Uplifting Stories

- The Boy Who Grew Dragons by Andy Shepherd
- The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane by Kate DiCamillo
- The Velveteen Rabbit by Margery Williams

- The Boy at the Back of the Class by Onjali Q. Raúf
- The Secret of Platform 13 by Eva Ibbotson

Books with Beautiful Language and Illustrations

- The Lost Words by Robert Macfarlane and Jackie Morris
- The Dark by Lemony Snicket and Jon Klassen
- The Fox and the Star by Coralie Bickford-Smith
- The Bear and the Piano by David Litchfield
- The King Who Banned the Dark by Emily Haworth-Booth

Short Stories and Anthologies

- Just So Stories by Rudyard Kipling
- Aesop's Fables retold by Michael Morpurgo
- Stories for Boys Who Dare to Be Different by Ben Brooks
- Fantastically Great Women Who Changed the World by Kate Pankhurst
- The Puffin Book of Stories for Eight-Year-Olds (and similar age-specific anthologies)

Books That Encourage Reflection and Calm

- Wonder by R. J. Palacio (selected chapters for older KS2)
- The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse by Charlie Mackesy
- The Invisible by Tom Percival
- The Journey by Francesca Sanna
- The Heart and the Bottle by Oliver Jeffers

Poetry and Calm Reads

- A Great Big Cuddle by Michael Rosen
- I Am the Seed That Grew the Tree by Fiona Waters
- The Lost Spells by Robert Macfarlane and Jackie Morris
- Poems to Perform edited by Julia Donaldson
- The Puffin Book of Fantastic First Poems