

For consideration within Egmont RfP award – whole school

Encouraging Communities of Readers at Joy Lane

Joy Lane Primary School

Siobhan Harkins and Stacey Gillmore



Context

Stacey Gillmore: *Y5 Teacher; 3 years teaching experience*

Siobhan Harkins: *Assistant Head Teacher; English Leader; 10 years teaching experience*

Working on the Reading team together, our different roles within the school support us in driving the reading for pleasure agenda at several levels.

We are continually working towards building a 'reading school' of engaged readers – children, teachers and parents. As a larger-than-average primary school with a high proportion of SEND and Pupil Premium, we work hard to develop and maintain effective relationships with our families; pushing our reading for pleasure agenda has afforded us the opportunity to establish further connections within the school community.

OU Research inspiration and rationale

- *A reading for pleasure pedagogy*
- *Reading communities that are reciprocal and interactive*

We identified that the findings related to 'A reading for pleasure pedagogy' encapsulated much of what we were working towards as a school. We were particularly interested in embedding 'informal book talk' as we had identified that reading had become a task-orientated activity.

We also saw the opportunity to support our ongoing aim (and Ofsted target) to develop home-school links by sharing our reading vision with the parent community. The TaRs findings suggest that reading for pleasure is 'strongly influenced by relationships', and the work we have been doing has supported us in fostering a link between 'children, teachers, families and communities' so that we can establish a shared vision for reading as an enjoyable experience.

Aims

- To create a fun, informal space for reading and 'book blethering'
- To forge links with our parent community in a different context
- To actively demonstrate to the children and parent community that we are readers who value reading for pleasure
- To establish new communities of readers involving children, teachers and parents

Outline

Staff:

- Our introductory staff meeting provided an opportunity for teachers to 'book blether' and reflect on their own knowledge and practices using the 'Review your Practice' questionnaire. As the TaRs research already demonstrated, teachers' knowledge of children's literature was a key area of development; therefore, their Christmas present was a book of their choice to share with their class or read for pleasure alone. Subsequent staff meetings continued to drive the whole-school target.



- We were keen to establish a community of readers amongst the staff where they were encouraged to not only widen their knowledge of children's books, but also read themselves – whatever that may be! We set up a book swap box in the staff room and space for teachers to recommend their favourites. In conjunction with the school's drive to support teacher well-being, the box was situated in the 'wellbeing corner' of the staffroom, encouraging teachers to value the time as adult readers to read.

Children:

- To fully embrace and embed informal book talk, different structures were experimented with. Initially, children prepared book recommendations for homework; this provided them with a scaffold for the first session. During the next session, they brought in a favourite book which they shared using prompt questions to generate discussion, especially for those less confident. The children then began to really take ownership and as they realised that these were their sessions, they designed blether ideas where they would share their book with the whole class or challenge themselves to speak to other class members that they wouldn't usually speak to. They even suggested a book blether session for books they hadn't enjoyed reading. Book Blether sessions soon created that sought-after, informal and spontaneous buzz around reading.
- Teachers were encouraged to develop the school's reading spaces and as a staff, we identified the ingredients of an effective reading area: bright and colourful; comfortable; interactive; stocked with inviting, varied books; and accessible. Staff were challenged to 'spruce up' their reading areas using this shared success criteria, and our School Council were gathered to judge the reading space that met all elements most effectively. These reading areas could then stand as models for others to 'magpie' ideas.





Parents:

'New and extended opportunities for interaction around texts developed' in the creation of Read Around the Campfire - an indoor campsite in our hall where families are invited to lay their picnic blankets under the stars (fairy lights) and bring cushions, camping chairs, tents and sleeping bags to create a cosy, inviting and informal environment to read, discuss and enjoy books.

These 'Read Around' events are becoming a firm Joy Lane tradition. They have been developed and tweaked each time in response to children and parent feedback.



We offer a range of experiences for families to enjoy:

- listening to teachers read in the EY/KS1 and KS2 reading tents
- storytelling to the whole group on the big screen
- a sing-along with our music teachers around the campfire
- the opportunity to meet with other families and discuss and share books



Giving the event a clear structure (see invite) ensures that families come with a shared understanding of the evening: to read, blether, share and enjoy reading.

We request book donations from our parent community; they are invited to fill in a book dedication slip so that their donation is valued and recognised within the school.

We regularly invite a small local children's book shop to host a stall; it is also a suitable opportunity for the book shop to promote their reading events.



**Joy Lane Primary School Welcomes you
to Read Around the Campfire!**

Schedule for the evening

5:10pm Welcome from Mrs Harkins and Miss Gillmore

5:15pm Group campfire story with Mrs Pout

5:30pm - 6:00pm Family reading time

Join us in the Key Stage 1 or Key Stage 2 reading camps for some of our favourite stories!

Guest readers include Miss Gillmore, Miss

Robinson, Mrs King and Miss Miles

6:00 - 6:10pm Singalong with Mrs Rawlings around the campfire

6:15pm Group campfire story with Mr Ashley-Jones

This ticket admitsguests



Impact

Staff:

- Feedback below shows that raising the teachers' awareness of new reads and actively encouraging them to share them with the class impacted the teachers, the children and their teacher/children relationships:

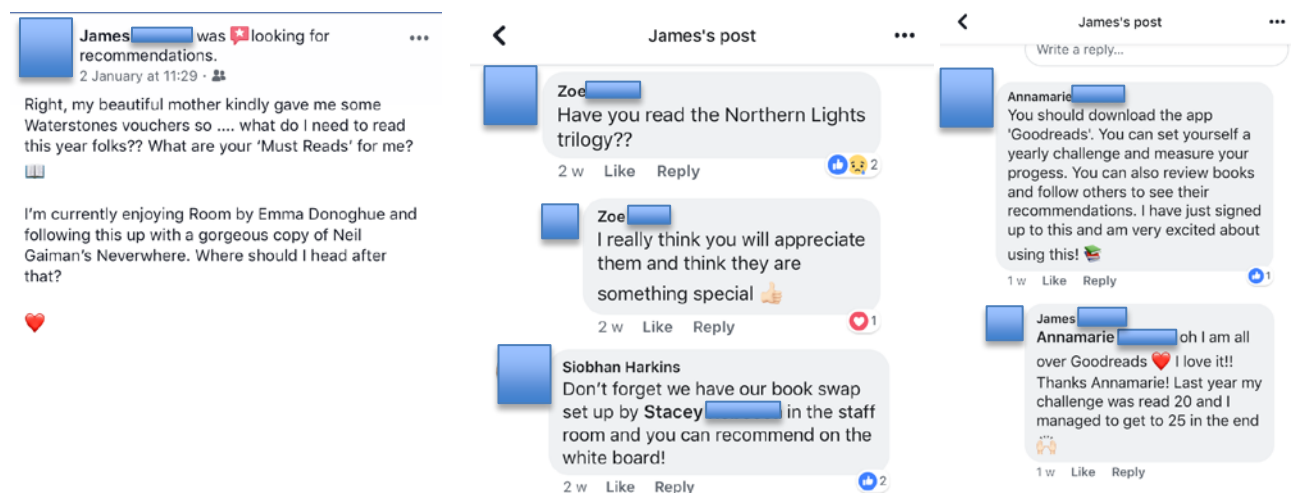
Year 1 Teacher:

*I read Lou Kuenzler's 'Shrinking Violet' to my class. They absolutely loved it and **it is now shared daily in the reading corner**. I found that the book was funny and original so the **children and I created warm emotional bonds**.*

Year 6 Teacher:

*I chose Welcome to Nowhere by Elizabeth Laird, a book about a child living in Syria during war time as **I knew little about the topic**. **Although it was not my usual choice of subject matter, it inspired me to explore other books** covering such topics as I felt moved and affected by the content - the story of Omar taught me more about the problems and struggles of Syrian refugees than countless news reports had done before. **I would definitely recommend it and will be reading it to my Year 6 class**.*

There has been evidence of engaged teacher talk around books and an increased passion for developing their personal reading stamina; in the examples below, teachers are discussing book recommendations on social media and challenging each other to widen their horizons and set targets:



Children:

- Book blether and reading aloud has had an impact on both staff and children alike. In one classroom, after researching children's literature linked to the Victorians and settling on three books, the class voted for the one that would be the class reader. This conversation around books resulted in two children borrowing the other two books; three class members bought the class reader; one child bought the trilogy; another asked a local book shop for their ex-display items to use in class; and the TA bought one of the other books to read with her daughter.
- Read Around the Campfire inspired a vulnerable KS2 child (Pupil Premium and SEND) to attend. The social element to the event gave her the confidence to take part; she had the opportunity to be part of a community that was out of her comfort zone - and she did this willingly!

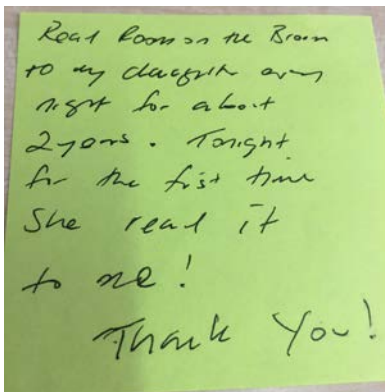
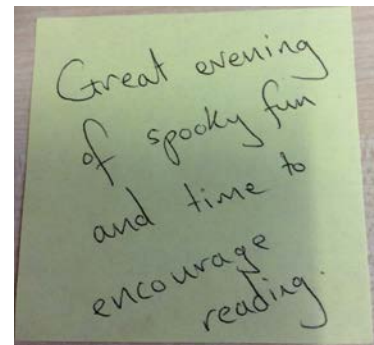
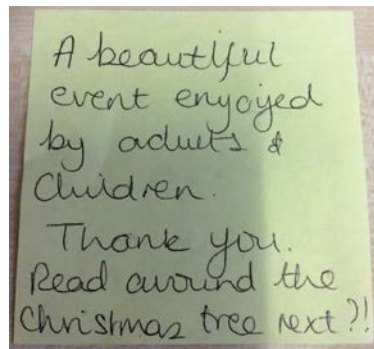
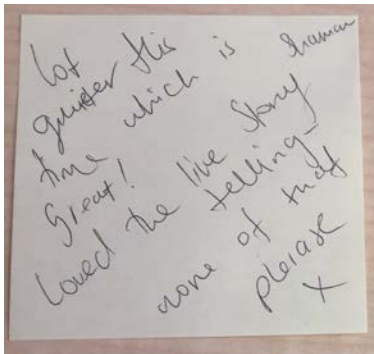
Parents:

- 'Read Around the Campfire' has signalled a shift in the school's approach to reading for pleasure, and it is becoming embedded in the school's reading pedagogy.

Parental feedback:

*'What a lovely way to **foster the community feel of the school**. Plenty of **book conversation** and beautiful singing.'*

*'...working full time, I don't get to **mingle with other parents** and this was a great opportunity to.'*



(See post-it) For this child in KS1, 'Read Around the Campfire' offered a new social environment with the opportunity to watch others reading with/to each other. This resulted in them having the confidence and desire to read their favourite story to their parent for the first time after having it read to them for two years - proof that 'reading for pleasure is a highly social process and that young readers are nurtured through their involvement in richly reciprocal communities of readers.'

Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

- We will continue to raise teachers' awareness of children's literature, as without this, communities of readers cannot be maintained and developed.
- We are currently in the early stages of setting up a Book Swap for KS2 children initially; however, we are looking into ways of making our Book Swap stations accessible for parents and manned by passionate, knowledgeable members of staff who can engage in conversations around books.
- Our Joy Lane 'Read Around' events have the potential to be adapted further to include new elements, including book recommendations, book swap stations, visiting authors/storytellers, video recordings of staff reading, etc.
- 'Read Around the Campfire' and other related events usually appeal to our avid readers. We would like to consider ways to make the reading experience appealing to our disengaged, reluctant and disadvantaged readers. Personal invites to our reading events or a staff/pupil buddy system (inspired by an Example of Practice) are ideas that we are interested in pursuing.