

## St John Fisher Primary



### Context

St John Fisher is a single form entry Catholic Primary School. Faith is key to the ethos of the school and the aim is that all children feel 'happy, safe and loved'. The school sits in the middle of a housing estate, in the suburbs of Sheffield. Although some of the children live locally, the school is a location school so many children arrive by car and may not live within the immediate community. The socio-economic status of the pupils varies and therefore the exposure and accessibility to reading material is not consistent across cohorts. The school has a strong family feel and many generations will attend the school making it a tight knit community. People feel passionately about the school.

St John Fisher Catholic Primary school became a sponsored academy school on December 1 2013. When its predecessor school, St John Fisher Catholic Primary School, was judged inadequate by Ofsted in May 2013.

This school is an average-sized primary school. An average proportion of pupils speak English as their first language. Of those that do speak additional languages Polish is the most common and many children will attend Polish school at weekends to enable them to learn to read and write in Polish. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is also average. Pupils with families of African heritage have often formed strong support networks and often attend the same church.

There is a below average proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are supported by the pupil premium. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above average. Pupils are supported by a range of support staff and these provide a vital element to the engagement of the pupils in promoting reading.

The school has a library that was decorated by the PTFA in 2014 and has recently been updated. There is an electronic booking system which, prior to Covid, was operated on a rota basis by one of the support staff every lunchtime. Pupils were encouraged to borrow books and there had been a drive to get parents to support this service before and after school. Since Covid this has not been possible.

The library is well stocked with fiction books though much of it now is older, non-fiction is less well stocked but the school has been left a legacy by a former teacher which is going to be used to update the library stock. Each class has their own reading corner which children can access.

### Explore

Prior to our engagement with the Reading for Pleasure (RfP) project, we struggled to show a clear and consistent approach as a school towards the promotion of recreational reading amongst our pupils. **The primary focus of our approach to reading in school was centred around the teaching of phonics and the development of reading fluency and comprehension. Pupils in KS2 engaged with teacher led reading activities but book talk varied in quality and frequency in different classes.**

As we entered the project, the full extent of RfP impact on children's life outcomes became clear, and **SLT and English leadership went about communicating the relevant statistics with staff. The general feeling among the school's English leaders was we were, at best, inconsistent across key stages and year groups in our approach to the promotion of RfP.**

As such, we began to collect initial baseline data, relating both to staff knowledge and practice, as well as to children's RfP attitudes.

#### Teacher's Review of Practice Survey

We asked staff to complete a survey of their own practice, in regard to RfP. The questions related to five key elements of teacher knowledge and practice: Teacher's knowledge of children's literature, children's reading practices, reading for pleasure pedagogy, the reading lives of teachers and the extent to which school and the children's homes form a reading community.

- Strengths:

Staff indicated that they considered themselves to have a strong knowledge of children's attitudes to reading in school.

Responses also indicated that children, typically, have the opportunity to read independently at school and they are allowed to choose what they are reading. Furthermore, children are regularly read to by teachers across the school.

- Areas for staff development:

It was clear that knowledge of children's literature was narrow, with many relying heavily on a small number of very well-known authors. Moreover, staff responses indicated that their knowledge of genre was limited and that most would benefit from wider reading of poetry, graphic novels, picture books etc. Staff did not consider themselves to have a good knowledge of children's reading habits outside of school, nor did many involve parents in the reading lives of their children. Finally, responses indicated that we did not have a school-wide culture of book discussion whereby informal conversations about books take place between teacher and pupil.

#### Children's RfP attitudes Survey

Following our staff survey, we conducted a whole school survey of the children. We aimed to determine children's attitudes towards reading, the types of books they enjoy, their perception of teacher's attitudes towards reading and their interaction with literature (both in school and at home).

- Strengths:

Typically, children enjoyed reading at home, and many children were read to aloud at home. Younger children, particularly, indicated that they enjoy reading and many could identify genres and specific books that they enjoy. Children in KS1 generally

had a positive view of themselves as readers, believing themselves to be good at reading and associating reading with pleasure.

- Areas for development:

Surveys indicated that there was a divide between children's attitudes to reading for pleasure in KS1 and KS2. For example, children in KS2 did not, to the same extent, hold positive views of themselves as readers, nor did they consider reading to be fun. This was in contrast to children in KS1. Moreover, older children did not, typically, read at home as frequently as younger children. Responses in reply to questions regarding children's perceptions of teachers as readers were very inconsistent, with many indicating that they did not believe teachers to be particularly passionate about literature. On the whole, children and teachers did not share a conversational relationship regarding literature. Finally, KS2 children particularly indicated that they did not have access to a wide enough genre of book, potentially a root cause of some children's apathy towards reading.

## Prepare

Our research indicated a positive correlation between positive RfP attitudes and children who have conversations with their teachers about books they have read. However, informal book talk, though evident in part, was certainly not ubiquitous throughout the school. Our findings also indicated that those teachers who have a wider knowledge of children's literature, typically share more informal RfP conversations with their pupils. **This finding was reinforced through professional conversations with staff, who suggested that their relative lack of knowledge dissuaded them from holding these informal conversations. Our research also suggested that this lack of staff knowledge, in part, impeded the projection of a positive RfP attitude towards their pupils.**

### Our targets for 2020-2021

Our aims were directly informed by our research. As such, we formed the following targets for the 2020-2021 academic year:

- Improve staff knowledge of children's literature:

We are aiming to increase staff knowledge of authors beyond the small pool that staff typically rely on, e.g., Julia Donaldson, Roald Dahl, Jaqueline Wilson etc. We also aim to increase knowledge of genre, as research indicated a lack of knowledge about poetry, graphic novels and picture books. Our rationale is that greater staff knowledge will result in an increase in informal book talk, as well as greater teacher confidence in promoting literature in school.

- Begin to engender a culture of informal book talk throughout school:

We decided to pursue the informal book talk pedagogy as a target as our research indicated that this was a particular area for development. The positive impact of an

informal book talk culture, as presented in RfP case studies and statistics, also encouraged us towards this target. Our ultimate aim is to engender a school-wide culture whereby informal conversations about books take place between pupils and pupils and adults. As a sub-target we aim to improve and increase the provision of reading books in both key stages, with a particular focus on purchasing contemporary texts from a diverse range of genres (see Priority 3).

- Create inviting outdoor reading areas so that children are tempted to read during break and lunchtime:

During our research, some members of staff expressed concern over the limited time during the school day allowing for RfP time. RfP research also directed us towards the utility of outdoor reading spaces. As such, we formed a target to create outdoor reading spaces, thereby utilising as much of the school day for RfP as possible.

### Our RfP action plan

- **Priority 1:** Enhance staff knowledge of children's literature and broaden staff awareness of different genres, so that they are equipped to raise profile of reading at SJF.

**Rationale:** Analysis of Teacher's Review of Practice indicates that staff's knowledge of children's literature is narrow, many relying heavily on a small number of very well-known authors. Moreover, staff responses indicate that their knowledge of genre is limited and that most would benefit from wider reading of poetry, graphic novels, picture books etc.

**Actions:** Staff to be provided with a new book (which reflects a contemporary and diverse approach to reading). Each staff member will be asked to read the book over the Christmas break and, on return to school, to provide a summary, opinion and general thoughts about their book at a staff meeting. Books then to be circulated around staff such that each member of staff has a good knowledge of a small but diverse range of new, modern books by the end of the academic year.

**Intended Outcomes:** Staff have greater knowledge of (modern) children's books and authors. Moreover, staff increase the breadth of their knowledge of children's lit genres e.g. poetry, picture books, graphic novels etc. Therefore, they are able to promote, recommend and discuss appealing books with the children in their class.

**Evidence of Impact:** We will survey staff again, as we did at the beginning of the project, to discern the impact of our actions on teacher knowledge. Impact should be such that changes are conspicuous. Staff (particularly RfP change team) will notice impact and R.MacInnes and H.Darken will regularly ask for staff feedback in order to monitor progress. We will track the impact of the action within our focus group of children.

- **Priority 2:** Create inviting outdoor reading areas so that children are incentivised to read during break and lunchtime.

**Rationale:** RfP English Leaders Session 2 (03.11.20) highlighted the utility of appealing reading areas for children. Indoor reading corners within classrooms have been tried before but with limited effect. The school day allows for limited recreational reading time, so break and lunchtimes are a potential source for RfP time. Installing reading spaces outdoors will facilitate this.

**Actions:** Sheltered reading environments and outdoor book storage to be installed in playground.

**Intended Outcome:** Children who want to read at break and lunchtimes, but are deterred due to no suitable reading environment, will have more opportunity to read. Also, some children who have previously showed little interest in reading at break and lunchtimes will find the outdoor reading area to be attractive, and so will be inclined to read.

**Evidence of Impact:** Evidence of impact will be clear from staff observing break and dinnertime behaviours. For more formal recording of evidence, daily tallies can quite easily be taken as could photographic evidence. We will track the impact of the action within our focus group of children.

- **Priority 3:** Children to have access to an increasingly modern and diverse range of books within school.

**Rationale:** Analysis of children's Reading for Pleasure survey responses indicated that many children have relatively narrow preferences in terms of genre. The vast majority of children chose story books as their preferred literature. Few children chose picture books, comics or non-fiction. This may be due to a lack of choice within school. New, modern, diverse books may encourage reluctant readers to read. An investment in quality non-fiction books may also tempt primary aged boys (who are typically more interested in non-fiction) to pick up a book.

**Actions:** A selection of new, modern children's books to be purchased for each year group.

**Intended Outcome:** Children who have previously shown little interest in reading for pleasure will, through increased range of quality fiction, have access to book-types and authors that appeal to them. Consequently, proportion of children at SJF inclined to read recreationally will increase.

**Evidence of Impact:** We will survey children in both key stages, as we did at the beginning of the project, to identify impact. Staff, who will increasingly engage in informal book talk, will be able to provide broad evidence of impact through their conversations with children. We will track the impact of the action within our focus

group of children.

- **Priority 4:** To engender a culture of informal ‘book talk’ amongst children and between children and adults at SJF.

**Rationale:** Staff responses to certain questions in the Teacher’s Review of Practice survey indicated that there is not a culture within our school that promotes recreational book discussion – neither between children nor between children and adults. For example, the most common answer to question 10 (On a scale of 1-6 how often do you encourage children to talk about texts during independent reading?) was 3, with a number of staff responding with 1 or 2. This suggests that children either are not encouraged to talk about texts they are reading independently or that they are done so infrequently. Responses to questions 20 and 21 (To what extent do you share your reading life with children in school?/How do you think children in your class view you as a reader) indicate that staff typically do not present an image to children of being passionate or interested in reading. Embedding a school-wide culture of book talk will reframe staff as interested and passionate readers.

**Actions:**

- i. Staff CPD to be delivered by R.MacInnes and H.Darken on the importance of book talk and methods by which it can be implemented in the classroom, i.e. Inside-Text Talk and Book Buzz approaches as described below on the RfP website.
- ii. Staff to action the CPD delivered. Class teachers to follow the ‘Inside Text-Talk’ approach, whereby the teacher encourages discussion of books at various times during the week , reads the blurb of books within school to encourage reading and acts as a role model to increase children’s inclination to discuss books.
- iii. Staff to action ‘Book Buzz’ approach, as explained through staff CPD. The Book Buzz approach encouraging excitement and discussion around a selection of books within class. This is achieved through the introduction of quality texts and the creation of ‘book borrowing sign-up sheets’ with which children can book to borrow a specific text. Please see example book borrowing sign-up sheets below.





**Intended Outcome:** Children throughout SJF to feel motivated and incentivised to recommend and discuss books with other children and adults, which will in turn encourage them to read for pleasure. Children will then benefit from the many advantages this brings.

**Evidence of Impact:** Evidence of impact should be apparent in responses to staff and children's surveys. We will track the impact of the action within our focus group of children. Change team to feed back to R.MacInnes and H.Darken on progress/difficulties. R.MacInnes and H.Darken to collect evidence of impact from regular monitoring/ speaking to class teachers.

What we want to achieve for our pupils

Our aim is to establish and sustain a RfP culture within our school, whereby maximum children are the beneficiaries of a positive attitude towards reading.

**Deliver**

**Intention: implementing our development plan and ongoing documentation of impact**

<i>Priority</i>	<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Reflection of effectiveness of strategies</i>	<i>Ongoing impact</i>	<i>Ideas to ensure sustainability</i>
<p><b>•Priority 1:</b> Enhance staff knowledge of children's literature and broaden staff awareness</p>	<p>Using staff CPD to engage staff in book talk about current books</p> <p>Providing staff with books that are expected to read and discuss with pupils.</p>	<p>Staff were given a book over the February half term holiday and also during the Easter break.</p> <p>Staff were then asked to review the books.</p>	<p>Staff on the whole feel more confident to talk about the books they have read with colleagues.</p> <p>Recommendations are also shared amongst other staff.</p>	<p>It is the school's intention to ensure that books are planned purchased so that book reviews are pre-planned for the next academic year.</p> <p>These books will</p>

<p><i>of different genres, so that they are equipped to raise profile of reading at SJF.</i></p>	<p><i>Sharing book reviews with parents on the school newsletter.</i></p> <p><i>Providing book reviews with pupils during staff assemblies.</i></p>	<p><i>Although there was not an overwhelmingly positive response staff did engage with the texts.</i></p> <p><i>There has been an effort to engage staff in book talk by asking them to provide a book review for the school letter. This has been a more positive response.</i></p>		<p><i>be shared with staff over the Summer holidays to encourage engagement from staff.</i></p>
<p><i>•Priority 2: Create inviting outdoor reading areas so that children are incentivised to read during break and lunchtime.</i></p>	<p><i>It is the school's intention to create reading spaces for pupils to use during playtime.</i></p>	<p><i>As of yet these have not been purchased. The money to pay for these is coming from a legacy fund and there has been a legal process that has been needed prior to the money being released. The school closure and lockdown has impacted on this.</i></p>	<p><i>Not seen yet.</i></p>	<p><i>There is a strong drive among reading leaders to ensure this opportunity is given.</i></p>
<p><i>•Priority 3: Children to have access to an increasingly modern and diverse range of</i></p>	<p><i>New books have been purchased for all classrooms and for all staff.</i></p> <p><i>A school WhatsApp group has been created to share book</i></p>	<p><i>There is an increased discourse amongst staff about books and how they fit in to the culture of their classroom.</i></p>	<p><i>More staff are sharing current books for their newsletter book reviews.</i></p> <p><i>Classroom reading areas have been</i></p>	<p><i>A significant investment is planned to ensure the book recommendations for the next academic year are planned ahead and that</i></p>

<i>books within school.</i>	<i>recommendations  Subject leaders have shared information about books that could be used within individual subjects to engage pupils and enhance learning.</i>		<i>enhanced by staff and more consideration is taken for displaying and promoting books.</i>	<i>teachers are able to talk with knowledge about the books.</i>
<i>•Priority 4: To engender a culture of informal 'book talk' amongst children and between children and adults at SJF.</i>	<i>Each class in KS2 have been given two books to create a 'book buzz' about.  KS1 children are provided with an opportunity to vote for the story shared at the end of the day.</i>	<i>Pupils are talking about books more frequently in class.  There is a drive to read the new books and a booking system has been organised. In KS1 children can verbalise why they may or may not prefer a book and talk about links to the book.</i>	<i>There are more children reading for pleasure around schools.</i>	<i>To maintain the book buzz strategy. Giving each class new books each term. To involve pupils in choosing the books moving forward.</i>

## **Review**

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

School data shows that there has been an improvement in attainment in pupils across the school but this was specifically notable in Y6.

Pupil surveys demonstrated that in KS2 there was greater engagement with texts and that pupils were keen to talk about a wider range of texts, with enthusiasm and passion. There was marker improvement in pupils in year 5 and 6 who were much were able to talk about the buzz book books and the new class texts demonstrating the impact that the project had on pupil engagement.

Staff showed an understanding of a wider range of authors and texts but there was still key members of staff who were leading the way and to further develop the impact of reading

for pleasure we want to consider how to ensure that all staff share the same enthusiasm. From learning walks it is possible to see how reading for pleasure has made an impact on the school environment. Books are more considerably displayed and there is a specific reading display in every classroom advertising a range of modern texts.

In key stage one staff have intent has led to pupils have more high quality conversations about texts. This has been encouraged by pupils having autonomy over the books they have read at the end of the day. Evidence of these conversations were documented by teachers and this deeper engagement led to staff being more enthusiastic about the texts they have available for pupils.

**Monitoring of the focus children by the group enabled staff to gather deep knowledge of barriers to reading for pleasure in pupils in the bottom 20%. Although it is possible to see behavioural changes within the case study pupils it has been harder to show evidence of impact on attainment especially with the impact of Covid on attendance and continuous learning. Many of the observations gathered have helped us understand how behaviour can impact deeply on pupils reading behaviours. Though there have been examples of positive change we also know that some of those habits are deeply engrained and it is important that we ensure all staff are aware of these factors. Thus we are planning to share our case study findings with the staff and ask all staff to choose a case study pupil in the next academic year. In addition we have found that some of the barriers to reading highlighted from the case studies were due to availability of reading materials and the range, specifically related to graphic novels and non-fiction. This is going to be a specific focus in the next academic year's school improvement plan and make links to the wider curriculum. Through the case studies we made we have highlighted a wider school issue relating to book availability in other subjects and we are planning a significant investment as a result.**

## **Sustain**

**Intention: review and plan for embedding implementation and impact in future years**

The project has really helped us to motivate staff and SLT to highlight the importance of reading in all pupils and the significant positive impact it can have on pupils. Viewing reading for pleasure as a social justice issue has really helped us to push the agenda with staff. In the past it has been easy to engage with pupils who are already interested in reading but the project has helped us to look deeper at those pupils who are not engaging and to consider what is inhibiting these pupils. The project has prompted us to reflect on why pupils are not reading for pleasure and how we can facilitate a positive change.

As a result of the project we have considered the range and quality of texts that are available to pupils. In addition we have really questioned how we can make the texts available more current and to challenge some staff to explore a wider range of texts.

The RFP model has been an excellent example of how to manage school improvement for a key area of learning. The process has enabled us to form a baseline view and then form an action plan to develop a change model. Throughout the process there has been times for reflection and evaluation which have enabled us to evaluate effectiveness. In addition we have used these staging posts to draw the staff together to reaffirm the key actions and to enthuse more reluctant members of the team. The end of the cycle has enabled us to reassess the impact of the project and measure any impact. Thus giving us areas for reflection and further development to drive the project forward. Key to the RFP journey is

that it is a constantly evolving model. As pupils develop and new authors become popular staff need to react positively to pupils reading habits and to ensure that they are developing their understanding of reading pedagogy to ensure they are effective and empowering reading teachers. Key to this message. is the core value that reading for pleasure is not just about school based attainment but about life changes and emotional wellbeing. Although this is a key Ofsted agenda and is a vital element of school improvement, there is also a moral imperative to ensure that pupils feel that 'reading is for them' and to provide a school environment that values all reading and provides an adult that can engage and enthuse.

In summary, we have formed the following objectives for the coming academic year, which we believe will help to sustain the momentum that the RfP has created this year:

- Continue to set reading expectations for staff each year.
- Continue to supplement class texts with high-quality, contemporary publications.
- Create inviting outdoor reading areas so that children are incentivised to read during break and lunchtime.