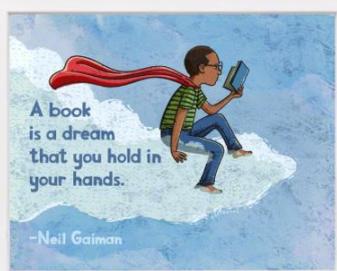


# Oysters, pearls and pleasure!



## Westmeads Community Infant School

Application by Helen Lambirth (Headteacher/English Leader) and Jamie Wraight (Year 2 teacher/English Leader)  
For consideration within the Egmont RfP Awards - Whole School Award

### Context:

Westmeads Infants is in the seaside town of Whitstable, Kent. Our journey towards a reading for pleasure school has taken several years and is embedded within our school ethos. We became aware from parents' surveys of a reduction in quality time families find to read with children.



We recognise that enjoying reading is key to opening up the world, helping children become confident, curious and artistically engaged citizens of the future. Consequently, it became a priority in our Development Plan to ensure reading for pleasure is given appropriate time; that teachers understand the processes of children learning to read for pleasure; that all children are excited and engaged by

reading; and that families feel confident in how to support and encourage their child. We decided the best way these things could be achieved was by encouraging a community of readers (Cremin et al., 2014) involving, children, parents and teachers.

### Research Inspiration and Rationale:

Our '*Reading for Pleasure*' initiative involved a number of strands from the Open University's Teachers as Readers findings (Cremin et al., 2014):

#### *Strand 3) Reading for pleasure pedagogy*

- Social reading environments
- Reading aloud
- Independent reading
- Informal book talk



We are fortunate that some of our children have access to books at home, have stories read to them and visit the library. However, some do not and, as parents work longer hours to financially support their families, fewer of them spend time encouraging reading for pleasure. We have seen this in the reduction of comments in reading record books and from feedback on our parents' survey. In addition, pressure is felt by teachers of young children to over-focus attention on mechanics of reading over reading for meaning and pleasure. We are sensitive to these and vigilant in our approach to ensure reading for pleasure is central to what we do.

#### *Strand 5) Reading Communities*

We wanted to develop parents' skills in supporting children in learning to read as we were aware many parents are willing but not always sure on the best approach to reading. We wanted to involve volunteers in reading to children, playing reading games, choosing, selecting and changing library books and by involving families in children's reading for pleasure at school.

We are also developing:-

### **Strand 1) Teachers' knowledge of children's literature**

We wholeheartedly embrace the value of using excellent texts to inspire children in cross-curricular work, enhanced by involvement in the CLPE 'Power of Reading', attendance at the Guardian's 'Reading for Pleasure' London conference and at our local OU/UKLA 'RfP' teacher group. Planning curriculum overviews as a team and topics around high quality texts ensures teachers discuss books and share ideas as a community. Teachers enjoy reading children's books across school and regularly recommend them to colleagues.

Reading research from the 'TaRs' projects (Cremin et al., 2008) it became clear we should ensure teachers recognise the importance of reading for themselves and have knowledge of children's books so they inspire children to have a passion for reading. In addition, within the whole staff there is a healthy and vibrant informal book exchange culture, whereby teachers share their enjoyment of reading at their own level.

### **Aims:**

- 1) Provide opportunities and places for all children to select high quality books to read and be immersed in so that they read for pleasure (*TaRs Strand 3*)
- 2) Make connections between children's home and school reading worlds (*TaRs Strand 5*)
- 3) Widen teachers' repertoires of children's books so that they inspire children (*TaRs Strand 1*)

### **Outline:**

#### ***Aim 1 (TaRs strand 3)***

- With our caretaker's help, we revamped reading areas in classrooms and outside learning environments. Using 'Book Blankets', children helped select and organise books for these areas, making them cosy and inviting with a range of quality texts, including poetry, non-fiction and comics. The children snuggle down with a book, sharing with a friend, teddy or soon our school dog!

The School Council raised money through a Bring and Buy sale to purchase a Reading Shed for the playground so children can read during lunch and playtime. This is now operational and a social hub for children.



- We invest in reading books for children using real books as well as a variety of schemes. Banded books guide children in making selections. Children enjoy independently making choices and are often heard recommending books to each other.



- Our teaching of reading was revisited based on TaRs research (Cremin et al., 2014). We combined guided and reciprocal reading to ensure comprehension has equal weighting to decoding skills. Using learning pods outside classrooms has meant children are free to enjoy and animatedly discuss books without disturbing other children in class.

- Whilst we make children’s literature central to plans for topics, this year we enriched this approach with two teachers attending the CLPE ‘Power of Reading’ training. The children have loved it and parents comment on how engaged children are. Displays incorporating these books celebrate children’s work and enjoyment.

- To support reluctant readers, Year 2 children have become Reading Buddies for EYFS, encouraging them to read for pleasure.



**Aim 2 (TaRs strand 5)**

- In our annual survey, some parents commented they did not find time to support children with homework in addition to reading. We made a decision, with support of governors, to focus only on reading for pleasure at home. This took pressure off parents to help them enjoy reading with their child without the burden of other homework to complete.

- Feedback from workshops run for parents on ‘Helping your Child to Read’ is extremely positive. “Really useful. Gave me insight into the mind of a child learning to read. Can’t wait to read with the kids after school!” We give out laminated bookmarks to parents in Reception classes with ideas on how to support their child in learning to enjoy reading.



Additional information on our website.

<https://westmeads-community-infant.secure-primarsite.net/supporting-learning-in-reading>



- In our annual Book Week, we involve families coming into school to read with groups or take part in story-camps led by the children. Other activities in Book Week involve teachers and teaching assistants visiting different classes to share favourite stories with children with whom they are less familiar, dressing up and book character potato homework!



- With parental help, we revamped our non-fiction library and reorganised books using a simplified Dewey system. The children visit weekly, supported by our parent community and Year 2 librarians ensure it's kept tidy and inviting.



- For three years we have participated in a county-wide initiative called 'Buster's Book Club', where children's home reading minutes are collected alongside other participating schools.

- To maintain engagement and pleasure in reading over the holidays, we visit Whitstable Library to find out about the Summer Reading Challenge. Children and families have embraced this and Westmeads has won the trophy with the highest percentage of children completing the challenge for the last four years in our district.



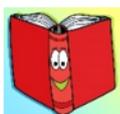
### Aim 3 (TaRs strand 1)

- For children to read for pleasure, research suggests they need to experience the pleasure to be had (Kalb and van Ours, 2013, Trelease, 2013, Cremin et al., 2014). Therefore, we prioritise reading stories to children throughout the day. We ensure all children have a rich diet, read by a variety of people, including in a weekly Story Assembly, led on rotation by teachers. We invite well-known authors and poets (Chris Wormell, Alan Durant, Sally Grindley, Roger Stevens) into school to inspire children about their books and bring them to life.



- In a lunchtime 'Bookworms' club, run by the headteacher, children listen, enjoy and engage with stories, make recommendations to the rest of the school and suggest titles on our weekly newsletter to parents.

Extract from newsletter:



#### Book of the week

With our focus on reading and ideas for Christmas presents, we will continue to recommend some children's books to you. This week's suggestions are recommended by Book Worms Club

members: 'The Tree' by Neal Layton; 'A Place to Call Home' by Alexis Deacon; 'I'm Going to Eat this Ant' by Chris Naylor-Ballesteros. |



**Evidence of Impact:**

Results from KS1 RfP Survey from a random sample of 5 boys and 5 girls from each class (60 children including Yr R).

<b>Do you like reading?</b>	<b>100%</b> of children enjoy reading with 70% stating they love it	Don't like reading – 0%
<b>Are you a good reader?</b>	<b>97%</b> of children consider themselves good at reading with 70% stating they are 'very good'	Not good yet – 3%
<b>Do you read at home?</b>	Yes – <b>100%</b>	No – 0%
<b>How often does someone read with you?</b>	<b>97%</b> of children read 4 days or more with 67% reading every day	Once a week – 3% Never – 0%

Reading results at end of KS1 have risen over the last three years since the implementation of our RfP strategies.

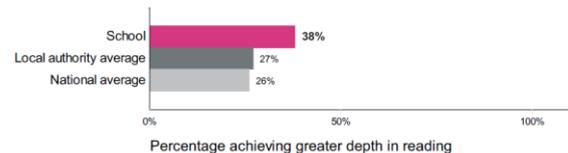
**Percentage achieving at least the expected standard in reading**

Number of pupils = 58



**Percentage achieving greater depth in reading**

Number of pupils = 58



We use the UKLA/CLPE Reading Scale to help track and identify next steps to help children progress. Whilst results are above national, we recognise it is children's attitudes to reading of which we are most proud. If one talks to our children, their love of reading is tangible!

**Reflections:**

Although pleased with progress made, there is always more to do. To further develop children's language development and imagination we are developing storytelling and making storyboxes for children to create and retell stories. Each cohort is different and our 70% boys in Year 2 helped us sharpen our focus in our provision.

We continue to add to class, school and reading libraries and are beginning teachers sharing or reading a book at the beginning of every staff meeting to help expand our knowledge of children's texts.

Using a variety of research, having professional dialogue around books and teaching reading and responding to children's interests and enthusiasm will help us continue our exciting journey as a 'Reading for Pleasure' school.