

Dear Parents/Carers

The national curriculum for English aims to ensure that pupils develop the habit of reading widely and often for both pleasure and information.

Developed by charity The Reading Agency (www.readingagency.org.uk) in partnership with Libraries Connected and the UK public library network, **Reading Well** is a national books on prescription programme that provides helpful reading to support health and wellbeing. The scheme is developed and endorsed by leading health partners and delivered in public libraries.

Since its launch, the scheme has supported **1.2 million people** to borrow **2.3 million books**. It has been endorsed by the public as well as by GPs, mental health professionals and government ministers as a helpful community-based health service. It has also delivered significant benefit; in a recent survey, **90%** of young people would recommend their Reading Well book to a friend for support.

Reading Well for children is a new booklist of expert endorsed reading to support children's mental health and wellbeing. The list is targeted at children in Key Stage 2 but includes titles aimed at a wide range of reading levels to support less confident readers, and to encourage children to read together with their siblings and carers.

How Reading Well works

- Teachers, health and social care professionals, or anyone supporting children and families can use the scheme to recommend helpful reading. People can also self-refer via the booklist.
- The books will be available on the open shelves of the local public library for anyone to borrow.

The booklist

The booklist of 33 titles provides quality assured information, advice and stories to support children's mental health and wellbeing. The books are all selected and endorsed by health experts, children and families.

The list covers general information and advice about: maintaining good mental health and wellbeing; understanding and managing feelings; dealing with worries; navigating the world around you, including at school, online and in the news; dealing with tough times, including when someone dies, trauma, and when a parent or carer has mental health needs; and support for living well with specific diagnosed conditions including Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and physical disabilities.

Please find enclosed some additional information about the **Reading Well for children** including the booklist of 33 titles and posters for you to display in school.

The need

There is **enormous need** for quality assured health information, advice and stories to support children in understanding and managing their mental health and wellbeing:

- **One in eight** (12.8%) 5 to 19 year olds had **at least one mental health condition** when assessed in 2017.
- **Over a third** of parents of children aged 4-11 (34%) **worry about their child's mental health** at least once a week, and these worries appear well placed as almost two thirds (60%) of children aged 8-11 say they feel stressed, sad or worried at least once a month.
- There has been an **increase over time in the prevalence** of mental health needs in 5 to 15 year olds. Rising from 9.7% in 1999 and 10.1% in 2004, to 11.2% in 2017.
- Schools are on average making **183 Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) referrals** every school day. **Most referrals** (56%) came from **primary schools**.

How do schools benefit?

- Reading Well for children has been mapped against key priorities outlined in the **2018 government Green paper** on Transforming Children's and Young People's Mental Health Provision including prevention and early intervention.
- The scheme provides evidence based interventions for common mental health needs, e.g. anxiety, depression, behaviour problems, as well as support for children and young people who experience traumatic events, bereavement etc.
- Reading Well is a 'shelf ready' resource that has been clinically endorsed by experts; staff don't need to be familiar with the books themselves to feel comfortable recommending books from the list as part of their wellbeing provision.

Endorsements

Reading Well for children is supported by the British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies, The British Psychological Society, Carers UK, Carers Trust, Mental Health First Aid England, Mental Health Foundation, Mind, National Association of Primary Care, NHS England (Children and Young People's Mental Health), Public Health England, Royal College of General Practitioners, Royal College of Psychiatrists.

Yours sincerely

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