

Finham Primary School

Green Lane

Coventry

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Real Books

Headteacher: Richard Machin

**Submitted for the Egmont Reading for Pleasure Award
In partnership with the OU and UKLA, 2018**

Whole School Award

Context

Finham Primary School is a larger than average school in Coventry. It is two-form entry with a nursery and currently has 469 pupils on roll. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. Finham Primary was last inspected by Ofsted in September 2012, just two weeks after the current headteacher took up his post and was rated good in all areas. Nevertheless, the school has undergone significant changes in the last five years that have included a move away from published schemes of work towards collaborative planning within, and between, year groups.

OU Research inspiration and rationale

3. A reading for pleasure pedagogy

Reading For Pleasure: Rationale

According to two major Ofsted reports (2004 & 2012) and four Progress in International Reading Literacy Studies (PIRLS, 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016) pupils in England have a poorer attitude towards reading and read less often for fun than similar pupils in other countries.

In PIRLS 2016 children in four out of the seven highest performing countries enjoyed reading less than pupils in England (who came eighth equal) suggesting that there may be a trade-off between a focus on high achievement and pupils' enjoyment of reading. This is worrying since generally pupils that achieve well enjoy reading but the Ofsted and PIRLS reports suggests that the way reading is being taught to high performing students is not leading to generations of enthusiastic readers.

The Research Informing Teaching Reading for Pleasure

Learning to Read is a Statistical Process

There is a considerable body of research in the field of cognitive science that supports a school's decision to teach reading through real books to promote reading for pleasure, rather than use a phonically decodable reading scheme. A theory within cognitive psychology known as rational analysis (Anderson 1991) suggests that learning to read is a statistical process and that as children read they effectively compute the items that appear frequently so they are seen to be important. They are less likely to remember items that appear infrequently as they are not seen to be essential (Seidenberg, 2017).

Pareto's Law (also known as the 80/20 Principle)

Pareto's Law provides a conceptual framework for identifying the optimal number of phonic and sight vocabulary skills to teach and identifying skills that are potentially redundant. It proposes that a minority of causes, inputs or effort usually leads to the majority of the results or outputs and reinforces the notion that a small number of words and grapheme-phoneme-correspondence (GPCs) have high utility and occur with considerable frequency and that a large percentage of written English occurs with low frequency and is therefore less useful.

The Value of Real Books

This is important when using real books since research shows that a relatively small number of words and GPCs account for the majority of written English. For example, just 16 words account 28% of all written English in children's literature and 30 GPCs account for the majority of GPCs in phonically regular words (Solity & Vousden, 2009; Vousden 2008). Real books tell children what occurs frequently and what does not but also

indirectly alerts them to combinations of letters that do not occur in English. As children read they automatically expect what they read to make sense and so become increasingly aware of the distinction between words and non-words which is an essential part of becoming a fluent reader. In contrast approximately a third of the skills taught with Systematic Synthetic Phonics (SSP) programmes are redundant with the consequence that decodable texts potentially mislead children in computing what can helpfully be remembered and what is redundant.

Vocabulary Knowledge and Language Development

However, an exclusive focus on SSP and decodable texts ignores the critical role of students' vocabulary knowledge and language skills in enabling them to maximise their phonic knowledge and make sense of what they read. For example, in the word 'blow' the letter combination 'ow' can be pronounced to rhyme with 'ow' in slow or 'ow' in 'cow.' Students only know it rhymes with 'ow' in slow because they are reading for understanding and the word 'blow' is in their vocabulary. In contrast, the pronunciation that rhymes with 'cow' is a non-word. A child who does not know the meaning of 'blow' would not know which of the two possible pronunciations is correct. In addition, this example illustrates the importance of pupils using their vocabulary knowledge to self-correct mispronunciations that are non-words (Dyson et al. 2017).

Children's Language Skills on School Entry

The difference in children's language skills on school entry was illustrated by Hart & Risely (1995) who found that student's from language rich family backgrounds will have heard on average 32 million more words than children from language impoverished backgrounds. Evans & Kelley et al. (2010) illustrate the impact of access to books in the home when they reported that having 500 books at home is equivalent to three years extra formal education and that this held equally in rich nations and in poor and cuts across social, cultural and ethnic boundaries. This research raises the question as to why children with poorer language skills on school entry and with very few or no books in the home, are taught to read with phonically decodable books that are also limited in their vocabulary and general content.

Challenging the Conventional Wisdoms

The research in rational analysis and the role of language in learning to read, reinforces the importance of children being taught to read with a focus on enjoyment. The emerging analyses that are now possible challenge some of the conventional wisdoms about the lack of consistency in written English and indicate the many advantages, not least on pupil motivation and engagement, of learning to read with real books.

Aims

The aims relate to developing a reading for pleasure pedagogy.

1. To use real books to teach reading and promote reading for pleasure.
2. To ensure children read 500 books in EYFS and Key Stage 1.
3. To place real books at the heart of Finham's 'six week learning cycle.'
4. To develop strategies to encourage children, their families and teachers to share a love of reading through real books.
5. That teaching reading through real books and making reading fun will also lead to high academic standards.

Outline

Over the last three years significant changes have been made to the way reading is taught at Finham which have centred on the decision to gradually phase out the use of a reading scheme and to replace this approach with teaching through 'real books.' The staff feel that if the goal is to read with pleasure then learning to read must be genuinely enjoyable - fully embracing George Bernard Shaw's maxim to 'make it a rule never to give a child a book you wouldn't read yourself.'

Sharing - Transition - Reading

The school took the decision to gradually phase in the 'real books' approach in September 2015. All pupils in Key Stage 1 are now being taught exclusively through real books. When children begin their school life at Finham, their first introduction to reading is through sharing books with adults in their classes. They are immersed in stories in an atmosphere that is as close as possible to reading with parents and carers at home. As children become familiar with story narratives and identify their favourites, a transitional phase occurs when they begin to anticipate story content and recognise and identify familiar words as they follow the text. In time children begin to read more of each book through

the process of paired (or shared) reading (Topping, 1995). Pupils read the words they know and the teachers read the rest.

Changing the Culture

Sharing real books using paired reading challenges the conventional practice typically associated with listening to children read.

Instead of selecting books for children to read that are matched to their ability and are 'consistent with their developing phonic knowledge and knowledge of common exception words (DfE 2013),' children choose the books they want to read.

Instead of being expected to read books with 100% accuracy, children share books using paired reading.

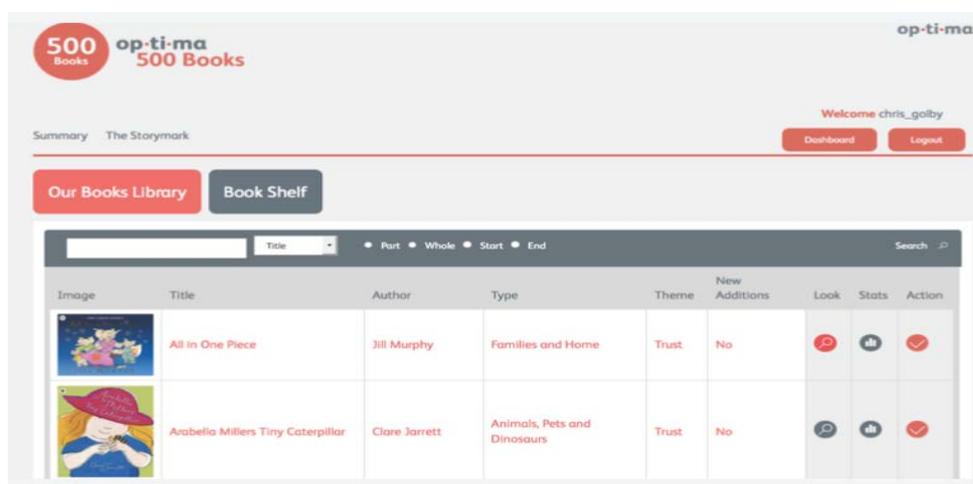
Instead of only (i) getting a new book from a scheme when all the necessary GPCs and common exception words have been learned and (ii) only becoming a free reader when all the books in the scheme have been mastered, children are free readers from the day they start school. This leads to the paradox that when using a scheme, slower learning pupils have fewer opportunities to apply their skills to reading books than their faster learning peers when in fact what they need is more opportunities to apply their skills to a variety of texts.

500 Books

Finham has invested in approximately 500 'real' books – a wide range of stories from different authors and cultures, including recent publications and much-loved classics.' All pupils are 'free readers', choosing books from this entire range of high quality texts. There is no attempt to 'band' or 'level' books according to perceptions of children's ability or their phonic decoding skills. The 500 books link to the Optima 500 books website (<http://bit.ly/2gegQtQ>) which summarises the content of each book and provides comprehensive details of (i) the high frequency words in every book and (ii) the GPCs required to read each book. This allow teachers, through a process known as skill matching, to identify the GPCs in any book so that teachers can reinforce phonic skills being taught while giving pupils the opportunities to apply their knowledge to texts that they love to read and have chosen themselves.

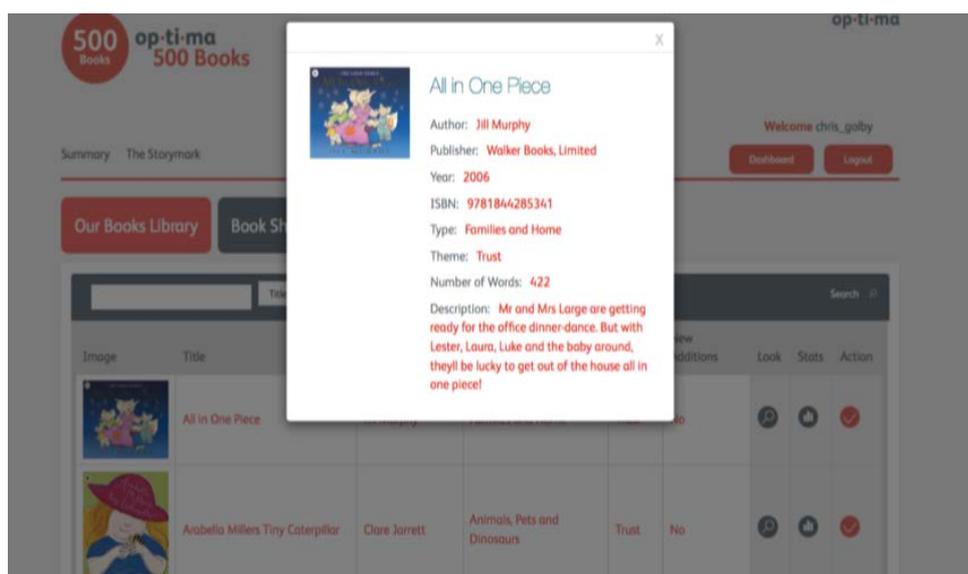
Books in the Library

The books in the library are listed together with book topics and themes



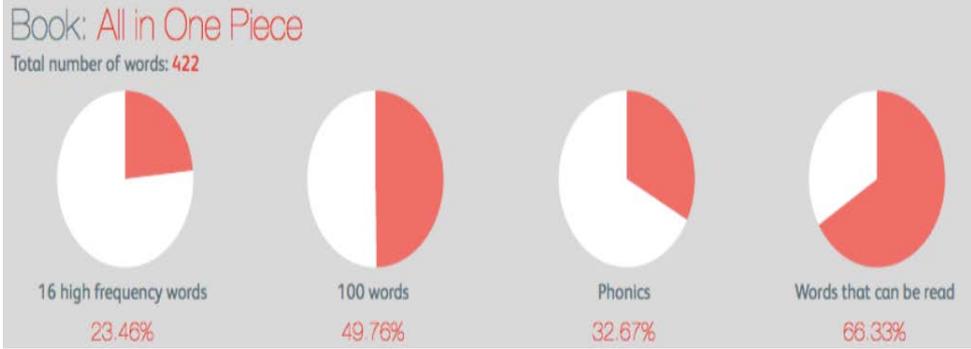
Book Summary

Summary of All in Once Piece together with details about book type and themes.



Book Statistics

The proportion of words that can be read through (i) 16 high frequency words; (ii) 100 high frequency words; (iii) 31 GPCs and (iv) combined total of 100 words and 31 GPCs.



List of GPCs Typically Taught in Schools

500 books op-ti-ma 500 books

Welcome Claire Machin

Summary The Storymark

Dashboard Logout

Phonics High Frequency Words Programmes

Graphemes	Pronunciation	Example
a	æ	cat
ā	ɑ:	father
a-e	eɪ	came
ai	eɪ	bait
air	E@r*	air
ar	ɑ:	arm
au	ɑ:	launch
aw	ɑ:	raw
ay	eɪ	say
b	b	bad
c	k	cat
ç	s	cell

List of Words Containing the Grapheme 'sh'

Ten of the 278 phonically regular words in the 500 books that contain the GPC 'sh'

Word	Occurrences in All Books
she	10845
fish	471
shall	451
show	400
she's	343
shop	261
shook	257
wish	246
shut	225
ship	203

Total Records : 1 - 10 (of 278 in total) 1 » Last

Books With the Highest Percentage of Phonically Regular Words Containing the GPC 'sh'

'sh'

Title	Author	Phonic Count	Total Words In Book	Percentage of Words
Funny Fish	Katy Pike	13	101	12.8713
Monkey Puzzle	Julia Donaldson	56	440	12.7273
Nancy No-size	Mary Hoffman	36	327	11.0092
My Mum	Anthony Browne	16	149	10.7383
Good Baby ; Bad Baby	Nanette Newman	54	519	10.4046
My Grandma is Wonderful	Nick Butterworth	8	88	9.0909
Knuffle Bunny	Mo Willems	18	203	8.8670
Old Mother Hubbard	Colin Hawkins Jacqui Hawkins	21	237	8.8608
Green Queen	Nick Sharratt	4	51	7.8431
My Dog Jessie	Donna Bryant Jakki Wood	8	104	7.6923

Total Records : 1 - 10 (of 997 in total) 1 » Last

One Hundred High Frequency Words



op-ti-ma
500 books

op-ti-ma

Welcome Claire.Machin

[Dashboard](#) [Logout](#)

Summary The Storymark

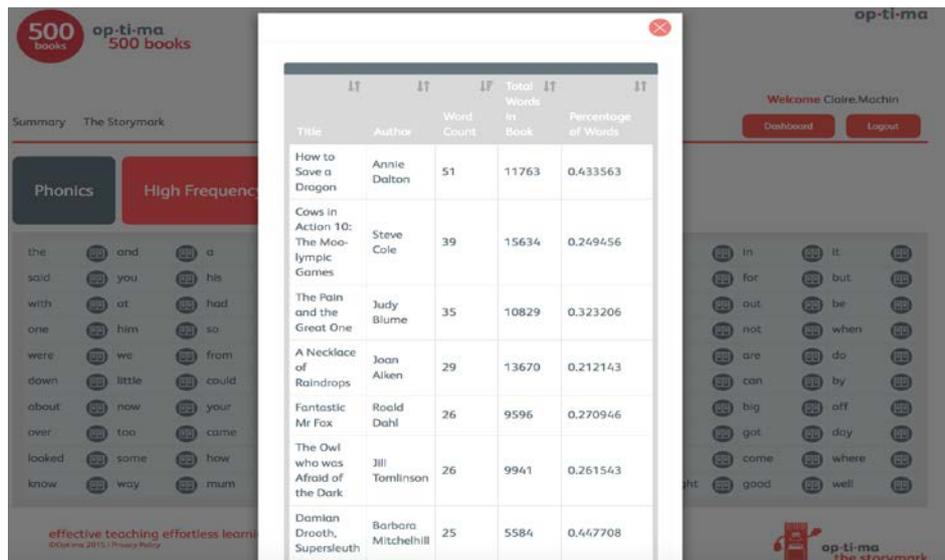
Phonics

High Frequency Words

Programmes

the	and	a	to	of	he	was	I	in	it
said	you	his	she	that	on	her	they	for	but
with	at	had	all	as	is	up	my	out	be
one	him	so	there	me	have	then	what	not	when
were	we	from	this	like	them	into	no	are	do
down	little	could	their	just	back	very	if	can	by
about	now	your	time	would	see	go	went	big	off
over	too	came	get	who	will	or	an	got	day
looked	some	how	been	did	asked	more	look	come	where
know	way	mum	again	away	going	through	thought	good	well

Books With the Highest Incidence of the Word 'just'



The screenshot shows the op-ti-ma 500 books website interface. A central table lists books with the highest incidence of the word 'just'. The table has columns for Title, Author, Word Count, Total Words in Book, and Percentage of Words. Below the table, there are sections for Phonics and High Frequency words, and a dashboard area with a welcome message and login options.

Title	Author	Word Count	Total Words in Book	Percentage of Words
How to Save a Dragon	Annie Dalton	51	11763	0.433563
Cows in Action 10: The Moolympic Games	Steve Cole	39	15634	0.249456
The Pain and the Great One	Judy Blume	35	10829	0.323206
A Necklace of Raindrops	Joan Aiken	29	13670	0.212143
Fantastic Mr Fox	Roald Dahl	26	9596	0.270946
The Owl who was Afraid of the Dark	Jill Tomlinson	26	9941	0.261543
Damian Drooth, Supersleuth	Barbara Mitchell	25	5584	0.447708

Bedtime Stories

Teachers have created a space on the school intranet called 'bedtime stories' and are placing video of themselves reading an increasing number of the 500 books. Children have opportunities to listen to these stories at various point through the school day as well as when they are at home. Teachers are also reading the first chapter of books that are suitable for older pupils in Key Stage 2 to encourage them to read the rest of the book themselves.

Coventry Director of Education, Kirston Nelson reads a book for Bedtime Stories (<http://bit.ly/2D9wjVL>)



Kirston
Nelson
reads
Ridiculous
by
Michael
Coleman
youtu.be

Icelandic Book Flood

The Icelandic Book Flood in Iceland is a long standing Christmas tradition where friends and family gift each other a special book to curl up with the night before Christmas. Finham has adopted this cosy tradition during the month of December. Special books are bought for each class to unwrap and share with each other in the build-up to the holiday.

Creating a Space to Share Books at the Finham Book Flood



Wrapped Books for the Finham Book Flood



Children Sharing Books at the Finham Book Flood



Engaging Children and Families Through Social Media



Finham Primary
@FinhamPrimary

Ready for our last day of term with our Finham Book Flood [#excited](#) where the stories will take us [@NatalieBWCSF](#)
[@FrogEducation](#) [@COVSF](#)
[@FinhamMAT](#)

Six Week Learning Cycle

Real books are at the heart of the six week learning cycle that forms the basis of much of the work that children undertake each half term. Books are shared, explored and studied to promote discussion, debate and understanding. There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers, just opportunities for pupils to talk about what they have read and appreciate the contents from different perspectives.

Impact

The way children are now being taught to read at Finham has had a positive impact on teachers, parents and children. New parents to the school have welcomed the 'real books' approach and parents with older children have reported, with considerable enthusiasm, the difference that they can see in pupils' attitudes and approach to reading. The school adopts the Learning for Assessment approach to monitoring children's progress. All the measures taken throughout the school reflect the positive impact of teaching reading through real books. Two cohorts have taken the Phonics Screening Check and the percentage of pupils reaching the pass mark of 32 is in excess of 90. In fact the results were so impressive in 2016 that Nick Gibb, the Minister of State at the Department of Education, wrote to Richard Machin to compliment him on the high standards achieved.

Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

The introduction of the above approaches to reading were the consequence of trying to change the culture in which children learn to read. It is clear to staff and parents that children are enthusiastic, motivated and knowledgeable readers. The approach is entirely inclusive since all children are seen as 'free readers' and all children have the right to access any book they like from the moment that they start school. The only difference in children's experiences as they learn to read is that faster learning pupils will read more of each book independently, but all will have the opportunity to share and engage with the same stories and the rich vocabulary that they contain.

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