

Research Studies

Below follow extracts from some of the recent studies that have shown how important it is to introduce babies and toddlers to books. There is no doubt that children who are introduced to books at a very early age outperform their peers once they start school. As you might expect, they have improved reading skills; but they also speak more fluently, concentrate harder, and are better at maths too.

Bookstart Study 2000

This was published in 2000 by Professor Wade and Dr Moore. They researched a group of children who received free books in their early years, and then compared them to a group of children who had not had the same access to books. The children in the study came from all types of backgrounds and cultures – and there was no difference socially between the two groups. They tested all of the children in many different things when they began primary school at the age of four. What they found was that the group of children who had the access to books were ahead of the control group in a high number of skills. They recorded higher scores in English (speaking and listening, reading and writing) and also Mathematics (numbers, shapes, spaces and measures.) They also had consistently higher levels of language, empathy and concentration. In short, they found that **the children who had shared books with their parents in infancy were significantly ahead of their classmates when they started school**. Perhaps even more interestingly, these children were *still* ahead of their peers when they had their first SATs assessment, at the end of Key Stage 1 (when they were 7). One might have assumed that any early advantage would have evened out amongst the children now they had all had three years of primary education; but the children who had had access to books from the age of 0-3 were still statistically ahead in the reading task, the reading comprehension, writing, spelling, mathematics and science.

“These children had not only been better prepared for starting school, but have maintained their superiority throughout their years of primary education.”
Wade and Moore

“An early start with books helps develop the practice, motivation, concentration and attention that are necessary for learning.”
Professor Barrie Wade, Literacy Today

“Reading to your child lays the foundations of a child’s education, a base on which schools can build.” Susan Elkin, The Sunday Times

I CAN Research 2007

In 2007 research from the Children’s Charity I CAN revealed that over that over half of all the five year olds in the UK (rising to over 84% in some areas) are unable to talk properly. They begin formal education with “impoverished speech and language,” are unable to utter a whole sentence and can

understand only simple instructions. Further research by the charity found that parents spend more time watching TV and cleaning around the house than talking to their children.

The charity's spokesman, Clare Geldard, said: *"We know from nursery teachers and reception class teachers that children are coming in with fewer speech and language skills, for example they only use short sentences and their vocabulary is not as enriched. The environment and society in which we live at the moment is less supportive of developing children's language".* She said she knew of one speech therapist who found that none of the three-year-olds she was assessing could say more than one word at a time. Mrs Geldard went on: *"The parents think, 'Oh it will be all right when they get to school – the school will bring them up to the right level'. But if a child is not talking before they go to school, they won't be able to springboard into academic learning. Half of them will become frustrated at not being able to understand instructions and express themselves. They will be labelled naughty children."*

I CAN believes strongly that communication is the foundation life skill. It affects our ability to learn, form relationships and make friends. Children who find language hard find life hard. In the UK, 40-50% of children are starting primary school without the basic speech and language skills they need to learn and make friends

Reading nursery rhymes and stories to a young child is an excellent way to introduce them to the rhythms of language, and there is overwhelming evidence that babies who are spoken to more often will learn to speak sooner – and more clearly.

"The more books you read together, the bigger your child's vocabulary becomes." Junior Magazine

"The best books for sharing with children contain short stories, often rhyming ones, which introduce babies to stories before they even know what they are. They need to be directed in part at the parent or carer, who after all has to read the book, sometimes many times. Good language – rhyme, rhythm – is crucial so that babies will learn to listen. And warm enchanting pictures."
Wendy Cooling, Children's Book Consultant

Centre for Social Justice Report 2008

This report emphasised just how crucial the years from 0-3 are. Quoting from the report on the BBC, Iain Duncan Smith said *"What is interesting is that the report shows that the most critical part of a child's development, is the first two and a half to three years of their life. In fact all the scientific evidence of the last ten to twelve years clearly shows that you can pretty much predict where a child will be at the age of eighteen in terms of their achievement levels by the age of two and a half."* He went on to say that *"empathy and nurture"* were hugely important in this early stage; that *"a child should be read to even when they can't understand the words"* and one to one conversation is crucial.

Further evidence (if any were needed) of the vital part that books can play in the early life of your child.

“Sharing books is an excellent way of building a strong and loving relationship with your child. You will see them grow into eager confident learners with lively imaginations and a curiosity about life.” Booktrust UK

“Books are as essential for the developing mind as cereal, fruit and vegetables are for the body.” Dorothy Butler, Babies Need Books

National Year of Reading 2008

The National Year of Reading was launched by the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families and a whole host of authors at 10 Downing Street in January 2008. It is managed by a consortium of organisations, including **The National Literacy Trust** and **The Reading Agency**. It is a celebration of reading and wants to build a greater national passion for reading in England. One of its aims is to get every parent reading to their child for ten minutes a day, as the government have said that *“one of the most important things a parent can do to boost the educational chances of their children is read to them.”*

“Experience of stories read at home is the most significant pre-school indicator of success in learning to read.” The Times Educational Supplement

“Encouraging children to develop a love of books and an interest in written language helps their literacy now and makes a difference to their whole future. Reading aloud to your children is one of the main ways in which you help them to become readers.” The Centre for Language in Primary Education

“A book, a person and shared enjoyment; these are the conditions of success.” Margaret Meek, Learning to Read

“Children who are read to regularly, hear stories, learn nursery rhymes and look at books are much more likely to learn to read easily.”
National Literacy Strategy, DFEE

“Cultivating an appreciation for literature will inevitably improve reading skills, but it will also educate children to value books.”
Professor Frank Furedi, Kent University



**Bookworm
Babies**

