



Developing ownership through  
inspiring reading environments

Belmont Castle Academy



UNIVERSITY of  
GREENWICH

# Context

- Belmont Castle Academy caters for boys and girls aged 5-11 years of age.
- As of 2016 there were over 716 children on roll.
- We have many classrooms, a music room, a library, a hall with fixed apparatus, and a wildlife area
- The school works in collaboration with The University of Greenwich



# OU Research inspiration and rationale

*'Social reading environments were seen to be key to creating richly reciprocal reading communities in the Teachers as Readers research. Physically engaging, the most successful environments tempted children into texts and offered spaces to relax, browse, and read for pleasure'. (Cremin et al, 2014)*

This statement from the TaRs research resonated with the staff at Belmont Castle Academy who have always worked to be sure there is a rich reading environment in every corner of the school.

The environments are influenced by teachers' knowledge of children's texts and their children as readers.

Ownership was an important issue and staff worked to ensure children were involved not only in the **design of the reading environments** but also in the **content of the environments**.

Working with the University of Greenwich, Belmont Castle used the Reading Competition to inspire a more detailed look at the reading environments within the school based on the TaRs reading for pleasure pedagogy.



# Aims

- To develop social reading environments where children can access a wide range of high quality texts.
- To ensure children have **ownership** of the reading environments and that they reflect their home reading habits.
- To increase teacher knowledge of children's literature through the reorganisation of the texts.



# Outline

## Promoting Reading Competition

How do you inspire and promote a love of reading in your classroom?



Would you like to win £200 worth of books for your class and an author visit?

Our 2017 University of Greenwich Primary Partnership Competition is designed to celebrate and share good practice concerning how you foster a love of reading for pleasure with your children.

We are interested in the creative ways in which you promote reading – e.g. through display / the reading area etc. to nourish and extend children's reading experiences as well as valuing personal responses to texts.

### Why promote reading?

Studies show that promoting reading can have a major impact on children/young people and adults and their future. For example, research with children has shown that reading for pleasure is positively linked with many literacy-related benefits including:

- fostering positive reading attitudes
- further developing reading attainment and writing ability
- supporting children's understanding of text comprehension and grammar
- enriching their breadth of vocabulary
- developing greater self-confidence as a reader

### Prizes

- All entrants will receive a certificate of participation
- The overall winner will receive £200 worth of books for their class and an author visit to their school
- Two runners up prizes will also be awarded. This will consist of 5 books listed in the 2017 UKLA book award.



### In partnership with...



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PRIMARY PARTNERSHIP

The University of Greenwich is a close partner and so when they launched the reading competition as a school we were keen to take part.

Based on the principles of the Reading for Pleasure pedagogy we chose the social reading environment as our focus.

Each class reviewed their social reading environment and then used a set allowance to design and plan ways in which the environment could be adapted to encourage, promote and model reading for pleasure.

Through the process the themes of choice, ownership, organisation and exciting readers emerged.





### Promoting Reading in Class 14 – Miss L Ballard

In class 14 the reading corner is a focus point of the classroom. The children chose the 'fairy tale' theme as this reminds them of listening to a story, which they enjoy, and also shows that reading is magical and inspires their imagination. As you can see, our reading area also reflects the book which we are studying (this term - Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*).

The children enjoy using the area, as well as taking care of it, as the books have been displayed where they can easily find a book that meets their interests (including categories such as: popular authors, genres and common themes). A variety of fiction and non-fiction books linked to our focus book are also displayed in our 'Focus Box'. Every half term, the children fill this box with books from the reading corner and the school library which link to our topic (as shown). This ensures that all books that we may make reference to, or those that they may like to read to enhance their understanding of the current topic, are readily available to them.

The information which they absorb from reading these books has helped the children to complete different pieces of work, positively impacting their writing by giving them ideas and enriching their vocabulary.

As a school, we use the idea of creative homework to engage children in the topic before they begin learning about it and ensure this is displayed throughout the topic. This creates a positive learning attitude and inspires the children previous to their new learning.

Since the arrival of the core books (as displayed on the spice rack shelves), the children have shown a great interest in reading, as they really enjoy taking it in turns to take a core book home and checking it back in.

This is encouraging them to care for the books, as well as to cherish what they are reading.





### Promoting Reading in R1 - Mrs D Chadwick

The reading area in R1 is enjoyed by all. You can see Dojo and Mojo, our class bears, enjoying the peace and quiet before the children come in and read to them all day.

The children have worked together to support me to organise our furniture, arrange the space and chose where to put our shelves, so that we can access our core books easily. They have also suggested several ways of sorting the books, such as stories about animals, people, cars and food. On our shelves, we also have the books which the children describe as their 'favourite books' and those that they enjoy reading the most.

You can see from the display, this week's focus book is Alice in Wonderland. Each week a child is chosen to put all the books which link to our focus story on the red shelf and as a class we discuss the link between the stories.

The children's writing, linking to our story, is also displayed along with the 'Zig Zag' books which the children use to make their own little books. We also have string mobiles of various book characters hanging above the carpeted area to familiarise the children with the different characters. In Reception, we also provide different props and objects, such as finger puppets, as well as using story bags, to allow the children to explore and retell different stories through play.

## Promoting Reading in R2 - Miss S Trener

The children love exploring our reading area during child-initiated learning time. It is a focus point of our classroom and there is not one moment throughout the children's 'choosing time' when it is not in use. It is a sociable area of our classroom, which inspires lots of creative talk. As a class, we sorted the books into different groups and chose how the different stories should be displayed. The children enjoyed painting our new book shelves and they love choosing which book to read and discussing them with friends. The children have taken real ownership of the reading area and take it upon themselves to tidy it and ensure the books are well presented.



## *What do you like about our Reading Area?*

"I like the baskets."

"It has lots and lots of books."

"The books have lots of pages and words."

"I can read all day!"

"It has lots of books and they are all new!"

# Impact

At Belmont Castle Academy, we included our children in choosing books for the school. We involved children in the purchase of books and in choosing 'recommended reads' for other children. We believe this made a difference.

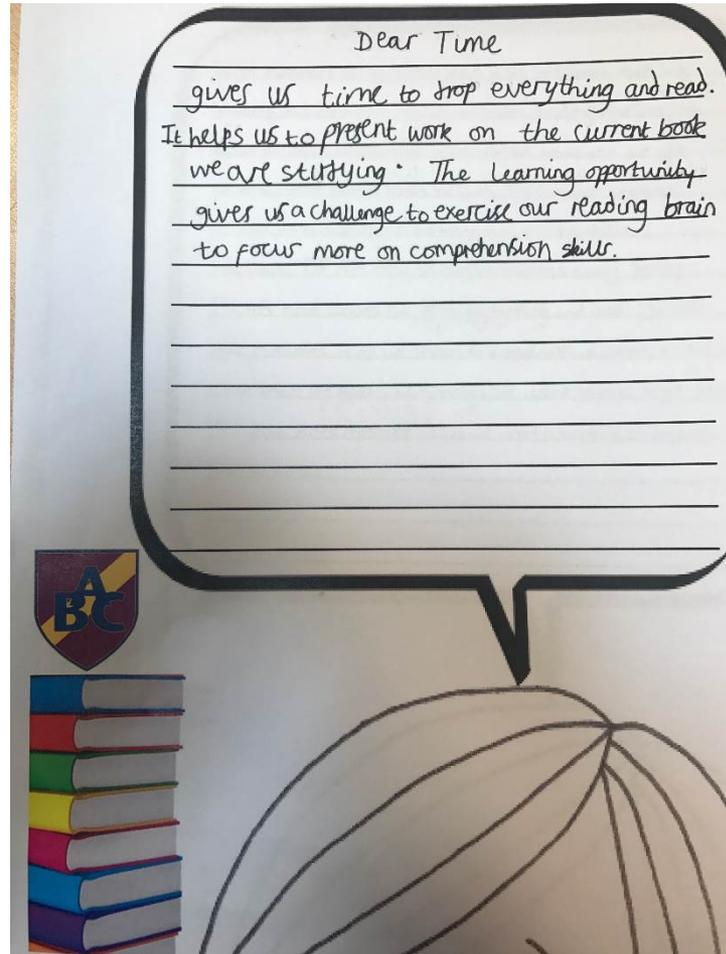
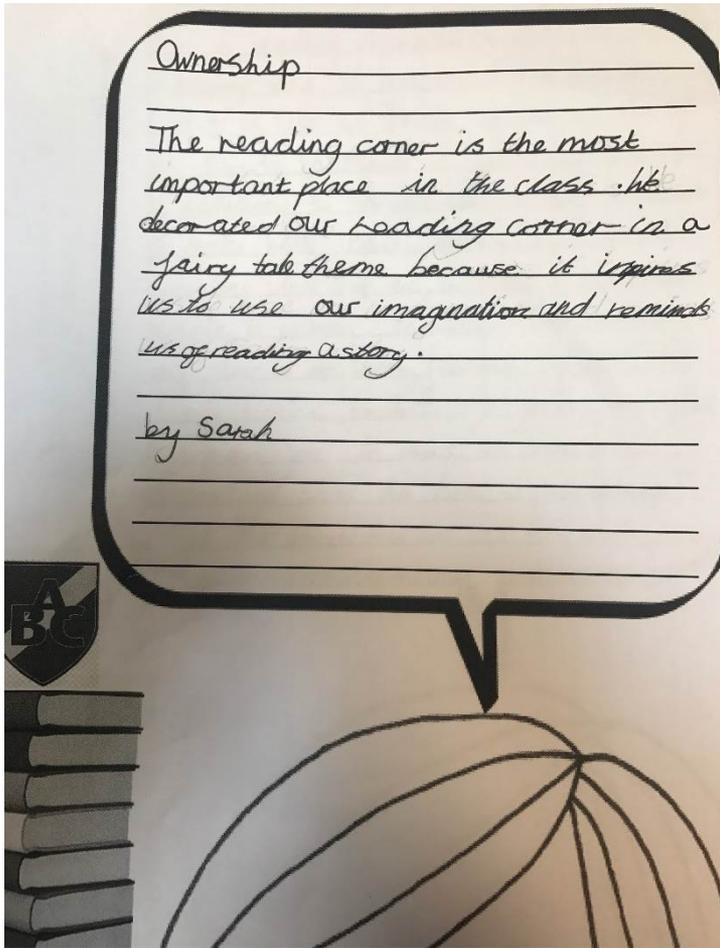
We also raised the importance of reading by introducing DEAR time where everyone drops everything and reads! We promote knowledge of books through our assemblies and author visits.

As a school, we also profile performance poetry to further develop the children's fluency, confidence in reading aloud and independence. This year we had a few winners of different categories for the Thurrock Poetry Competition.

In each classroom, we now have a set of 30 core books to help the children access high quality texts. These are promoted by teachers and have a high impact on vocabulary usage and the desire to read for pleasure. This is also evident in the quality of children's writing.



# What the children say



# Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice



## Reflections from the University of Greenwich:

The reading competition has proved to be a great way to support schools with the reading for pleasure pedagogy. Working with 'Just Imagine' and UKLA, the university has been able to offer prizes for the competition to further enhance reading for pleasure.

The impact of these social reading environments is developing and Belmont Castle Academy were able to identify the themes of:

- Increased ownership by the children
- Children better equipped to make informed choices
- Increased knowledge of texts through the organisation
- Greater excitement in reading

## Reflections from Belmont Castle Academy:

At Belmont Castle Academy, we believe that every child can learn to read with the right teaching and support! Recently, we injected a considerable amount of money and resources in this area of the curriculum as we needed a big change.

We have also reviewed the place of reading on the curriculum and increased its allocation of time and include more attention to understanding texts, recommending books, sharing books and whole class books.



