

Bringing Back Story Time

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Little Eaton Primary School



Little Eaton Primary is a single-form entry school that caters for children aged 5-11 years of age. We have 215 children on roll. I am currently the Deputy Head, Year 6 teacher and English Lead. As an avid reader, I have always encouraged reading within my classroom and more recently ensured I have read and recommended current children's literature for the age range in which I teach. Class stories have always been a part of my weekly timetable, although until this year that would rarely be on a daily basis.

When taking over the role of English Lead in September 2018, I wanted to extend the school's reading provision and ensure all classes had the opportunity to hear a quality class book. Reading for Pleasure (RfP) was included on the school development plan to ensure regular focus, monitoring and time was dedicated to this. With the support of the head teacher and staff, reading has been a whole school focus during this academic year.

OU Research inspiration and rationale

Reading aloud is a crucial element with the *Teachers as Readers* (TaRs) research and is featured as part of the RfP pedagogy (Cremin et al., 2014). With increasing time restraints in the curriculum, we acknowledged that reading aloud needed to be a priority to ensure time was protected within the day to allow it to happen.

"You can't teach pleasure: you have to share it!" Frank Cottrell Boyce (quoted in Weber, 2013)

In order to increase the enjoyment of reading in school, we recognised that teachers needed to provide the role models and through regular sharing of quality texts we hoped children would be inspired and engaged in the reading process to find pleasure in literature. Through our focus on reading aloud, we wanted to create a sense of class community, offering a shared reading experience. We also recognised that reading aloud would allow all children, regardless of their reading ability, the opportunity to engage in sophisticated themes and language beyond their independent reading capability (Cremin, 2018 p. 96) .

We were in a similar position to many schools, where reading aloud was an established routine with younger pupils, but would not feature as frequently as they moved up the school. Aidan Chambers in 'The reading environment' acknowledged this trend: *"It is a mistake to suppose reading aloud is only needed in the early stages (the period people tend to call 'learning to read')"* (1991 p. 51). Our focus was to ensure all pupils could listen with pleasure and understanding to language and themes which might have otherwise been inaccessible for them.

Aims

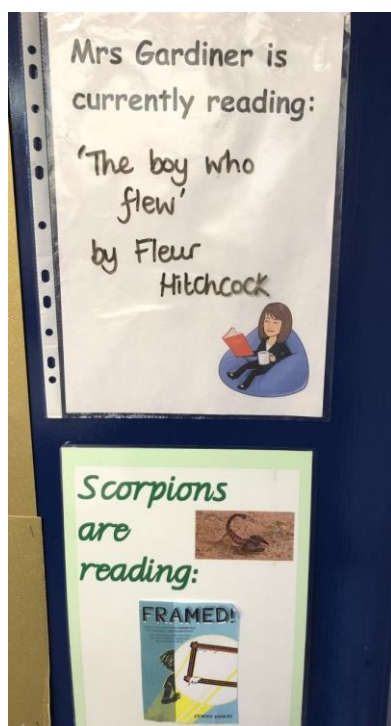
1. Establish a daily class read in all classes across the school.
2. Inform parents of the class novel using a poster on the door, class webpages and reading newsletters.
3. Widen children's knowledge of age-appropriate, quality reads

Outline

During the Summer Holidays, children were encouraged to take photographs of themselves reading in unusual places as part of the '**Extreme Reading**' challenge. These were displayed in the corridor and discussed and shown in assemblies to motivate children ready for a reading focus during the academic year. Most staff provided a photograph and children enjoyed discussing these which were interspaced amongst the children's.

Time was dedicated in the INSET day in September to discuss, as a whole staff, attitudes towards reading, barriers to reading aloud daily and possible solutions. We also discussed ourselves as readers and our personal background/experience and views of reading.

All classes established a routine for a whole class read and teachers chose the first book to read aloud in each class.



In Reception and Year 1, it was decided that there would be a collection of '**Treasured Reads**' which would form the basis of books read, alongside child-initiated stories which they were encouraged to bring in from home.

Information about the class book was provided on a poster on the classroom door and included on a half-termly reading newsletter for parents.

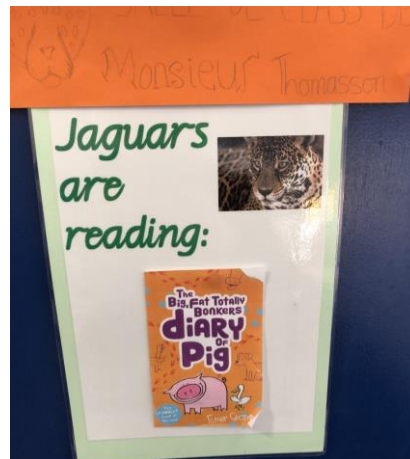
During the Summer term, Year 1 introduced a short chapter book which was read alongside child-initiated stories.





Alongside class reads, a **Weekly Reading Assembly** was introduced in KS2 during Autumn 2 and Spring 2. Short books such as 'The Truth Pixie' by Matt Haig and 'The Fib' by George Layton were read in their entirety.

Extracts and the first chapter of new books purchased for the library were also read to encourage children to choose a wider range of texts.



The junior classes followed the Scholastic Lollies awards; all books in the 6-8 and 9-11 categories were purchased and children voted on their favourite. The competition winners were announced in assembly.

During staff meetings, regular time was assigned to discuss class read choices, successes and difficulties. All children from Year 1 to Year 6 completed the OU RfP survey in October 2018 and again in June 2019 to obtain their perceptions and opinions. These were analysed and followed up with groups of children to gather information.



Following a successful book fair, which earned £200 in reward points, it was decided to purchase **a new book for each class to hear read aloud**. Each class was provided with the front cover, blurb and a short extract of 8 age-appropriate books from which to choose.

Following class discussions, **children voted** and the book was purchased to provide the next class read. **This created a huge buzz within classes and gave them ownership over the choice made**. Other popular books, which did not win the vote, were also purchased for the libraries.

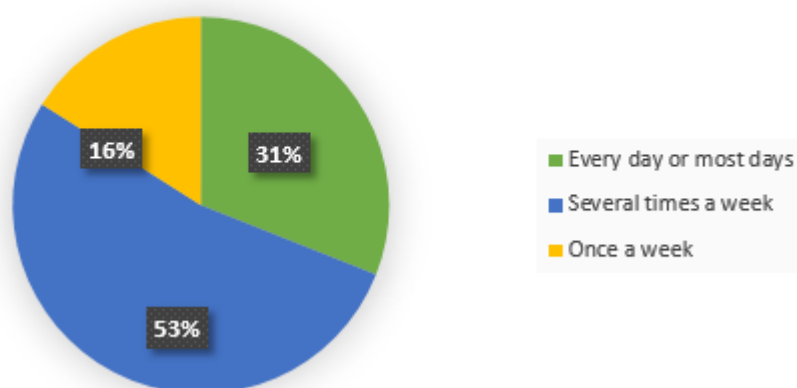
Impact and reflections

Regular discussions with children and surveys were conducted to gather opinions and consider their attitudes towards reading. Staff and parents were also asked to complete a survey in order to gain their views about reading aloud in school and give them an opportunity to make suggestions on how to increase reading for pleasure further during the next academic year.

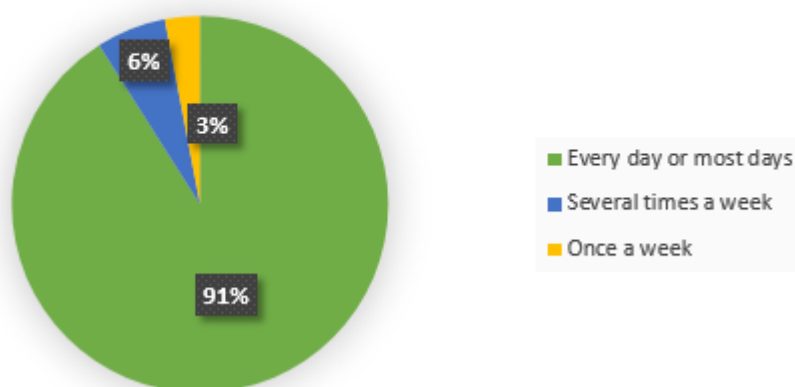
Results and reflections from children's surveys:

Children in Years 1-6 were surveyed using a slightly adapted version of the survey available on the RfP website in October and then again in June.

How often does your teacher read aloud to the class? (Oct)

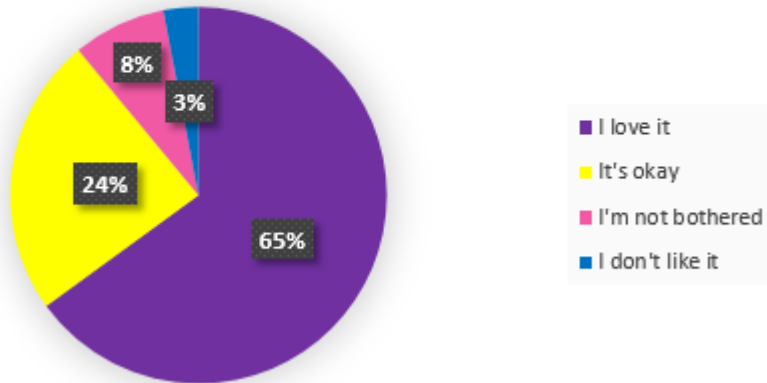


How often does your teacher read aloud to the class? (June)

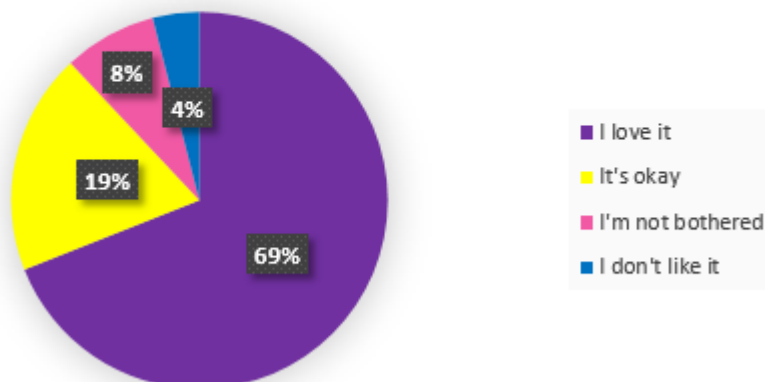


This data clearly shows the increased amount of time spend on a class read on average in the school. There was a rise from 31% of pupils to 91% of pupils noting their teacher read aloud to them every day or most days in the week.

Do you like it when your teacher reads aloud? (Oct)

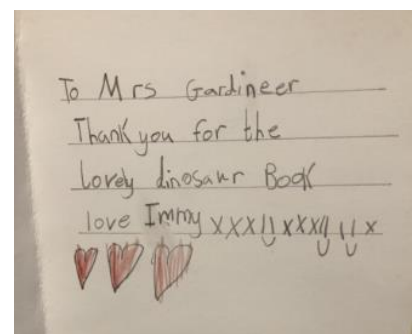


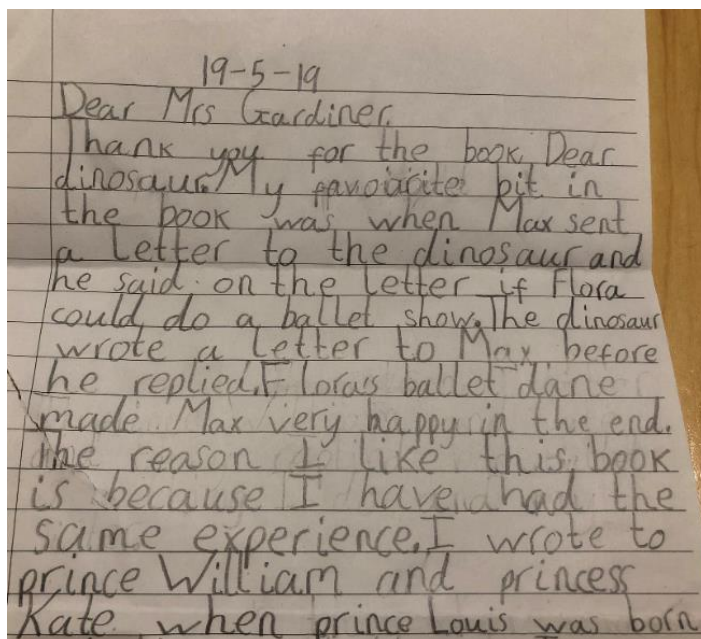
Do you like it when your teacher reads aloud? (June)



Interestingly, the figures which gathered pupil's enjoyment levels remained quite similar between the start and the end of the project. With 12% reporting they were not bothered or didn't enjoy listening to the class story. Further investigation of the children who reported listening to the class story to be 'okay' will be carried out to gain more information about their likes/dislikes.

The biggest impact on fostering enjoyment for the class book, in my opinion, was the decision to allow children to vote for their next class read and then present it as a gift to the class. Pupils were very positive and many gave thanks for their new book.





Results and reflections from staff surveys:

- Prior to this academic year, only one class teacher read aloud every day to their class. Three staff members read some days in the week and had an established 'class book' for pleasure. At the end of this project, 5 teachers reported reading every day (or most days) and 2 teachers read some days. This is a significant increase from previous years and will hopefully continue to increase as confidence and established routines are now in place.
- When considering the biggest barrier to reading aloud, 5 teachers reported time. Support of senior leaders this year and continued focus as part of the SDP will ensure regular time slots are considered an essential part of the day and allow teachers the confidence/ validation to 'use time' to read aloud.
- When asked to rank the core reasons for reading aloud to children, the most common responses were to provide a reading role model of expressive reading and to foster enjoyment beyond their ability.
- Teachers were asked about the impact they felt the class book had on their class, some of the responses are provided below:
 - "The children use story book vocab in their play and writing; they will often pick up a book to look at again that we have read together."
 - "Nearly all the class enjoy reading now."
 - "Children look forward to hearing the class book"
 - "Children now have a wider knowledge of book and different authors/genres."

Results and reflections from parent surveys:

In total 60 responses were received, this represents just under a third of all parents. The survey was anonymous with only the child's year group required. The questions were all multiple choice with an option to comment at the end if they wished. There was a total of 10 questions, some of which focused on the class read aloud; others on reading opinions more generally.

- **Does your child enjoy listening to the class book?**

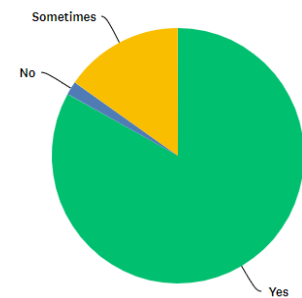
Yes – 83%

No – 2%

Sometimes – 15%

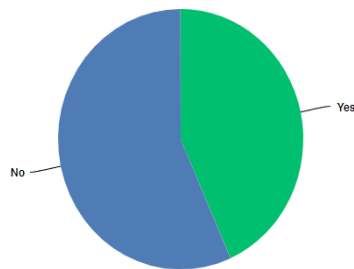
Does your child enjoy listening to the class book?

Answered: 59 Skipped: 1



Are you aware of the book the class is currently reading?

Answered: 60 Skipped: 0



- **Are you aware of the book the class is currently reading?**

Yes – 44%

No – 56%

- **Have you read the reading newsletter produced this year?**

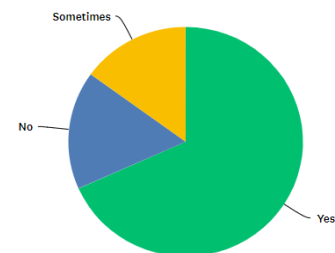
Yes – 68%

No – 16%

Sometimes – 16%

Have you read the reading newsletter produced this year?

Answered: 60 Skipped: 0



The responses were generally positive about RfP and the impact of the class book. There is still further work to be done to increase the reading community and reach all parents. Although the class book is included on newsletters and visible on classroom doors, some parents were unaware of the current one. Informing parents directly via the teachers2parents text system each time a new book is begun is being considered. Encouragement could also be given for parents to discuss the book too.

What's next? Further development of reading for pleasure

- Continued focus on a daily class read.
- Ensure parents are aware of the class book and encourage them to be involved in discussing books more generally at home.
- Encourage a range of non-fiction and poetry to be read aloud alongside fiction to widen children's experiences further.
- Additional opportunities for children to vote and choose class books from a selection.
- Extend the reading assembly for KS1 as well as KS2.
- My own continued attendance at the local **OU/ UKLA RfP group** with a new project linked to the TaRs research and focused on reading communities to build on this work.