

Reading, relationships and teacher repertoire

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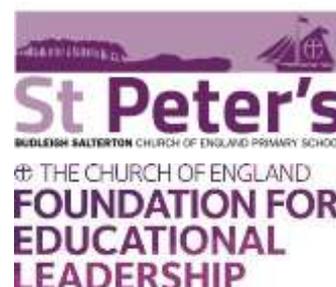
Submitted – 2021 Farshore RfP Awards - Whole School Category

St Peter's CoE Primary School

Budleigh Salterton, Devon

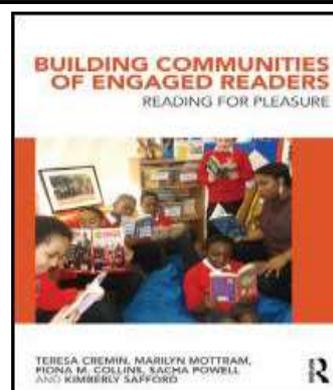
<https://www.st-peters-school.org.uk/>

Project completed as part of CoEPQH



OU Research inspiration and rationale

For many years at St Peter's CoE Primary School, Budleigh Salterton, we took pride in good reading results. They were good, but were rarely great. We had been a part of several projects and initiatives to re-energise reading, we had good quality books, and We are based in a town with a prominent annual Literary festival and a Library, but we still struggled to be great. It soon became apparent that the problem centred on the school's absence of a strong reading for pleasure culture. Sadly, our story is not unique.



Opening of the new School Library and Simon James at the Budleigh Literary Festival

In 2008, Teresa Cremin surveyed 1,200 primary teachers from 11 English local authorities and asked them to name five authors, poets and picture fiction creators. Whilst 73% of teachers stated that they did read for pleasure, the research revealed “they have limited and limiting repertoires of children’s authors, poets and picture fiction creators and rely upon childhood favourites and ‘celebrity’ authors”. Subsequent research revealed that this is a stubbornly persistent issue within education. Last year our own staff survey revealed a similar picture at St Peter’s, hence my Church of England NPQH reading project was born.

Babcock School Library Service also supported this work, in particular Nicola Cowling, with whom we had an excellent working relationship. Being professionally supported helped us start this project.

Aims

Our staff had, and continue to have, good relationships with their pupils, but in many cases connections and relationships were not being developed through reading, including reading for pleasure. Staff knowledge of children's literature was a limiting factor in developing reading relationships and fostering a reading for pleasure culture. Furthermore, knowledge of what children were reading was limited, the status of reading for pleasure had been reduced by other curricular pressure and there was very limited evidence of informal book talk.

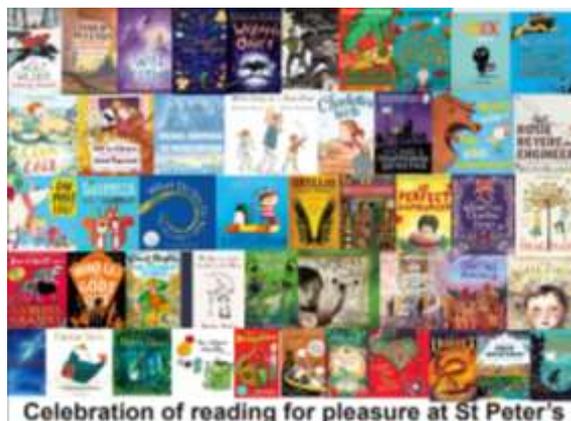
As a leader, and with the support of our Governing Body, I began a project, supported by the Open University's Teachers as Readers (TaRs) which focussed primarily on the following areas:

- *Considerable knowledge of children's literature and other texts*
- *Knowledge of children's reading practices*
- *As Reading Teachers: teachers who read and readers who teach*
- *A reading for pleasure pedagogy which includes:*
 - *Reading aloud*
 - *Informal book talk, inside-text talk and recommendations*

Outline

Teachers who read, readers who teach: Developing teacher knowledge of contemporary children's literature

This is a key active ingredient in terms of developing a reading for pleasure culture. There are no shortcuts. We agreed school reading expectations for teachers (Upper KS2 teachers must read at *least* one book every half-term - with the quantity of books increasing for preceding years/phases). We dedicated staff meeting time each half-term to share and discuss our reading, make recommendations to each other and just enjoy books.



Celebration of books read by staff within a term.

Modelling reading, including reading for pleasure to the class and reading preferences.

Wider school opening in June 2020 focused on wellbeing as part of recovery, all classes were expected to have a daily story to listen or be part of. Whilst I acknowledge this is not a 'revolutionary' action, it had fallen at the wayside with inconsistent approaches across the whole school. Teachers were supported in terms of timetabling.



The influence that teacher have on creating culture and class reading in KS2

Teachers were encouraged to focus their attention and 'hold certain pupils in mind' when reading themselves, or thinking about book selections/recommendations. Teachers carefully selected or sought professional advice regarding book choice for these pupils. Teachers developed their confidence making book recommendations.

During lockdown, we created virtual libraries with books read aloud by staff.



Rowan Class and Cedar & Sycamore Virtual Library

Books were delivered to the homes of pupils. Books could be requested via Google Classroom. This scheme was so popular that we ran out of books. Our close relationship with Budleigh Library enabled us to bulk borrow books to complement our stock. Whole classes began issuing books to all pupils in their classes. Staff took ownership of reading for pleasure and selected books which would engage their readers – clear evidence of the strength of reading relationships.



Weekly book deliveries earned me the nickname 'Postman Pat'; ordering books during lockdown/restricted library access; working with Budleigh Library

A whole school spine was created to reflect the breadth of literature available, diversity and representation. The spine was designed in such a way as to facilitate opportunities for teachers take ownership and select and read their own book choices too.

Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Reading Spine 1	[Book 1]	[Book 2]	[Book 3]	[Book 4]	[Book 5]	[Book 6]
Reading Spine 2	[Book 1]	[Book 2]	[Book 3]	[Book 4]	[Book 5]	[Book 6]
Reading Spine 3	[Book 1]	[Book 2]	[Book 3]	[Book 4]	[Book 5]	[Book 6]
Reading Spine 4	[Book 1]	[Book 2]	[Book 3]	[Book 4]	[Book 5]	[Book 6]
Reading Spine 5	[Book 1]	[Book 2]	[Book 3]	[Book 4]	[Book 5]	[Book 6]
Reading Spine 6	[Book 1]	[Book 2]	[Book 3]	[Book 4]	[Book 5]	[Book 6]

Reading Spines

Within reading time, teachers have been encouraged to model their own reading preferences, i.e. openly discuss likes and dislikes; interests; to express curiosity, awe and wonder; discuss emotional responses and viewpoints; our habits as a reader and our range of reading material.

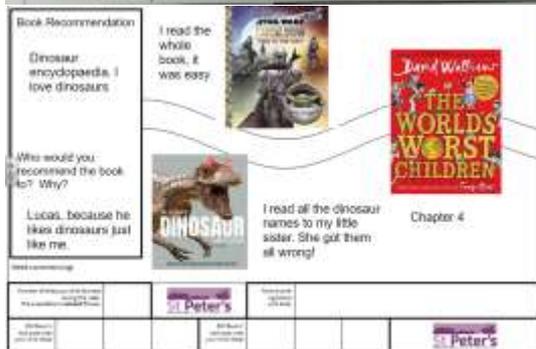
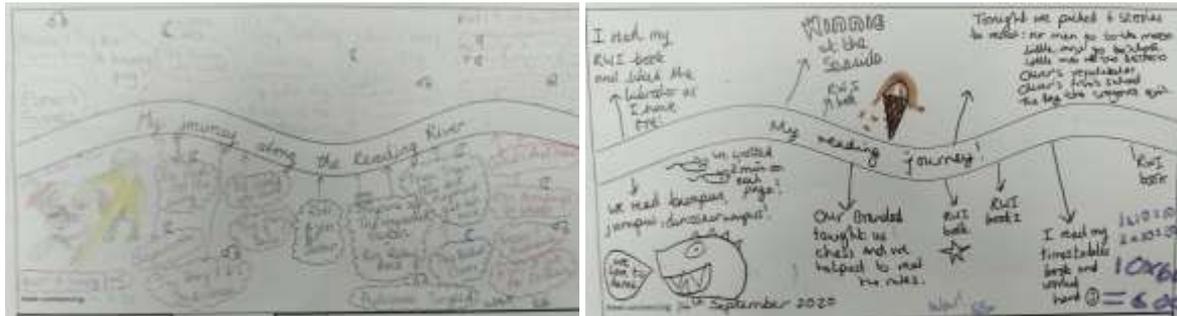


Discussing reading and reading preferences; Library stock shared using YouTube; Books and book talk via Zoom

Visibly valuing reading in all forms and developing a reading culture

We replaced the traditional reading logs which felt incongruous with our desire to develop a reading for pleasure culture. The new Reading River celebrates all reading across the week. Pupils are encouraged to draw images, give books ratings/reviews and to be creative.

We wanted all staff and families to celebrate all reading, including non-fiction, poetry, graphic novels, audio books, e-books, songs and song lyrics, rhymes and nursery rhymes, magazines, sports programmes, Top Trump cards, blogs and even road signs, board game instructions, baking recipes and take away menus! *All* reading counts in the Reading River.



Reading Rivers (paper format and digital versions)

Impact:

“This book is really good” Child who had been previously identified for low affective processes and behaviours. The book is ‘When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit on our Reading Spine.

“I have a child in Reception who often feels anxious to join in with play. She finds comfort in finding stories that are familiar to her in the classroom – I always make sure they are available. This has helped her to join in with friends by reading to other Reception children who are in awe of her reading talent.” Reception teacher who focused on empathy through reading

“Boy X is asking me to listen to him read on Friday afternoons, during choosing time. Boy X has really improved in his confidence and self-esteem.” Year 1/ 2 Teacher -child who had been previously identified for low affective processes and behaviours and cognitive processes.

“Children are doing more reading at home as a result.” Year 6 teacher - Reading Rivers

“There is now more emphasis placed on learning new language in all subject areas. The extra time we have for reading in class has meant we can give it the emphasis it needs.” Year 6 teacher

“We read ‘Shifty McGifty and Slippery Sam’ as a class. Lots of children enjoyed it and started to order the other books from the library.” Year 3 teacher modelling reading and inspiring independent reading.

“Boy X wanted to read a book about ADHD to the class because he wanted his friends to understand his ADHD. The class listened attentively and then asked questions – it was a beautiful moment of empathy development through reading initiated by a child.” Year 3 teacher

“I have recently had success with two pupils by introducing them to a different author. Both children have previously found reading a trial. They have both reported really enjoying reading their books and are asking for a new book on a more frequent basis.” Key Stage 2 HLTA

“They asked me if they could miss swimming so that they could read their joke book instead”
Year 5 teacher recommended books to a child who had been previously identified for low affective processes and behaviours.

Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

I have discovered the ‘magic’ key is for teachers to be able to recommend the right book, to the right pupil, at the right time. The impact of increased knowledge of children’s literature is not fully realised without knowledge of the reading preferences of pupils. Knowledge of reading preferences is not fully realised without knowledge of when to recommend a book. Are they ready in terms of their reading skill? Are they ready to take a risk and embrace a new author or explore a less familiar genre? Success is achieved when staff have excellent relationships with all pupils.

The TaR research has helped create a significant change in the type of relationship between teacher and pupil throughout the school, not just their class.

I feel proud to work in a school where teachers:

- Have established reader relationships and have encouraged pupil-to-pupil and pupil-to-teacher book talk;
- Incorporate accessible books into continuous provision to encourage deeper exploration of books;
- Encourage pupils to read a diverse range of books, poetry and non-fiction.
- Have diversified the range of texts on offer, including access to graphic novels;
- Actively seek advice and book recommendations to meet the need/preferences of pupil and that this is reflected in the book stock in their classrooms.
- Are using texts to develop empathy and address specific needs.
- Are redefining with children what it means to be a reader.



Books, including phonetically decodable books, in continuous provision.



Investing in social reading spaces; Staff book choices alongside the Reading Spine; Diversifying text types in the classroom.

Reflections on impact the TaRs research has on future plans

Next academic year, we aim to:

- To develop our reading communities, specifically parental and library involvement which has been compromised due to the impact of Covid-19.
- To develop physically engaging environments which tempt children into texts, offer spaces to relax, browse, and read for pleasure across the whole school.
- Inspired by the SLA 'Reading Science for Pleasure', to develop non-fiction reading (valued, modelled and well resourced) with a focus on Science.

Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on my leadership: Hope

“However dark & difficult things get in the world, we have to help kids imagine a better world. And that’s what children’s books do. So keep reading, sharing, teaching. Keep helping them fall in love with reading. And keep on giving them HOPE.”

S. F. Said, multiple award winner Children’s author

(Varjak Paw, The Outlaw Varjak Paw)

I have selected these words because I believe **hope** is what is most needed right now.

What are my hopes for 2021? I hope that staff continue to develop their knowledge of contemporary children's literature and continue to model, value and celebrate reading, in all its forms. Secondly, pupils and staff further develop their nurturing reading relationship. Pupils have lots of opportunities to read and listen to books which broaden their horizons, represent them, transport them to 'dangerous places', challenge them, inform them and inspire them.

Within my leadership journey I aim to fully utilise the Open University's (TaRs) research in my journey to Headship. I hope other leaders can learn from this project and apply it to their school provision too.

Word Count: 1499