

Engaging children and parents with reading

Littlecoates Primary Academy

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Let's raise the profile of reading

Context

We are three teachers working across Key Stage 1 and 2 within a Primary Academy in North East Lincs. Our catchment has a high proportion of PP (46%) and SEN (around 30%) children with a low % ARE for reading throughout their time with us. We have a long-standing aim to promote a love of reading amongst our pupils and their families.

This is something close to our hearts as all three of us are avid readers ourselves, as children and now as adults. We were inspired by some of our colleagues whom attended the 'Reading for Pleasure' programme at BGU last year.

In response to the sessions, amongst other things, we transformed our library area into a bright inviting area with lots of space to read and share books. Each class was given a shared library slot with a paired class to further create a positive ethos towards reading. We also created a Jacksonary after-school book club for parents and children.



Have you got the reading bug?



Context continued

However, we felt that we needed to extend this good work and try and promote reading further by encouraging parents to get the reading bug too.

We felt reading needed it's profile raising as historically we have often had a low turnout for key events in our school calendar, ranging from more formal events such as reading meetings, to the less structured EYFS 'stay and play' themed sessions (often themed around traditional tales). So we began considering what we could do to continue to raise the profile of reading within school and particularly with the wider community, including parents and carers.

Reading for Pleasure

OU Teachers as Readers Research inspiration and rationale

The TaRs research project (Cremin et al. , 2014) gave us lots of food for thought and we discussed the ways in which we already promoted these things within school. We reflected on our classroom practices and felt that as a whole school, 'Reading Week' would be ideal for promoting ourselves as readers and would be both beneficial and encouraging.

The social reading environment and use of informal book talk were the strands we felt we wanted to explore further. The TaRs research revealed that when children were encouraged to talk to one another about their current reading in informal contexts, this overtime supported their growth as readers. It even led to, in some schools, spontaneous child-led text talk in which their teachers (and hopefully parents) could also join in.

Let's raise the profile of reading

Aims

We wanted to further explore the importance of creating a social reading environment and using informal book talk to support children with their reading. We decided to do this by:

- modelling and encouraging lots of informal book- talk or 'book blether' (Cremin 2009) between peers / carers and their children.
- encouraging children to love reading through seeing all adults around them reading a variety of materials.
- modelling reading aloud to children and their adults.
- involving parents in informal, school reading events/sessions throughout the year and thus hopefully keeping the profile of reading high within the school and home/school environment.

Outline



***Jackanory Club
had a special
treat today.***

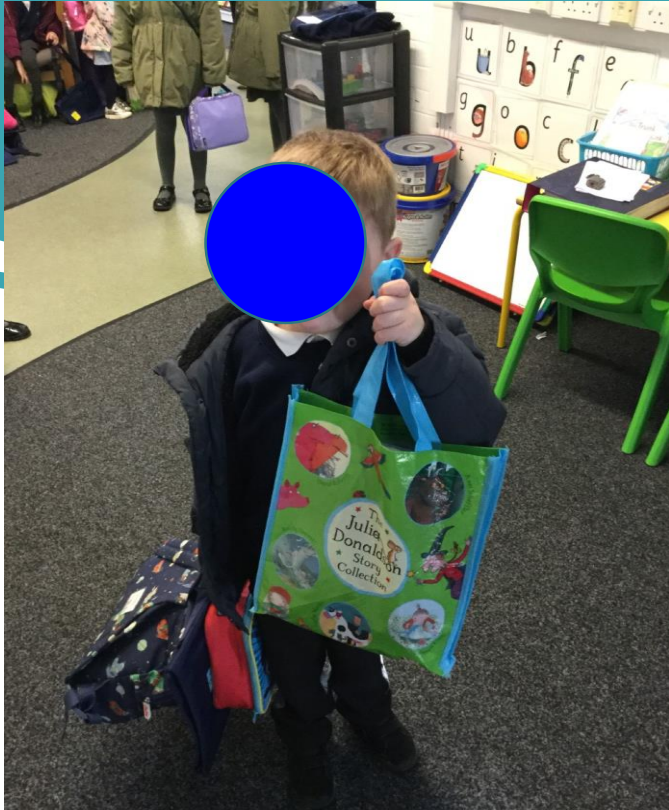
***Our bedtime book
bag is full of lovely
things.***

***We can enjoy taking
it home and
sharing stories.***

PIC•COLLAGE

As previously mentioned, we created our Jackanory Story Club last year. It gives children a chance to listen to stories and informally 'blether' about them over a biscuit and drink of juice. Miller (2002) identified that even young children can take part in book clubs, which can help these children to progress with their reading. Parents and children in our Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 are invited to a weekly after school relaxed reading time. Recently, we have encouraged children to bring in books from home too and we have created our 'book and a cuddle' bag, which went home each week with a child and parent. This was a conscious decision to try and link parents and book talk together in another way. We let the child choose a book from a selection in school to put inside the bag with a teddy, a mini pack of biscuits, a hot chocolate sachet and some 'book blether' prompt cards. We spoke to each parent and encouraged them to stay with their child as they shared the story and engaged in some book talk together. Feedback was very positive and children were keen to tell us about the story they read and why they liked it.

Jackonary Reading Club



Parental involvement

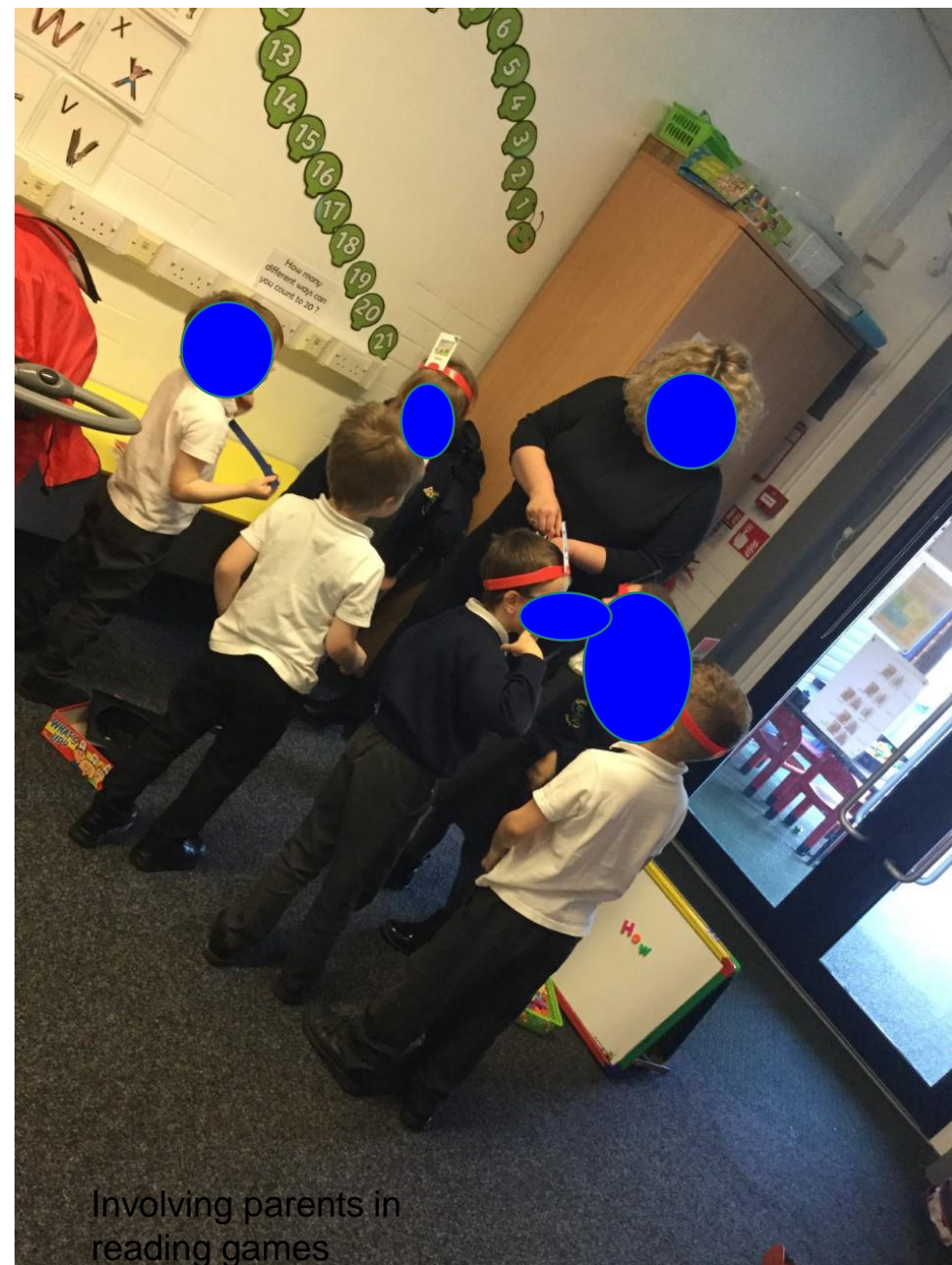
Books and Biscuits Bonanza

We also invited the Foundation stage and Key Stage 1 parents in for the afternoon at the end of our 'Reading for Pleasure' Week. Staff read stories aloud with groups of children and parents watched and joined in as much as possible. Children, siblings and their parents then moved between the rooms playing reading games like: 'What am I?' and charades, singing nursery rhymes with puppets, and reading poems aloud etc...

We then came back together to share our book experiences and had biscuits and milk. Parents were also asked to fill in a reading questionnaire too.



Parental involvement



Informal Book Talk

Our pupils have been given increased opportunities to talk about what they have been reading.

In Year 2, the pupils were shown how to take part in a book blanket activity, which engaged them to talk about books. The books on the blanket were chosen from a variety of sources. Some were familiar and from the class library, whereas some books were new and unseen. The pupils were given question prompts to discuss the covers of the books with their classmates. This took place before the children were then able to choose a book from the blanket to read independently or within a small group.

During this time, children had the freedom to explore the classroom, so for example, they could sit at or under a table, on a beanbag or on the carpet. In the Year 2 classroom, there was a spare whiteboard, so this was transformed into a book graffiti wall. Pupils were able to share their thoughts and recommendations of books that they had read.

KS2 using the Local library



To try and engage the Key Stage 2 pupils and their parents we arranged a trip to the local library for these children. They then were offered the chance to join the library and forms were sent home to parents to fill in. Lawrence Dunn (Lincs Inspire Libraries) our local librarian was eager to foster links with parents and children so was willing to come in to read in all classes and to attend some future events within school to raise the profile of the library within the community. Unfortunately, Covid-19 meant this latter part of the plan was in it's infancy and will not now happen fully until the Autumn term.

Reading during lockdown and post-Covid

The lockdown due to COVID-19 in March 2020, threw up many challenges especially in relation to engagement and learning, especially regarding reading.

As a team, we distinguished between 'platforms' and 'learning opportunities'.

Our lessons/ 'learning opportunities' moved onto the online 'platform' of Google Classroom and Bug Club became our main 'platform' to be used by ch. for reading.

We have attempted to keep the pupils engaged with a combination of both.



Bug Club



Google Classroom

Reading during lockdown

Platform



Bug Club

Platform

All pupils in the school have had access to Bug Club - an online platform which allows children to read books that are set by the class teacher. This was a means in which we could ensure that ch. could access appropriate and quality texts of a wide range, whilst adhering to what was the current Covid-safety-guidance.

We acknowledged that this takes away the enjoyment and sensation of holding a physical book and that in print more 'learning'/retention may occur (Mangen, Olivier, Velay, 2019) but having a way of physical books being 'distributing' and 'collected' was not possible at this time, due to both logistics and ensuring that the ch. were safe (Covid-guidance at the time being met).

Positives:

- ch. can access a range of quality texts (which they themselves can choose from a selection), with teachers also having oversight (as appropriate).
- Covid safety guidance at the time being met.

Possible limitations:

- sensation of holding a physical book being lost.

Reading during lockdown

Learning opportunities



Google Classroom

Learning opportunities

-We used Google Classroom (GC) to distribute videos of staff reading books (nearly the whole school staff has been involved) and these have been shared weekly during term time and daily during the holidays.

-Google Classroom has also been used to set guided reading/phonics activities which have included videos of teachers reading a variety of different books, as our confidence and capability with online home learning has increased.

-For the children that have been engaging with the online learning/activities, it has felt that what we have provided has still enabled our pupils to gain some pleasure from reading as well as ensuring that their reading journey continues.

Reading during lockdown

Reading journey continues



Google Classroom









Bug Club

Interactions/blether

Google Classroom has also enabled staff-pupil and pupil-pupil interactions regarding reading to continue, despite the distance and circumstances.

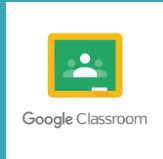
Direct responses/ interactions to the reading of books/novels/ texts (that were posted on GC).

Ch.s responses to a story read by a teacher (Year 5 pupils).

-  **Child A** 30 Mar
I loved that story it spooked me a bit, the girl in the painting was my favourite story (what is a purkus)
-  **Child B** 30 Mar
good actions Mrs Howes
-  **Child C** 30 Mar
I agree to millie good actions
-  **Child A** 30 Mar
what is purkus?
-  **Teacher** 30 Mar
Mrs Howes is glad you enjoyed Chapter 1. I've had to text Mrs Howes and she replied saying that's it's a porpoise. Keep an eye out for Chapter 2 later on in the week.
-  **Child D** 30 Mar
I think it was interesting
-  **Child E** 30 Mar
A porpoise is a type of mammal that swims in the sea

Reading during
lockdown




Reading journey
continues



Interactions/blether



Direct interactions relating to reading content posted on Google Classroom:

Children's responses to a video of a teacher reading a poem and posting it on Y'5s Google Classroom.



-   0 Mar
it's funny again
-   31 Mar
i still remember my part in the play
-   1 Apr
I still think this is my favourite poem

Pupil's response to a range of audiobooks being posted onto Google Classroom with a teacher's suggestion.

-   2 Apr
A personal favourite that I would recommend to anyone is: The Reluctant Dragon by Kenneth Grahame.
It is a little bit different to traditional fantasy style stories and is a great short story!

-   2 Apr
Good choice, my favourite part was when the shepherd entered the cave and found the dragon! :)

Year 3 pupil's response to a teacher having a 'book conversation' on GC:

-   9 Jun
I have done this and I really enjoyed it. I did my book review on Demon Dentist by David Walliams. I got this book as a present for Penny's birthday and I have read it already. I only took me 4 days to read it.

Reading during
lockdown

Reading journey
continues



Google Classroom

The stories read by members of staff and posted on Google Classroom have inspired children to share the stories with their family/ friends.



Pupil A 3 Apr

I loved the witches I'm wearing gloves



Pupil B 3 Apr

My little sister, Penny, loved watching Miss Sapsed read the Pip and Posy book. She even said "goodbye" to Miss Sapsed at the end. 😊

Another story read by a different teacher:



Hi

Miss Howes

It's [redacted] remember me I used to be in your class I was just sat watching your video with my sister [redacted] and I liked the way you changed your voice for each character.
Hope you enjoy your Easter.



From



A range of different genres/ types of literature has been shared through GC including 'the school newspaper':

A pupil's response to the newspaper posted 22.06.20 :



[redacted] 09:20

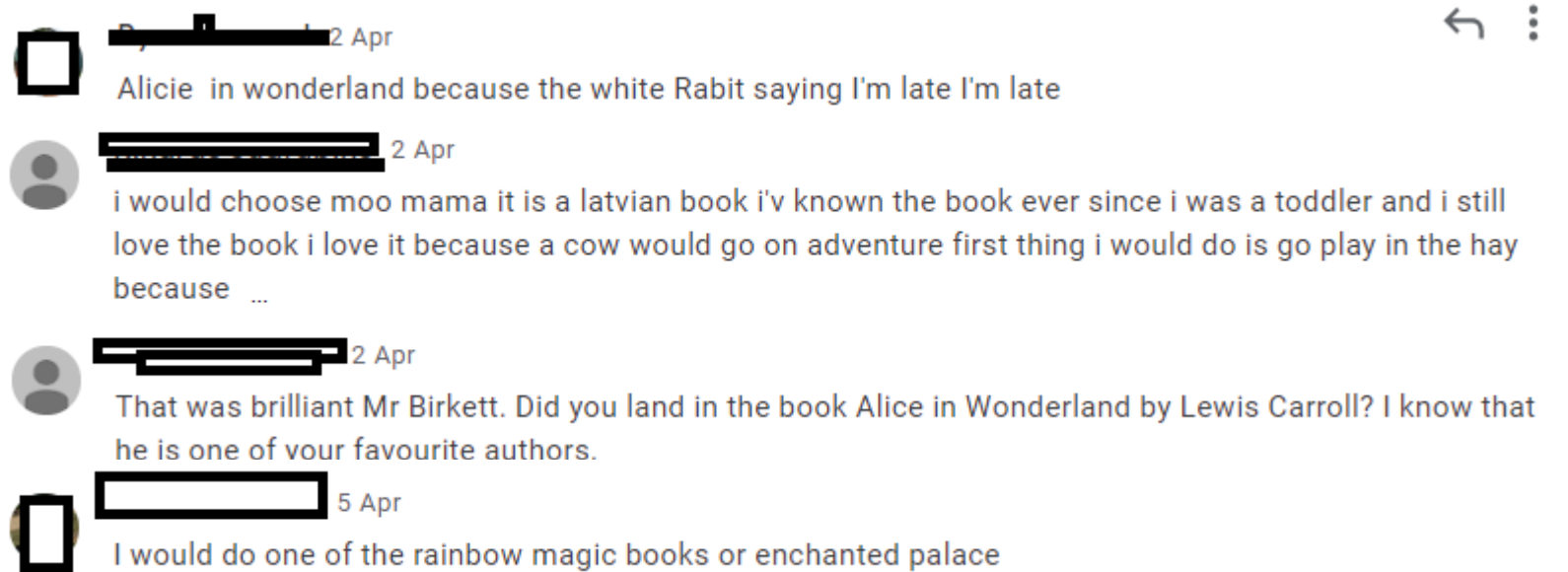




Thank you Mrs Hall. I read about the chocolate factory near Amsterdam and how Donald Trump suggested that drinking bleach would stop the coronavirus, which was a very silly thing to say!

Reading during
lockdown

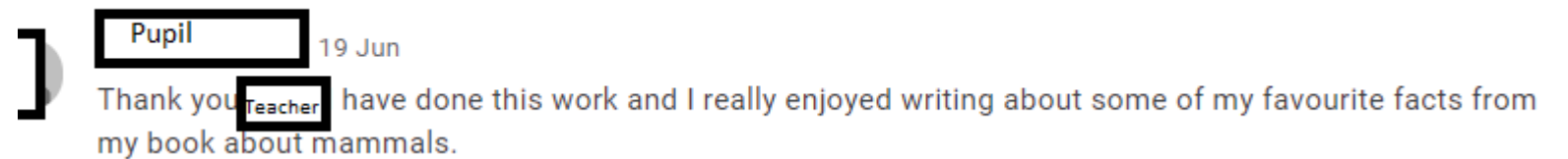

Reading journey
continues

Interactions

Pupil's responses to the teacher, regarding reading, that started from a writing task that was posted on Google Classroom.

- 
- A screenshot of a Google Classroom thread showing four comments. The first comment is from a pupil named 'Alicie' dated 2 Apr, mentioning 'Alice in wonderland' and 'the white Rabbit'. The second comment is from a pupil dated 2 Apr, mentioning 'moo mama' as a Latvian book. The third comment is from a teacher dated 2 Apr, responding to the first comment about 'Alice in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll'. The fourth comment is from a pupil dated 5 Apr, mentioning 'rainbow magic books' and 'enchanted palace'. Navigation icons for back and more options are visible at the top right.
-  [Redacted] 2 Apr
Alicie in wonderland because the white Rabbit saying I'm late I'm late
-  [Redacted] 2 Apr
i would choose moo mama it is a latvian book i've known the book ever since i was a toddler and i still love the book i love it because a cow would go on adventure first thing i would do is go play in the hay because ...
-  [Redacted] 2 Apr
That was brilliant Mr Birkett. Did you land in the book Alice in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll? I know that he is one of your favourite authors.
-  [Redacted] 5 Apr
I would do one of the rainbow magic books or enchanted palace

Year 3 pupil's response to a writing task posed on GC:

- 
- A screenshot of a single comment from a pupil to a teacher. The comment is dated 19 Jun and expresses gratitude for the teacher's work and mentions enjoying writing about favourite facts from a book about mammals.
-  Pupil [Redacted] 19 Jun
Thank you Teacher [Redacted] have done this work and I really enjoyed writing about some of my favourite facts from my book about mammals.



Google Classroom



Bug Club

Reading during
lockdown

Reading journey
continues

School 'Reading Friend'

The school 'reading friend' is a poet/ author who regularly comes into the school and 'story tells' and runs workshops with the children- this helps to engage children with reading and inspires them to tell their own stories.

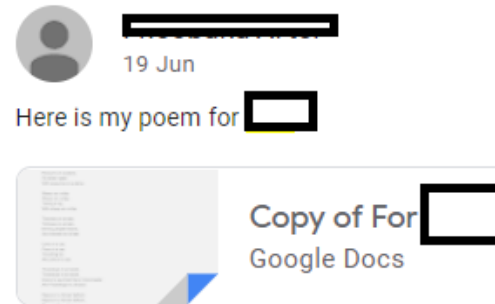
This has continued post-Covid through the use of posting videos of various tasks and 'story-tellings' from the school's 'reading friend' onto GC.

An example of pupil's engagement with this:

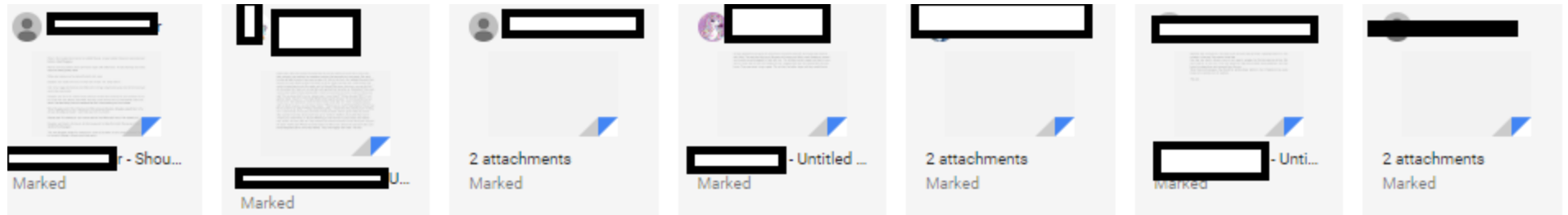
This Year 2 pupil watched the 'Reading Friend's' poem performance, then wrote their own poem and posted it on GC.



Google Classroom



Examples of Year 2 pupil's engagement to another 'story telling video' from the school's 'reading friend'.



Pupil's responded to watching video of reading friend's story performance with their own stories.

Impact



- Reading has kept a very high profile in school all year (pre and post Covid). We have noticed an improvement in children wanting to read books at home and school.
- Children were bringing books in from home throughout classes to hear read or read themselves.
(Transitioned to Bug Club post-Covid.)
- Older children talk about going to the library again with their families to choose new books.
- We have many more parents attending our Jackonary Club (13% parents attending, up from around 9%) we are thinking about extending it over two evenings and over the three key stages, rather than two.
- We have also ran a few reading competitions linked to the Jackonary club with book voucher prizes which have proved a great success too.

Reflection

Reflections on the impact of the TaRs research within school

The TaRs research impacted upon our school practices in many ways and continues to as we hopefully move out of lockdown and continue with our plans.

The parents that attended our 'Books and Biscuits Bonanza' was still quite a low percentage of those invited (22%), but of those attending nearly all said they felt 'quite confident' to 'very confident' in supporting their child with reading. Only 6% of those asked felt they were less confident so we do feel that we need to continue having these informal sessions to encourage further participation. There are still therefore a lot of parents that we still need to reach with our important message about reading. It is part of our School Development Plan and is at the heart of all things we do as a school. We think the most important thing that we have all learnt is that enabling the children to talk and discuss the books they read in an informal social context makes it so much more meaningful for them. This in turn creates a culture of loving books which we hope they will continue to share at home and with their siblings.

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