



19th November 2019

Dear Parent,

'Reading for Pleasure and Progress' at Tarleton Academy

Reading for pleasure is possibly the single-most important activity your child can do to improve achievement in school. Research has shown that reading helps cognitive development; a recent Institute of Education study (world leaders in educational research) revealed that students who read at home do 'significantly better' across the curriculum – including 9.9% better in Maths – than students who don't read. Linked to this is the fact that reading is the best way to improve vocabulary, essential for success in every subject.

Reading also has social and emotional benefits. It increases self-esteem and studies show that students who read are more empathetic. Growing up is tough -- reading can help young people explore complex problems from the safe fictional world of a book.

What goes hand in hand with reading is a young person's ability to both access and utilise ambitious and academic vocabulary. Students with limited vocabularies struggle with all reading, but accessing the academic curriculum in secondary school is particularly challenging. These words serve as the bridge to comprehension of academic texts and are increasingly prevalent in the new GCSEs. Without a sufficient word-hoard, texts become incomprehensible for some students. For full comprehension, readers need to understand 95-98% of the words in a text.

As I am sure you are aware, reading is already an essential part of your son/daughter's learning and we take every step to ensure that this is a key focus of our curriculum here at Tarleton Academy. In English, students at Key Stage three have dedicated reading lessons once a week during which they engage with a challenging novel to help prepare them for the further challenges faced at GCSE. Students have access to our new 'Reading Hub' at lunch time where they can loan books and engage in quiet reading in a purpose-built, peaceful space. Interventions such as peer reading are also put in place for students who might find this aspect of school particularly challenging.

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The problem, of course, is convincing young people of the importance and joy of reading. Within school, we make every effort to promote reading for pleasure and to build a robust reading culture such that students recognise reading as an essential skill across all subjects. It is for this reason that we have introduced a 'Learning Snapshot' initiative into our curriculum outlined below:

- Each week, students will bring home a piece of reading material, such as an article or blog, from one of their subjects which is designed to engage students in current issues relevant to that particular subject.
- Students are encouraged to read the material to themselves, or even better, along with a parent, guardian, gran or grandad, brother or sister.
- Students will be issued with a 'Learning Snapshot' postcard along with the reading material which we hope will support you in engaging in a discussion with your son or daughter.
- We ask that your son/daughter completes the postcard, outlining what has been discussed and that you, or a responsible adult, sign the postcard as evidence that this discussion has taken place. We would also welcome any additional comments from yourself about what you have talked about with your son/daughter.
- The postcard will form the basis of a feedback discussion which your son/daughter will have with their class teacher and fellow students in their lesson.
- Attached is an example of a 'Learning Snapshot' postcard and an article which your son/daughter may have already been set in their English lessons.

We are very grateful for your support with this initiative which we hope will help your son or daughter to engage in regular reading habits at home as well as the development of their vocabulary.

If you have any further questions regarding this, please contact Mrs Gill, Head of English, via email on: n.gill@tarletonacademy.org.

Yours sincerely,

M. Cunniffe

(Head of School)

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