

Reading Role Models in the Community

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Context



Baslow St Anne's C of E Primary School is in a small village in Derbyshire. I am an NQT in a Year 3/4 class with a passion for reading for pleasure. The focus for our school improvement plan has been to promote and encourage children's reading and understanding of texts as well as supporting the mental wellbeing of children through various strategies including reading.

OU Research inspiration and rationale

Building Communities of Engaged Readers Reading for Pleasure by Cremin et al. (2014) emphasises how important it is that teachers enrich their knowledge of children's everyday reading preferences and practices. Developing reading communities involves authentic engagement between teachers and readers. This relationship is a reciprocal one.

'Reading is an incredible skill and children who read regularly before starting school are more likely to have a larger vocabulary, learn language faster and become more successful readers within school' Bus et al. (1995), Mol et al. (2008). The Teachers as Readers research and other research has inspired me to explore how to use the communities surrounding the school to help our school to build an authentic reading community, develop the children's love of reading and inspire boys.

Aims

To inspire children by showing them that adults also read for pleasure.

To give children, people in the community and family members the opportunity to share their reading habits with each other.

To improve boys' skills and levels of engagement with reading.

Outline

After speaking to the staff within school, we identified that many boys within school do not love reading. Furthermore, children may not always see reading as a pleasurable task when in school or that it's a skill and behaviour that will be carried throughout life. We chose to start a social media activity using #hereads to encourage parents and members of the community to upload pictures which would then be retweeted by the school account showing adults engaged in reading.



The children took home a letter to advertise the project, a display was created within school and I contacted local celebrities to invite them to be involved.

There was around a six-week deadline for photos to be submitted and prizes were awarded for unusual submissions sent by local bookshops, businesses and authors.



Baslow St Anne's Primary School
@BaslowStAnnes

A snippet of the fantastic @Redknapp sharing his thoughts on reading with the children at @BaslowStAnnes! Thank you so much Harry, they LOVED it!!! #HeReads #R4P @OpenUni_RfP



Over the six weeks, we undertook different activities in school to raise the profile of reading for pleasure: the children were read to by adults during the school day; classes thought about their reading journeys and the importance of reading and we were even sent a video message from Harry Redknapp.

At staff meetings, staff were briefed on ways to encourage reading in class and the importance of the children seeing the adults as readers. We asked adults to read at the same time as the children; advertise their reading at home by having a poster on their class door; discuss books with the children and giving recommendations – engaging in informal book talk.

Impact



Baslow St Annes Primary School · 3d
Clearly captivated by Fantastic Mr Fox.
#hereads
@OpenUni_RfP @The_UKLA



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The staff, governors and parents at Baslow St Anne's were incredibly supportive of the project. Many parents talked about their child's reading preferences and behaviours.

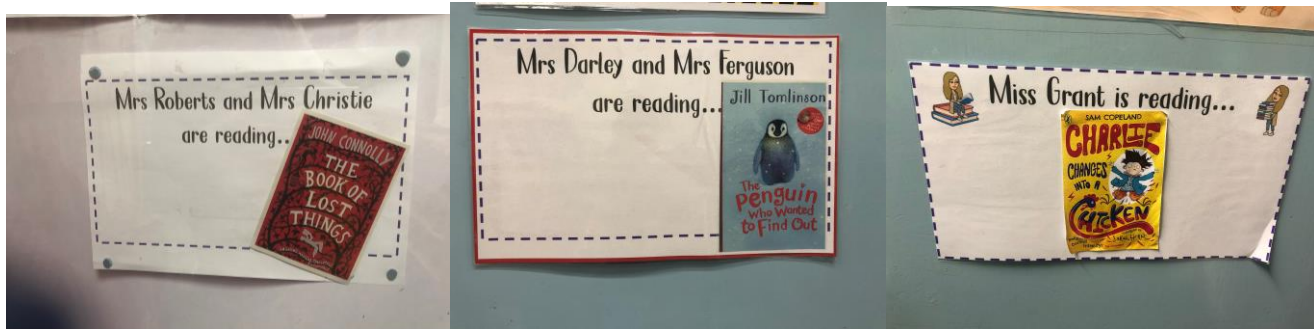
"I think this is a great initiative. Fergus loves books and reads with Andy every night, and recently he's started reading by himself. His favourite books to read on his own at the moment are the Tom Gates books, and he loves telling me stories from them, so he is really taking them in! We all read a lot as a family (we hardly ever

watch TV, which helps) so Fergus is just catching the bug like the rest of us."

“And believe me, it’s a miracle.

I’m really behind this project - my degree is in English Literature and Language and I have two young boys so I’m really keen on getting them to understand the benefits of reading.”

The staff helped by posting pictures. Advertising what they were reading at home encouraged the children to talk to the teachers about their own reading for pleasure, to see the teachers as readers and to see that reading is an enjoyable activity. The children became a lot more aware of their own reading choices; they started to talk about their habits and compare books with one another. The environment was transformed with reading at its heart: we created displays using the photographs shared by the community; book recommendation sheets and ‘*Don’t Judge a Book by its Cover*’ recommendations where the first line of a text was on view rather than the cover.



The Twitter campaign was a huge success and we had some great feedback. Many parents used it to send in pictures. Authors also engaged in this activity. The children loved looking at the photographs and reading the Twitter feed. This in turn encouraged the children to talk to each other about the books they’d read, comparing and recommending books and this led to the children widening their reading experiences because they began to select different books.



Baslow St Annes Primary School · 2d

Hi @ProfStevePeters, look at what some of our younger readers are reading! Fantastic to see pupils reading both fiction and non fiction! #HeReads #R4P @OpenUni_RfP





We believe reading in school is now associated more with mental wellbeing, pleasure and sharing. This project has brought the families, the school and the children closer together and we have observed that the profile of reading and reading for enjoyment has been raised from Reception to Year 6 (and beyond)!

The end of the project was celebrated by sharing books we read – admiring the breadth of reading experiences as well as awarding some small prizes. These prizes included a signed book by David Walliams and Lisa Thompson as well as several other books which were donated by a local bookshop.

In the future, we are hoping to create a #WeRead Twitter campaign with the help from the local community as well as continuing to develop the positive reading ethos we have created: through book clubs, extending the informal discussions between staff and children and maybe even a creating a dedicated reading shed!

Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

The project has helped parents, staff, governors and the wider community to work together to help to promote reading for pleasure and to encourage everyone to read. We believe that the children now have a more positive attitude towards reading. There has been more conversation within school about reading and books and our school environment is rich with reading. This conversation is helping to develop a more reciprocal reading community in which sharing, discussing and celebrating reading practices and preferences is helping to promote authentic reader interaction. We are all reading role models!