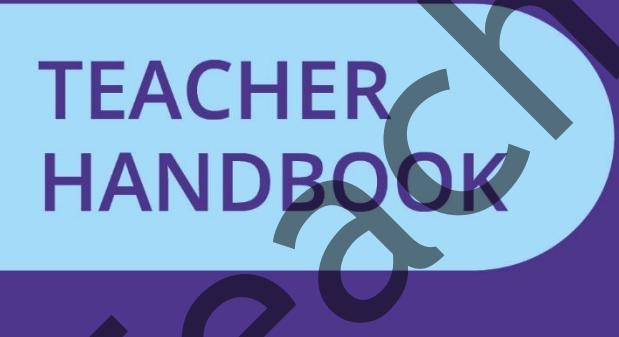


KS3

# FIX IT READING



TEACHER  
HANDBOOK

- Structured intervention support to improve students' reading at KS3
- 12 detailed lesson plans with worksheets and activities
- Supported by an accompanying student workbook for classroom use

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# An introduction to *Fix it reading*

## About the author

Annabel Wall has taught English for over 20 years and currently works for a Hospital Education and Reintegration service (HERS) within a large MAT. A former second in department, she's also an educational consultant and writer for BBC Bitesize and the author of a wide range of educational resources, textbooks and GCSE revision guides.

## How to use the teacher handbook

The lessons and resources in *Fix it reading* have been devised for KS3 students aged 11–14 (in years 7, 8 and 9) whose reading attainment has fallen behind that of their peers or below their age-related or expected reading level.

We know that the reading gap happens before children start school and can become more acute during the transition to secondary school (Quigley, 2020), and one in seven children will begin secondary school as a struggling reader (Martell, 2018).

Research also suggests that a quarter of students at 15 still have a reading age of 12 or below. This reading and language gap affects students' academic outcomes in all subjects at GCSE – including maths and science, as well as arts and humanities subjects (OUP, EEF, Save the Children and GL Assessment).

We also know that this cohort of students' reading has been adversely affected by Covid-19 school closures, with the Education Policy Institute and DfE (2021) recently reporting that all year groups have experienced a learning loss in reading of around two months. This learning loss is more acute for younger disadvantaged students (Rose et al., 2021) and can be as much as seven months.

The need for increased reading support then is clear. Evidence-based research from EEF (2018) suggests that reading comprehension strategies which focus on learners' understanding of written texts can be both effective and low cost for schools to implement, and can deliver an additional six months' progress in reading. The approaches have been proven to be 'more effective for low attaining older readers' and for disadvantaged students.

*Fix it reading* has been specifically designed to develop these reading comprehension skills, and to provide support, guidance and lesson plans for the staff involved in delivering a reading intervention programme, many of whom may not be experts in this field or have had any specialist training in how to teach reading.

The teaching and learning resources can be used for 1:1, small-group and whole-group intervention sessions or as a complementary resource in English lessons when teachers are focusing specifically on developing students' reading skills. The lessons can be used in sequence or as one-offs to target a particular reading skill.

This teacher handbook is accompanied by the *Fix it reading* student workbook, which contains all the classroom and reading resources needed for each of the 12 lessons. The teacher handbook includes lesson plans and guidance to develop your understanding of how and why these reading comprehension strategies work, with a summary of the research evidence to help you to understand the learning context for the lessons.

The lessons are designed to support students who have lost confidence with their reading during their transition to secondary school and throughout key stage 3. It focuses primarily on reading comprehension and reading aloud strategies for students whose reading development is delayed, but not generally as a consequence of a special educational need or disability (SEND) or because English is an additional language (EAL). These students might benefit from more specialist support.

Each lesson is divided into four sections, with a starter/introduction, a development section, a plenary activity and a homework/extension suggestion, with suggestions for how the lesson could be extended. The lesson structure has been kept deliberately broad to allow you to adapt the lessons to suit your particular cohort's needs. The timing for each lesson is approximately one hour, so the whole programme represents about 12 hours of teaching.

There is also a student survey and a teacher observation sheet to complete before and after delivery of the programme, to help you to assess students' needs and progress.

The lessons are divided into two sections, focusing on different areas of reading intervention:

### **Section 1: Practical reading comprehension strategies**

- Practical strategies for supporting students' comprehension
- Practical strategies for inferring meaning
- Practical strategies for summarising
- Practical strategies for word recognition

### **Section 2: Group reading strategies**

- Reading aloud
- Reciprocal reading

The intention is that *Fix it reading* will help students to enjoy reading more and to feel more confident as readers, leading to overall improvements in their literacy and crucially their engagement and motivation as learners in English and other subjects.

Students in intervention groups are often concerned about being left behind and can experience feelings of shame, isolation or disillusionment. Consequently, there is a strong emphasis throughout on confidence-building and student support running through the lessons. The activities aim to celebrate what they can do, as well providing a supportive and scaffolded framework for moving students forward in their reading.

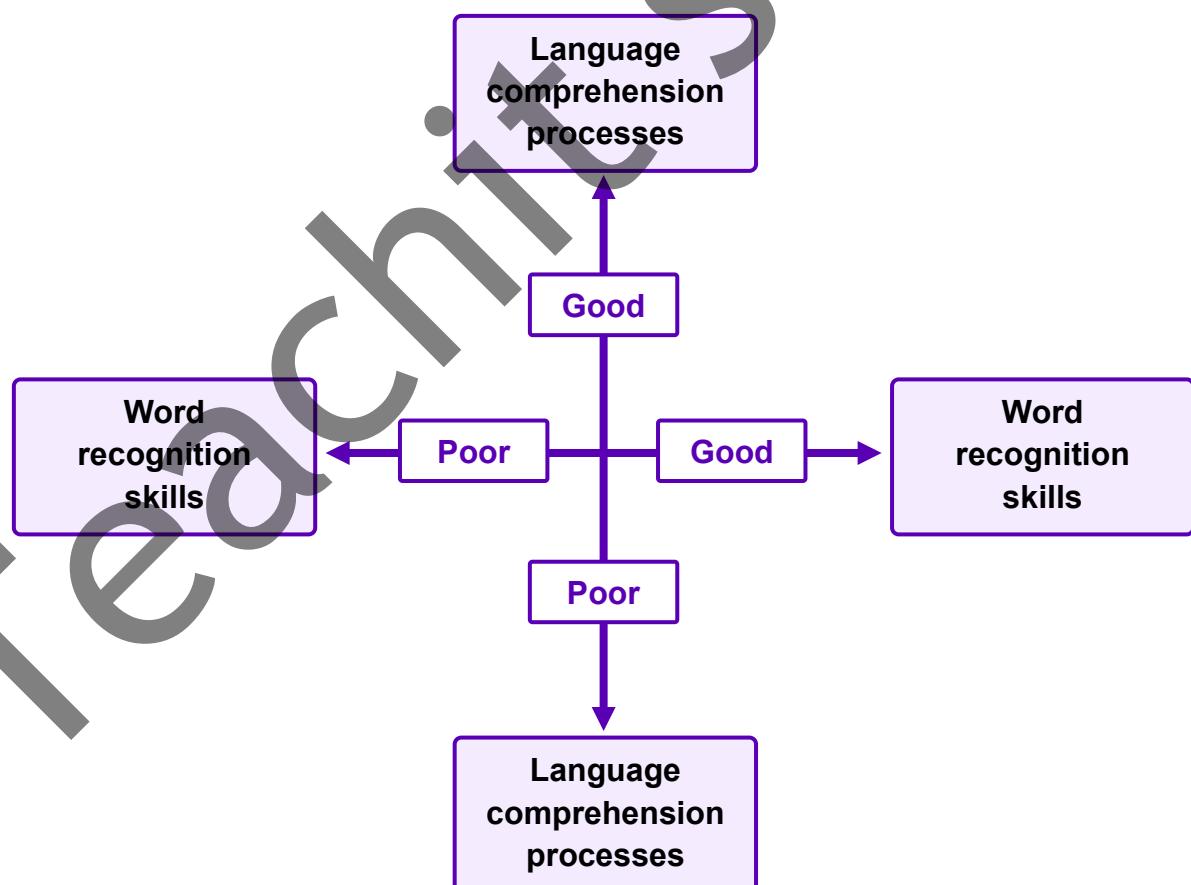
## Understanding a student's reading level

You'll probably have some data from feeder schools and internal records to identify which students might benefit from additional support with their reading skills. An initial diagnostic assessment of students' reading level is also crucial to identify readers who are struggling, particularly with new year 7s.

Murphy and Murphy (2018) advocate three stages of screening to ensure the right students are selected for extra support. Stage 1 involves a regular standardised test that assesses decoding and comprehension. Stage 2 retests those reading at or below the bottom third of the national percentile with another standardised test; this second test may catch those able readers who simply weren't motivated in the first test. In the third stage, those students that are still identified as struggling readers can then have a one-to-one assessment of their reading with a teacher qualified to identify areas of specific weakness.

Following initial diagnostic assessments, your own or colleagues' one-to-one observations are also important because you can more closely identify which areas of reading a student is struggling with.

The 'simple view of reading' diagram (Gough and Tunmer, 1986) is a useful starting point for this work, as it demonstrates the commonly accepted view that reading has two basic components: word recognition (decoding) and language comprehension.



The simple view formula makes clear that strong reading comprehension cannot occur unless both word recognition skills and language comprehension abilities are good.

For example, a student may listen to an oral text and be able to easily show their understanding when questioned. This student has good **language comprehension** skills. However, this student may still struggle when faced with **reading comprehension** because of their weak decoding skills. Alternatively, a student may be more confident with **word recognition** but have poor **language comprehension**. This approach is useful because it allows teachers to think more strategically about what support students may need.

Asking a student to read aloud one-to-one can also be a powerful diagnostic tool. If a student struggles with their oral reading fluency (ORF), it is a sign that they may need additional support with either their decoding skills or comprehension, or both (Hudson et al., 2020). [See pages 49-55 for some ideas and approaches for reading aloud.](#)

## What difficulties do struggling readers face at secondary school?

We know that as a result of Covid-19 more students will be transitioning to secondary school with a disparity between their reading age and chronological age. While many families embraced reading during the pandemic, disadvantaged students may have had less access to books and reading support during school lockdowns. BookTrust, the UK's largest children's reading charity, suggests that there were many students who read less and 'struggled to access books and stories during the Covid-19 pandemic' (Gerald, 2020).

We know too that some students are more likely to need support with reading. Only 60% of FSM (free school meals) students met the expected standard in reading at the end of primary school, compared with 78% of non-FSM pupils.

Boys continue to fall behind girls in their reading. Research from National Literacy Trust (Clark and Picton, 2020) showed that the gap between boys' and girls' daily reading widened during lockdown, increasing from a 4.3 to 7.4 percentage difference. Government statistics (DfE, 2020) also show that, in every ethnic group, girls were more likely than boys to meet both the expected and higher reading standards at the end of primary school.

The revised GCSE curriculum in 2015 also marked a shift towards more exam-based assessment, which can create additional difficulties for struggling readers. Reading is key to higher attainment.

These increased challenges make it imperative that readers at KS3 are given the support they need to get ready for the rigours of the KS4 curriculum. Quigley (2020) summarised the challenges facing readers as the 'Arduous Eight':

1. Background knowledge – the sheer range of necessary knowledge and related ideas in a given passage or whole text.
2. Range and complexity of vocabulary (including word length).
3. Use of abstract imagery and metaphorical language.
4. Sentence length and syntax.
5. Narrative or whole-text structures.
6. The generic elements of the text, e.g. a biographical account in history.
7. The scaffolds present, or absent, in a given text, e.g. keyword glossary.
8. Text length.

Text	Title	Fiction or non-fiction	Type of text
1	UK Black Lives Matter protesters pull down statue of slave trader and push it into harbour	Non-fiction	Online news story from 2020
2	<i>12 Years a Slave</i>	Non-fiction	Historical memoir from 1853
3a	Modern slavery fact sheet	Non-fiction	Information text from a charity website from 2016
3b	The Universal Declaration of Human Rights	Non-fiction	Legal summary from 1948
3c	Stories of Freedom	Non-fiction	True life story from charity website in 2016
4	<i>Patina</i>	Fiction	Sports novel for young adults published in 2017
5	<i>Home Ground</i>	Fiction	Football novel published in 2019 for reluctant and dyslexic readers
6	<i>Kids' Survival Guide: Practical Skills for Intense Situations</i>	Non-fiction	Informational/advisory/instructional text published in 2020
7	Eating insects: Should we be eating more? Why are they so good?	Non-fiction	BBC Newsround website article from 2019
9	'The Pie Thief'	Fiction	Graphic novel published in 2018, set in Victorian era
10 and 11	<i>City of Ghosts</i>	Fiction	Modern ghost story published in 2018 for KS3 readers
12	<i>The Hound of the Baskervilles</i>	Fiction	Detective story published in 1901

## 1b Practical strategies for inferring meaning

Inference is fundamental to successful reading comprehension and is a higher order skill that students need to use across the curriculum. Van den Broek (1999) defines inference as ‘information that is activated during reading yet not explicitly stated in the text’. Inference is supported by a student’s background knowledge, as the reader uses their experience to read between the lines and develop an interpretation of a text. Inference can also be as simple as working out that the pronoun ‘she’ refers to a character mentioned in the last sentence.

It can be useful to consider the different types of inference that are used when we read. A knowledge of these types of inference can help teachers to ask inference questions during lessons with greater precision (Quigley, 2020).

Here are some of the most commonly cited types of inference (Kispal, 2008). It should be noted that these inference types are of academic interest to the teacher but do not need to be shared with students. Also, there is considerable overlap between these categories.

### Predictive inferences

We often use predictive inferences before reading the text ([see Lesson 2 on page 20 for developing the use of prediction](#)). Research shows that the sharing of prior knowledge during a prediction is particularly important for the development of EAL learners’ inference skills (Kispal, 2008).

For example:

- What do we already know about this subject?
- How can we use our existing knowledge to help us to infer meaning?
- What can we infer from the title?
- What clues do we have that might suggest what this text will be about?

### Local (or cohesive) inferences

This type of inference looks at links between sentences and paragraphs in order to understand a text ([see Lesson 4 on page 27](#)). This is an area that experienced readers take for granted, but struggling readers sometimes miss the details that would allow them to ‘fill in the gaps’ of comprehension.

For example:

- Who is the pronoun ‘it’ referring to in line 18 of the text?
- How does the connective ‘although’ help us to understand the meaning of these sentences?
- Which word suggests the family are late to the party?

## Elaborative inferences

Students bring their existing knowledge to add meaning and greater coherence to the text (see [Lesson 4 on page 27](#)). These types of inference typically happen during our reading of a text.

For example:

- How do we know the character is nervous?
- What are the connotations (or feelings we associate with a word) of ‘savage’?
- How does the conclusion suggest the speech is biased?
- How can we infer from the opening that the writer is trying to present a balanced viewpoint?

## Global inferences

Students use details from the text to infer the overall concerns, morals and message of the text (see [Lesson 5 on page 29](#)).

For example:

- What does Romeo’s speech tell us about how love is presented in the play as a whole?
- What can we infer about the overall purpose of this article?
- What is the writer’s message about the use of plastic?

## Evaluative inferences

This type of inference generally happens after we have read a text (see [Lesson 5 on page 29](#)). The focus here is looking back on a text and reflecting/concluding/evaluating. The student is being asked what they think in relation to the text.

For example:

- How does the reader feel about the issue of homelessness by the end of the article?
- Why is the playwright interested in the theme of race?
- Does the writer present a balanced viewpoint?
- Have you changed your mind about this issue after reading the text?

It is important to support students in building these different inference skills as this area is one of the most challenging aspects of reading comprehension. By breaking inference into different categories, you can more easily ask targeted questions in lessons.

## Listening and inferring

Research has shown that struggling readers may be more willing to initially engage in inference tasks if these are separate from reading (Kispal, 2008). Try to read a text aloud to the class and ask them to listen, and then ask inference questions, rather than asking students to follow the text and infer on their own. Speaking and listening then take on an important role in supporting students to develop their inference skills.

**See Lesson 4 on page 27 for how this works in a lesson. This is also explored in further depth in the Reciprocal reading lessons on pages 50-55.**

## Think-alouds

To support the inference strategies noted by Kispal, students also need help with explicit modelling (Elleman, 2017). Using the different types of inference as a starting point, you can model the thinking processes of inference by using ‘think-alouds’.

By modelling this process, you can show students how experienced readers explore a text.

For example:

- What do I think the writer means here? How do I know?
- What do I learn from this bit of the text?
- Is there more than one way of looking at this?
- I'm not sure what's going on in this sentence. I will need to reread it.

**See Lesson 4 and 5 on pages 27 and 29 for how this works in practice.**

# Inference

## LESSON 05

**Lesson length:** 60 minutes

### Lesson objective

Develop students' inference skills (with a focus on global and evaluative inferences).

### Resources needed

Pages 29–33 in the *Fix it reading* student workbook  
Text 5 – *Home Ground* by Alan Gibbons on page 30

Explain to students they are going to work on their inference skills today, with a focus on using what they already know to work out what the writer is doing.

### Starter/introduction

They will be reading a section from a novel called *Home Ground*. Ask them to spend a few minutes thinking about the title. Then start to do some 'think-alouds' with students.

- What can we infer about the story from the title? Recap the meaning of the word 'infer'.
- Discuss famous home grounds. Which would students most like to visit and why? Ask for oral contributions from as many students as you can.
- Does the title have more than one meaning? For example, it is used in football to mean a football team's home football ground, where they train and play. It has also become an expression to mean when someone is comfortable, secure or familiar with a situation or place.

### Development

1. Read the first part of **Text 5** on page 30 of the student workbook until the sentence, 'Another player was waiting in the goalmouth.' Ask students the following questions:
  - How can we infer that the characters are playing football?
  - How do we use our knowledge of the game to assume this?
  - How does the title of the novel also support this assumption?
  - Who is Mo Salah? (Egyptian Premier League footballer who is regarded as one of the best players in the world. He is known for his finishing, dribbling and speed.)
  - How does this knowledge help us to understand the theme of this text and Sam's view of the boy in the first paragraph?

2. Now read the rest of **Text 5** to students. Explain that at points you will ask the class to complete a sentence in unison to check they are with you (just ask them to finish the sentence whenever you pause). Focus on reading the dialogue parts with expression – for example, to show that the character Jordan is angry. Encourage students to create their own ‘mental movies’ of the text – what do they imagine the surroundings are? How old are these boys? What are they wearing?
3. Ask students to answer the following question on page 32 of the student workbook: How can we infer that the reader is going to like the character of Sam more than Jordan? Support students with some ‘think-alouds’. For example:
- Is Jordan justified in his anger?*
- When did this anger become less justified? (When he shoves Sam.)*
- How does Sam show more emotional control than Jordan?*
- How does the perspective affect our view of the character? (We share Sam’s viewpoint, so are more likely to feel closer to him and share his attitude.)*
- Ask students to think about people they know and what they admire/dislike – how does this affect their judgement of these two characters?
4. Ask students to evaluate the extract on page 30 of the student workbook – does the writer present a realistic view of a football game? How does it compare to their own experiences of football games or other sporting competitions? Do the tensions on the pitch seem realistic and convincing? What details would they add or change?

### Plenary

In pairs, ask students to verbally retell the events in this opening section of the novel, focusing only on the main events. Alternatively, can they summarise the events in 3–6 drawings? Move around the class listening to or looking at their retellings to see how they have mentally organised the events.

### Extension/homework ideas

Ask students to compare the characters of Sam and Jordan to the character of Patty from Lesson 4. Which characters show a positive attitude towards their sport? Ask students to give Patty, Sam or Jordan some coaching advice to help them to achieve their goals. Students should write their suggestions in the trophy outline.