

**Context**

I am Prep Librarian at Notre Dame School, Cobham, Surrey, an independent school for girls aged 2-18 and boys from 2-7. It is a school that considers itself a 'reading school' with two libraries and two full time librarians. This review is based on work that took place within the Prep School.



**OU Research inspiration and rationale**

The Reading Interviews were inspired by two strands of the Teachers as Readers (TaRs) research findings, that in order to foster reading for pleasure effectively teachers need to develop a reading for pleasure pedagogy which includes:

- social reading environments
- reading communities that are reciprocal and interactive.

After the success of several initiatives introduced throughout the Prep School to foster Reading for Pleasure (RfP) including the formation of an after school book club, author visits culminating in the adoption of a Patron of Reading and timetabled DEAR sessions, I felt that RfP within the classroom itself had plateaued a little.

I was keen that the pupils should see their teachers as readers and this was partly due to my own observation of the positive impact a teacher who engages with pupils in all aspects of reading can have. However this was further influenced by the TaRs research findings. I also wanted to create the feeling of the school being a wide community of readers and to involve as many of the staff as possible in addition to the parents. In this way we would be encouraging an interactive reading community as suggested by the TaRs research report.

**Aims**

The TaRs research had shown that it was possible to build reading relationships with pupils, parents, carers, librarians and families and that in this way the boundaries between home and school practices could be blurred. In addition we wanted to support the pupils in their ability to make successful reading choices.

- To assist pupils in book selection – some were struggling to find the 'right' book for them despite help from both librarian and teacher.
- To encourage informal book talk about specific titles, authors and genres
- To develop an understanding that everyone has different reading preferences
- To understand the concept of RfP and its value to both adults and children
- To encourage parents to become involved in the reading lives of the

## Outline

Following discussion at a curriculum committee meeting, a Year 6 English teacher suggested that he would ask his pupils to interview members of staff about their love of reading. This, we decided, should include as wide a variety of staff as possible to show that everyone can be a reader. The children would create a write up of each interview and share it in our weekly newsletter to parents. As librarian I already provide a weekly 'Reading Matters' section including news from the library and the world of children's books.

The TaRs research had indicated that developing a reciprocal and interactive community would assist in the creation of a wider reading for pleasure agenda. We hoped that by including a range of staff within the school in the interviews and sharing the results with parents we would be creating links between the home and school environments as suggested in the review of school practice.

Prior to the first interview the pupils had an informal book chat with their English teacher and it was during this discussion that many pupils had their 'lightbulb moment' when he confessed that it was the Goosebumps series that had made him into a reader at Junior School. This had an impact and supported the view that the book they chose did not have to be a classic.

The first interview was with me as librarian which they all felt was the best place to start. During the interview I was as honest as possible and they learned that I don't like books with a slow start and have been known not to finish a book. I also showed them books that I enjoyed and told them of my childhood favourite, *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*.

### Love of Reading

Following our interview with Mrs Thompson last week, we carried on our journey through the school by going next door to the office where we found our next volunteer: Mrs Keane.

It's clear that Mrs Keane has a passion for reading as she believes reading "takes me away from a busy day." I think she means that reading settles your mind so that you're not stressed in the morning.

We also asked Mrs Keane what genre she liked the best and she said, "Romance novels as they always have happy endings." Mrs Keane "can't remember her first book," but a novel she would recommend is *To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee.

If you wanted to make Mrs Keane ecstatic, you could give her either a copy of the Bible or a novel to curl up with on the sofa. I must warn you though to never give Mrs Keane a book about horror for her birthday as you'll scare her out of her skin!

I hope this interview has inspired you and has helped you to understand that reading can be fun in many different ways.

Emily W



The second interview was with the school secretary and she told pupils about her love of romance novels and happy endings. She also recommended *To Kill a Mockingbird* as a book they may like when they are older.

Both interviews appeared in the weekly newsletter that is shared with staff, parents, governors and the wider community.

The interviews are to continue and will be with teachers, caretakers, kitchen staff and PE teachers.

### The Love of Reading

Following Mrs Thompson's request for the teachers to encourage more reading for pleasure, Yellow Set looked at creating something for the Friday Mailing to illuminate people's love of reading. Yellow Set were also looking at being more ambitious with their punctuation, attempting to use semicolons and colons to link sentences/ideas together. The following article is a short piece written by Jessica P after Yellow Set had completed an interview with the very willing Mrs Thompson.

Yellow Set have decided to go out and speak to the teachers themselves about what makes them read. We thought the best person to interview first was our Prep School Librarian, Mrs Thompson.

It is clear that Mrs Thompson is very passionate about reading as she says reading is the "key to everything." I think what she means is that you use reading everywhere, such as when you want to go on the internet to get facts, you would have to know how to read; she is saying that reading comes up everywhere!

We also asked Mrs Thompson where her favourite place to curl up with a book is and she said, "On her sofa or on holiday in the sun." My favourite place to curl up with a book is in my bed; it is nice and warm. Mrs Thompson says that it is "impossible" to choose her favourite book but, if she really had to, she would choose *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis.

If you wanted to make Mrs Thompson happy, you could either give her a historical book or a book that drags you in and makes you feel like you're a character from the book. One thing she really wouldn't want in her stocking at Christmas would be a book with a really slow start!

Thank you for taking the time to read this. I hope you enjoyed our interview with Mrs Thompson.



Jessica P

## Impact

- The pupils have already commented on the fact that different people like very different types of books and have been encouraged to look at different genres both in the classroom and the library. *'Have you got any more books like the Goosebumps series?'*
- It has prompted them to ask other staff about books and reading and has encouraged more informal book talk.
- Pupils have noticed that staff have talked about reading for relaxation and had not realised that adults may read to relieve stress and to escape from the daily routine. *'I didn't realise people read to relax.'*
- A couple of pupils have mentioned the way in which books take you to another world and the opportunity reading gives to use your imagination.



Although it is very early days in this project it is clear that it is having a positive effect on the pupils already in some ways. We have not yet consulted the parents on what they think of the interviews and must pursue this to measure whether this

is assisting in creating a dialogue between home and school. One parent has volunteered to be an interviewee and it will be interesting to see how a father's point of view compares to those already interviewed.

It has also enabled collaboration between the librarian and the class teacher allowing us to discuss the findings and use them to guide our future book purchases and use of class library time to further support RfP. A review of how library stock is displayed may be necessary to make pupils more aware of different genres.

### **Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice**

In many ways this project can be linked to several aspects of the TaRs research: reading communities, social reading environments and informal book talk. Although the interviews started with a structure they evolved into an informal book talk that has continued. It is these conversations that we as a school need to build on to encourage RfP.

Our next steps are to continue the interviews and perhaps involve other year groups. It may be possible for pupils to interview members of their families and report back to their classes on their findings. It is important that we follow up the sharing of the interviews in the newsletter and obtain feedback from the parents. This could be done informally at the school gate, school functions and parent evenings.