



Ferham Primary School



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Y6 Teacher and Literacy Team Member

Context

Ferham Primary School a small school located in a severely deprived area of Rotherham. Mobility is high and as a result, many pupils have substantial periods of missed education resulting in gaps in their knowledge and understanding. The pupils speak 22 different languages, and many have little or no English when they start school, not necessarily in KS1.

Reading at Ferham

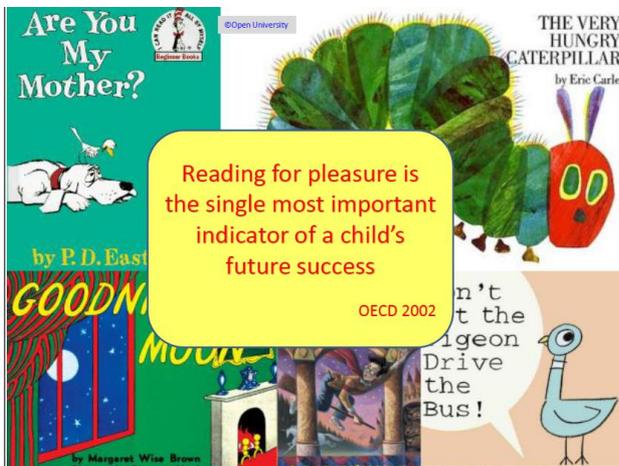
We have taught reading rigorously through different teaching approaches, but the children were not engaging with books. In 2019, we asked the children what they thought about reading. Their view was clear, reading was something they *had to do* to pass tests. Reading was a taught skill and not a personal, pleasurable activity. So, we have changed the focus of reading and joined the Open University's Reading for Pleasure (RfP) project in Autumn 2020.

Explore

Collecting Baseline Data Information

[Surveys](#) were conducted of all classroom staff and a cross section of children in each class throughout school. It was clear from the initial meeting that the staff had never thought about their own reading habits being relevant to their work before. Their role was to teach reading,

not engage as a reader in a reading community. As I introduced the project to the staff, I was conscious that everyone had worked so hard, taking many different approaches but to no avail; this needed to be purposefully explained or it would be just another project. I used this slide provided by the Open University RfP tutors. I knew that ultimately we all want what is best for the children in school.

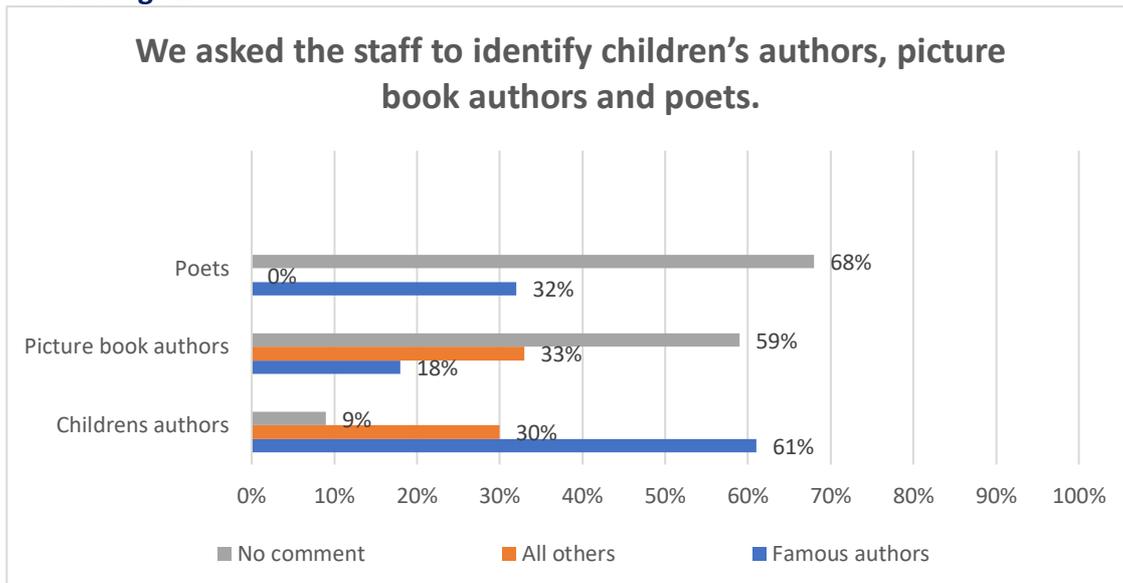


Immediately, the staff were on board.

Questionnaires

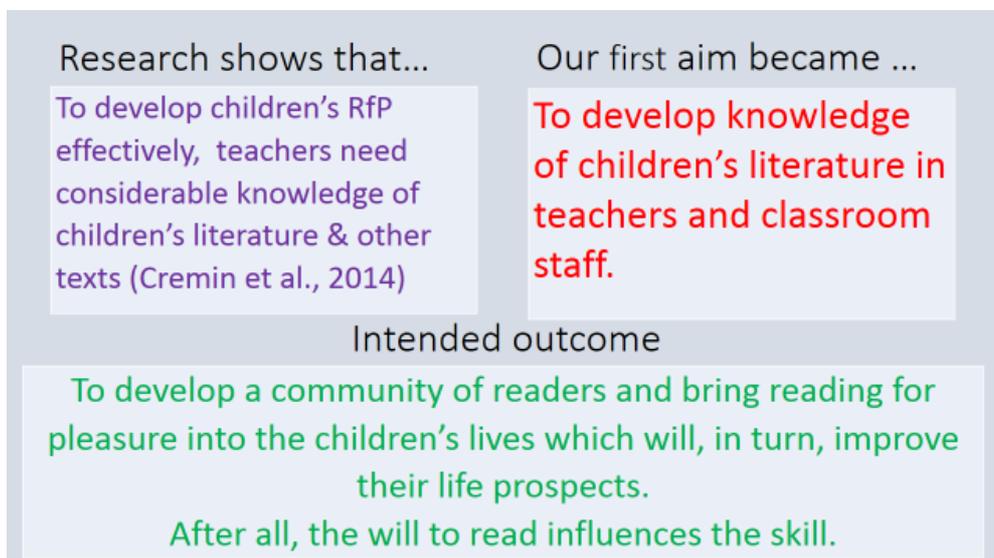
We carried out a separate survey of *What we do at Ferham?* It encompassed all key stage staff and children, and we asked their opinions on all aspects of reading. We wanted our course of action in school to be research-led. From this data we clarified our project aims.

Important Findings 1



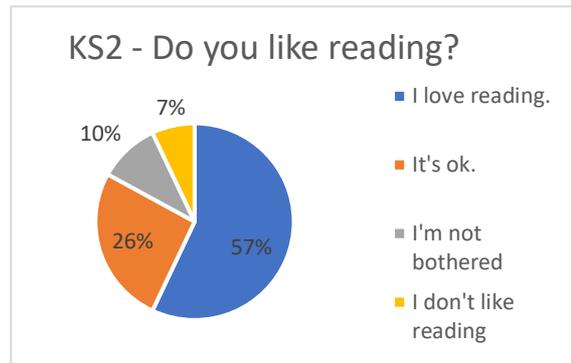
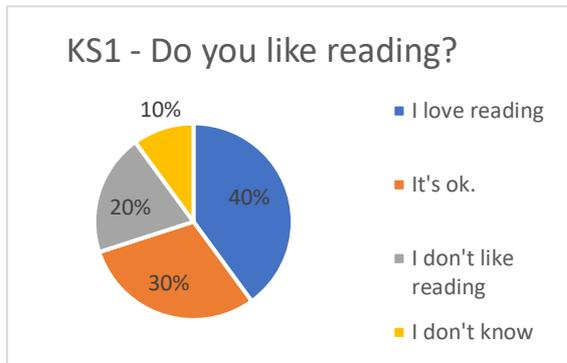
The Open University survey results showed that staff were honest about their knowledge of children's literature and pedagogy. When asked to identify 6 children's authors, 61% of answers mentioned the same three authors: Roald Dahl, Julia Donaldson and J.K. Rowling. Only twelve other authors were mentioned. Eight different picture book authors were mentioned and 18% of these were Anthony Browne. Just three poets were named by staff. This aligned with RfP research which found nationally, *'the teacher's knowledge of children's literature was dominated by Dahl and celebrity authors'* (Cremin et al., 2009; Clark and Teravainen, 2015). Our practise had been activity driven by commercial programmes. We had taught reading strategies but not engaged with the subject matter. How could we develop children's volitional reading without a strong knowledge of children's literature? *'Teachers with weak subject knowledge are not in a position to support children adequately in making their own and recommendations are important in developing young readers'* (Court, 2011: Goodwin, 2011: Hughes-Hassell and Rodge, 2007). We needed better knowledge about children's literature to be able to recommend appealing, exciting books to children.

Aim 1

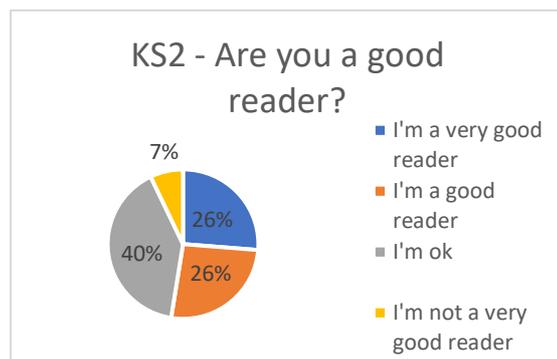


Important Findings 2

We asked a sample of mixed ability children from each class if they liked reading. More children in KS2 said that they loved reading than in KS1. 30% or less of children in both key stages didn't like reading or were not bothered.

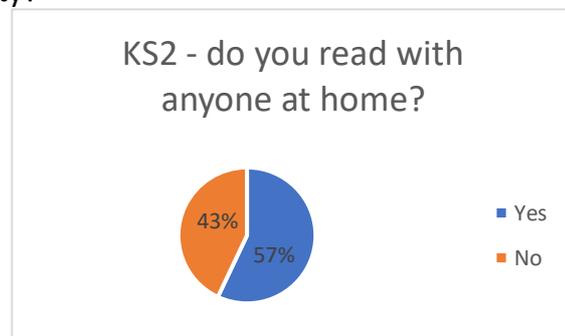


We then asked if the children thought they were good readers. The numbers dropped significantly from KS2 to KS1. All KS1 children considered themselves to be a good or ok reader. With 90% of KS1 children considering themselves good readers why would only 40% love reading? Could there be other matters that influence them?



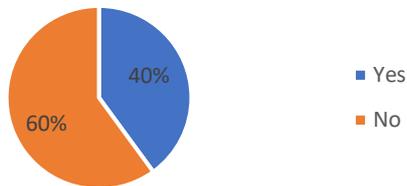
What was affecting the opinions of the children?

We asked the children about their reading habits at home. In KS1, 90% of the children read with family members, whereas only 57% of the KS2 children read with family members. As the children grow older there was less shared reading at home. Could this be the factor that changes the perceptions of the children's own ability?

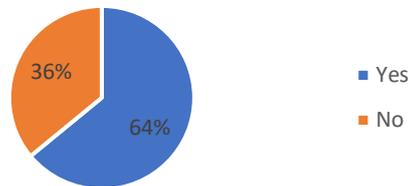


We asked the children if anyone read aloud to them at home. Interestingly, the number of children who loved to read in both key stages was exactly the same as the number of children who said that they were read to at home. **Enjoyment of reading appeared to be linked to someone reading aloud to them.**

KS1- Does anyone read out loud with you at home?



KS2- Does anyone read out loud with you at home?



Does your teacher read aloud to the class?

• Every day?	86%
• Several times a week?	10%
• Once a week?	2%
• Less than once a week?	2%

Story time was not a timetabled activity in KS2. However most children said that they were read to regularly. We had followed many commercial programmes for reading but perhaps it just wasn't pleasurable? Often the class texts were not completed as there was never enough time, especially longer novels in KS2. We also know that the children have thought in the past that reading was purely for passing national tests. Research helped us to identify our next aim.

Aim 2

Research shows that...

'When children are read aloud to, they are enveloped in a risk-free learning environment that 'removes the pressure of achievement and the fear of failure, allowing the freedom to wonder, question, and enjoy material beyond their reading abilities' (Wadsworth, 2008: 1; see also Fisher et al., 2004; Childress, 2011; Trelease, 2013' Cremin et al., 2014:94)

Our second aim became ...

To develop reading aloud in school.

To create a reciprocal reading community with reading role models. Where reading is primarily enjoyed and therefore associated with reading for pleasure.

Important *Other Findings* 3

- Some children found reading hard. We knew this was an issue as most of our children are EAL learners and several join us in year 6 each year having never been to school before, but we had to remember *the will influences the skill*.
- We found that most children preferred to read at school quietly. Often, they could not find an appropriate space at home, so a calm time and space was necessary.

- Very few teachers let the children choose the class texts, even though 96% of the children said that they were read to most days. The children had little input or control over the types of things they were reading together. As most of our teachers knew very few children's authors, it was probable that we were not covering a diverse range of authors, genres or subject matters. How many of our children would or could relate to the characters in the books that were read to them?

It was clear there were lots of other issues to unpick and we needed to know our readers better. We needed to develop our school as a reader-led community, offering children choice, diversity to reflect the community and space to discover read independently.

Aim 3

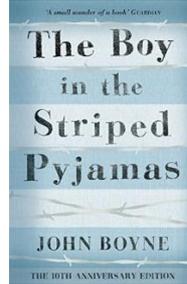
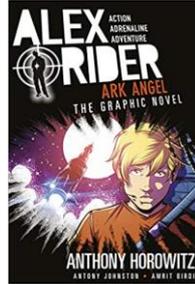
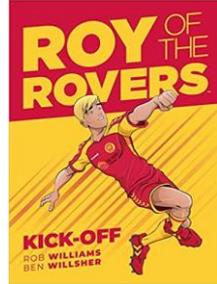
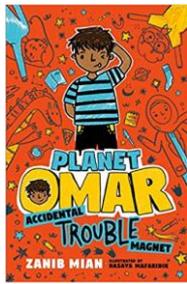
<p>Research shows that...</p> <p>To succeed and change reading habits in school we must develop "reciprocal and interactive reading communities" (Cremin et al., 2014)</p>	<p>Our third aim became...</p> <p>To develop teacher's and support staff's knowledge of children's reading preferences, behaviours and attitudes to strengthen reader relationships.</p>
<p>The purpose is to entice reluctant readers; to find a book, author, genre or space to spark an interest and develop a love of reading. To become a community of readers that reads together, recommends favourite books and talks about books everyday.</p>	

Prepare

We had received some funding the previous year from The Literacy Trust in conjunction with British Land however the Covid-19 pandemic meant that we needed to be flexible with this and so it enabled us to gift all children a book as a Christmas present. For some, this was the only book they owned. We also gave a reading Christmas present to each member of staff and asked them to read it over the holiday. The change team (our group of enthusiastic reading leads) became invaluable. This team of staff were taken from each key stage. Over the course of the year, they would help me to lead this work, model strategies and support teachers and analyse data. They helped me to match the book gifts to each reader. Staff were pleasantly surprised by this gesture. I asked that they think of a child to recommend it to in the new year. Each member of our team now knew one new author/ book.

New Books: Gifts that Keep on Giving

The gifts that keep on giving were introduced in every class. A variety of new books from recommended reading lists and book prize winners were given to classes, exposing children and staff to new and exciting authors, a wider range of genres and book types. Children and staff were invited to take a book to read and recommend it to someone on their return to school. The buzz for books was magical. The children were excited to talk to their teachers about these new books on a personal level. The act of reading was changing in school and a school community of readers was about to be born.



Quote from AM, Y3 Class Teacher.

We waited until the end of the day for the children to choose their books. The books looked so beautiful and enticing. I found myself picking up a different book every time I walked past and so did the children. It was really exciting.

Open University Reading for Pleasure Conferences: Professional Development for all Staff

Many staff were anxious about the OU Reading for Pleasure conferences that took place in February, especially support staff. These staff didn't normally attend staff meetings so the thought of a Zoom conference with university lecturers and 300+ participants was a little daunting. I had several conversations, along with the change team, reassuring and calming staff members.

I set up small WhatsApp groups, with a change member in each, to promote everyone having a voice during the conferences. This worked really well. People who would normally not speak were able to join in and they did so with gusto. The enthusiasm was amazing!

Really good ideas. Excitement! I don't know about the children having a love of reading but I certainly am. Thank you...

JF, a TA during the conference.

As a change team, we were overflowing with ideas; it was frustrating as we were in lockdown, but we kept the enthusiasm in school alight. I was conscious that we needed to focus on just a few ideas to start with, to embed RfP. It was better to do a few things well and have consistency throughout school. The journey is, after all, a marathon not a sprint. We started with some basics.

- All teachers were asked to 'weed' their bookshelves. With beautiful and exciting new books in every room, we wanted to tempt the children visually. It would also make sure that the teachers were aware of their bookstock.
- Displays were changed; books became the visible theme of the school.
- Staff recommended the *gift that keeps on giving books* to children and other staff.

The only difficulty was most of the children were locked down.

What did we do at Ferham?

Aim 1 – Develop knowledge of children's literature with all staff

- RfP became a daily timetabled activity.
- Book talk began. Staff and children made book recommendations.

- The staff continued to use the WhatsApp group to find specific books throughout school: books by the same author, books in a series, books in a genre without bursting Covid-19 bubbles.
- Monthly recommended reads were published on the school web site and on ClassDojo.
- Staff created [reading rivers](#) to reflect on their reading habits.
- All staff displayed their current reading choices in on their classroom/office doors.
- WhatsApp quizzes kept the book talk going when could not meet.

Reflections

Reading for Pleasure became a **daily activity in school**. Although lockdown meant most children were at home, the upside of it was a more personal experience for the children and staff. The **WhatsApp groups were used to great effect** finding specific books and similar books within a genre, books by the same author and sequels as well as book recommendations within school. For the children at home, I created a Ferham Treasure Hunt taken from the [Open University's idea](#). This changed weekly, with different activities for the children in each year group to try at home.



This is an example of the Y6 Ferham Treasure Hunt.

It was difficult for the staff to meet and chat during lock down. Covid-19 bubbles had to be strictly maintained. Many thanks must be passed on to Laura Robinson (HLTA), who generated chat around reading with the staff using WhatsApp. She shared ideas and developed quizzes about books, old and new. She asked the staff to share their favourite children's books and explain why. Later, these became book recommendations by the staff – she was modelling RfP for our staff. She organised a tutorial from a children's book illustrator for the Y3/4 bubble and much more.

Since the children have come back to school, **RfP is timetabled** for 20 minutes throughout school after lunch. As the children said that they liked to read quietly, two or three sessions are spent reading quietly. We were responding to the children's voice. These daily sessions have given the teaching staff time to read with all children once a week. The children love this special time to

read and share their books. Across school it has been noted that the children are more engaged with their books and want to talk about them, and there is now informal time to do so. Children are also discussing new words that they have come across. Spelling and phonics skills have improved too.

The other timed reading sessions are used to promote a more sociable side to reading, such as:

- reviewing books
- shared reading
- chatting about books: engaging in book talk
- presenting and sharing book reviews
- planning favourite meals from recipe books and take away menus
- playing games where reading is an integral skill, such as Top Trumps.

The children love sharing their reading experiences, especially recommending books and having books recommended to them; it really makes them feel that **their opinions are valued**.

Aim 2 – Develop reading aloud in school

- **Story time takes place in every classroom at the end of the day in all classes.**
- All staff were asked to read a book aloud and record it.
- We made links with The University of Sheffield. Foreign students recorded traditional stories from their countries in their own language. We were allowed to share them and post some of them on our web page.

Reflections

During lockdown, we had little control over the reading that the children were doing. To generate RfP we had to engage the children. Our children seemed to lose confidence in reading during KS2. Perhaps we had inadvertently spoiled pleasurable reading through focus on teaching of reading, inhibiting *'the freedom to wonder, question, and enjoy material beyond their reading abilities'* (Wadsworth, 2008: 1; see also Fisher et al., 2004; Childress, 2011; Trelease, 2013; Cremin et al. 2014:94).

Reading aloud was key to keeping the children engaged with books during this unprecedented time. We knew from the questionnaires that most of the children preferred to read at school. Reading aloud to them at home was a way to still affect them.

The Teachers as Readers research (2009, 2014) showed that reading aloud prompted the children's affective engagement and created a class repertoire of 'texts in common' to discuss. Evidence shows that *'when children are read aloud to, they are 'enveloped' in a risk-free learning environment that 'removes the pressure of achievement and the fear of failure, allowing the freedom to wonder, question, and enjoy material beyond their reading abilities'* (Wadsworth, 2008:1; Fisher et al., 2004; Childress, 2011; Trelease, 2013) as cited in Cremin et al., 2014. All teachers recorded themselves reading books and posted it on ClassDojo and the school website. This created a library of read alouds reinforcing a sense of community whilst we were separated. We developed this further. We asked the children to film themselves reading aloud at home. Some children enjoyed and took part in this but not all. We started to recommend books to the children at home and deliver them to their doors. We followed up the recommendations during our welfare calls which generated more children becoming engaged with this. We followed the advice of Michael Rosen in his poem, *A Child*:

A child
a book

a read
a chat.
This is the way the mind grows.
Not with a test
but a tale.



Pictures sent by the children of them reading at home and the books we had sent from school.

During a weekly Zoom, whole school assembly, we were able to share the enthusiasm for reading that was building in school with the children at home. We had a queue of children volunteering to read out loud in the assemblies, some even read from home.

- Children have recorded themselves reading at home and posted on ClassDojo.
- Children volunteered to read the story during assembly.
- A Masked Reader took place in World Book Week. Using filters, the staff recorded themselves reading a section of a book. What was the book and who was that behind the mask? **This created a dialogue between families at home.** Interestingly, some children who didn't recognise the book were able to narrow down the options by know the preferences of the teacher.

Aim 3 – Develop knowledge of the children's reading preferences to build a community of learners

- All staff identified 2 target children to observe and engage with as readers. They were asked to consider their reading habits; how they read, what are the obstacles that stop them from reading? What interests them? The purpose was to entice our reluctant readers, to find a book, genre or space to develop a love of reading in these 'hard to reach' readers. By talking to these children and observing them, staff were able to find out and respond to their individual needs as readers.
- We developed the use of social media to connect with families. A RfP section was developed on the school website. Posts have been made on the school Facebook and Twitter accounts. We also used ClassDojo to connect with our families.
- Every teacher had a trolley displaying their recommended reads. These are the special books recommended by the teacher, identifying just the right book for each child. In order to make this relevant, teachers needed to find out about each of their readers and know the texts they were including in their trolley. Teachers were required to develop their subject knowledge.
- Children write reviews of the books they have read – *if they choose* - and recommend books to other readers. This worked in two ways: they recommended for specific children that they know and also for people who like specific genres.
- FerhamFest – our own small reading festival.

- The Ferham Football Tournament – here the children in KS2 followed the author Tom Palmer creating the story around the Euros football competition. To celebrate, we had tournament between classes that shared the same yard bubble to be Covid friendly. The children read and chatted about books in between matches.
- We joined in The Summer of Reading and held a [Booknic](#). The children viewed authors and storyteller telling a story with a picnic. These social reading events helped children to see the adults around them as readers, engaging with them in the act of reading.
- Lockdown [Reading Treasure Hunts](#) took place.
- Children were encouraged to have more input into the class texts.
- The right to stop reading. No children were forced to finish a book if they did not like it.
- In some classrooms, waiting lists for books were set up.

Reflections

From the initial surveys, we knew that usually teachers did not regularly discuss with their class which texts they chose to read to them. We wanted our school to be a reading community. We were modelling reading aloud and affecting the children positively; next we needed to develop reciprocity in the classrooms for the children to feel and see their voices and opinions mattered. Now the teachers are changing their pedagogies to ensure they are LIST – Learner led, Informal, Social and with Texts that tempt (Cremin, T., 2019).

In April, FerhamFest was introduced to support the teachers in finding out about their target children; we held a reading festival to span over 3 weeks.



The strap line, ‘things that make you go hmmm’ was intended to explore the impact different books can have on the reader. The teachers undertook a new [book blanket](#) with their classes each week.

A selection of books were chosen and different activities were available to the children. The activities included:

- book blankets that were different genres
- focused talk: for example:
 - a) find a book which you like from the appearance of the cover
 - b) find a book with a fact you don’t think anyone else knows
 - c) find a book containing a poem with an eye-catching title
 - d) find a book with a subject you’re interested in
 - e) find a book that you think will make you either laugh or think
- time to explore and chat about the books.



RfP research has found that avid readers have a high self-motivation to read whereas reluctant readers will avoid reading. This event generated ideas to motivate the reluctant readers by engaging them in informal talk and social activity around books. To further this, some teachers started the event by wrapping the books with a personal message to a child; our teachers now knew their readers, and our children wanted to read specially recommended books. The relationship was reciprocal.

Review

During June 2021, the staff and children were asked to complete the surveys again. Since the first questionnaires, we have had some staff leave and three teachers start maternity leave, so there was a smaller range of data. The new staff that had started have not completed the surveys to ensure as much integrity as possible.

Aim 1 – Develop knowledge of children’s literature with all staff

This time, when asked to identify children’s authors the answers were much more varied.

- Eighteen different authors were named by seven staff members which is proportionately better, a 50% increase.
- Of those, five authors were repeated and famous authors. This was 27% of the answers, whereas previously it was 61%.
- Eighteen different picture book authors were recorded and only two were repeated, famous authors (11%). Previously it was 61%.
- Five poets were named but by several staff. This could reflect the poetry books available in school. In September, 68% of staff replied with no comment, and this was now 29%.

The staff reported that they are becoming more knowledgeable about children’s literature. Although we have not been able to use the school library, staff have kept interest alive by collecting books for classrooms. They feel that their strengths in the classroom reading communities are recommending books; talking about books informally with children and having a better knowledge of newer picture books.

Evidence of Impact

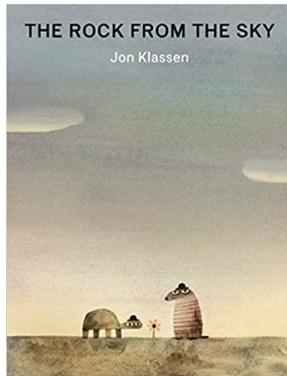
Laura Robinson HLTA

The ethos in school has changed massively! In Y3 and Y4 there has been such a positive impact on children and staff. Staff are recommending books to the children and now the children are recommending books to the adults!

Ferham... are keen to promote a love of reading... staff training is broadening their knowledge of children's literature.

Ofsted, March 2021

CS – teacher - from WhatsApp group chat



His new book arrived today 🤩 i love this guy. It is brilliant and very funny just like his other books 😄😄

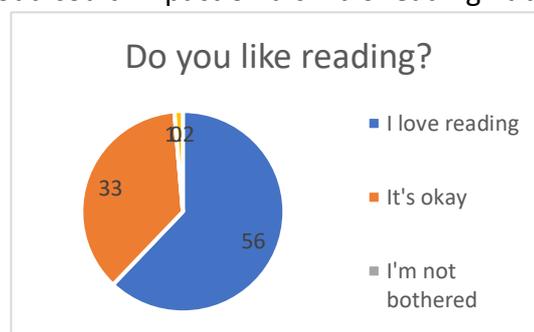
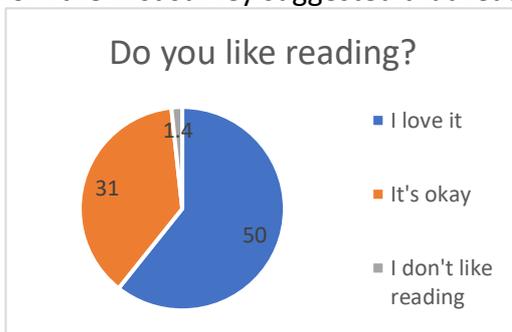
Areas to Develop

Poetry

- Baskets of poetry books in all classrooms. Currently there is not enough choice in school, and this is hindering knowledge and enjoyment of poets and their work. Stock new poetry collections, for example the [CLIPPA](#) prize winners and shortlisted books.
- Identify poems linked to teaching themes and include. For example, themes around food could include *Hotdog* by Joseph Coelho.
- Monthly genre events to entice and expand staff knowledge of children's literature and impact on children's choices in class communities.
- When library visits resume, staff can choose a book with the class to become part of the read alouds.

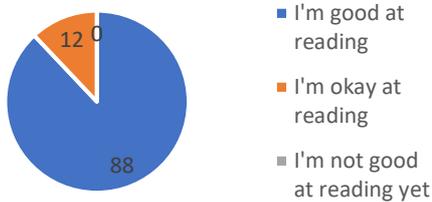
Aim 2 – Develop reading aloud in school

Data from the first survey suggested that reading aloud could impact on a child's reading habits.

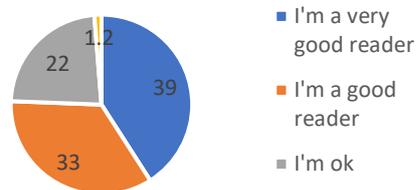


This time the amount of children who loved reading in KS1 increased by 10%. In both key stages, the number who considered reading to be ok increased slightly too. However, the number who said they disliked reading increased in KS2 by 4%.

KS1 - Are you a good reader?



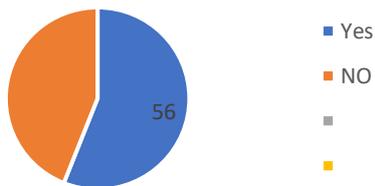
KS2 - Are you a good reader?



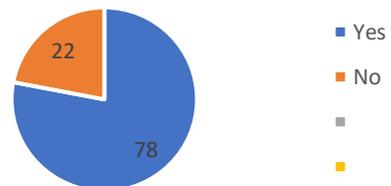
The data collected in KS1 was almost identical. However, KS2 showed a significant boost in the number of children who now felt more confident readers.

- I'm a very good reader increased by 13%.
- I'm a good reader increased by 13%.
- I'm okay dropped by 18%.
- I'm not a very good reader dropped by 1%.

KS1 - Does anyone read aloud to you at home?



KS2 - Does anyone read aloud with you at home?



A surprising result, was to find that the amount of children who said that they were read aloud to at home, dropped significantly in KS1 and rose sharply in KS2.

- KS1 dropped from 90% to 56%.
- KS2 increased from 57% to 78%.

This data is encouraging but it must be noted that this has been an extraordinary year. Home schooling during a pandemic could well have impacted in both sets of data. Equally it could be argued that as the KS2 children are feeling more confident reading aloud due to the increase in reading for pleasure; they may be affecting the reading communities within their homes.

Evidence of Impact

- All classes are reading aloud in literacy lessons every day and for pleasure during story time across school. 55% of children said that they were read to everyday with a further 28% saying several times a week.
- Children in KS2 are now reading complete books in literacy.
- The children are more confident to read aloud and want to take part in reading aloud sessions.
- Confidence in the ability to read has significantly increased KS2. 13% of pupils in KS2 now report they are good readers.
- Of the KS2 children asked if they liked their teachers to read aloud to them in story time, 72% said that they loved it.
- Teachers have noted an improvement in spelling and vocabulary use. More children can talk about several books not just one.

I love reading because I can use my imagination when I read.

B in Y4

I love reading because it's like a TV in your head.

Z in Y4

I love it when Miss reads out loud... it makes me feel safe, warm and sleepy.

P in Y6

These comments demonstrate that children are responding positively to the approaches we have employed. They enjoy reading and are recognising how it affects them.

Areas to Develop

- Over the summer, teachers are going to take part in The Reading Agency and Open University's [Teachers' Reading Challenge](#).
- Books recommendations in staff meetings will continue. Developing teachers' knowledge of children's literature must be an ongoing focus.
- It's important that monthly reading assemblies with recommended reads from the staff and children continue. These help to bind our community and demonstrate how we are all readers.

Aim 3 – Develop knowledge of the children's reading preferences to build a community of learners

We have tried many things in isolation (class bubbles) in this area due to the pandemic. We hope that next year we can reopen the library and have movement around school.

Evidence of Impact

- The *gifts that keep on giving* have had a huge impact in school. It introduced staff and children to new authors and books. It generated many book recommendations and much book talk.
- The children love to recommend books to their friends. They present their reviews to the class.
- The children are exploring and enjoying the freedom of the right to stop reading. They are beginning to understand the choices they can make as readers. We can now begin to explore the other [Rights of the Reader](#) (Pennac, D., 1992).
- All year groups were encouraged to read and enjoy picture books. Interestingly, the children in Y6 no longer see them as 'babyish'; they love them.
- Many children used to be reluctant to read aloud but now children want to try and sign up to read aloud in class and assemblies.
- A donation of books was made by a TA for Eid as she recognised the importance that books can make on a child's future.



The Child's Voice

Averse readers
Low intrinsic motivation,
High avoidance



Meet P

I am an EAL learner.

I find reading hard but I've never really tried.

I was surprised (and delighted) to find that I can read.

I am enjoying reading now and I'm achieving more in all lessons.

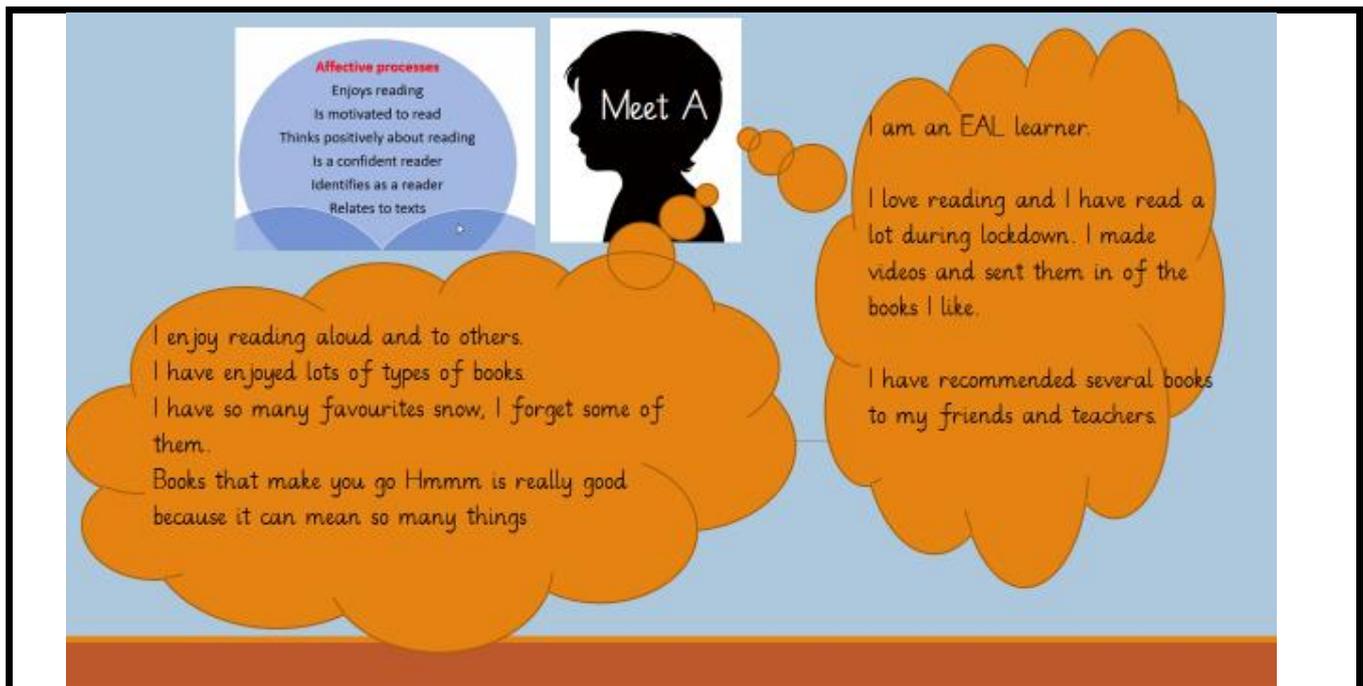
I have started to complete tasks.

I have chosen a graphic novel and a Horrid Henry book.

I only ever read at school.

I like to read with an adult

I love it when the teacher reads at the end of the day, it's so nice.



It is fair to say that the pandemic has hindered this objective the most. Although back in school, the strict bubbles have halted even the normal school activities, such as assemblies. The onus has been on the classroom staff to build their reading communities through the approaches, including those described in this case study. The Teachers as Readers research states that, *‘teachers will wish to employ a mixture of tools to get a rounded picture of a few children, ascertaining differences in their RfP over time’* (Cremin et al., 2014) and I’ve seen staff do this in many innovative ways over the course of the project year.

R in Y5

I just want to read... I like to read with the teachers.

Areas to Develop

When school returns to normal activities, post-Covid, we will have more opportunities to read aloud in different ways:

- reading buddies – across year groups
- reading assemblies with recommended reads
- reading breakfasts – inviting parents into school to share reading with their children
- reading suitcases, to take the library outside.

Our long-term dream would be to get funding for teaching adults to read. If we can engage our parents, the impact for the children would be amazing. To succeed and change reading habits in school we must develop *‘reciprocal and interactive reading communities’* (Cremin et al., 2014).



Our shared dream is to have a reading prize system with a vending machine where children can choose a new book for their prize. We have started to raise funds by selling books in school.

What Have We Learned?

At Ferham, we had taught *reading skills* rigorously, but the children were not engaged in books. What we had not taught or modelled until this year was how to enjoy books and how to take pleasure in reading. We have learned that to this, we need to build a reciprocal reading community led by reading role models. Just like anything else that we learn to do, it has to be exemplified. It seems clear now. Where reading is enjoyed, it is associated with Reading for Pleasure. We have started to change reading habits in school and are looking forward to building on this and embedding more RfP pedagogies and continuing to develop our knowledge of children's literature and children as readers in the future.