

Dragging a fossil into the Digital Age! (or using technology to continue Book Talk during lockdown)

Sara Lednor
@SaraJayneLednor

Submitted – 2021 Farshore RfP Awards – School Reading Champion



I am currently English Subject Lead and Reading Champion at New Ash Green Primary School, a two form entry Primary School in Kent. All aspects of reading were identified as a next step in our last inspection in 2017 and are a key part of our School Goals document.

Quality of Education

1. Reading Strategy

To ensure consistent implementation of the English Reading curriculum in school to enable children to know more, remember more and understand more. To provide further opportunities for all pupils to have access to a wide range of quality texts, including classics, and regular opportunities to read for information, knowledge and pleasure across the curriculum to ensure a culture of reading.

2. Embed the Curriculum

Children will access a broad and balanced curriculum applying the core curriculum values in their learning. The teachers will be using the progression in skills and the knowledge organisers

3. Implement the Recovery Curriculum

Implement the Recovery Curriculum – the balance between what to learn and how to learn best. After lockdown implement 'The Journey Project' and the reintegration and assimilation of pupils and staff into full education

Our school strives to be a Reading School where children want to read for pleasure.

OU Research inspiration and rationale

One of the recommendations from the Teachers as Readers project (Cremin et al, 2014, UKLA) was the need for a Reading Community that is both reciprocal and interactive, and in particular in relation to the way children's reading practices have changed in the twenty-first century. The human interaction element of reading and the connections made when people all read the same text is an important part of the experience. During lockdown children relied more on technology for education and reading – but this removed the social element, the 'book talk'. Research has shown that children need to be aware of what others are reading to be 'active participants in the shared social experience' of reading. The National Literacy Trust (Clark and Picton, July 2020) showed that children were reading more during lockdown, so I was looking for ways of ensuring that the shared, social aspect of reading could continue whilst we were not together in school.

Aims

- To continue to ensure that reading was a reciprocal and interactive experience.

- The need to provide children with a safe way of discussing books when in lockdown.
- To ensure children and adults could continue to recommend books to each other and to take part in 'Book Talk'
- To show others in our community reading and enjoying books.

Outline

As lockdown began and only a handful of children were in school, it became clear that the social aspect of the shared enjoyment of reading was going to have to change. It became clear that if I was to continue to interact with the children about their reading as Reading Champion, I would need to enter the digital world myself. As I am also Online Safety Lead, I had to also make sure that this was in a way that was safe for the children. We began to use Purple Mash to set work during the first lockdown as this was something that the children were familiar with. Within the website there is the facility to create a Blog that is only available to children within our school. I thought that this might be a way to interact with the children about their reading and for them to continue to recommend books to each other.



To ensure that books and discussion were appropriate to the ages of the children, I set up a blog for year 3 & 4 and a separate one for year 5&6. The first entry introduced me and the purpose of the blog.

[Happy New Reading Year!](#)

Mrs Lednor

05/01/2021

Good morning and welcome to the Bramleyham reading blog.

The idea is that this is a place where we can continue our love of reading for pleasure. Maybe you have finished a book that you have enjoyed and think others would enjoy too. Write a review and then others will see it.

Maybe you are stuck for an idea for what to read next..ask on here and you might get some good suggestions. Tell us what sort of books you enjoy, and we might be able to help.

I will set some challenges and questions, but it really is a space for you to talk about your love of reading.

To start off:

What book did you get for Christmas?

I received The Creature Keeper by Damaris Young and I post a review when I finish it.

Have a great day and stay safe.

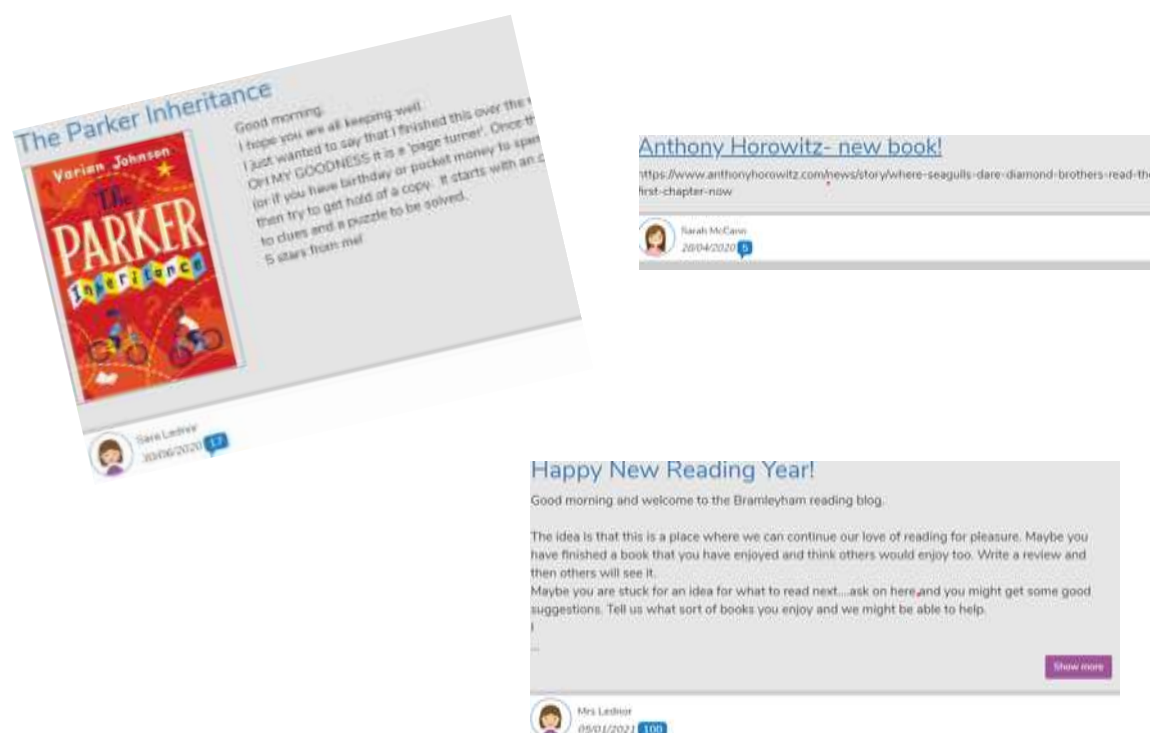
Mrs Lednor

As the time away from school went on, I explored ways of allowing the children to continue to hear stories read to them and found that the school Vimeo account was perfect for this. The wider school community were invited to record themselves reading a book, email it to school and then it was uploaded to our school account (that can only be accessed using a password).

Impact

The blog ran through all lockdowns – not just the first one, and posts attracted up to 100 comments on individual posts from children aged between the ages of 7 and 11. We swapped recommendations, shared where we liked to read and took part in quizzes set regularly. As my 'online skills' improved I set 'emoji book title' challenges and sent out links to digital books and online literary events that the children and their families could access. Staff also commented and added their thoughts so that the children began to have a sense of each other's reading and

messaged each other. They also saw their teachers as readers. Research shows that children's pleasure in reading is 'strongly advanced' within a network of people reading.



The Vimeo account also proved popular with recording extracts and whole stories as well as nonfiction and poetry. Parents were soon keen to contribute as well as current and past pupils and grandparents. In all we received 28 videos containing many hours of reading for the children to enjoy. This is in addition to staff reading to children on TEAMS several times a week.

Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

My Technological skills have improved beyond measure and, as Reading Champion at New Ash Green Primary school I feel that we were able to carry on our reading for pleasure as an interactive and reciprocal community. The children, staff, parents and grandparents were able to continue to enjoy 'Book Talk' despite being at home. Whilst I still prefer to hold and 'smell' a physical book, I will continue to explore technology as a way to keep up with the way that children are now accessing text and plan to look at Digital Reading Rivers to record how staff and children read online. I would also like to continue to add the Vimeo Digital Library and to find a way of children continuing to recommend books safely online.