Guided Reading Rotations: Organising Year 2 Groups So Every Pupil Gets Teacher Time

Many Year 2 classes split children into small groups for guided reading, where the teacher works closely with one group at a time while the others take part in other activities. This guide explains how a school can arrange these groups in turns, called rotations, so that every child gets a fair share of teacher time over the week. It is here to help you understand what you might see at your child's school. It is not a timetable, because every school arranges this differently.

What it is

Guided reading is a short session where a teacher sits with a small group of children and reads a text with them. Year 2 is the second year of Key Stage 1, the part of primary school for children aged about six and seven. At this age children read with very different speed and confidence, so teachers often group them by how well they currently read. Each group can then get support that suits it.

A rotation is simply a way of taking turns. While the teacher works with one group, the other groups carry on with tasks they can manage on their own or with a partner. Then the groups move on, so that over the week each group has its turn with the teacher. Rotations help a busy class make good use of every session, so that no child is left waiting without support.

The Department for Education sets out what children are expected to learn in reading. How each school organises its groups is the school's decision, so your child's teacher can tell you how it works in their class.

What happens

A class is often split into three or four groups. Teachers usually decide group sizes by looking at children's current reading, using their own observations and any checks the school carries out. Children reading at a similar level sit together. Groups are often small, perhaps four to six children, so everyone has a chance to read aloud and talk about the text.

While one group is with the teacher, the others work on tasks they can do without constant help. These might include re-reading a familiar book with a partner, matching words to pictures, or a short activity about a story they already know. Teachers choose these carefully so children can stay busy and independent.

Groups rotate through the week so that no group is always last. A simple plan might move groups on each day, so a group that met the teacher early on Monday meets them at a different time on Tuesday. Schools adapt this pattern to fit their timetable, so what happens in another class may look different.

What it means for your child

For your child, guided reading means regular, focused time with the teacher. There they can read aloud, answer questions and receive specific feedback. Children do not stay in the same group all year. As reading develops, many children move between groups, and teachers adjust them when they see a child needs more or less support.

It is natural for children to notice which group they are in. Some may feel proud and others a little unsure. You can help by talking about reading as something everyone is still learning, rather than comparing groups. If your child seems unhappy about their group, or you are unsure how groups are decided, the class teacher is the best person to ask. Schools differ in how they organise this and how often groups change.

How you can help at home

Reading at home works best when it feels relaxed and enjoyable, and a few minutes is plenty. You could take turns reading a page each at bedtime, or let your child read a favourite book aloud to a teddy or a sibling. Spotting letters and words on a cereal box, a road sign or a shop front makes a fun game too.

Talking about stories helps as well. Ask what might happen next, or which character your child likes best and why. A visit to the local library can be a relaxing outing, and most libraries have children's sections where your child can choose books.

If your family speaks another language at home, sharing stories in that language is a lovely way to enjoy books together. You can also ask the teacher for ideas that suit your child.

Questions parents often ask

Why is my child in this group? Teachers group children by their current reading, and this can change as they progress. Your child's teacher can explain the reasons for their group and what they are working on.

How often will my child see the teacher? This varies between schools and classes, so ask the class teacher how guided reading is arranged and how often your child has a turn.

What if my child reads more slowly than others? Children learn to read at different speeds, and slower reading is very common at this age. Your child's progress is best judged over time, and your child's teacher can share how they are getting on and suggest small, everyday ways to help.

Sources

- Department for Education (2023), Reading framework: teaching the foundations of literacy, GOV.UK
- Department for Education (2013), National curriculum in England: English programmes of study (key stages 1 and 2), GOV.UK