

A Time and a Place

Robert Fletcher

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

Context

St. Michael's C of E Primary school is a 2-form entry primary school in London, UK.



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HIGHGATE

In our school development plan we have included to 'Further improve pupils' higher-order reading & writing skills in Key Stage 2.

OU Research inspiration and rationale

As a school, we were particularly inspired when looking into the reading for pleasure pedagogies. As English leader, I have wanted us to explore how we can raise the profile of our reading environments and conduct action research into how to maintain and raise the profile of reading through encouraging independent reading, and regular discussions about books: both one to one and as a class.

Another strand of the TaRs findings that we felt would help us with this, especially in key stage 2 is 'As Reading Teachers: teachers who read and readers who teach'. As modelling is key to teaching, this felt integral to achieving our goals.

As English leader I was also intrigued by the findings in

['Reading for pleasure?: A summary of the findings from a survey of the reading habits of year 5 pupils](#)

Naomi Dungworth, Shirley Grimshaw, Cliff Mcknight & Anne Morris

[New Review of Children's Literature and Librarianship](#) Vol. 10 , Iss. 2,2004'

As a result of this and the TaRs findings, we decided to raise the profile of reading for pleasure in the school: to encourage willing and competent readers.

Our teachers have a wide and deep knowledge of children's literature already and using a 'text driver' from Hampshire Council to support their choices in text, I was confident we could build on our firm foundations.

Aims

Significant efforts had been made in the past few years to reform guided reading in our school, moving from 'carousel' style reading sessions to whole class reading, inspired by the action research and contributions of Mrs. P. Teach

(<http://www.mrspteach.com/2015/05/from-guided-reading-to-whole-class.html>), and this has proven successful for guided reading. However, upon starting the year I discovered that

- The majority of children do not share reading with parents beyond Key Stage 1.
- Majority of children, especially boys, are reluctant to read at home.
- When instructed to 'get a book and read' many children would choose to sit and do nothing instead of read a book.

Across the school this is leading to groups of children not being developed to love reading or understanding that reading can be pleasurable.

Upon interviewing individuals in my own class, I was informed that

- The books in the book corner didn't interest them.
- That time given at school to get into a book was too short.
- That they were already reading a book, but left it at home.

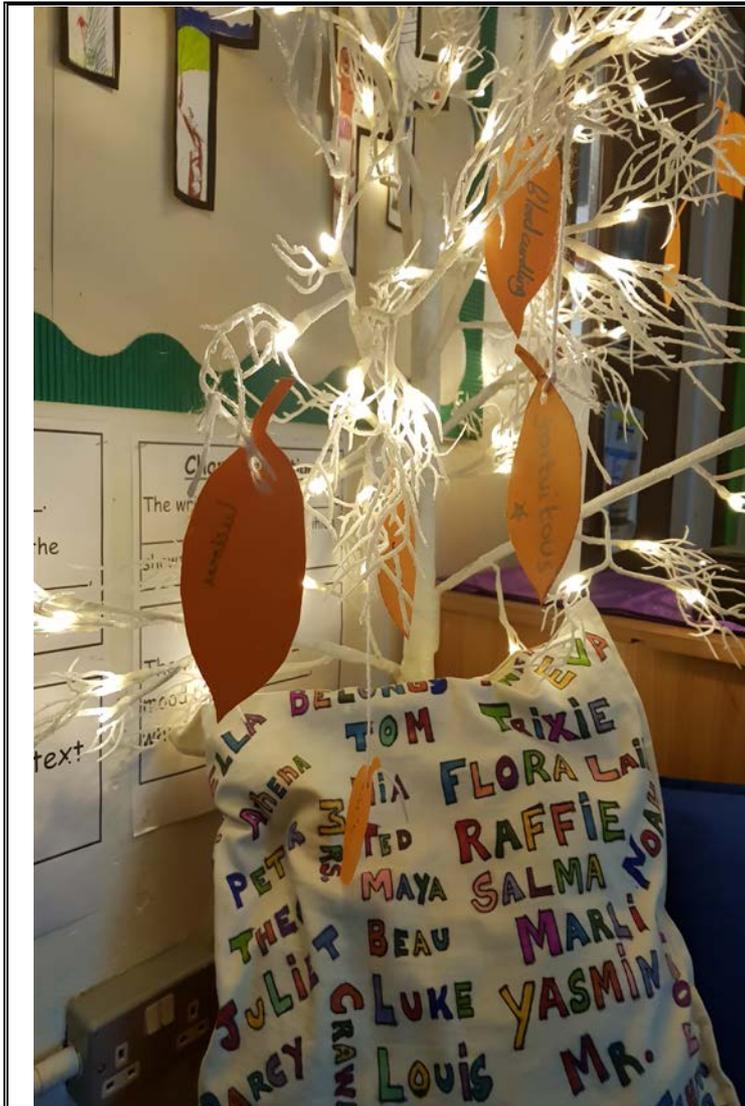
These are all factors that needed to be addressed to motivate children to choose to read a book, and engage with books by choice.

This links directly with the TaRs findings that

- Reading for pleasure needs to be focused on, and developed *alongside* instructed reading.
- Children need to control their own reading.
- Time needs to be made for children to explore texts in greater depth, share favourites and talk spontaneously about their reading.
- The role of the environment, a relaxed ethos, and the space and support for choice and conversation about texts was also seen to be crucial (Cremin and Swann, 2016).

Outline

Firstly, we focused on environments. Teachers were asked to create safe and encouraging environments that would engage the children. This was undertaken in different ways:



One teacher chose to engage the students by creating a word tree. Each week the children write down their favourite words, from the books they are reading. Each week, five are chosen. In a special pen the children write them on a leaf and then children are encouraged to use these words in their writing.



The environment is further added to with a collection of cushions - so the environment is safe and comfortable, and sentence stems to encourage discussion amongst the children.



One teacher chose to create a secluded and safe area, where children can go to read. To maintain safe use, 2 children are chosen each week (all children are chosen over a term) to read in the book corner. This is seen as a huge privilege in class.



Another teacher chose to enhance pupils' engagement by encouraging them to create book reviews for books that could be found in their reading corner.

The teacher started this activity, by writing their own review in front of the children, thus modelling being passionate about books, and the enjoyment that can be found in reading.



Another teacher, who also took the idea of engagement as a focus, encourages children to put their favourite quotes from books in their book corner, again starting this by doing one himself.

Alongside environment we made time in the time table for reading for pleasure. Previously, 3 mornings a week, 1 hour has been set aside for guided reading. 1 of these sessions is now split into two halves. Half is still guided reading, the other half children read whatever book they like. This is the equivalent of E.R.I.C. (everybody reads in class), or S.Q.U.I.R.T. (silent, quiet, independent reading time). We have called this reading for pleasure. Children are encouraged to choose books that interest them, fiction or non-fiction, and enjoy them in class.

Children's opportunity to go to the school library has been protected, and their reading for pleasure lesson takes place near to their library session, so that as they are engaged by a book, they are able to then maintain this momentum into their reading in class.

To address the books not being the books that the children enjoyed, I assigned each class a portion of our English budget, to spend on updating and improving the content of their book shelves. Teachers did this by asking the children for suggestions of books they would like, and by using the knowledge of children's literature to choose books they thought would engage more reluctant readers.

Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

Creating social and engaging reading environments has had a huge influence on us as a school, it has brought reading significantly into the classroom. We have many displays where children share their love of reading or interesting texts, and for book week we created 'reading in unusual places' boards which really engaged the children.

In teaching we are aware that modelling is key to getting great outcomes from our children, but in reading this is sometimes overlooked, and during our reading for pleasure session, I spend the first 10 minutes reading my own book, and having open discussion about it. I sometimes add my own words from my books to our vocabulary tree.

Building on this practice I would like to introduce opportunities where children take their reading for pleasure book to the hall and read it aloud with a child from another year group. I have seen this done effectively in a 1 form entry school, it really motivated and inspired the younger pupils and encouraged the older pupils to be great role models.

Our school has fabulous grounds, an allotment, multiple fields, and is described as 'an oasis of green in inner London' on our website. When the weather is more inclined I want teachers to take their reading for pleasure session outside and utilise the environment, showing that reading doesn't just happen at desks or in classrooms, but in fields and gardens: wherever you have a book.

