

Can read, won't read!

Building a reading community in which young people are inspired to read and supported with their reading habits.

S White

Context



To Care and Succeed.

- I teach Year 6 and English at Monkseaton Middle School, a three-form entry Middle School which serves the community around Monkseaton in North Tyneside. We have 278 children on role, aged between 9 and 13.
- Reading is at the heart of our school development plan. All our efforts are committed to improving literacy across curriculum areas and improving outcomes in reading at KS2 and KS3.
- As part of my research, I was interested in the reading attitudes and behaviours of readers in my class who could read fluently, but were still reluctant to read. My aim was to develop a love of reading, which along with established routines and habits, would become self-perpetuating.

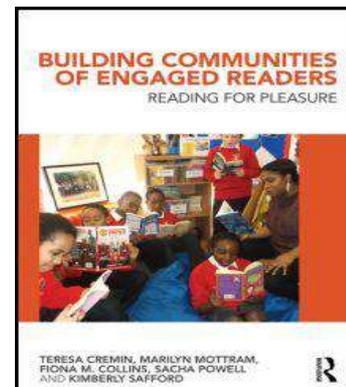
OU Research inspiration and rationale

In my rationale to foster Reading for Pleasure (RfP) effectively, I was interested in the following areas:

2. *Developing knowledge of children's reading practices.*
3. *Developing a reading for pleasure pedagogy which includes:*

- *Social reading environments*
- *Reading aloud*
- *Independent reading*
- *Informal book talk, inside-text talk, and recommendations*

4. *As Reading Teachers: teachers who read and readers who teach*



Aims

I focussed my work on improving RfP for children, who regardless of reading ability and despite:

- access to a wide variety of texts.
- regular opportunities to read.
- encouragement to read.

were still not finding reading pleasurable and an intrinsically motivating activity which they enjoyed.

As such, my aims were focussed on developing reading stamina, improving interest and engagement with texts and peer support through recommendations.

One of the key research findings, as referenced below, is that reconfigured space and time for relaxed reading and creating physically engaging reading areas and environments can encourage children to become tempted and enticed children to read, borrow books, get to know new authors, talk about texts, and see themselves profiled as readers. These environments promote reading as a richly positive experience and prompt sharing and significant book talk and inside-text talk.

This is what I set out to achieve with my sample group

References:

- Cremin, T. and Swann, J. (2016) Literature in Common: Reading for Pleasure in School Reading Groups’.

- Hempel-Jorgensen, Amelia; Cremin, Teresa; Harris, Diane and Chamberlain, Liz (2018): Pedagogy for reading for pleasure in low socio-economic primary schools: beyond ‘pedagogy of poverty’? Literacy, 52(2) pp. 86–94.

Outline of steps taken

1) Baseline and sample

A baseline assessment was undertaken of all children, from this I chose my sample, who were as follows.

Child A:

Identifies as male, above average reader in terms of internal reading age and assessments, would choose to read David Walliams and Diary of a Wimpy Kid.

Child B:

Identifies as male, average reader in terms of internal reading age and assessments, reads books which have been bought by parents, but are not of his choice. Parents report lack of interest in reading.

Child C:

Identifies as male, below average reader in terms of internal reading age and assessments. Will read quietly, during reading sessions, but loses concentration. Enjoys being read to and will respond to questions showing some understanding.

Having analysed responses from their questionnaires, I could identify themes within my sample of reluctant readers.

a) Reading was viewed as a task, rather than a pleasure.

b) More value was placed on finishing a text, than understanding what the book was about.

c) Knowledge of books by other authors was limited, as was an awareness of why a reader may enjoy accessing other titles by the same author, after they have read

one title by the author.

2) A- Z of Authors



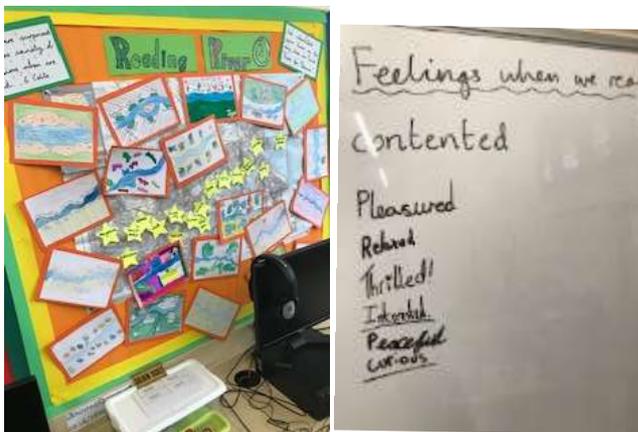
I began an A-Z of Authors, to promote an awareness of the variety of authors who the children can access. The children each created a letter applying their skills in pattern from art to design the letter.

This promoted: ownership, engagement and buy-in from the children.

When complete the children were given star shaped post-its, to complete using the authors second name initial. They were to complete with a 5-star rating for a book they had read.

Naturally there was a buzz and element of competition around this with some letters being harder to source than others. This helped float the idea of sourcing books by the author and opened dialogue and informal book talk.

3) 24-hour River of Reading



It struck me that the children will be reading, just not realising, or placing value on this, so we developed a 24-hour Reading River.

As a class we discussed and thought showered:

- reasons why people might read.
- the media which people can read from (including games).
- varieties of texts which people read.
- any times where they have been surprised to find that they had been reading but didn't realise this.

We collected the creative examples of the children's reading and displayed these on

a map of the River Tyne, just above our reading area.

The effect of this was to encourage greater understanding of reading as a skill which is used every day and how often, people do not realise they are doing it.

We also found times where we would like to improve our reading, by thinking about a time when they could be quiet and enjoy reading. Many of the children suggested just before bed. We identified that leaving screens and games for at least 30 minutes, initially would help to engage with reading.

Having decided this, we agreed to try 30 minutes reading for pleasure before bed each night.



4) Recommendations of series of books as follows:

Harry Potter
Murder Most Unladylike
His Dark Materials
Diary of a Wimpy Kid
Star Wars
Dotty Detective
Mortal Engines
Divergent
Shadow and Bones.

We set up regular book recommendations, where children placed the book, they were reading on the desk, then went to a different book to find a recommendation which had been written by a member of the class.

To encourage engagement with series of books, we trialled simple sentence stems such as:

If you liked this book, try...

Did you know this is part of a series?

The effect of this was that children began discussing books by different authors, when read with by me and also with each other. Series which were popular are:

-Murder most Unladylike

- Star Wars original novels
- The Harry Potter series
- Beast Quest

5) Pupil voice: replenishing of book stocks

Children have been involved in helping to choose books from a publisher to replenish our library stocks. Selected children were invited to choose books to form a class library set. This was then reviewed mid-way through the year, to purchase new, engaging stocks. We discovered that children's understanding of other titles by different authors had improved and they were more likely to select these titles.

6) Regular time to read.

During morning registration, children were encouraged to read for 30 minutes at the start of the day. During this time, they could read:

First News

Scoop

Class library books

Library books (readers)

The children were heard to read by teacher and LSA. The questions along with encouraging understanding, were also based on RfP. These were questions such as:

What drew you to choose this book?

Is this part of a series?

What has surprised you about this book?

Has the author written anything else which is similar?

This also gave me an opportunity to model how to select a book if it was obvious that the child was not enjoying the text. To help re-engage with texts, I often encouraged the children to choose anthologies of poetry or collections of short stories.

7) Modelling Reading for Pleasure:



During class reading lessons, two sessions a week were devoted to modelling reading for pleasure. During this time, I would use actions, adopt voices for the characters and keep a steady pace to ensure that the reading of the text was: lively, engaging, and entertaining. I did not ask many higher order questions, but would ask the children to summarise what they liked and to make regular predictions.

This helped to develop familiarity with predicting/ summarising based on their understanding so far. Reluctance to do so diminished as these conversations became normalised.

Using high quality texts really helped. A text which I found particularly useful was Seven Ghosts, particularly the twist in the tale at the end. I then offered the text to children to take as a home-reader, which proved to be very popular.

8) English lessons based on text work.

Our English curriculum is based on high quality texts to help immerse children in language and high quality. Texts which have had a great outcome with Year 6 this Year have been:

- **Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (this has encouraged an interest in a series of series of texts).**
- **When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit.**
- **Shackleton's Journey.**
- **Kensuke's Kingdom.**
- **Millions.**

The effect of this was profound. As we always made every effort to finish the text, the children had experience of reflecting on their initial predictions and deciding on whether the story ended in the way which they wanted. Following completion of a text it became commonplace for children to request their own copy which they began to use in reading for pleasure. Currently Kensuke's Kingdom is a favourite, along with other titles by Michael Morpurgo. In addition to this, having completed Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone, many children requested JK Rowling titles for presents from family, for birthdays or as gifts.

Impact

Introduction:

Following analysis of RfP children's surveys conducted towards the end of summer term, there was a positive picture overall, in terms of Reading for Pleasure.

Children demonstrated increased engagement with the work of a variety of authors and appreciation of the pleasure gained from being read to and of reading. Children reported that their ability to visualise had improved also.

Direct quotes from the class as a whole are as follows:

"Books help me to relax."

"When I am really stuck into a book, it feels like I am in another world."

"I am an okay reader, not the best, but I am getting better with words I get stuck on by thinking about the picture in my head."

"We have a great selection of books."

"I like to get to know new words."

"Reading is good- it puts me in a good mood."

"Teachers give good feedback when I read and I just think I am good at reading."

"Some books give me a movie in my mind."

There is a generally positive view of the value of reading in our class.

Target Children

Of the Target Group of three children, RfP had improved, but there are still areas for further development. What follows are direct quotes, taken from the Target Group RfP survey.

Child A:

Do you like reading?

- 1) At first, I didn't like reading, but now it's okay.
- 2) I'm a good reader because I read complicated books.
- 3) I like reading at school because it's quieter.
- 4) Nobody reads to me at home.
- 6) I read few books during lockdown.
- 7) At home I read comics, websites and online games.
- 8) I am reading the Horrible Histories series at school.
- 9) My favourite author is Margaret Simpson.
- 10) My favourite ever book is Deathly Hallows.
- 11) I chat to friends about books. I don't talk about reading at home.
- 12) My teacher loves reading.
- 13) My teacher reads every day.
- 14) We are currently reading Millions.
- 15) It's okay when he reads as he has a good reading voice.

Child B:

- 1) I get bored very quickly when I read a book.
- 2) I'm an okay reader. I only read at school.
- 3) I prefer reading at school, as it gets me ready for the day.
- 4) I don't read with anyone at home.
- 5) No one reads aloud to me at home.
- 6) I didn't read any books during lockdown.
- 8) I am reading Skellig at school.
- 9) My favourite author is Rick Riordan.
- 10) My favourite book ever is Percy Jackson.
- 11) I talk about books to my friends and teacher. I don't talk to anyone at home about books.
- 12) My teacher loves reading.
- 13) My teacher reads to us every day.
- 14) We are reading Millions and Kensuke's Kingdom at the moment.
- 15) I love it when my teacher reads aloud as I feel I can understand it more.

Child C

- 1) I like reading, but it depends on the book I'm reading.
- 2) I'm an okay reader, but I don't like it if a text is too big.

- 3) I like to read in a high tree, as it is calm and relaxing.
- 4) I don't read with anyone at home.
- 5) No one reads to me at home.
- 6) I read the BFG during lockdown (at school).
- 7) At home I read social media and online games.
- 8) I'm reading Kensuke's Kingdom at school.
- 9) My favourite author is Michael Morpurgo.
- 10) My favourite book ever is Cool.
- 11) I talk about books with my teacher and my mum.
- 12) My teacher loves reading.
- 13) My teacher reads to us every day.
- 14) We are currently reading Millions.
- 15) I love it when my teacher reads because I can picture what is happening in the story, like a movie.

Summary of positive impact on RfP (Target Group):

- 1) Attitudes had changed to a more positive view of how reading can be pleasant.
- 2) Improvements in ability to visualise and use internal book-talk.
- 3) Increased engagement in book-talk with their peers and their teacher.
- 4) Improved identification of themselves as a reader.
- 5) Wider reading and identification of authors and series of books which they enjoy.

Areas to further support RfP (Target Group):

- 1) Motivation to read outside of school.
- 2) Engagement with reading with adults outside of school. This could take the form of asking the children to invite parents to school, thereby increasing and widening our reading community.
- 3) Continue to expand the scope of several types of reading and for the children to recognise the validity in reading for different purposes.

Impact on attainment:

Reading scores gathered using internal processes demonstrate a larger uptake from this class in quizzes, along with texts read and words read. All children in Target Group have made progress in internal reading assessments.

Summary:

As this research was undertaken during the pandemic, there are lots of factors which can influence a child's access to books and motivation to read outside of school. A major variable in influencing parental support could be the time which needs to be devoted to supporting a child's reading. If time is increasingly pressed due to demands of working from home, this could have an impact on time invested in reading. Another linked variable could be that as parents were encouraging children to access online learning, reading may have become something which was traded away for some children.

My research has reaffirmed my belief that encouraging children to read for pleasure

requires a partnership of stakeholders: child, parents/carers, and school, who all have a valid role to play.

Reflections on impact the TaRs (Teachers as Readers) research had on practice

The following areas which I included for my study had the most impact:

1) Reading River: This made it feel “safe” for the more reluctant readers to identify as a reader, which helped them to begin a new journey with reading. It also served as a great reminder of the reading they completed incidentally and helped to promote positive self-identification as readers.

2) Continue texts in English lessons: Basing English lessons on high-quality texts allowed children to explore character, descriptions, themes, and dilemmas. This facilitated high-quality discussion as it allowed for lots of internal and external book talk.

3) Pupil voice for texts: Involving children as stake-holders in the process of selecting books for the whole-school and class libraries had a significant impact. This was increased further as we waited for the books to arrive. Children were enthusiastic and excited by the rich quality of texts on offer. For some of the children in the class this was the most accessible sources of any high-quality text.

4) Series of books by the same author: Investing in series of books by the same author was immensely powerful for children as this allowed for recommendations of books written in a similar style to be made. Children began to be able to spot recurrent themes and structures within an author’s writing, particularly with the work of Michael Morpurgo.

5) Engaging reading: As a reading teacher, using drama as well as tone of voice has had a profound effect on the development of the children’s internal reading voice. In many cases, the teacher’s reading voice is one of the few voices which the children have heard as a reader.

What are your plans and next steps to support children’s volitional engagement as readers? Following the success of the initiatives above these will be revisited, so that they are constantly relevant and valid for the children.

Other initiatives in school will include:

- Shelfies Competition which will reinforce reading in an unusual place outside of school.
- Further projects to involve parents with their reading (dependent on Risk Assessments (Covid-19)).
- Adult literacy support with external agencies.