

Cotherstone Primary School



Reading Bands Information Booklet

Reading books are graded by reading levels known as Book Bands or schemes. We use a variety of reading schemes and the different schemes are all designed for different purposes. Whilst being categorised as closely as they can be into book bands, it is not an exact process as the different schemes do have slightly different stages or colours. We use either Oxford Reading Tree (ORT) or Collins Big Cat schemes to form the basis of our book banding.

Book Bands and Levels Chart

Performance Indicator	Book Band*
	0 Lilac
	1 Pink
Reception Expected	2 Red
	3 Yellow
	4 Blue
Year 1 Expected	5 Green
	6 Orange
	7 Turquoise
	8 Purple
Year 2 Expected	9 Gold
	10 White
	11 Lime
Year 3 Expected	12 Copper
	13 Topaz
Year 4 Expected	14 Ruby
	15 Emerald
Year 5 Expected	16 Sapphire
Year 6 Expected	17 Diamond

Each Book Band has its own colour. The chart above gives an indication of the range of Book Band levels at which most children will be reading as they progress through primary school. The colour scheme we use is based on the Collins Big Cat scheme. As a number of our scheme books have been around a while they may have a number of different stickers or numbers on them.

The chart shows the progress of an 'average' band of children- but no individual child is 'average', so no child makes smooth progress precisely in this way. Children tend to learn in fits and starts – periods of growth followed by periods of consolidation when their progress seems to halt for a while. The periods where you don't see rapid progress may be worrying, especially after a 'growth spurt', but they are important as your child develops confidence in using and applying their newly acquired skills.

If you are ever worried about your child's progress, talk to their teacher.

The books children read will vary in a number of ways, including layout, size, vocabulary and length, to give the children a rich diet of literature. The difference between each colour band/number stage is very gradual so that children do not experience great difficulty moving up through the scheme.

Progress through the bands is not automatic and it is important to ensure that children working in the early bands have secure understanding so that they remain in control of the task and well-motivated as they move on to more challenging texts.

Obviously this guidance can only give a rough idea of the right reading level for your child. There will be a wide range of reading abilities in any school year. As a rough guide, children should be able to read at least 90% of the words on the page without any problem. If the book is too easy, they can become bored. If it's too difficult, they can become frustrated, and may have to concentrate so hard on reading the words that they lose the enjoyment of understanding the story.

How we assess which level your child should be on.

There are a number of ways in which teachers decide which reading band would be most suitable for your child. Reading ages form the initial basis. Calculating their reading age is done by a single word reading check. Children are given a graded list of unrelated words and according to the number of correct readings their reading age is calculated. Although quick and easy to administer the single reading test relies on the child's ability to decode with no comprehension.

Another reading age test we use is a context comprehension assessment. This is where children have to read a sentence with at least one word missing and they have to select the appropriate word from a list of options. This helps to give an element of comprehension as well as testing a child's decoding skills.

Teachers will then use the calculated reading ages alongside their assessment to decide which book band level is appropriate for your child.

A Word of Caution!

Reading ages – These are a guide. The statistical confidence level is fairly wide and becomes even wider as the reading age increases to such an extent that they do become unreliable. As learning to read is not a linear process, the difference between a child's reading age and chronological age will not remain a constant value. As such, if there is a certain number of months' difference between one assessment and the next assessment it is not necessarily an indication that the child's reading is 'slowing down'. However, do feel free to discuss it with the class teacher if you are concerned.

Reading band books – reading band books serve a purpose in that they have been specifically designed to build up a specific set of reading skills but they are not the be all and end all. Children need to be reading and listening to books that are non-scheme based, often referred to as 'real books'. This can become a tricky balance between real and scheme books as the books children are reading become longer.

Rushing through the stages - You will be doing your child no favours if you rush them through books. It is not a race; it is a journey. Children learn at different rates just as they learn to walk, dress themselves etc. at different rates. Reading must not be treated as a competition. If children are rushed through the books they will not achieve the enjoyment and understanding

necessary. Books that they find too difficult will soon put them off reading.

Do hear your child read every day.

Little and often is more beneficial than a long session once a week.

Think about how long you are reading for - the amount of reading time shouldn't exceed your child's span of attention.

Pick your timing carefully - it's best not to embark on a reading session when your child is tired. Every child is an individual - try not to compare your child's progress with other children or with brothers and sisters.

Lilac level

Lilac level books are wordless books that tell a story through pictures alone. They help children to develop speaking and listening skills through creating and telling stories.

How to support your child reading Lilac level books

Your child is just beginning to discover the excitement of books. Although these books have no words, they are an important introduction to reading. Please encourage your child to:

- Look at the pages in order, and talk about what is happening on the left hand page before the right hand page.
- Talk about what is happening on each page, rather than just talking about what they see in each picture.
- Tell you who or what the book is about.

Pink book band – stage 1

Pink level is the very first level of reading books which has words. The number of words increases slightly as your child progresses through the reading level. Children are getting used to reading from left to right and matching spoken words to written words.

Aligned to Phase 2 Letters and Sounds

Learning opportunities at this level:

- Locate title, open front cover, turn pages appropriately
- Understand that left page comes before right
- Use meaning together with repeated language patterns (syntax) and some letters to read simple text
- Match spoken word to written word (1:1 correspondence)
- Use a few known words to check own reading
- Read a simple CVC (Consonant Vowel Consonant) word in the text from left to right

How to support your child reading Pink level books:

Your child is beginning to learn to read. As they read, please help them to:

- Read the words carefully. Ask your child to sound out and blend only the words they can't read yet, not every word. Eventually almost all words will become part of your child's 'sight memory', and they won't have to sound out at all.
- On second and third readings of the book, encourage them to read with more pace and with less focus on sounding out the letters in each word.

- Make a story out of a whole book, rather than focusing just on what is happening on each page.
- Tell you about something that happened in the book or about something they found out in the book.

Red book band – stage 2

The second step up the ladder as children gain a little more confidence and may know some words by sight. Red level books have a slightly increased number of words, an increase from eight to twelve pages and slightly more complex story lines.

The growing complexity in the story lines is reinforced through the development of inference and prediction using visual literacy. All of the books introduce new sets of characters which are revisited throughout the level.

Aligned approximately with Phase 3 Letters and Sounds

Learning opportunities at this level:

- Locate and recall title
- Consolidate secure control of one-to-one matching on a wide range of texts
- Use known words to check and confirm reading
- Solve simple CVC words by blending phonemes from left to right and check for meaning and correct syntax, ie, does it make sense and sound right?
- Start to read more rhythmically or use phrasing while maintaining track of text
- Repeat words, phrases or sentences to check, confirm or modify own reading

How to support your child reading Red level books:

Your child is beginning to learn how to read. As they read, please help them to:

- Read the words carefully. Most of the words can be recognised or sounded out. Ask your child to sound out and blend only the words they can't read yet, not every word. Eventually almost all words will become part of your child's 'sight memory', and they won't have to sound out at all.
- On second and third readings of the book, encourage them to read with more pace and with less focus on sounding out the letters in each word.
- Make a story out of a whole book, rather than focusing just on what is happening on each page.
- Tell you about something that happened in the book, or about something they found out in the book.

Yellow book band – stage 3

Children are beginning to read more varied sentence structures and taking some note of punctuation. Usually no more than 15 pages with 1 or 2 sentences per page. Non-fiction titles at this level build on children's interests and encourage discussion around the high-quality photographs. New learning in Yellow level books includes a slightly increased number of words and a move away from familiar experiences. Yellow books require some inferencing skills from the reader, e.g. for humour, and have more variation in sentence structure, including sentences with more than one clause.

Aligned with Phases 3/ 4 of Letters and Sounds

Learning opportunities at this level:

- Follow print with eyes, finger pointing only at points of difficulty
- Take more note of punctuation to support the use of grammar and oral language rhythms
- Cross-check all sources of information more quickly while reading
- Note familiar words and phonemes and use these to help with reading of unknown words
- Search for information in print to predict, confirm or attempt new words while reading
- Notice relationships between one text and another
- Predict in more detail

How to support your child reading Yellow level books:

Your child is now beginning to read with more confidence. As they read aloud, you can help them by:

- Giving them time to sound out words they don't know. If they still struggle, encourage them to try sounding out the whole word first, rather than guessing from the pictures or from the first letter.
- Giving them time to recognise and correct their own mistakes.
- Asking them to talk about what's happening in the book, encouraging them to make links to events on previous pages.

Blue book band – stage 4

Children are becoming more confident at reading longer and more varied sentences. The books have a slightly increased number of words and some variation in sentence beginnings. They may use ellipses and other punctuation. The story lines are more complex, including more than one event, and the stories are less dependent on picture cues.

Aligned with Phases 4/ 5 of Letters and Sounds

Learning opportunities at this level:

- Move through text attending to meaning, print and sentence structure flexibly
- Self-correct more rapidly on the run
- Re-read to enhance phrasing and clarify precise meaning
- Solve new words using print information and understanding of the text to try alternative pronunciations
- Identify constituent parts of unfamiliar words to read correctly
- Manage a greater range of text genre
- Discuss content of the text in a manner which indicates precise meaning

How to support your child reading Blue level books:

Your child is now developing into a more confident reader. Encourage them to select from books at the library or bookshop as well as those from school. As they read, you can help by encouraging them to:

- Sound out quickly – and silently – inside their heads, if they need to sound out words.

- Look at the punctuation marks. You may want to model how to read a page of writing, paying attention to punctuation, such as full-stops and question marks.
- Tell you about what the characters in the story are doing and why they are acting in that way.
- Show you how they can find particular things that interest them in non-fiction books.

Green book band – stage 5

Children are starting to read quite fluently and take note of punctuation. The number of words increases slightly in Green level books. Stories have a wider variety of characters and events which develop over a number of pages. Sentences may include lists of things or actions, and adverbs are used frequently to begin sentences. The growing complexity in the story lines is reinforced through the development of inference and prediction using visual literacy.

Aligned with Phase 5 of Letters and Sounds

Learning opportunities at this level:

- Read fluently with attention to punctuation
- Solve new words using print detail while attending to meaning and syntax
- Track visually additional lines of print without difficulty
- Discuss and interpret character and plot more fully
- Use contents page and glossary in non-fiction books and locate information

How to support your child reading Green level books:

Your child is now developing into a more confident reader. Encourage them to select from books at the library or bookshop as well as those from school. As they read, you can help by encouraging them to:

- Sound out quickly – and silently – inside their heads, if they need to sound out words.
- Look at the punctuation marks. You may want to model how to read a page of writing, paying attention to punctuation, such as full-stops and question marks.
- Tell you about what the characters in the story are doing and why they are acting in that way.
- Show you how they can find particular things that interest them in non-fiction books.

Orange book band – stage 6

Children are starting to read longer and more complex sentences and can understand a range of punctuation. At Orange level, the page count increases to challenge and encourage reading stamina. There is an increased use of dialogue to encourage reading with expression. Books at this stage also introduce complex sentences (use of 'if', 'so' and 'because') and include italics to show emphasis. Slightly more literary language is used. Children are increasingly encouraged to infer meaning from the text in order to gain full enjoyment from the story.

Aligned with Phases 5/ 6 of Letters and Sounds

Learning opportunities at this level:

- Get started on fiction after briefer introductions without relying on illustrations

- Examine non-fiction layout and use the contents page to select which sections of a book to read
- Read longer phrases and more complex sentences
- Attend to a range of punctuation
- Blend phonemes in unfamiliar words more fluently, cross checking with meaning and syntax
- Search for and use familiar syllables within words to read longer words
- Infer meaning from text, check information in text with illustrations, particularly non-fiction, and comment on content
- Begin to use appropriate terminology when discussing different types of text

How to support your child reading Orange level books:

Your child is now beginning to read with more independence. They should be feeling more confident and will rarely need to sound out words. You can help them by:

- Listening to them when they read aloud. Avoid interrupting them if they make small mistakes, so that the sense of the text is not lost. You can revisit that page at the end of the session to check certain words.
- Reminding them of useful strategies if they can't read a word, for example:
 1. Sounding the word out silently, under their breath
 2. Dividing a longer word into syllables, or looking at the word without an -ing or an -ed ending

Don't allow them to worry about a word. Tell them what it says and revisit the word once you have completed the book.
- Encouraging some use of expression, especially for character-speech in fiction books. You may wish to model reading some pages aloud for your child to copy.
- Talking about how characters are feeling.

Turquoise book band – stage 7

Children can read complex sentences fairly fluently, taking note of punctuation. They use expression and do not rely on illustrations to help them. Turquoise level books include an increasing range of adjectives and more descriptive verbs to replace 'said'. There is an increased proportion of space allocated to print rather than pictures. Turquoise level books include words chosen for appropriateness and impact rather than decodability, with more extended descriptions. Paragraphs begin to develop and more unusual and challenging vocabulary is included.

Aligned with Phases 5/ 6 of Letters and Sounds

Learning opportunities at this level:

- Extract meaning from the text while reading with less dependence on illustrations
- Approach different genres with increasing flexibility
- Use punctuation and layout to read with a greater range of expression and control
- Sustain reading through longer sentence structures and paragraphs
- Tackle a higher ratio of more complex words using known vocabulary, phonic knowledge and syllables
- Find a way around alphabetically ordered texts such as indexes, glossaries and dictionaries

How to support your child reading Turquoise level books:

Your child is now beginning to read with more independence and their books are getting longer. You can help them by:

- Encouraging them to read some pages silently, inside their heads.
- Listening to some pages read aloud, encouraging the use of expression and paying attention to punctuation marks.
- Talking about how events in the book relate to each other and helping your child to understand how the story builds up in a longer book.
- Asking them to tell you about interesting things they found out and showing you where the information is in the book.

Purple book band – stage 8

Children might read silently or quietly at quite a rapid pace, taking note of punctuation. Purple level books include an increased proportion of longer sentences, with a more challenging vocabulary. Some Purple books have short chapters to challenge and encourage reading stamina. Purple level books include longer and more complex sentences with the inclusion of complex (i.e. 'when') and simple (i.e. 'and') connectives. Story features such as plot, character and setting are developed in more detail, and the text in the non-fiction books is presented in a variety of ways.

Aligned with Phase 6 of Letters and Sounds

Learning opportunities at this level:

- Look through a variety of texts with growing independence to predict content, layout and story development
- Read silently or quietly at a more rapid pace, taking note of punctuation and using it to keep track of longer sentences
- Solve most unfamiliar words on the run by blending long vowel phonemes, recognising and using them in longer and more complex words
- Adapt to fiction, non-fiction or poetic language with growing flexibility
- Take a more conscious account of literary effects used by fiction writers, and the formal language of different types of non-fiction
- Begin to make more conscious use of reading to extend speaking and writing vocabulary and syntax

How to support your child reading Purple level books

Your child is now beginning to read with more independence and their books are getting longer. You can help them by:

- Encouraging them to read some pages silently, inside their heads.
- Listening to some pages read aloud, encouraging the use of expression and paying attention to punctuation marks.
- Talking about how events in the book relate to each other and helping your child to understand how the story builds up in a longer book.
- Asking them to tell you about interesting things they found out and showing you where the information is in the book.

Gold book band – stage 9

Children might read silently or quietly at quite a rapid pace, taking note of punctuation.

Gold level books include more sophisticated and challenging vocabulary, including word play and the introduction of figurative language. Some Gold books have longer chapters for more sustained reading.

Children reading at this level are confident independent readers who can tackle increasingly complex language, story structures and text layout.

Aligned with Phase 6 of Letters and Sounds

Learning opportunities at this level:

- Look through a variety of books with growing independence to predict content and story development, and make full use of non-fiction layout
- Read silently or quietly at a more rapid pace, taking note of punctuation and using it to keep track of longer sentences
- Solve most unfamiliar words on the run by blending long vowel phonemes, recognising and using them in longer and more complex words
- Adapt to fiction, non-fiction and poetic language with growing flexibility
- Take a more conscious account of literary effects used by writers
- Make more conscious use of reading to extend speaking and writing vocabulary and syntax
- locate and interpret information in non-fiction

How to support your child reading Gold level books:

Your child is now reading longer books with fewer illustrations so they continue to need your help to ensure they are getting the full meaning and enjoyment from the text. They may prefer to read one chapter or section at a time, rather than reading the whole book in one session. You can support them by:

- Asking them to read some pages of the book aloud to you so that you can enjoy hearing them reading with expression and pace.
- Asking them to find parts of the text which describe a character or place and talking about the words used in the description.
- Asking for regular updates as to what is happening in the book so that you know how the different chapters or sections link.
- Talking about how much they enjoy a book or a type of book. Encourage them to look for more books of the type they enjoy.

White Book band – stage 10

Books might have chapters. Children will read silently most of the time. They are interested in longer texts which they can return to easily after a break. In White level books there is a more sophisticated use of narrative voice. Clauses in longer sentences are separated by commas to encourage developing intonation. Some books have longer chapters for more sustained reading. The stories included at White level encourage children to empathise with the characters and consider why they behave as they do, and how they change during the course of the story. The

non-fiction books are divided into sections that require more sustained reading and there is increased challenge in the layout of the information.

Letters and Sounds Phases cease to be relevant

Learning opportunities at this level:

- Read silently most of the time
- Sustain interest in longer texts, returning to it easily after a break
- Use text more fully as a reference and as a model
- Search for and find information in texts more flexibly
- Notice the spelling of unfamiliar words and relate to known words
- Show increased awareness of vocabulary and precise meaning
- Express reasoned opinions about what is read and compare texts
- Offer and discuss interpretations of text
- Comment on main characters and how they relate to each other
- Suggest alternatives or extensions to events and actions
- Discuss feelings created by stories
- Retelling of stories is balanced and clear

How to support your child reading White level books:

Your child is now reading longer books with fewer illustrations, so they continue to need your help to ensure they are getting the full meaning and enjoyment from the text. They may prefer to read one chapter or section at a time, rather than reading the whole book in one session. You can support them by:

- Asking them to read some pages of the book aloud to you so that you can enjoy hearing them reading with expression and pace.
- Asking them to find parts of the text which describe a character or place and talking about the words used in the description.
- Asking for regular updates as to what is happening in the book so that you know how the different chapters or sections link.
- Talking about how much they enjoy a book, or a type of book. Encourage them to look for more books of the type they enjoy.

Lime book band – stage 11

Books might have chapters. Children will read silently most of the time. They are interested in longer texts which they can return to easily after a break. Lime level books include a widening range of writing styles and an increased variation in sentence structure, including –ing clauses and longer sentences with more than two clauses. Children reading at Lime level are able to interpret more sophisticated word plays and puns. The narrator’s voice in a fiction story may be distinguished from the characters’ voice through figurative, idiomatic and literary language. The story is often told through dialogue and action to ‘show’ instead of ‘tell’ as the plot develops.

Learning opportunities at this level:

- Begin to read reflectively and to perceive meanings beyond the literal
- Refer to text to support own ideas
- Distinguish main points from examples; fact from opinion
- Devise key questions and words for searching and use several sources

- Begin to read in different ways for different purposes, e.g. skimming for relevance, scanning for specific details, reflective and recursive reading for fuller comprehension
- Compare/contrast work from more than one source
- Read aloud with expression and intonation taking account of punctuation
- Pupils can refer to text layout and organisation
- Pupils show some awareness of the point of view of the author
- Beginning to sustain narrative and investigative reading

How to support your child reading Lime level books:

Although your child is now taking off as a reader, it is still important that you read with them and talk to them about their reading. This reassures them that their reading is still important to you, as well as giving you an opportunity to share an enjoyment of books. You can still help them by:

- Asking them to read aloud some parts of the text which they particularly enjoy. This may include action or description. Talk about how the writer made those parts so enjoyable.
- Talking about how characters develop or how they react to different people, places or events.
- Read the book yourself so that you can talk together about the smaller details of the book.

Copper level – stage 12

Children reading at Copper level at this level, they should be able to:

- interpret more sophisticated word-play and puns
- distinguish the narrator’s voice in a fiction story from the characters’ voices through figurative, idiomatic and literary language
- understand a story that is told through dialogue and action to ‘show’ instead of ‘tell’ the plot

How to support your child reading Copper level books:

Your child may well not want to read aloud to you anymore because they probably enjoy silent reading more. This is fine as long as your child continues to read actively and not just pass their eyes over the words. You can help them by:

- Continuing to make a time available for regular quiet reading sessions, and reading your book while your child reads.
- Establishing an expectation of a conversation at the end of each reading session: can they tell you what’s happening in their book?
- Ask questions which make your child go back to the book to find answers. Support your child as they develop skills in skimming and scanning to find the information to answer your question.
- Continuing to read aloud to your child at bedtime. This shows them the importance you place on reading as well as developing their language, vocabulary and love of story.

Topaz level – stage 13

Children reading at Topaz level are able to interpret more sophisticated word-play and puns. At this level, they should be able to:

- explain a character's motivations
- discuss the points of view of the character and the narrator
- better understand a range of narration styles

How to support your child reading Topaz level books:

Your child may well not want to read aloud to you anymore because they probably enjoy silent reading more. This is fine as long as your child continues to read actively and not just pass their eyes over the words. You can help them by:

- Continuing to make a time available for regular quiet reading sessions, and reading your book while your child reads.
- Establishing an expectation of a conversation at the end of each reading session: can they tell you what's happening in their book?
- Ask questions which make your child go back to the book to find answers. Support your child as they develop skills in skimming and scanning to find the information to answer your question.
- Continuing to read aloud to your child at bedtime. This shows them the importance you place on reading as well as developing their language, vocabulary and love of story.

Ruby, Emerald, Sapphire and Diamond levels – Stages 14 to 17

How to support your child reading these level books

The books at these levels are written in a much more subtle way than in previous levels which means that it is important that the reader is fully engaged with the process of reading and alert to the language and vocabulary the writer is using. These levels are more advanced than many books that are sold to adults but these stories are not intended to be just 'leisure reads'. Although your child should enjoy them, the books need the reader to be fully alert and willing to learn.

You can help them by:

- Continuing to make a time available for regular quiet reading sessions, and reading your book while your child reads.
- Suggest that your child invites friends who are also reading the book to a 'Book Group' which may be made up of their peers or family members. If you skim-read the book first you can prepare some questions for the book group to discuss.
- Before a reading session, ask your child to find and note down some particular information. It could relate to the plot or it could be something like: a really good descriptive passage; three words which are adventurous; two words you want to use in your next piece of writing; an example of something typical a character does or says; how one character's reaction to another shows their relationship ... There are lots of questions you can ask which don't mean you have to know the book yourself but serve to alert your child to its possibilities.

Free Readers

By this stage, children have developed the skills to tackle a range of text types and developed the ability to engage at a high level with the text. Children read silently with confidence and perseverance. A wide variety of longer, demanding texts.

Learning opportunities at this level:

- Sustain confidence and perseverance when reading longer, demanding texts
- Begin to use deduction and inference with more mature fiction and poetry
- Begin to perceive how an author develops: plot, characters, meanings beyond the literal, figurative language
- Distinguish fact from opinion, point from example, relevant from irrelevant
- Select key points of a text and summarise
- Can refer to the impact of structure and organisation of texts
- Can refer to text to explain their views
- Identify themes
- Identify impact of word choices
- Secure the skills of skimming and scanning and recursive reading
- Pupils can identify the purpose of a text

How to support your child as a Free Reader

- They may need guidance on selecting appropriate books. They need to select books which continue to challenge their reading. Whilst they may enjoy reading books by particular authors or a particular genre, it is still important that they experience new authors, topics and styles.
- Although they do not need to be read with so frequently it is still important to share texts and discuss the books the children are reading.
- You may like to consider making comparisons within or between texts, such as;
 - Describing the different characters' reactions to the same event in a story
 - How similar/different is it to ...?
 - Is it as good as ...?
 - Which is better and why?
 - Compare and contrast different characters/settings/themes
 - What do they think about the way information is organised in different parts of the text? Is there a reason for why this has been done?