

# Recommend, read, review, represent!

## Holy Family RC Primary School



*Holy Family*  
RC Primary School

### Context

Holy Family RC Primary School serves an area of Rochdale with a high index of disadvantage: we have twice the number of children receiving pupil premium than the national average. Although most pupils are of White British heritage, the number of pupils from minority ethnic groups is increasing over time. There are more pupils who speak English as an additional language than found nationally. Our school's responsibility area in reading is to "raise standards in reading by improving the rate of progress for all groups of pupils, particularly the disadvantaged group", and developing the reading for pleasure pedagogy across the school was chosen as a key focus.

### OU Research inspiration and rationale

The Open University's Teachers as Readers (TaRs) findings (Cremin et al., 2014) that inspired me included a reading for pleasure pedagogy which includes informal book talk, inside-text talk and recommendations, whilst building reading communities that are reciprocal and interactive. This will be done by nurturing independent reading, where the teacher and teaching staff would begin to establish book talk of different sorts. A new reading for pleasure policy (agreed in 2016) was written with reference to building Communities of Engaged Readers, UKLA, 2009; English Curriculum Review and Planning Tool, 2014; and Reading for Pleasure, NUT, 2014.

### Aims

We began as a class by filling in questionnaires about their reading habits. From the data collected by our reading survey, it showed that 48% of children thought reading "was okay", 41% said they "loved reading". 10% was made up of children that stated they were either not bothered or didn't like reading, and so for these children it was a target to find different ways to engage them.

It was important to me for the children to see me as a reader and a book recommender. If I can encourage a love of reading in different ways then their responses would hopefully reflect this.

Pleasingly, the data showed that 0% described themselves as a bad reader, so this showed that all children saw themselves as readers to begin with. Therefore a development of their confidence was needed.

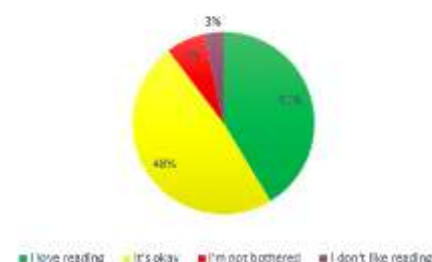
Some quotes I collected from the children about how they feel about reading are as follows:

"I find it a bit easy but I struggle with big words."

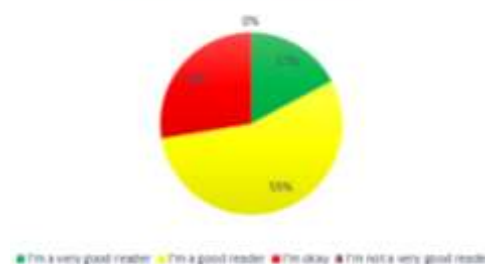
"I find some books hard to read and tricky, it's boring when we are told what to read."

I am hoping that by carrying out this practice, I will begin to see a greater increase in children talking positively about reading and that they feel they chat about what they've chosen to read more at school.

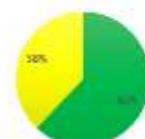
1. Do you like reading?



2. Are you a good reader?



Do you ever chat about what you've chosen to read? At school



## Outline

As my aim was to make reading more visual, I created recommended read boxes from all staff in year 4 full of new books and books which were collected from the staff's favourite authors.



This allowed children to become exposed to new authors and illustrators and began a culture of book talk. Now more time was being given for children to select and review. It didn't take long before the children, including my targeted disengaged group, were enthusiastically selecting the recommended reads and were focussed on their reading. Prior to this, I had asked the class about their favourite authors and we had restocked the book corner so most of the books were new. It created a 'buzz' around reading when the books looked and smelled fresh and the children made sure to take great care with them to keep them in good condition. Every time a new book was delivered to the class, I would make a point to show my excitement around it and ask questions about what the book might be about- is it fiction/non-fiction? What characters can we see on the book cover?



After the children had selected their books from the boxes, they were given time during guided reading sessions when they weren't in groups to have independent reading time. The children were encouraged to keep that book with them for several sessions, or had the option to swap next time if they weren't enjoying the book. This meant that children weren't feeling pressured to finish a book they weren't engaged with, while at the same time being given enough time in the session without swapping to read several pages of it before forming an opinion.

After they had read the book they returned it to the reading box and left a recommended review near it for other children to select.

The review templates had been modelled prior to this with a whole class book review of a story they were reading in English lessons, so they were clear on how to fill them in and give them ratings.



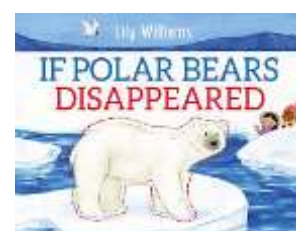
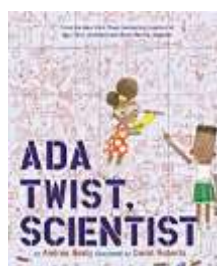
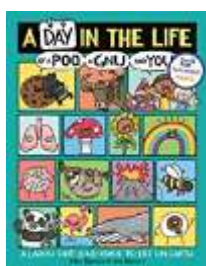
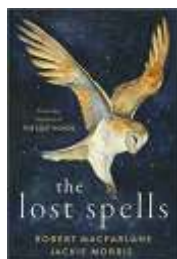
## Impact

Once a child had selected a book, some of the children were inspired to draw the covers of them, which I noticed made my class more enthusiastic about reading and the choice gave them some direction and confidence. Some quotes from my class include:

"It was interesting I was reading it then I wanted to draw it. It helped me understand the characters more" "I really liked born to run it was very interesting and I liked the author who wrote the book." "I was inspired to

draw because some sentences are funny, some are weird, and some of the sentences I didn't know how to describe so drawing it made it easier." "I drew the book cover before I started reading them. It tells you more about the main characters and it made me want to read it more. I wanted to read more books written by that author."

Even in a matter of days I could see a community of readers was developing; there were children who were often disengaged with reading beginning to talk more about authors and independently fill out book reviews. Creatively planning using books and stories in cross-curricular lessons, particularly in science, engaged the children in their learning, while providing an environment where the children associate books with fun and exciting activities. We explored many cross-curricular books and these were then included in the recommended reads area, where children were encouraged to write who they think the book would be suitable for, so we could recommend to those outside our class too. Some children for example decided the Ada Twist book would be a good book for year 2 to read to help with their science and they would love the rhyming words.



## Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

This experience has revealed that being a reading role-model and providing recommended reads has been an effective strategy to encourage book talk and a love of reading. Using the TaRs research as a basis for my practice has allowed me to think reflectively about my practice and be direct about what I and the children want to achieve out of reading.

To develop the reading community further I am going to start a 'Bookflix' list, which will feature a range of fiction, non-fiction and poetry books, as well as new releases, and will aim to provide diverse recommendations.

Our school has recently subscribed to Madeleine Lindley's 'dazzle box', which is a monthly book subscription designed to spark reader's imagination with new titles and inspiring illustrations. We hope by using these it will further enhance a positive reading environment in our school and support our ongoing aim of developing the reading for pleasure pedagogy.



I would also like to incorporate online book talk into my classroom, through both the Seesaw app and look into setting up a class twitter account.