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*To provide a foundation for fulfilled lives, inspiring and creating confident learners.*

### Dobcroft Infant and Nursery School



Claire Hughes and  
Vicky Harrison

2020 - 2021

#### Context

- We are a three form Infant School and Preschool providing education for children aged 3+ to 7+. We serve parts of the Ecclesall, Millhouses and Whirlow areas of southwest Sheffield. Our 26-place Preschool is located in the main building of the Infant School. We are below the national average for pupil premium with just 7% of our school population made up of PP children. We have 27% EAL pupils, and this has been a constant average for the school for the last few years. We are the national average for our SEND percentage, which is currently at 10%, however, we have higher than the national average for complex needs. People choose to send their children to Dobcroft Infant School as we are renowned for being highly inclusive with a diverse curriculum and strong relationships between staff, children and families.
- We feel that reading is a strength in our school with our reading results consistently being at or above national average, although we do acknowledge that lockdown and Covid-19 has affected our results. We wanted to get involved with the Reading for Pleasure research project as we recognised even with new staff starting, our subject knowledge of current children's authors and texts was not as strong as it could be!
- Our Change Team was headed up by Vicky Harrison (Head of School) and Claire Hughes (KS1 English coordinator), and included teachers and teaching assistants from each year group who we knew informally enjoyed reading and reading for pleasure outside of school.

#### Explore

##### **Intention: define the problem and establish a baseline**

Our whole school reading data has always been strong; however, we were aware that children had the skill but lacked the passion and enthusiasm for reading. This is consistent with international evidence from PIRLS and PISA (OECD, 2010). As a staff, there were small pockets of committed readers but we were not a reading community as a whole and many pupils did not think of their teacher as a reader:

**Question 21: What do you think your class would say about you as a reader?**

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I don't think they are a reader	I read when time allows	I am an avid reader	I don't think they will have considered this
2/20	5/20	3/20	10/20

***(Staff survey carried out in November 2020)***

This told us we needed to raise the profile of teachers as readers and have pupils see their teachers and support staff enjoying reading.

Before selecting our aims to focus on for the project, we sent out a staff survey to see staff's opinions of reading at Dobcroft Infants and their own strengths and areas to develop. We also carried out individual pupil surveys across Key Stage 1 to help us identify pupils for our focus groups based on their responses, and asked staff in our Foundation Stage to use their knowledge of their pupils to select the focus group children in their classes. As Change Team leaders, we spoke to class teachers about the pupil survey results to get a picture of each class as a whole and to discuss any surprises that emerged and to ensure children selected would benefit most from the project. We then compared the pupils who said they "didn't enjoy reading" or thought they "were not good at reading" with our bottom 20% in reading attainment to see if there were distinct correlations or not.

Here are some of our headlines following the analysis of the staff and pupil surveys:

- There is a real need to introduce more poetry and quality non-fiction into classrooms
- Staff wanted nice, cosy, appealing reading corners but Covid restrictions are hindering this.
- Staff do know which children enjoy reading and some of their favourite texts
- Most children did see themselves as readers or say they are good at reading, however we were surprised that a lot of children thought that they were just okay at reading or not good at reading...yet.

**Question 1. Do you like reading?**

I love reading %	Reading is ok %	I don't like reading %
<b>60 %</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>6%</b>

**Question 2. Are you a good reader?**

I'm good at reading %	I'm OK at reading %	I'm not good at reading yet %
<b>70%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>4%</b>

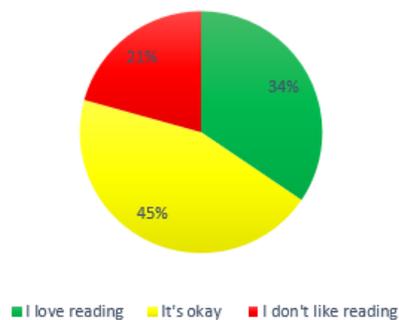
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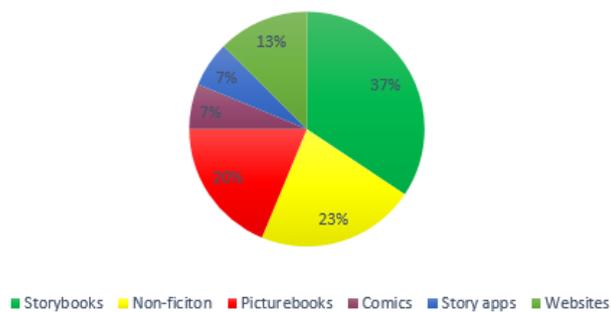
We were quite shocked that our children did not all love reading - although we were focusing on changing that 6% to love reading, we wanted to change the whole school to loving reading and have put lots of ideas into place to change this data.

- This was the baseline pupil opinions from one Year 1 class (Hedgehog class) which showed that 21% said they did not like reading.

### 1. Do you like reading?



### 7. What do you most like to read?



From our baseline staff and pupil surveys, we came up with the following headlines:-

- **Key Strengths:** children could identify favourite books, most children said that they liked reading, most children identified that they were good at reading, staff thought they had a good knowledge of reading preferences in their own class. Children said that they liked to read a lot of story books, as shown by the pie chart, but when we were writing down some of the authors that the children mentioned, the staff did not recognise them, so our subject knowledge needed to be improved.

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- **Key Areas for Development:** staff knowledge of current authors, poetry knowledge and having poetry books.



As seen in the Wordle image above, the main authors named by our staff were Roald Dahl, Julia Donaldson and Michael Rosen. These are authors who we read a lot of in school and are authors whose work we use in our English lessons. As you can see, there is a lack of non-fiction authors, poets and modern authors who have published work in the past 5 years.

### Prepare

When the project began, we chose our Change Team to support us in the journey. The teachers and teaching assistants selected for the Change Team were each based in different years across the school and were people we know read for pleasure outside of school and are role models for sharing reading in class. We also used the baseline data results to help us choose the Change Team, for example having the teaching assistants in the classes where most children said they “didn’t like reading” or “it’s okay” join the Change Team where we felt there could be the most impact.

From the baseline data results and talking to teaching staff about the results, we chose our focus children. Each class had 2 or 3 focus children who had either reported they “didn’t like reading”, thought they “weren’t good at reading” or pupils that staff identified as not enjoying reading in class or not engaging with reading at home. Of our 11 pupil premium pupils, 3 were selected to be focus children (27%), with one in each year group.

The focus children needed to have access to high quality books to pique their interest (it is worth noting that we spoke to the teachers and ensured that this would not be an additional guided reading session!) We needed to dedicate time to reading for pleasure even through lockdown and make it equitable for the children who were also remote learning, this was incredibly important to us.

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We also invested in a Reading Shed for our outside playground as children were asking for a quiet area to read and share stories with their friends at playtimes.



We created our action plan with three main aims:

**1. For teachers to be familiar with the authors and books that the children of Dobcroft Infant School are reading**

We broke this overarching aim down into three more specific strands:

- Staff are familiar with current children's book
- Staff to be reading current children's books so that they are able to make recommendations to the children
- Staff to be aware of which books are winning awards

As written in "Teachers as Readers: Building Communities of Readers (2014), *"the last decade of prescribed practice and the pressures of accountability are likely to continue to exert their influence upon teachers' knowledge and use of literature for some considerable time to come"* (Cremin et al. 2014).

Our staff survey results and discussions in CPD meetings are certainly consistent with these findings, as staff were only really able to name authors of texts they have taught in class such as Roald Dahl and Giles Andreae - both of these being white, male authors being over 50 years old and the books our staff know of them were all published before 2000! The main female author named was Julia Donaldson - again largely due to her being an author whose work we use in Literacy lessons - but again she is a white, over 50 year old British author and the work we best knew her for was published in 1999. Cremin also recognises that "In addition, despite the fact that studies demonstrate teachers need a wide knowledge of children's literature (Medwell et al., 1998; Block, Oakar and Hurt, 2002), this knowledge is not recognised as part of the professional repertoire in the Teaching Standards for teachers in England" - so when we had SCITT students training in our school, it wasn't a big focus for them to have current knowledge of children's authors either, so we weren't having that influx of new texts from them either.

**2. For staff to enable pupils to read a diverse variety of texts**

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- To develop staff and children's knowledge of recent children's texts especially poetry and non-fiction.
- To see an increase in the range of texts read and enjoyed in surveys and in class.
- To promote a variety of different character representations/ genders etc.
- To ensure that staff were reading a variety of new texts themselves.

Again, as seen in the Wordle image above, our staff were definitely lacking in knowing, sharing and recommending diverse authors. Cremin et.al (2014) writes that *"this indicates that practitioners may not be sufficiently familiar with a diverse enough range of writers to enable them to foster reader development, make book recommendations to individuals and promote independent reading for pleasure"*

### **3. To develop staff use of informal book talk, inside text talk and recommendations**

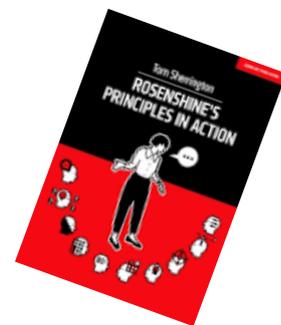
We broke this overarching aim down into three more specific strands:

- Increase the number of pupils who openly have a love of reading, and raise the pupils' view of themselves as a reader and their ability to read.
- Teachers to include formal book talk using question stems and sentence stems to encourage comparison of texts, characters and more discussion about books between classes
- Teachers use all opportunities for informal book chats - such as when they are coming in from play time etc.

As a staff, we have been following Rosenshine's 'Principles in Action' workbook through school (all teachers, HTLAs and TA3s). One section in the book is dedicated to MARGE: A whole-brain approach to learning for students and teachers. MARGE is an acronym; Motivate, Attend, Relate, Generate and Evaluate. We were really interested in the motivational part which states "we need to be motivated to use energy to keep focused on the learning process. Designed well,

motivation can be intrinsic to learning." We needed our

children to be lifelong book lovers, but they needed to learn how to do this, they needed to be motivated to do this. So many of our children are time deprived and spend a lot of time on screens/ iPads, we need to change this mindset, or at least introduce them to reading apps on these devices. Rosenshine states that "by generating curiosity about new material as a quest to answer big questions, organising big ideas within a wider schema, story telling and asking the "aesthetic question" - "What do you think? How does it make you feel? Why is it good? The aesthetic question engages emotional brain circuits and forces us to attend to and organise our knowledge."



From reading the research summary from "Reading for pleasure pedagogy: Informal book talk, inside-text talk and recommendations" from the Open University and the Teachers as Readers project, it was clear that informal book talk is a great way to engage pupils,

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enrich understanding of stories read and help make connections between stories. "Book talk also developed; teachers created frequent opportunities for discussions with the class, small groups and individuals about texts, authors, preferences, responses and so forth. In addition, children began to make time to talk to each other about their own reading and more spontaneous child-led text talk emerged." (Cremin et al., 2014). This is what we hoped to achieve as a result of taking part in this project ourselves.

### Deliver

**Aim 1 - To develop staff and children's knowledge of recent children's texts especially poetry and non-fiction:**

Strategies put in place to meet action plan:

Staff to be reading current children's books.	Purchase the Reading Shed for the playground.	Develop the reading spines and launch.
Staff to be aware of which books are winning awards	Purchase new poetry books	Staff to be able to recommend books to children.

We have purchased poetry books for every class, as we felt that children were not being subjected to high quality poetry books. Staff are now reading poetry to the class every day and children are reporting that they love it! When I did the "Ning, Nang Nong" poem over Zoom, one Year 1 class then spent a week trying to learn the poem off by heart as they really enjoyed it. Teachers are showing poetry videos like "Chocolate" by Micheal Rosen on wet play times to further immerse the children in different forms of poetry. When we asked a sample of children about poetry they were highly positive about it. We also had a PDM in Spring1 where staff also brought along their favourite poetry book, shared it, explained why it was their favourite and again, knowledge was shared!

We have developed our reading spines as a staff team (which will be updated every year, with new books from the UKLA book list). We have purchased a set of each reading spine books for every year group which include a variety of new and established authors. Staff had a lot of discussions with each other about new books and are more aware of the need to include diverse authors and representations of pupils in these books. We also made sure to include at least one poetry book in each Reading Spine. At transition this year, each class teacher shared some books from the Reading Spine to get the upcoming class enthusiastic about the books they will access and be recommended in their new class.

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FS1	FS2	Y1	Y2
You choose by Nick Sharratt 	Poems to perform to by Julia Donaldson 	The magic far away tree by Ehd Glynn 	The giant turnip by Aleksis Tolstoy 
Something else by Kathryn Cave 	Giraffes can't dance by Giles Andreae 	Chocolate cake poem book by Michael Rosen 	The Worst Witch by Jill Murphy 
Meg's eggs by Helen Nicoll 	The tiger who came to tea by Judith Kerr 	Bloom by Anne Booth 	The day the crayons quit by Oliver Jeffers 
Not now Bernard by David McKee 	This is not my hat by Jon Klassen 	Clean up by Nathan Byron 	Rabbit and bear by Julian Gough and Jim Field 

The very hungry caterpillar by Eric Carle 	Wild by Emily Hughes 	A very first poetry book by John Foster 	Commotion in the ocean by Giles Andreae 
Handa's Surprise by Eileen Browne 	I am brown by Ashok Banker 	Where the wild things are by Maurice Sendak 	Flat Stanley by Jeff Brown 
My hair by Hannah Lee 	Stuck by Oliver Jeffers 	Mad about minibeasts by Giles Andreae 	Poems out Loud anthology 

As mentioned above, we knew we had to ensure staff were familiar with current, award winning books and authors. Before the PDM to create the Reading Spines occurred, we shared the UKLA award winners list with all staff, so they could research these and decide which to include in their year group's Spine. The impact of this is that staff now have a greater knowledge of new authors and texts. As we update the Reading Spines each year, we will continue to use the published award lists to inform our choices.

## Aim 2 - For staff to enable pupils to read a diverse variety of texts

Strategies put in place to meet action plan:

Reading Shed purchased so pupils have access to a wider selection of books in playtime	More non-fiction books purchased for each classroom	Poetry books in each classroom and shared by the teacher.
Pupils have set aside time to choose to read and share poems with their class.	A wide range of non-fiction books are available at lots of different reading ability ranges.	Dedicated Reading for Pleasure time timetabled in (even when in lockdown!)

Drop in by SLT showed that children are being subjected to more poetry in wet play times and lunch time. Focus children were able to talk about poetry to SLT and were able to point out where the poetry books were kept. Even our F1 (nursery) pupils have been heard reciting poems by memory when they transition to lunch time. Poetry is much more visible in school. We have found that whilst children can name a few famous poets when asked like Roald Dahl and Micheal Rosen, we do need to broaden their knowledge as a next step next year. We would also like to buy more poetry books so that the children can choose to read and share the poems as we do not have many poem books to go around.

We have started to purchase some lower level non-fiction books for our children but this is an ongoing target due to budgets. However, we have increased the number of Bug Club

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books (our online reading facility) and they do have a lot more non-fiction books at the lower level and teachers have been using these books sometimes in class too, to support those reading for pleasure readers. One teacher found out that a child who was struggling to read a book and did not like reading, when reading a nonfiction book on an iPad was able to read, as he said it was like a game to find facts!

This is a photograph of one of our focus children, who initially said he didn't like reading and wasn't good at reading - even though attainment wise he was meeting age related expectations - who found a love of nonfiction books about animals.



**Aim 3 - To develop staff use of informal book talk, inside text talk and recommendations**

Strategies put in place to meet action plan:

Dedicated Reading for Pleasure time on the timetables.	Reading Shed in the playground for pupils to read at playtimes.	Hosting a Reading for Pleasure day to encourage reading for pleasure.
Time for Change Team members to meet with focus groups	Teachers to include formal book talk using question stems and sentence stems to encourage comparison of texts, characters and more discussion about books between classes	Reading areas in each classroom with space for pupil and staff recommendations

We wanted to ensure that this project was given the time and the momentum was sustained over the year, so ensured every class across school had it timetabled. During lockdown we ensured that all classes had dedicated reading for pleasure time on their timetables, and made sure that this was also followed up with the children at home. It was explained to them about the importance of reading for pleasure and how they could facilitate this when remote learning. It was really rewarding to get pictures from the home learners to show where they had chosen to read for pleasure and we have them displayed in school (see picture).



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Unfortunately, due to the children not being able to access the hall through the school the children have not yet been able to see these photos but we hope to share them soon! Feedback from the focus group of children has been that they loved reading for pleasure and really miss it when it has been replaced with something else one week.

When the project has been completed, after feedback from all the staff and taking into consideration the pupil voice it is definitely something we will continue to do next term as we have seen the benefits in mental health (we feel that it gives the children some down time to just relax and enjoy a book, which is what the children said) and also it promotes a love of reading, which is what the data below shows.

The Reading Shed was purchased in the Summer holidays and arrived in the Autumn term. It has been a great addition to Dobcroft Infant play times and lunch times, where children enjoy popping in and reading a book during their down times. Sometimes children can find the playtimes too long (1 hour 15 minutes) and they want to take a bit of a break and the reading shed is the perfect place for that. It is always full of children sitting in and perusing the books. We have 3 boxes of books which we change on a weekly basis, the children (reading monitors) are responsible for changing this over. The welfare supervisors have reported that there are a lot less children who don't have someone to play with as they often take themselves to the Reading Shed. We will be developing this further next year, with reading shed volunteers to recommend books to children who come to the Shed.



We knew from the Reading for Pleasure training, we needed to support our staff with the formal and informal book talk. Claire Hughes felt that teachers were good at asking comprehension style questions to pupils, but wanted to improve staff's conversations around books with pupils and help them create dialogue and natural conversation. We used Aiden Chambers' book as a starting point to create sentence and question stems, and Claire met with a Foundation Stage 2 teacher (Miss Chaudhry) to make sure they were suitable for the younger children we have in our Foundation Stage. They came up with a list of stems that would suit each key stage and then presented them to the staff at a reading PDM. It was made clear that this would not be a guided reading session, and the focus would be getting children to share books, enjoy books, talk about what they liked about the book and to have books read to them etc. Staff report that they have been a really useful starting point, but many have since developed their own style and stems. On learning walks around school we have seen evidence of this book talk being

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used across each year group, with staff also modelling reading for pleasure and some Year 2 children even asking their teacher some of the book talk questions!

As we were remote learning on World Book Day 2021, we wanted to have a whole school event celebrating reading when all the children were back in person, so we held a “Dobcroft Loves Reading” day on the last day of the Spring term. Throughout the lockdown, staff were recording themselves reading bedtime stories to put on our remote learning online platform for children and families to watch at home, and so to go with our theme of bedtime stories, we invited all children (and staff) to wear their pyjamas to school and bring in their favourite book to share. Normally, when we have a dress down day there are one or two children per class who do not participate, but this time there was not a single child in school who did not turn up in their pyjamas. Each class partnered up with another to share a story time, and we shared some more of the staff videos with the children over the day.



Each year group had their own reading task to do:

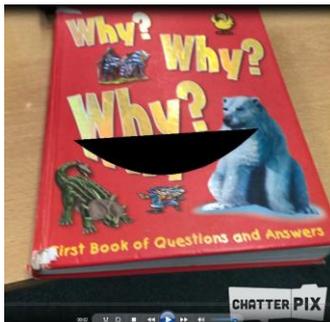
- Foundation Stage 1 children sent their favourite books to our SEN base in the school, and used sound boxes to record what they liked about them.
- Foundation Stage 2 made videos of children sharing their favourite book together and also sent books to the Year 1 classes to read and share. The children were also

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so excited to receive a book from another class all wrapped up. It really built up the suspense of receiving a book and they treasured it.

- Each Year 1 class chose books to wrap up and pass along to another class. They wrote clues about each book on the wrapping paper and why they were recommending it. In each class, it was the pupils who selected the books to send to another class and two classes chose to include non-fiction books and one class chose to send a poetry book - showing the impact of us trying to spotlight these genres over this year with the Reading for Pleasure project.
- All Year 2 pupils used the augmentation app ChatterPix on the class iPads to take a photograph of their favourite book and talk about why they like it. Some children chose to talk as a character from the book, explaining what the book is about and why other children should read it. These videos were then shared with other classes. The Chatterpix was a real hit, with the Year 2 children enjoying using the apps and the receiving class loving watching them! One of the teachers said *"I absolutely loved what the Y2s produced - the ChatterPix app is brilliant."*



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## Review

### Intention: reviewing to ascertain impact at the end of the academic year

When we re-surveyed the KS1 pupils in June 2021, we saw an increase in both the 'I love reading' and 'I'm good at reading' categories.

We also saw a complete fall from 4% of pupils who said they felt they "were not good at reading yet" to 0%. This means the focus pupils who we selected initially for this reason have all had their opinion changed for the better.

Of the 5% of pupils who said they don't like reading (5 pupils), 3 are on the SEN register, two of whom have complex needs.

Pupil survey results from November 2020 and June 2021:

#### Question 1. Do you like reading?

I love reading %		Reading is ok %		I don't like reading %	
Nov 2020	June 2021	Nov 2020	June 2021	Nov 2020	June 2021
60 %	69.3% ↑	34%	25.7% ↓	6%	5% ↓

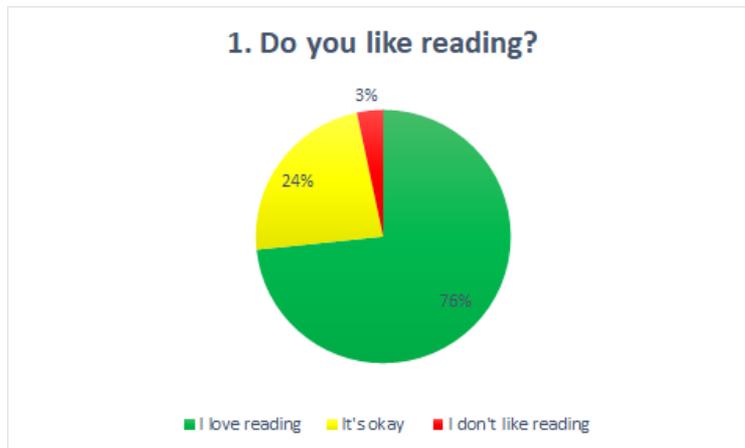
#### Question 2. Are you a good reader?

I'm good at reading %		I'm OK at reading %		I'm not good at reading yet %	
Nov 2020	June 2021	Nov 2020	June 2021	Nov 2020	June 2021
70%	72.7% ↑	26%	27.3% ↑	4%	0% ↓

This shows the impact of the strategies we have implemented, as well as the buy-in we have had from the wider staff across school. This is the end of year pupil opinions from one Year 1 class (Hedgehog class) showing the drop from the initial surveys where 21% said they didn't like reading to 3%!

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Of the 16 focus pupils chosen from the baseline data and initial discussions with teachers, 13 now feel like they are good at reading and enjoy reading more than before. Whilst 5 of the 8 Year 2 children are currently Working Towards the end of year government expectations, they have all made progress in their attainment, and most importantly in how they see themselves as readers and could all name a favourite book when asked by the Change Team. We have also had parental comments about the impact of the introduction of Reading for Pleasure, with a parent of an SEN child writing *"We are pleased to see his reading progressing; he is enjoying reading more and has asked to read to his grandparents recently which was lovely to see and he read brilliantly."*

Many staff members have emailed with positive feedback from parents too. One staff member in Year 1 has emailed me about a focus pupil in her class, to say that *"I just thought you might be interested to know that NDS's parents (one of our RfP focus pupils) said, totally unprompted at parents evening, that they had noticed he was so much more keen to read and interested in books in the last few weeks. His mum mentioned his new passion so I thought we needed to thank you for your support and hard work. Mrs DS."*

Another Year 2 staff member has a positive parent email saying *"I just wanted to thank you for inspiring William to read independently. I've been waiting for him to just pick up a book for pleasure and it finally happened this morning! Reading Harry Potter to himself in our bed. Wonderful! Have a lovely break! Mr and Mrs K."*

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As a result of the Reading for Pleasure day in April, our Pre-School (Foundation Stage 1) asked for their own Reading Shed area in their outside classroom which we have now purchased, and when we walked through this outdoor classroom there were children sat inside the shed reading and sharing books. They also now have the children vote for which book to read at snacktime.



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### **Sustain**

We are really aware that as a school, you can get really focussed on the mechanics of reading; the decoding, encoding, the synthetic phonics, book bands etc and forget about fostering a lifelong love of reading which can sometimes go missing in some schools. I think that in this day and age where children would often rather pick up an iPad than a book it is even more important to get children to love books as we are now in competition with the digital era and the immediate entertainment a video or app game can bring.

Reading is going to be one of our school priorities next year, even though reading is a strength of the school. However, due to the Covid- 19 pandemic and all the knock-on effects it has had in the past 18 months, we are seeing that more children are not where they should be currently even with the intervention programmes that we have put in. In addition, we want to continue with the reading for pleasure project as we feel that it has benefits for mental health, which is another school priority. The school has worded the priority as *"To address the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on reading achievement."* We hope through maintaining the momentum of Reading for Pleasure and the new poetry, non-fiction and Reading Spine books we have purchased, all pupils will find their passion for reading, participate in more conversations about books, be exposed to a more diverse range of text and authors and make accelerated progress. We hope to raise reading attainment levels back to where they were pre-Covid 19.

We feel we have always been very good at managing school improvement and ensuring staff are aware of our school priorities, and I think we have learnt a lot about managing school improvement in a pandemic - especially when children were remote learning at home and many parents were juggling their own jobs alongside this remote learning. We have had to adapt our teaching, for our home learners and this was a real learning curve and we are still learning to be honest! We have adapted a lot of our CPD time to learning and embedding the Rosenshine model to support our learners who we were aware needed additional revisiting and low-level quizzes, overlearning and teaching new learning in smaller chunks. We have now already organised an INSET day in September where all staff are going to attend to know the school priority and hear the key messages and strategies for the upcoming year. This will mean all staff - teacher and teaching assistants - are onboard with our school improvement and we have chance to address any misconceptions before the children begin school.

One of our specific next steps to sustain and develop Reading for Pleasure as a whole school ethos is to have Year 2 Reading Champions who will be responsible for changing the books in the Reading Shed, recommending books to pupils at playtime and bringing pupil voice recommendations to the staff of books they would like us to order for classrooms. We will continue to have timetabled reading for pleasure sessions in every year group, every week and that we foster a love of life long reading in our young

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children and hopefully when we no longer have to remain in class bubbles, we can have some cross-school mixed year group reading for pleasure sessions too.

As we have learnt over this year, *“We all have a uniquely valuable role in life. But many of us, even if satisfied with that role, often wonder what it would be like to live in a different place, work at a different job, or even be a completely different person. For brief moments of time, books release us from the constraints of our own reality. They take us beyond our world and into someone else’s real or imaginary one. They satisfy the curiosity of the elusive “What if?”* (abebooks.co.uk) We want to give our children the “what if?”, and being on this Reading for Pleasure journey has helped out staff tap into their own escapism through books.