

Developing a school reading ethos



Chris Lamming
English Lead
@GEMSDidcotATA
@MrCLamming

Context

- GEMS Didcot Primary is a two-form primary school on a new estate in Didcot, South Oxfordshire.
- On opening in 2016, the school's classes ranged from Nursery to Year 2.
- Now in its third year, the community continues to grow and evolve with the school's eldest pupils at Year 4.

School Action Plan related to English

- English lead to continue to ensure improved outcomes for all groups of pupils
- Further embed the feedback and assessment routines ensuring that progress is clear within the pupils' work.
- Greater number of pupils achieved 'expected' and 'greater depth' standards with pupils building upon prior attainment year making at least good progress.

OU Research inspiration and rationale

- This whole school project was inspired by the Open University's Teachers as Readers research (Cremin et al., 2009) point 5, which identifies the importance of reading communities that are reciprocal and interactive.
- Although this was the leading inspiration, the project also encompasses:
 - TaRs 2: Knowledge of children's reading practices
 - TaRs 3: A reading for pleasure pedagogy.

Aims

Starting points

- Both children's and parents' perceptions of reading needed developing.
- Age related reading levels (Oxford Reading Tree) showed that less than 50% of children were on track (across the whole school).
- Children's fluency, comprehension and enjoyment of reading wouldn't develop without a real focus in school and at home.

Aims of the project

- To increase the enjoyment of children reading.
- To increase the frequency of children reading.
- That greater number of pupils would achieve 'expected' and 'greater depth' standards than the previous year.

Outline

Key actions were undertaken at both the class and school level, and we also ran several events.

Class

- Audited book corners
- Further developed Whole Class Guided Reading from Year 2-4.
- EYFS book world cup

School

- Reorganised library
- Junior Librarians
- Links to local library
- Book buddies
- Twitter account
- Lunchtime book boxes

Events

- Weekly tracking of children's reading
- Reading Bingo
- World Book Week
- Roving book fair

Impact: class level

Action 1: audit of book corners

We identified the need for book corners to be more visually appealing to build on children's enjoyment of reading.



Children were able to discover a greater range of books, and to take ownership of their reading.

Impact: class level

Action 2: EYFS book world cup

Nursery and reception used their structured afternoon reading time to read and vote on books suggested by Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE).



The quality of children's answers to questions about reading improved, and vocabulary and role play were encouraged.

Impact: school level

Action 1: Reorganise the library

Sections were reorganised into non-fiction types. Front facing displays were used more to encourage children to read on a greater range of topics.



The library was open twice a week.

Impact: school level

Action 2: introduce junior librarians

Junior librarians were given ownership over the organisation of library, as well as raising profiles for ambassadors of reading.



Impact: school level

Action 3: Create links with the local library

All the classes visited or had a workshop with the library during world book week. Each class was set up with their own library card to supplement our school reading stock.



Impact: school level

Action 4: Set up book buddies

We built confidence for less able readers in older years, as they were having to model reading using simpler book bands.



Book buddies was very popular with children reporting great enjoyment of this activity.

Impact: school level

Action 5: Use a Twitter account to create book discussion

This made the children consider their opinions on books in order to frame questions. It also allowed children's work and literary events to be shared with authors and a wider audience.



Over 150 tweets were sent and 25 authors responded.

Impact: school level

Action 6: Introduce lunchtime book boxes

8 boxes of books used for children waiting to be served lunch. A range of genres and book types was included.

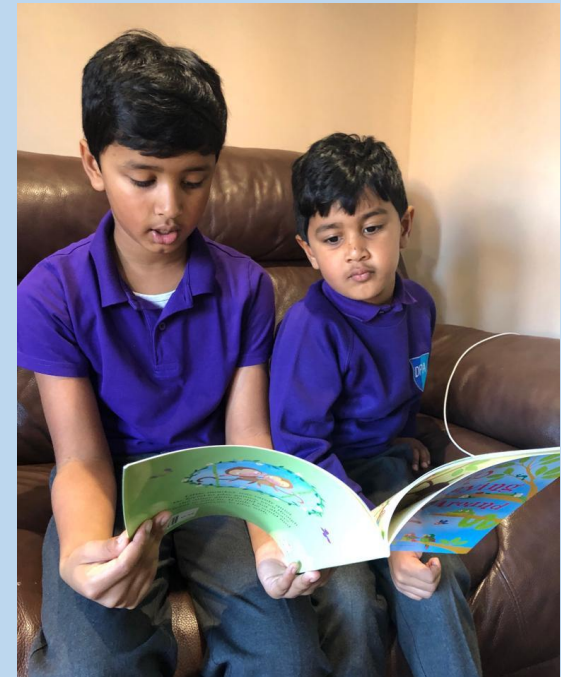
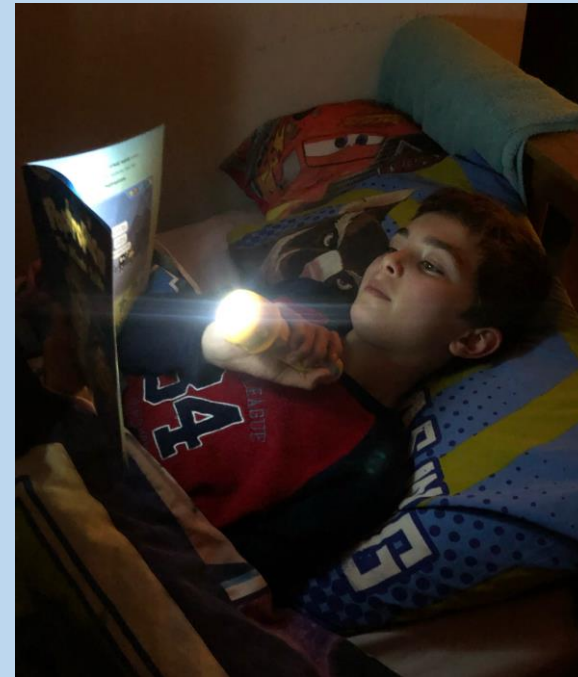
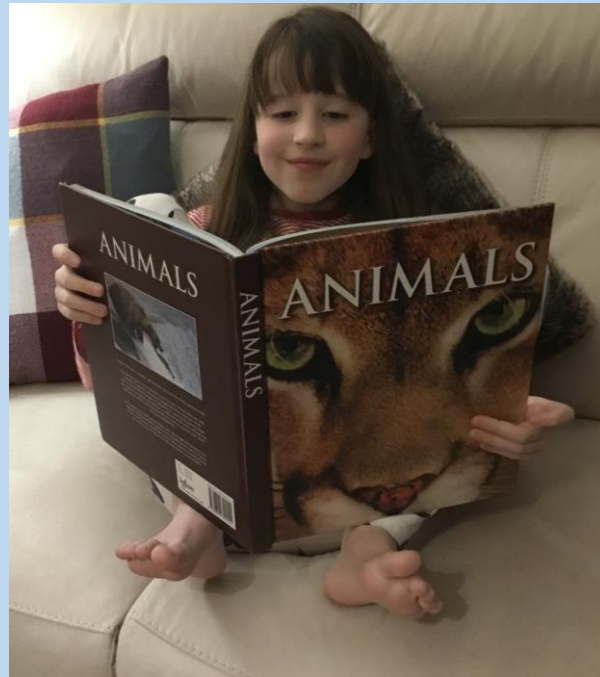
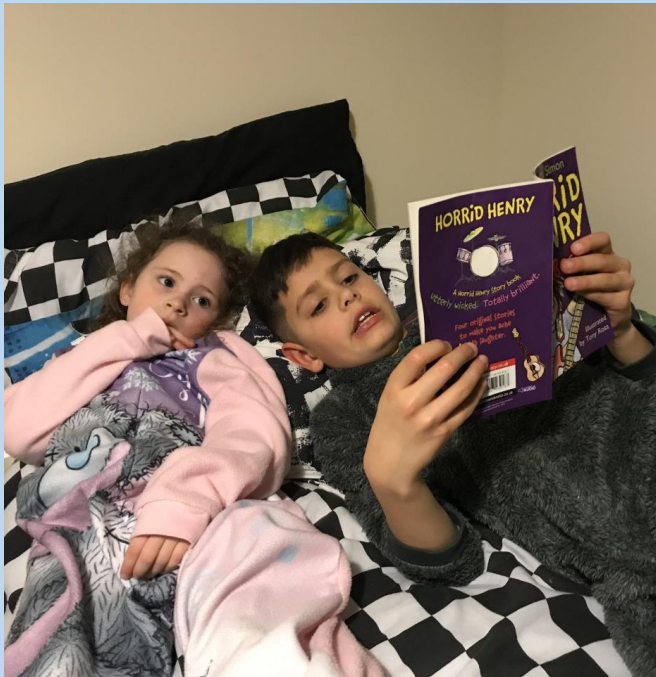


Alongside encouraging reading, behaviour improved and noise levels were reduced as the children were occupied whilst waiting.

Impact: events

Activity 1: Reading bingo

The children were encouraged to broaden their reading choices and responses to reading.



This resulted in children making progress in book bands. They were also exposed to a greater range of reading experiences.

Impact: events

Activity 2: Roving book fair

All children had the chance to visit a bookshop and leave with high-quality texts.



Impact: events

Activity 3: World book week

We engaged in a range of activities including a book breakfast, a reading workshop, library visits, Blackwell's bookshop visits, author masterclasses, and dressing up.



Parental engagement was increased, and a £250 commission was used to buy new books.

Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

Already the school has become much more book-orientated, for instance through the use of the library, the increased 'blether' between children and adults around books or the dialogue from child to author through the twitter account.

An added benefit of this approach has been on the children's writing. A recent Ofsted report stated that 'writing is typified by confident phraseology and rich vocabulary...Attention to detail is high, and secure grammatical construction is evident.' I believe a lot of this impact can be traced back to our developing whole school reading approach.

Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

Next steps

- Develop the role of Junior Librarians
- Redesign our reading journals
- Introduce Reading Breakfasts
- Introduce Book / Creative writing club
- Pupil voice:
 - Aim to increase the percentage of pupils who report that they love reading.
 - Aim to increase the percentage of pupils who report that they read with someone at home.

