AGES 4–7

You Can... Promote reading in homes where there is no tradition of reading

In many schools there are 'hard to reach' families. Family members may have left school without having acquired good literacy skills and stayed away from school because of their own negative experiences. In order to break the cycle of poor literacy skills in these families, it is crucial to help to promote literacy in their homes.

Thinking points

- If you decide to do home visits, follow your school or local authority guidelines for your own safety.
- The majority of parents who are 'hard to reach' are not hostile and want their child to do well in school; they just don't know how to help. If you can help these parents to support their children you could make a real difference to the children's life chances.

The Family Reading Campaign

In order to develop reading in the home, the FRC recommends:

- agencies to work in partnership with parents
- children and young people should be helped to fulfil their potential and then they will start to enjoy reading
- different family cultures should be valued and the support offered should be flexible to suit families' varying needs

More information can be found at: www.literacytrust.org.uk /family reading.

Tips, ideas and activities

- Be prepared to make home visits as the children start school. Parents will often be more relaxed in their homes and most will appreciate you taking the time to call. Give the parents simple leaflets on reading with their children as well as the school phone number and a regular time when they can talk to you if they need additional advice.

- Make up packs of tapes, picture books and games. The games should be simple reading games based on the words and events in the book. Games for going home should have as few pieces as possible – but make sure that the pieces are replaceable. Simple lotto games, memory games, snap, board games, hide and seek games or race track games can be made to accompany most picture books.

- Make CD-ROMs and audio cassettes of your own picture books for children and parents to share. Young children will prefer to hear your familiar voice than to hear the voice of an unknown actor. Ting a glass when it's time to turn the page and allow the children a second or two to do it. Listening to the story together with their parents will be a precious time for the child.

- When you send home a game and book pack, make sure that the child has read the book in school and, ideally, played the game so that parents are not dependent on reading instructions. Don't send worksheets: the idea is that parents and children should be together as they play the game. These games are as much about bonding over the idea of reading as they are about reading aloud.