



Developing a culture of Reading for Pleasure



Emma Elliott
Sythwood Primary and Nursery School, Woking

For consideration in the Egmont RfP Awards: School Reading Champion

Context

I am the Assistant Headteacher and English Lead at Sythwood Primary and Nursery School in Woking. We are a three-form entry school with 30% disadvantaged children and 53% children with English as an additional language. The proportion of children who have SEN is above national average and we have over 37 different languages spoken. We are a good school and passionate about raising aspirations, improving life chances and giving our children amazing experiences.

I previously worked in children's publishing and have brought my enthusiasm for reading with me into my new career. I understand how critical a love of reading is and this year my main focus has been on developing teacher knowledge so that teachers are seen as readers and can develop and foster children's love of literature.

OU Research inspiration and rationale

This year, I have been part of the OU / UKLA Teachers Reading Group in Surrey which has pushed me to further develop Reading for Pleasure (RfP) at my school and consider how important it is to raise teachers' awareness in order to enthuse children and create a buzz about reading. I have also been inspired by literature conferences where I have listened to Nicola Davies, Rob Biddulph and M.G Leonard share their passion for children's literature.

I quickly realised there was much work to do and there were many links between each of the Open University's Teachers as Readers findings. I decided to focus on the OU research around 'A Reading for Pleasure pedagogy' and 'Reading Teachers' in order to prioritise reading in the timetable and ensure that teachers could direct children to exciting texts (Cremin et al., 2014). From this, I knew I would concentrate on daily book sharing, independent reading time, teacher suggestions and whole class reading sharing new and engaging texts.

Aims

Learning to read is one of the most important things that a child will learn. Everything else depends on it, so we devote as much energy as we can into making sure that each child learns to read as quickly as possible. Reading is vital for academic success and we promote reading across the curriculum. We want each child to love reading and to want to read for themselves. We believe that the more children read, the more they know and the more they continue to grow.

Previously children have only been exposed to well-known authors such as Roald Dahl and David Walliams, I wanted to share exciting new authors, encourage recommendations and develop a library for older children.

Our aims are:

- To direct teachers to exciting and engaging texts that they want to read to their classes.
- That every child is read to every day.
- To increase the amount of high quality, current children’s literature that children have access to at school.
- To develop reading environments that spark interest in reading and provide space to ‘escape’ with books.
- To build reading communities within school between staff, children and families.
- To increase opportunities for children to be exposed to stories, non-fiction texts and poetry.
- To speak to children to find out what they want, what they love and what they are looking for.

Outline

I knew that I had to prioritise teacher knowledge, time to read, space to read and building a buzz about reading.

Staff knowledge



I created a book box in the staffroom full of new books with a post-it note review on each to engage staff. When staff borrow a book, they comment on how they used it and what impact it had. Teachers have commented that they are now more aware of what books are out there

and children are being exposed to new authors and illustrators. It has also inspired many teachers to venture into bookshops, get recommendations and suggest books to each other.



Teachers are sharing their suggestions with children and challenging themselves to read more children’s books. As teachers read books, they are recommending them to children, getting feedback from children and creating lifelong readers.



KS2 library

Although we have a library in our Infant building, this is not used by children in the Juniors. Over the summer, I used an existing space in the Y3/4 building to create a new KS2 library with space to read, librarians and lots of new books.



I also created recommendations to move children on from their favourite authors:



Excited by the success of the KS2 library, teachers began creating reading environments in their KS2 classrooms.

One teacher really took this to heart and had a ribbon cutting ceremony for her classroom library, contacted publishers for publicity material and included materials that the children had created themselves. She also got a signed author poster, recommended other authors and provided plenty of opportunities for children to read. As a result, the children are highly engaged and desperate to read every day.

Time to read

With the pressures of the curriculum, I wanted teachers to prioritise reading. We asked for a commitment of class story time every day as from pupil voice I knew that many of our children do not have a bedtime story or have the opportunity to read with a family member.



Reception children visit the Infant library to share a story and then choose a book each to borrow:



Children now choose to read during golden time, love finding new books to share and want to talk about what they are reading.



Building a buzz about reading

I wanted to share excitement about books with children and develop a passion for literature. This included teachers and children dressing up for World Book Day, Book Fairs, reading assemblies and librarians sharing their knowledge with other children.





Impact

- **Wider variety of children's literature:** used £600 raised from Book Fair to purchase class sets of books, books for teachers to share and books for the libraries. Children have been more engaged due to more exciting texts and are asking to borrow the books that teachers read to them.
- **Children hearing a story every day:** in Nursery, children vote for the book that they would like to hear read and this has created a real enthusiasm for books. In all classes, teachers are now reading a story each day and prioritising reading time.
- **Whole class reading:** instead of a guided reading carousel, teachers now read with the whole class meaning that a cap is not placed on any children. This has allowed more interesting discussion, more children are making links between books and teachers are able to respond as readers.
- **Accelerated Reader development:** As children read more widely and more regularly, more children are taking Accelerated Reader quizzes and developing their comprehension.
- **Libraries award:** This year we are taking part in the Surrey Libraries Book Award and are one of the Champion Schools. This will further develop children's' love of reading as they will read the titles, recommend their favourites and enjoy a visit from one of the authors or illustrators. This is a huge opportunity for our children and they will also be able to attend the awards ceremony.
- **Access to books:** Every term, children in Year 2 are visited by a charity who provide a free book for each child. This creates massive excitement and for some of our children it may be the first book that they own.
- **Teachers' understanding and enthusiasm:** In staff meetings, teachers have shared how much they are enjoying devoting time to reading and teaching reading as a whole class. When observing reading sessions in the school, it is clear to see how much more excited both staff and children are now. Teachers have also created their own collections of books that they want to share with their children.



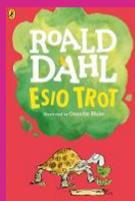
Year 2 teacher: *'I love teaching reading now! I choose the books much more carefully and enjoy how everyone is able to take part.'*

Year 1 teacher: *'Children I didn't expect come out with amazing answers and can make links to other books that they have read.'*

Year 3 teacher: *'Whole class reading is already ingrained in our year group. We are much more confident now and we hear every child read each week. We are also reading more interesting books that we are enjoying.'*

- **Reading surveys:** during pupil voice, children are now able to identify their teachers as readers and they have all said that their teachers love reading and that makes them love reading. They are also now sharing their favourite books and they are predominantly new books that have been read in class.
- **KS2 library visits:** every day there are over 30 children in the library during morning play and lunchtime play. Librarians support children to choose books, borrow books and find new books that they may love. With a wide range of graphic novels, newspapers, non-fiction texts and fiction, children always find something that they want to read. We now have children borrowing books who showed no interest in books before. One child who had never been engaged with reading, borrowed 50 books in the autumn term! I also had 40 children all wanting to be a librarian next term.
- **Book recommendations:** each fortnight, I recommend books on the school newsletter to inspire children and their families.

BOOK REVIEW



Esio Trot by Roald Dahl

This is about a man who falls in love with a lady who lives next door. However, she just loves her pet tortoise. It is a funny story and I really liked reading it.

By Madeline, Year 4

Sythwood Suggests



Harrison tries to be good but he cannot control his temper. This time there are terrible consequences for his actions...

Great for Year 4 to Year 6.



This lovely picture book is all about a little boy whose worry monster follows him wherever he goes.

Great for Nursery to Y2.

Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

This year has been successful in so many ways and has certainly engaged children and teachers in Reading for Pleasure. By reading case studies from other schools, engaging on Twitter and talking to children, I am much more confident on how to develop Reading for Pleasure further and ensure that we are a 'reading school'. The OU/ UKLA Teachers' Reading Group has supported me to question my own practice, engage others and inspire the reading curriculum team to ensure the best opportunities for reading. The Research Rich Pedagogies website has allowed me to hone in on specific areas, consider a whole class approach and survey pupils and staff with targeted questionnaires.

The next steps are embedding the culture of Reading for Pleasure, developing more book bletcher around the whole school and creating Reading Champions in each year group. Once this is established, then I will begin considering how we can extend the reading community to families and our local community.

I also hope to involve more teachers in the OU/ UKLA Teachers' Reading Group so that they can share their enthusiasm with more teachers and children in our school. I am also going to record reading sessions to share good practice, develop a bank of reading questions and try to fund even more books to keep our children excited, engaged and inspired to read.