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Puss Bank School and Nursery's Reading for Pleasure Journey 2018-2019

Reading for Pleasure @ PB creates a love of reading for all

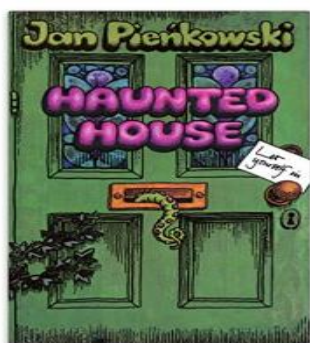
Helen Mason

Context

Puss Bank School and Nursery is a larger than average sized primary school situated in a residential area of Macclesfield in close proximity to the Peak District. The socio-economic backgrounds of pupils are varied. There are 470 pupils on roll, 264 boys and 206 girls. 59 children are currently on the special educational needs register, including 15 pupils with a Statement of SEN or Educational Health Care Plans, which is much higher than national. We Joined The Aspire Educational Trust in January 2018.



I am an experienced teacher and have worked at Pussbank for some years. Currently, I'm the Lower KS2 phase leader and joint English lead. As a child, I loved picture books and still do!



This was the first book I remember owning as a child (it may have been a hand-me-down as my sister is 3 years older). I must have been about 5 years old and I read it so much the pop-up parts broke! I didn't know back then but it was the winner of the Kate Greenaway Medal in 1979.

'The will to read influences the skill and vice versa' OECD (2010).

Intent

The first step I took was to collect baseline information to understand our children's attitudes and our school's Reading for Pleasure (RfP) practice. Children completed a [survey \(from the Open University's website\)](#) and I analysed the results.

Do you enjoy reading?

KS1 79%

KS2 83%

I was pleased with the results as we have been promoting reading for some years through guided and home school reading.

Does your teacher read to you?

KS1 72%

KS2 21%

Rate your enjoyment of reading. 1 - 10

KS1 (7+) 63%

KS2 (7+) 52%

However, when I delved a little deeper, I could clearly see where we needed to start our RfP journey.

This showed that although children said they liked to read, their rating for that enjoyment was **much lower** than I'd expected. Also, in KS2, not even three quarters of the children saw their teachers as readers.

Do you see your teacher as a reader?

KS2 – 72%

The National Curriculum states: *'All pupils must be encouraged to read widely across both fiction and non-fiction to develop their knowledge of themselves and the world in which they live, to establish an appreciation and love of reading, and to gain knowledge across the curriculum.'*

Reading widely and often increases pupils' vocabulary because they encounter words they would rarely hear or use in everyday speech. Reading also feeds pupils' imagination and opens up a treasure-house of wonder and joy for curious young minds.' DfE (2013). So, we had a journey ahead.

The whole school project was inspired by the Teacher as Readers research findings on developing a RfP ethos. Reading the research *Building Communities of Engaged Readers: Reading for Pleasure*, Cremin et al. (2014) confirmed our decision to focus on staff knowledge and the key pedagogies which support development of children's RfP. These are: social reading environments; reading aloud; informal book talk, inside-text talk and recommendations and independent reading time.

Our aims were:

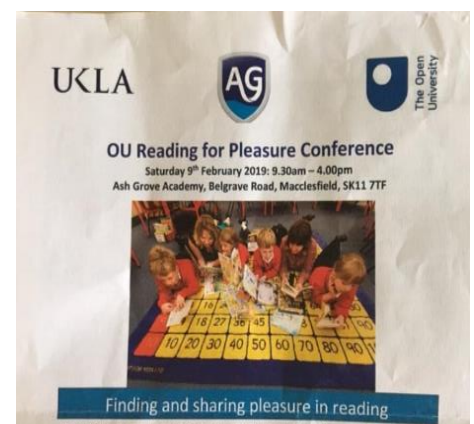
Long Term: To raise the attainment in reading at the expected and greater depth level through developing children's Reading for Pleasure.

Short Term:

1. Support staff to develop their own knowledge of children's books.
2. Develop high quality child-led, comfy and relaxing reading environments that reflect the children's preferences and wishes.
3. Actively encourage children to independently use the spaces available and to be respectful of them and books.
4. Develop readers and teachers who enjoy and confidently undertake informal book blether and share recommendations.

To support the journey, I set up a **change team**. This consisted of a member of staff in each Key Phase to drive the project in their departments. Staff attended the **OU RfP conference** to learn more about the research. This inspired staff and had some immediate effects for example: "After attending the UKLA Macclesfield conference, I loved the idea of creating my own teacher bookshelf. It has been a huge success with children regularly borrowing books, which has introduced them to new authors such as Phillip Pullman and Peter Bunzl. In addition, it led to my children 'commandeering' the other half of the bookshelf for their own recommendations."

As the project grew, teachers own RfP journeys developd, so I was able to draw on different staff to support me in leading this project.



Implementation and Impact

Staff Knowledge of Children's Authors

Short Term Aim

1. Support staff to develop their own knowledge of children's books.

Staff were asked to complete their own Reading River. This was a really important starting point as some staff did not see themselves as readers. After completion and thorough discussion, staff could recognise that reading was a common part of their everyday lives and just because they were not sitting down with a book to read did not mean they were not readers.



Teachers took time to share their reading preferences and habits with their classes, and these were displayed in a variety of ways. KS2 staff had book holders

on their desks so children could borrow the books that teachers and adults had discussed and shared.



'Teachers having the book they are reading on their door seems great. My son has told me more than once that someone is reading something he knows. It is nice to make that link that teachers like books too.'

Parent

'We have really appreciated the book recommendations our daughter's teacher has made to her – she has loved chatting about the books she's enjoyed and feeling like she's trading enthusiasm for the different books they've enjoyed.'

Parent

'This year I have tried to read books by different authors. My teacher has recommended me some books and I really liked reading them.' Pupil



Reading Environments

Short Term Aim

2. Develop high quality child-led, comfy and relaxing reading environments that reflect the interests of the individual classes.

I held several staff meetings where I shared appropriate parts of the [Reading for Pleasure website](#).

We read several research findings and Examples of Practice documents from the website to review our practice and borrow ideas.

'We feel that our children have gained a lot from this year's emphasis on reading for pleasure. Both children have taken on board the message that reading should be fun and enjoyable and, importantly, that all types of books count!' Parent



'From what I can see the school does a fantastic job at making reading an enjoyable activity for the kids and something that they want to do. The range of books in the library, and in the classrooms, is fantastic with a great range of fiction and non-fiction.' Parent



One parent's comment showed that we were succeeding in developing the reading environment as social and interactive: *'I loved about the number of books in your class and explained how they get to read books several times a day and that it doesn't have to be just sitting there quietly but it can be sharing books. He was very positive about it.'*



'We Love Books' Event on 14th February

Short Term Aim

3. Actively encourage children to independently use the spaces available and to be respectful of books.

After our initial progress, developing a wider knowledge of reading and environments in which reading was profiled, I felt we needed to come back together as a whole school to remind ourselves of the key aims. We always celebrate national events, such as World Book Day but we wanted another event to raise the RfP profile in school. February the 14th seemed like an accessible date to celebrate 'We love Books' together.

- Teachers shared the Rights of a Reader with their classes.
- Teachers recommended books they enjoyed as a child.
- We shared books across year groups.
- We held independent reading sessions.
- Children wrote why they like reading in love hearts.
- We created a whole school 'We are Readers' display.



'I know that the impact of being a confident reader is huge for children. In the beginning, when children are learning to decode words, reading can feel a bit chore-like. Giving children the opportunity to look at different books in different ways (e.g. comics, information books, or reading together with adults) takes them out of the decoding stage and shows them how enjoyable reading is.' Parent

'For older children, experiencing other worlds and other people's points of view is invaluable. This is what RfP in schools gives, and we're so grateful for all the hard work Puss Bank teachers have put in to support this.' Parent



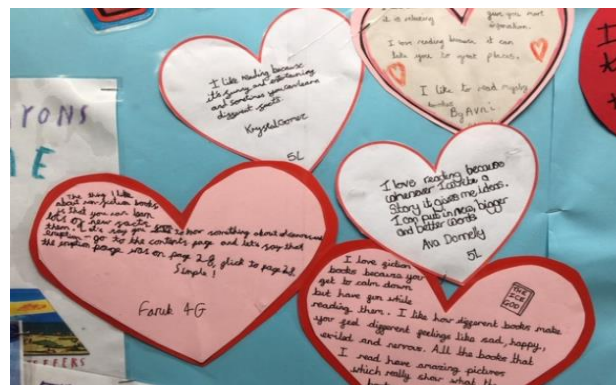
We spent a day celebrating reading and that everyone at Pussbank was a reader including the kitchen staff.

'I didn't used to read as much as I do now. It's amazing.' Pupil

My husband particularly likes the focus on reading for enjoyment and that the children can read whatever books they like. He feels he was only encouraged to read certain books at school and not to read for pleasure, so reading feels it is more of a chore as an adult than he would like.' Parent

Children were given £100 from the 'Friends of Puss Bank' to select books for their classrooms. Staff collected book recommendations from children based on their interests and used their growing knowledge of children's literature and

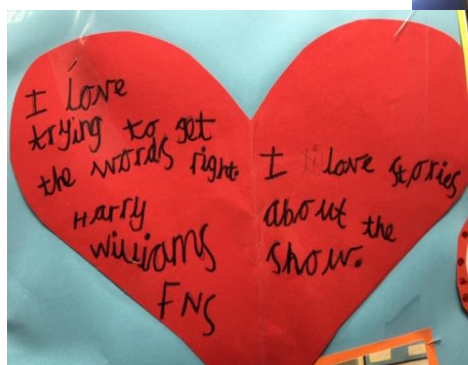
literature prizes, drawing on the long lists for the UKLA Book Awards and the Kate Greenaway Medal.



'More than one child has told me how excited they were when books they picked arrived in the 'Friends' reading for pleasure packages. I think a real positive in this was that there didn't seem to be limits on what they could pick. The children got free rein and could pick things that appealed to them.'

Parent

'Following our book discussions, when picking our books from the Friends, Sally told me about a shopping trip she'd with her mum. She loved picking books that she'd seen before. She bought some more from the list we'd looked at in class.' Member of staff



Book Blether

Short Term Aim

- Engage in informal book talk and confidently share recommendations.

We discussed what RfP independent reading time meant to our school and we came up with a collective set of non-negotiables that profiled talk and recommendations, although we recognised sometimes it would be silent.

Reading for Pleasure Independent Sessions @ Puss Bank would be -

- comfortable and relaxed for the readers
- flexible (in terms of the space and time dedicated)

- safe
- social and involve interactions...
- teacher as facilitator.

Teachers were also asked to develop ways their classes could share recommendations.

In addition, children were asked to make a **Reading River** in order for the teachers to find out about their home reading experiences and practices and to be able to discuss these with the children. These records of reading celebrate home reading in its broadest sense and allow teachers and staff to recognise the breadth of children's reading.



We learnt a great deal about our individual readers through the Reading Rivers. This helped staff appreciate diversity and uniqueness and tailor their recommendations.



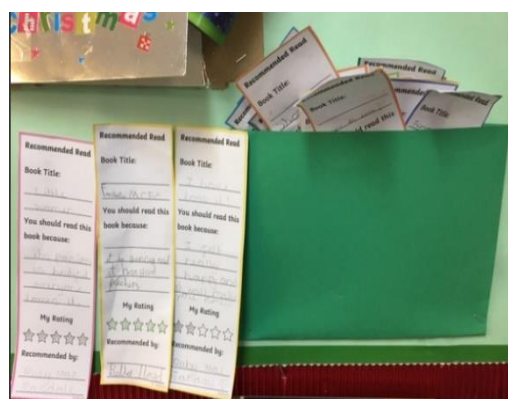
'Our daughter in Year 3 says that she loves being able to read books wherever she likes in the classroom.' Parent

'We read when we are comfortable. Sometimes we like to read to each other. We like talking about books we have read. It makes us feel calm and relaxed.' Pupil



'All classes had well organised book classrooms, children clearly knew routines and expectations. It had a relaxed, sociable, purposeful atmosphere. Children had free choice. Teachers were facilitating the reading where needed or just modelling being a reader. My only target would be to keep going.' Chair of Governors

These comments show that through considering the children's preference for reading in more relaxed comfortable environments and trying to replicate this in our school, as well as encouraging informal book talk. Classrooms were becoming more social reading environments and the teachers were also part of this. This supported children's RfP.

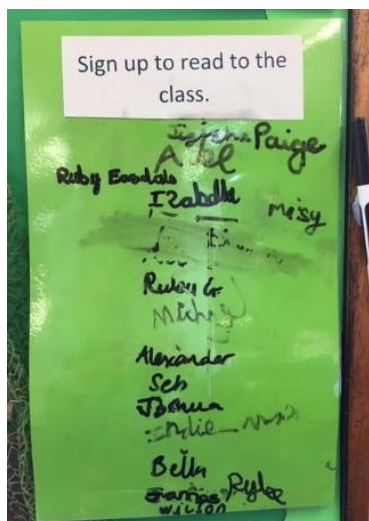


Reading Aloud

This was not one of our original aims for the project but was identified as a key RfP pedagogy (Cremin et al. 2014) and as a result of wider staff knowledge, reading aloud has grown in school. Not only are teachers reading aloud to their classes regularly, children and teachers have engaged in reading aloud in a more reciprocal way.



Children have been invited to choose reading aloud texts and to read aloud with peers and children from other year groups. They read in assembly and older children have read aloud to younger children – much to the delight of the audience. The books shared in reading aloud sessions are taken from a wider range of texts – teachers are taking risks. Parents have also been invited to share stories with children. Our reading community is growing.



'I was thrilled when my reading in Reception as a volunteer was changed from reading their banded books with the children

to just going in and sharing books. We had a wonderful time (I did!).' Parent

*'Today *** read to 6F, they asked for him to carry on longer as they were enjoying it. He read The day I was Erased by Lisa Thompson. This is the same author as Goldfish Boy which I'd learnt him weeks earlier.'* Member of staff



Through developing their own knowledge of children's literature and talking to the children about their reading preferences, children and teachers were building a bank of books and authors in common. Lisa Thompson, for example, wasn't an author who was well known by the teachers at the start of the project – our knowledge of children's literature was growing, and this was being shared with our young readers.

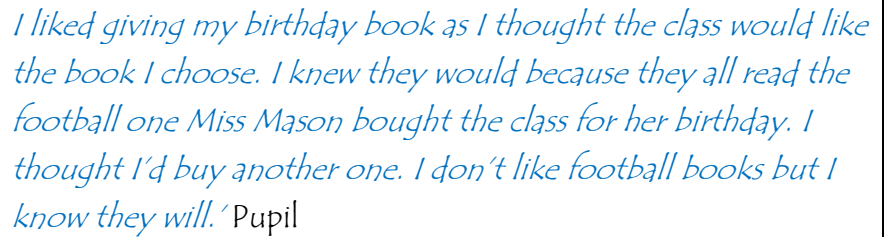
'It was fun to see other children smiling at what I was reading. I choose a book I thought everyone in KS2 would like. Just before I started, I was very nervous but when I saw children smiling at me it gave me a great sense of happiness.' Pupil

'I have been at several of the parent/carer reading sessions in reception this year. It is lovely how the kids are really enthusiastic to share the books available with their parents. I am also impressed by how there is a huge variety of reading material, including leaflets, maps, books.' Parent

Birthday Book Gifting

By gifting books, the teachers were finding ways to further share their love of reading, celebrate the children's preferences and create more 'books in common' to read and discuss as a community.

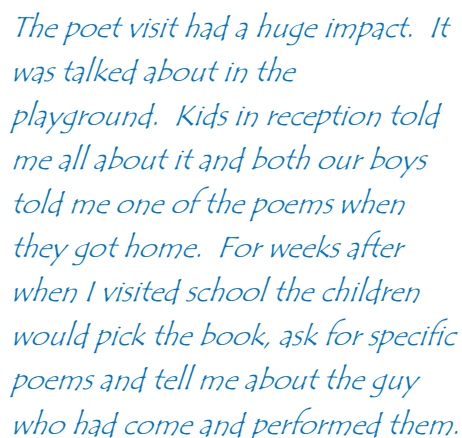
Miss Mason and Miss Cross



because it is a worth while and lasting present which will bring pleasure to many different children. Member of staff



We are very lucky that our head teacher values reading and allocated money to spend on real authors. The children really valued these, and they added to the focus on RfP. Over the course of the year we were lucky to have visits from a poet and more than one author. On poetry day, 125 children bought a book! ✓



Victoria Holmes, who writes under numerous pseudonyms, one of which is Erin Hunter author of the *Warrior Cat* series, visited Year 6.

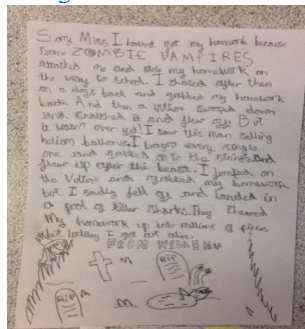
'I thought it was a shock as I didn't know she was here. I thought she was in America. I was nervous but it was really exciting and a once in a lifetime opportunity. She's my favourite author.' Pupil

Miss Cross and Miss Mason

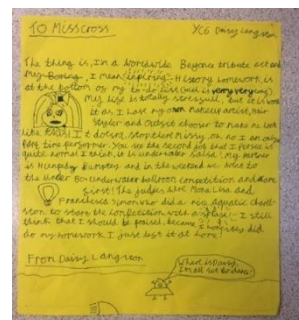
Competitions

Over the year we held different competitions. These were linked to children's authors and included children writing in role as Horrid Henry to his teachers in order to win the opportunity to see Francesca Simon speak and inviting year 1 and Year 2 children to take photographs of themselves reading Julia Donaldson books in unusual places.

'I know one of the Year 6 pupils who was involved in setting the reading challenge to the KS1 students. She was really proud of her work helping them and I think the sharing things between different ages is a fabulous thing.' Parent



'I entered the competition as I wanted to meet a real author. I also like writing. It was fun to write like Horrid Henry would.' Pupil



Summary

This has been an exciting journey for our school. We have made great progress through shifts in staff knowledge, pupil enjoyment and building our understanding of each other (children and staff) as readers, particularly in KS2, to have Reading for Pleasure at the heart of our school.

Do you enjoy reading?		
Baseline	KS1 79%	KS2 83%
Final	KS1 86%	KS2 90%

Rate your enjoyment of reading. 1 – 10		
Baseline	KS1(7+) 63%	KS2(7+) 52%
Final	KS1(7+) 75%	KS2(7+) 81%

By engaging the whole school community in book events, by discussing books together, asking about children's preferences and sharing our own, the children could see that we were all readers and a community was being built. The final surveys demonstrated that by the end of the year, 30% more KS2 children rated their enjoyment of reading 7/10 or higher. In addition, children in KS2 in particular were experiencing far more reading aloud, and as a motivating Influence on young readers, this was clearly working.

Does your teacher read aloud to your class?		
Baseline	KS1 72%	KS2 21%
Final	KS1 79%	KS2 82%

Do you see your teacher as a reader?	
Baseline	KS2 – 72%
Final	KS2 – 86%

A highlight of being involved in this project has been staff talking about books in the staffroom and sharing stories with each other. I love the moments when a teacher comes up to me, to say a child in their class has really enjoyed independent reading time and they never used to pick up a book! In addition, it is clear the children now see us as readers, this was not a concern at KS1 but was at KS2. This has shifted markedly.

Whilst one parent told us *'I think you do masses to encourage reading.'*, the journey is not over yet. Consistency, as in most schools, will be the main focus next year. A few teachers still find it difficult to share

themselves as readers with their classes. As English lead I will need to encourage these staff to see the real importance and need for RfP. Next year, too I am going to establish a RfP lead in each Key Phase, who will be able to continue to embed development and RfP pedagogies in our school.

We have not yet received our attainment results, but we know that in the longer term this new commitment and interest in RfP will contribute to children's literacy outcomes and shape their life chances.

Where next for Puss Bank Primary and Nursery school

Transition Recommendations: *'Maybe some sort of recommendations from the class above would be a good idea. It would introduce children to new books/authors and make the books seem more exciting if they know that someone older likes it.'* Parent. In response to this idea, in September, the previous classes will leave a series of book recommendations for the new pupils to enjoy. These will form the starting point of a new RfP year.

Children: We will build on the research informed recommendation that book environments should be child-led, comfy and relaxing. Children will be encouraged to get to know the new books in their classrooms and have ownership on how these should be organised. In addition, we will introduce a PB children's book club. *'How could we improve RfP? A book club? I think that there are quite a lot of kids who would enjoy a book club as a lunchtime or after school club.'* Parent



Staff: We will continue to support teachers in developing their knowledge and love of children's authors and texts. We have decided to introduce a KS/ whole school author of the month. The authors for September and October are Lauren Child and Sarah McIntyre. A CPD board has been to be created in the staffroom where research, new books to share and all things RfP can be located

Parents: We are going to open up sharing stories to include parents and carers on 'Learn with Me' mornings. All parents will be invited to read to their child's class in the form of a Mystery Reader.

Wider Community: Reading helpers will share stories with children in groups rather than just listen to book banded books. Children will visit the local library each term. Furthermore, Friends of Puss Bank will set up a termly book swap stall to encourage more 'books in common' and develop adults' knowledge of children's literature.

Consistency: English Leads will write a school Reading for Pleasure policy, which will include our school's core principles for RfP. There will also be a RfP section on our website where parents can go to find out what is happening in school.

*"There is no such thing as a child who hates to read;
there are only children who have not found the right book"*

Frank Serafini