

Organising social reading environments

Belmont Castle Academy



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 TaRs research. Physically engaging, the most successful environments tempted children into texts and offered spaces to relax, browse, and read for pleasure'

'The Teachers as Readers (TaRs) teachers reconfigured space and time for relaxed reading and created physically engaging reading areas and environments that tempted and enticed children to read, borrow books, get to know new authors, talk about texts, and see themselves profiled as readers. These environments promoted reading as a richly positive experience and prompted sharing and significant book talk and inside-text talk'. (Cremin et al., 2014)

These statements from the TaRs research resonated with the staff at Belmont Castle Academy who have always worked to ensure that the classrooms reflect an inviting, rich and exciting reading environment.

Staff worked with the children in their classes to design and organise the reading environment to reflect the children's own reading habits, preferences and sought to design enticing spaces for children to read, browse and share.

Working with the University of Greenwich, Belmont Castle used the Reading Competition to inspire a more detailed look at the school reading environments 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 are pivotal to the design, content and use of the reading environment.
- 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...



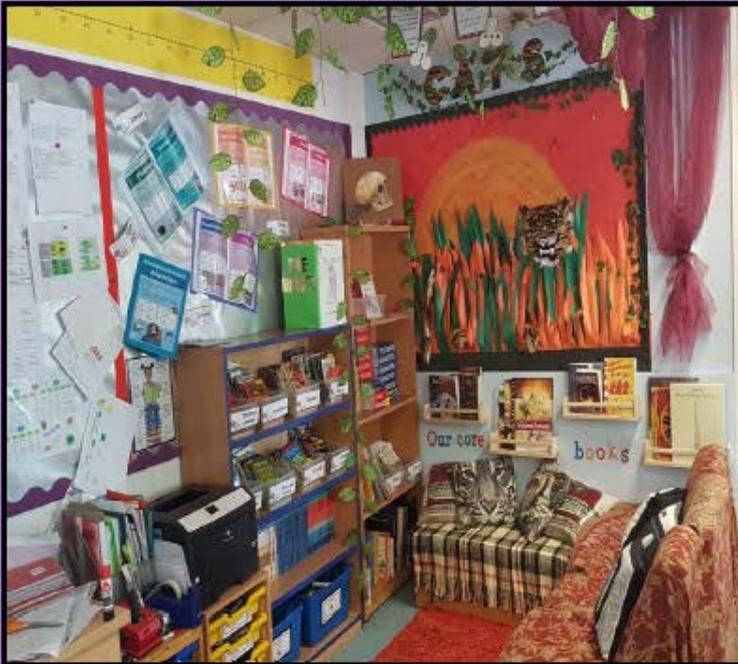
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PRIMARY PARTNERSHIP

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 TaRs Reading for Pleasure pedagogy we chose social reading environments 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 reading and readers emerged.



Promoting Reading in Class 8 - Mr S Minns

Class 8's book corner is a reading sanctuary that the children love to settle down into with a good book. The vibrant tiger display, celebrates our current 'Cats' topic, whilst below it, we exhibit the stunning new core books that really excite any reader, young or old. The genre grouping of the books - within our book corner - allows ease of access for every child to take advantage of, whilst also enabling them to find similar books that will get their imagination flowing. This sorting system is complimented by the genre display above, which informs children of the types of wonders each section encapsulates and represents.



Promoting Reading in Classes 11 & 12

Mrs C Farrow and Miss D Watts

We have a joint reading area to make use of the space available for the children.

In our reading area, we have a selection of small picture books suitable for the ages of the children. The area can be used for quiet time out of the classroom, a time to socialise with friends during indoor playtimes or for when children have a spare couple of minutes at the end of a lesson. The core books can also be used as a whole class reading activity at the end of the day and a child will choose on behalf of everyone.

Besides our core books, there is a selection of fiction and non-fiction books. The books are stored in boxes and organised into easily accessible title/authors. Free readers are promoted to read from this area which allows them access to books that interest them if they are unable to access a public library. We have monitors from each class who take responsibility to keep the reading area tidy and all children are encouraged to leave it exactly how they found it and tidy for the next children to visit.

We have a bucket that contains a selection of reading buddies. The reading buddies provide a comfort for children who may be sitting out on their own or who are using the reading area to have some quiet time out of the class.

The lighting around the outside of the reading area is soothing and relaxing, promoting a calm and relaxed area for the children to enjoy. Above the canopy is a board where the two class teachers are able to promote our favourite books and copies of those books are available for the children to sit and read.

We have enjoyed creating this calm and relaxing work space for the children and hope they get to engage with it as much as possible while promote reading to everyone.



Promoting Reading in Nursery- Miss C Chambers

In Nursery we focus on one story for two weeks. During this time, we create our book corner display to show the focus story. This story is read to the children every day and props such as puppets, and other objects that relate to the story, are provided to enable the children to explore and retell the story. We also place other books of a similar theme to our focus story on the shelves in the book area under the display. These books are chosen with the children and as a class we discuss how they link to our theme book. 'Story time' is an integral part of our day in Nursery and the children love to choose a story for us to read. They enjoy joining in with the repeated refrains and are becoming very familiar with lots of different stories.

To support our EAL children, we send home pre-teaching folders prior to introducing a new story. In the folders, the children have the key words from the story, along with colouring pages and word mats in both their home language and English. These have proven really beneficial to the children as they are then able to access the story when it is introduced to the class as they already have some prior knowledge of the key words.

We provide opportunities in other areas of the Early Year's curriculum for the children to explore the focus story. For example, in Art we paint pictures or make collages of the characters from the story. We then display this work, along with the focus book, enabling the children to recall and discuss the books that we have previously read. The children also have the option to read in our 'Reading Garden'. Here, they can access different books and sit in a comfy shaded area to develop their love of reading whilst in the outside environment. The children really enjoy using the outside book area and will often sit in small groups sharing books, pointing at the pictures and retelling familiar stories.

Promoting Reading in Class 4 – Mrs. E. Harvey

This half term, we have been studying 'The Adventures of Odysseus' by Hugh Lypton & Daniel Morden as our main topic book. We have also been looking at a range of non-fiction texts on the Ancient Greeks and have studied texts from Rick Riordan's Percy Jackson & the Olympians series. They inform all of our foundation units, literacy and comprehension lessons. 'Who Let the Gods Out?' by Maz Evans has provided some great opportunities for PSHCE and empathy. It is an open, inviting area where children want to go and read.



The book corner reflects the general theme of Ancient Greece and has clear links to our main topic book. It provides topic information and clearly labeled topic books and is a place where the children can immerse themselves in all things Ancient Greek.



The core books that we have are displayed in pride of place. Extracts of these are read at the end of the day. The children can select one of these and sign it in and out, they see the core books as special books and as such, even the most reluctant readers, are engaged when it is 'Core book time'.



The range of work that reading inspires in our class is varied, the children get the opportunity to fully comprehend and engage with the topics. This is reflected in their work, which displays their depth of understanding, apparent in both the questions they ask and the way in which they respond to texts. Their writing uses the mix of knowledge, imagery and high-level vocabulary that these books have exposed them to.

The books are clearly labeled, ensuring that the children are able to select books with ease. Book genre guides are laminated and on a clear rack on the shelves, thus making their selections more appropriate to their own tastes and interests. Furthermore this provides inspiration for children who like to experience alternative genres. Accompanying these are task cards, which present the children with short tasks and suggestions on how to reflect on their chosen texts.

Children in class 4 are able to recommend any book (which they have read) to their peers by writing their own reflection and putting it in the small draw for others to access whenever they need inspiration.

Our light box has interchangeable messages so we can promote any books that have received positive reviews. This encourages the children to reflect on what they read, after all, who doesn't want to see their idea in lights?



As a class we spend ten minutes at the end of the day reading (core or topic books), this is a shared experience and one, which the children look forward to. The school promotes reading as a whole with reading achievement certificates each month and DEAR time (drop everything and read) once a week.

Advice for other schools

In partnership we have learned that it is worth:

- Involving children in the organisation of the reading space
- Ensuring that texts are outward facing to entice children
- Displaying books in different ways over time including by author, by genre, by popularity, by age, by interest.
- Designing the whole reading space to reflect a theme, text or author pertinent to the children
- Making sure the texts are continually updated. Shadow some prestigious awards such as UKLA, Carnegie or Kate Greenaway.

Through careful organisation of reading environments we have enriched children's and teachers' agency as well as prompted more shared conversations about reading.



Impact

At Belmont Castle Academy, books are at the core of our curriculum. Teacher knowledge is being increased by improving knowledge of books within the classroom. Teachers are expected to know all of their books. We have a book based curriculum and each half term, the children get to study a different genre. Timetables have been adapted to fit in our comprehension sessions. Our school displays reflect our reading culture at BCA.

By re-organising our book corners, displays and library, we have given all our children a new direction. They now have access to books at all times. There has also been an increase in the percentage of parental involvement. We also have our Early Bird Readers where parents come in to read to their children first thing in the morning.

What the children say

Organisation

Our new reading corner is more beneficial because the books are labelled with different genres, for example: Horror, crime and fantasy. My favourite genres of books are classic and adventure because they make my imagination run wild like a bird free in the sky! In particular, I like to read Roald Dahl books because the illustrations support the text and make me laugh.

By Honey Patient Class 6 Year 5.

I like the organisation of books here at BCA as there is a vast range of authors and genres such as: spooky, humour and fantasy. Also, we have to take pride in our book corner and keep it extremely tidy, so that the books do not get mixed into different parts of the book corner. In my book corner, there are different places to read and find books in. There are two sofas, cushions and an area of carpet to sit and read on. Our key texts, which we have studied throughout the year, are labelled by the author. The dictionaries, thesauruses and atlases are kept in a different rack of shelves in the corner with their labels on top. It is much easier to find the books I want to read!

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 social reading environments is clear 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 and as readers

