

extratime

Breakfast Readers

This Breakfast Readers Essential Guide complements the Extra Time resource packs *Breakfast Club Plus* and *Book-it!* (see 'Resources'). It offers advice about setting up and running a 'Breakfast Readers' club, where children and their parents or carers take part in reading activities in addition to enjoying a healthy breakfast.

Why include reading in your breakfast club

Breakfast clubs play a key role in extending learning opportunities, tackling childhood obesity, developing healthier schools, and so on. They can also help schools address the five outcomes for children outlined in *Every child matters* (now an integral part of the Ofsted inspection), and deliver the '8 to 6 core offer'.

The reasons for introducing reading into your breakfast club are likely to link closely to your school's current objectives and targets. These may include raising the general profile of reading in school, increasing parental involvement, or focusing on literacy and reading attainment among specific groups of pupils.

Parents play a key role in their children's learning. Involving them in reading activities in your breakfast club can therefore:

- enhance the literacy and reading skills of parents and children
- promote lifelong learning
- provide parents with skills and knowledge to support their children's learning
- raise the status and importance of reading in school – and of healthy eating.

Where this document refers to 'parents', this should be understood to include carers, prospective parents and those in a parenting role.





How to include reading in your breakfast club

You will need to consider a number of issues when planning to introduce reading into your breakfast club – for instance: the type of activity to run; where and when to hold it; which pupils and parents to include; who will run the sessions; and how to maintain pupils' interest.

What kinds of activities will happen?

There are different types of reading activities you could organise – for example, pupils reading and reporting back to their parents on what they have read, parents reading to their children, or a professional story-teller reading to the whole group.

There are also numerous materials you could use. Below are just a few examples. Remember to ask club members what they like to do – and what they like to read.

- Provide a wide range of books, including fiction and non-fiction. Short stories and poetry are a good choice when you only have limited time available. Don't forget other sources of text either – magazines, comics, brochures and newspapers, for example.
- Find materials that will be particularly interesting to the parents – for instance, community newsletters, local events listings, and 'information, advice and advocacy'.
- Use word games, word searches and riddles. Also make available story tapes, videos and DVDs of well-known books.
- Set up a website corner, where children and parents can look up information about books and their authors.

- Hold book raffles at 10p or 20p a ticket. Perhaps have one for children and one for adults.
- Offer a 'book a book' scheme for members to reserve a book for use at the club. This will help encourage regular attendance.
- Have themed reading events. You could have a holiday theme and use travel brochures, travel guides, fiction set in other countries, foreign language books and dictionaries.
- Get members to collect 'reading miles' for the amount they read. Give out certificates or other rewards when a certain number of miles have been collected.
- Ask members to fill in a 'book review club journal', and offer club awards, where members vote for their favourite book.
- Persuade local people, staff and other pupils to make guest appearances, for example, to tell a story to the whole group.
- Use menus, cereal packets and written instructions for making toast or a cup of tea – these can be a good way to kick-start conversation over breakfast about reading.
- Set up a reading activity to do with breakfast itself, such as a questionnaire about the food on offer or a breakfast quiz that leads into reading time.

Whether reading together becomes the main focus of your club, or whether a certain amount of time is dedicated to reading each week, will depend on what the club members tell you they want, and need, to do (see *Breakfast Club Plus* and *Book-it!* for a wide range of activity ideas).

Where will the reading activities take place?

Wherever you set up your club, you will need to make the reading area comfortable, relaxing and attractive – for instance, if you are in a hall, mark out an area that feels calm; if you use a classroom or library, think about how to make the reading area special for your group.

When will the activities take place?

What should come first – the breakfast or the activity – will depend on the type of activity you are offering, if parents are going straight to work or can stay on to eat breakfast with their children, and so on.

Top tips!

- Ask parents and children what works best for them. Be flexible – you can always change the timing if it doesn't work out.
- You may find that children are able to concentrate better if they eat before reading.

Who will the reading activities be for?

When you plan your Breakfast Readers club, you need to be clear about who it is for. Start by thinking about who already attends the breakfast club, who doesn't, and who you want to target.

Remember that work, financial pressures, childcare or other family commitments may make it difficult for some parents to attend the club regularly.

Top tips!

- Tell parents that they don't have to attend every day and support them when they do come.
- Offer childcare arrangements for parents who need to bring younger children or babies along.
- Give information about other out-of-school-hours learning (oshl) or reading initiatives for keen parents who can't make breakfast time.

Some parents will not realise that Breakfast Readers is for them, as well as for their children. You may want to send out a flyer emphasising that Breakfast Readers is also for parents, grandparents, sisters and brothers.

Other parents will be nervous about attending a reading club – especially one that takes place in a school. See opposite for some 'tried and tested ideas' for getting people involved in Breakfast Readers.

Top tip!

ContinYou offers training programmes for working with parents and involving male carers in your projects – for instance, Share (family learning), and Top Dads (working with young fathers). For more information, contact us at the address overleaf.

Who will run the activities?

You don't necessarily need other staff in addition to your existing breakfast club team. However, extra support is always welcome. You may find book enthusiasts among other staff, parents and community members. Partnering with voluntary reading agencies or local libraries can also be a good source of support (see 'Resources').

Who else needs to be involved?

Start by talking to pupils, parents and senior school managers about your ideas for introducing reading activities into your breakfast club. If you are focusing on specific groups of pupils, talk to other teachers to see which pupils will benefit most from attending the Breakfast Readers club.

Think about how the club can link into other reading and parenting initiatives happening in the school, in the community and nationally. The club may, for instance, be a springboard for parents to get involved in community learning opportunities.

Top tips!

- Don't forget to involve members in the planning of your club, as well as in its day-to-day activities.
- Talk to senior staff and managers about their aims and how you can work together. This will help you decide whether to open the Breakfast Readers club to the whole school or focus on specific families.

Tried and tested ideas

Negative school experiences Some parents who have not had a positive time at school may feel uncomfortable about getting involved with school, so make sure that you:

- make the club area as different to a classroom as possible
- explain the sort of activities you plan to introduce so parents realise it won't be like a formal lesson
- make the club a sociable place, where parents can meet with others for support
- listen to parents' concerns and learn from these to make your club more inclusive.

Reading concerns Some parents may worry that their reading difficulties will be identified publicly or that they will be unable to support their children's reading effectively. You may find it helpful to:

- stress to parents that children's reading improves through parental involvement, whatever the parents' reading level
- find different ways to introduce parents to the club, such as asking them to help prepare breakfast or raise funds for books
- display information on available adult basic skills courses and other sources of support.

Cultural differences Some parents from ethnic minority groups may, for cultural reasons, see education as the business of the school rather than their role. They may also be reluctant to participate

if English is not their first language and they themselves struggle with reading and writing the language. You could also:

- remind parents that reading in any language will help them and their children develop their literacy skills
- provide texts in a range of languages
- encourage parents to tell stories from their own countries to their children.

You should also be aware of different communities' attitudes to breakfast and the foods eaten.

Involving dads Fathers are less likely to participate in your club for different reasons – for example: schools are often seen as 'women's places', and dads may feel uncomfortable if the club mainly involves mothers working with their children; they may not feel confident about their ability to help their children; fathers' work patterns might also make it difficult for them to attend. Try to:

- get male members of staff or volunteers involved in running the club
- hold one-off special dads' breakfast reading clubs
- involve the children in sending a personal invitation to their dads to attend the club
- make the reading area and activities more 'men-friendly', with a careful choice of posters and reading materials.





Top tips!

- Build up a relationship with parents so they know the club is a safe place for them to learn too.
- Try holding a breakfast reading club on a Saturday or Sunday morning to involve more parents.
- Vary the activities and reading materials on offer to keep the club exciting and enjoyable.
- Follow up non-attendance individually and sensitively so that members know you are concerned about them.
- Celebrate and publicise your club's successes so that it retains a high profile in the school and the community.
- Keep consulting with parents about new ideas for the club, and how you might offer what they want.
- Organise activities that do not require the participants to contribute individually.
- Give out personal invitations to join the club at parents' consultation meetings.
- Work closely with other local organisations, such as libraries.
- Keep the club friendly and informal.

Shout about what you are doing

Much of ContinYou's work involves collecting the good practice that happens in clubs and passing it on to others. Let us know what reading activities you offer your breakfast club members, what food you serve, how you are funded, how many members you have, and so on.

Just phone 020 8709 9926 and ask for a questionnaire to fill in and send back to us, telling us what you do. You can also send us photos and press cuttings – we'll find it all useful.

Please invite us to your club and, if you have a club newsletter, please add us to your circulation list – you can email the newsletter to info@continyou.org.uk or post a copy to ContinYou at the address overleaf.

Resources – where to go to find out more

Publications

Book-it! and Breakfast Club Plus
(ContinYou, 2005)

Guides for setting up your own reading club or breakfast club and keeping it going.

Both guides are downloadable from:
www.continyou.org.uk

For hard copies, contact Fiona Joseph at: ContinYou
17 Old Ford Road, London E2 9PJ.
Tel: 020 8709 9926

The Activity Kit

(TRA/ContinYou, 2005, £15)

A handbook for 11 to 14 year old reading groups with photocopiable reading activities. Available from:
PO Box 96, St Albans AL1 3WP. Tel: 087 1750 1207
Website: www.readingagency.org.uk

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Websites

Campaign for Learning –
www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk
Working for an inclusive society in which learning is understood, valued and accessible to everyone.

Children in Scotland – www.childreninscotland.org.uk
The national agency for all those working with children and their families in Scotland.

Family Caring Trust – www.familycaring.co.uk
Offers training, materials, videos and resources for parents/parental support organisations.

Fathers Direct – www.fathersdirect.com
Provides news pages, training information, policy updates, and guides for supporting fathers and their families.

Home-Start – www.home-start.org.uk
The UK's leading family support charity.

Parents Online – www.parents.org.uk
Helps parents with children through their primary school years.

PEEP – www.peep.org.uk
Supports parents/carers and provides training and support for practitioners working with families.


The National Family and Parenting Institute –
www.nfpi.org.uk
Supports parents in bringing up their children, to promote the well-being of families, and so on.

The Parenting Education & Support Forum –
www.parenting-forum.org.uk
The national umbrella body for people who work with parents.

Reading Connects – www.readingconnects.org.uk
A DfES-funded initiative that supports schools in using reading for pleasure to enhance achievement.

Volunteer Reading Help – www.vrh.org.uk
A charity that imparts a love of reading through the sustained support of trained volunteers.

More information about these and other useful resources will be available to online members of Breakfast Club Plus from January 2006.

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