



# Everybody's Talking About Books

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# Context

- Avondale Park Primary School is a federated school with St Anne's Nursery
- Two form entry school in North Kensington from Nursery to Year 6
- Kensington & Chelsea borough
- 56% Pupil premium, 26% SEND, 66% EAL, 52% FSM & 89% from ethnic minority backgrounds
- Still hugely affected by the fire in Grenfell Tower, which occurred in 2017
- Many obstacles & challenges to engage children as readers & spark passion to read, including some parents who speak little or no English



**AVONDALE PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL**

*Dream, Believe, Achieve*



# OU Research inspiration and rationale

- Focus for the project: **Reading for pleasure (RfP) pedagogy** was the main focus for the project, as well as simultaneously **knowledge of children's literature** .
- Reading for pleasure is divided into 4 areas. I chose to focus on '**Book Talk**'.
- 'Thus a key impact of the classroom talk about texts was the shared understanding amongst children, between teachers and children, and amongst teachers, that reading is intrinsically worthy of discussion.' (**Building Communities of Engaged Readers: Reading for pleasure, 2014**)
- 'This encompassed planned time for reading aloud, independent reading, and book talk, 'inside-text talk' and recommendations, all in the context of a social reading environment. Such practice is dependent upon teachers' knowledge of texts and their children as readers and was seen to be effective in motivating young readers and developing their autonomy and desire.' (**Reading communities: why, what and how? 2019**)
- 'In order to disrupt Pedagogy of Poverty (PoP) and for children to reap the multiple benefits of reading for pleasure in low SES schools, the challenge of teaching in such contexts, particularly in a high accountability culture needs recognising and addressing. Furthermore teachers may need to be supported to reconsider the nature of reading in order to encompass children's volition and social interaction around texts in addition to proficiency.' (**Pedagogy for reading for pleasure in low socio-economic primary schools: beyond 'pedagogy of poverty'? 2018**)
- 'Whilst over 50% of children and young people said they "enjoyed reading" it's not the same for everyone, e.g. only 47.5% of children in receipt of FSM said they "enjoyed reading."' (**National Literacy Trust, 2021**)
- Book talk was vital to spark passion, interest and a reading community, however this had to stem from the teacher's own knowledge on literature & reading for pleasure. This is where my project had to begin with the teachers themselves.



# OU Research inspiration and rationale ctd.

TaRs found that in order to foster RfP effectively, teachers need to develop:

1. Considerable **knowledge of children's literature** and other texts
2. **Knowledge of children's reading** practice
3. A **reading for pleasure pedagogy** which includes:
  - Social reading environments
  - Reading aloud
  - Independent reading
  - Informal book talk, inside-text talk and recommendations
4. **As Reading Teachers:** teachers who read and readers who teach
5. **Reading communities** that are reciprocal and interactive. (from Cremin et al., 2014, above).

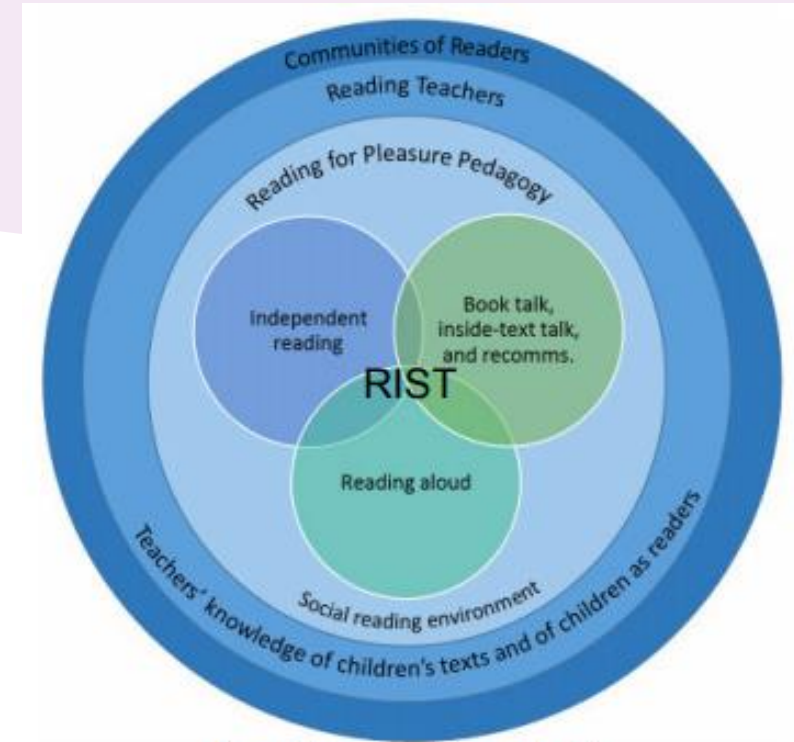


Figure 1: Research insights regarding the effective development of reading for pleasure (based on Cremin et al. 2014)

I kept in mind the The Reading for Pleasure Pedagogy (as seen above) the foundation of my project throughout the process. In order to develop a love of reading, the teachers would first have to be trained and introduced to research, pedagogy and high quality texts. All 3 areas of RfP, would be promoted through the process of the project, however book talk became a priority. This was due to lack of time given for this currently; story times sometimes dropped off the timetable, old & bold books were not engaging all children, lack of understanding of how to promote reading for pleasure and how to measure this. Overall, book talk was lacking & this was even evident in my class, where children were not confident in discussing books when asked simple questions or how to structure a simple answer.

# Aims

## Aims

- Develop staff's knowledge of children's literature to enable them to engage in meaningful book talk, make tailored recommendations and foster reading for pleasure.
- Informal book talk to become part of the school's culture in reading for pleasure.
- Improve our school's range of books available to children including books of diversity, new authors & a range of genres.

## Research aims are based on:

- 'Teachers realised that their growing knowledge of children's literature enabled them to join in such inside-text talk conversations with increased assurance and genuine engagement. Their knowledge also enabled them to make recommendations to children about what else they might find engaging to read. In many cases such recommendations became two-way as children also suggested books to their teachers.'
- 'Children were encouraged to talk to one another about their current reading and, over time, spontaneous child-led text talk also emerged.'

**(Building Communities of Engaged Readers: Reading for pleasure, 2014)**

# Outline Stage 1 - RfP within my own classroom

- Firstly, I trialed ideas with my own class to gather information about the children's knowledge of books.
- **A-Z author books**-children wrote a list of as many authors as they could in groups. As a result, I found children listed predominantly white men and many classic 'old & bold' authors, which mirrored my own A-Z. I knew it started with me & what I expose to the children influences their own knowledge.
- **Book Blankets**- Next, I created a book blanket to observe & listen to how my class interacted with the books & each other. For this, I used new texts, with a range of genres, as well as mixed in books we currently had that I knew were popular e.g. David Walliams texts. Subsequently, the children were able to spot 'classic' & celebrity authors they knew. Some children read the blurb & some children asked one another about their book. Most pupils were drawn to the title or front cover. However, I noticed that most children needed scaffolding when asked about their choice of book. Surprisingly, children were not interested in classics or celebrity authors. Lots of children were drawn to graphic novels, new chapter books, tactile picture books, non-narrative. This gave me a better understanding of what my class are interested in & their lack of confidence when discussing books.





# Outline Stage 1- RfP within my own classroom

## In class systems:

- **Weekly 3 new showcased books**-Each week I ensured 3 brand new books were showcased and still continue to be. On Mondays, I would read out the blurb and the books would be available for children to read in that week and going forward. It was a chance to bring special attention to a few at a time.
- **Bookmark reviews**-Children were given the opportunity to complete a bookmark review, which they could then slip into the book and leave for the next person to read.
- **Show and tell**-In class, children asked if they could bring books from home and share them, which developed into show and tell. The previous teacher had done this with them and I wanted to re-boot it. This gave children a chance to share books that were special to them at home.

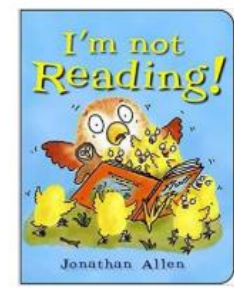
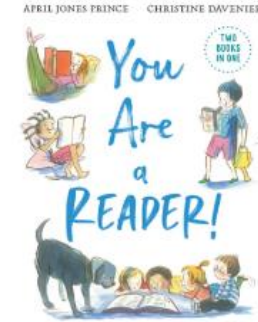
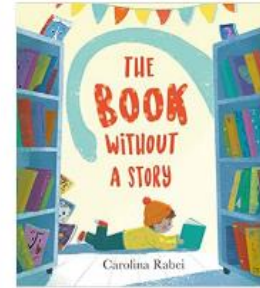
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# Outline Stage - Staff Training

- Secondly, I led a staff meeting centered around RfP. In this meeting, I read a book, gave time for teachers to share their own recommendations with each other. Afterwards, I shared staff development materials from the OUP RfP website to help staff understand what RfP is. Next, I shared award winning websites and the importance of exposing children to a variety of genres, authors and diverse texts. Even though this meeting was over Zoom, I tried to make it as interactive as possible giving staff the A-Z authors challenge in their teams, creating book blankets for them to explore, reading materials such as: Reading Communities & Documenting RfP from OUP. Overall, it was a successful meeting & staff commented that they felt more secure in understanding what RfP is. I asked teachers to write down take aways to trial in their own classroom e.g. book blankets, reading rivers & time for independent reading.

## Staff meeting



Grab a cup of tea and start reading the article

**Reading communities:**  
why, what and how?



## Agenda:

- \*Book recommendations
- \*Reading for pleasure
- Pedagogy of reading
- Why and how to implement?

**LITTLE MISS BOSSY**  
By Roger Hargreaves





# Outline Stage 3 - New books

## New books-

- Teachers used the recommended award-winning websites to find new texts.
- Our Amazon Wish list was being regularly used to buy new texts.
- New genres of books were introduced in classrooms.
- Classes bought packs of diverse books which included: cultural diversity, physical disabilities, different types of families, neurodiversity.
- Book blankets were used across the school to introduce new books.
- Children were developing reading rivers of their reading journey's across the school.





# Outline Stage 4 - Books of the Month

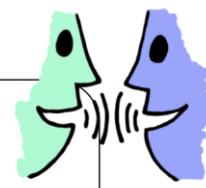
- Books of the Month was launched to share new high-quality texts across the school.
- Reading Heroes, who applied for the position in Year 4, read 3 books per month and reviewed them. These reviews have been shared in assemblies and pre-recorded videos across the school.
- Each month has a different theme e.g. Anti-bullying week, graphic novels, Christmas, Black history Month, chosen by Headship.
- The display in school, allows all children/classes to 'sign out' a book of the month and a review scrapbook gives children the opportunity to leave thoughts, comments and reviews.
- Books shared on Twitter & some authors have liked and re-tweeted.



# Outline Stage 5 - Develop Book Talk


- The fifth stage in this project was to support children in talking about books.
- 3 sentence-starter posters for each phase of Primary were shared with staff to support children in class.
- Children could then refer to it during informal book talk opportunities, sharing book recommendations to the class or others.
- Teachers could then model using these if needed by their classes.

EYFS



I am reading ....  
I like this book because.....  
I dislike this book because....  
My favourite character is.....

KSI



I am reading .... because....  
My favourite part is....  
This book reminded me of.....  
After reading, I felt....

I am reading .... because....  
My favourite part is....  
This book reminded me of...  
The theme of the book is...  
I pictured in my head....  
I like this author because....  
I was surprised when...  
After reading, I felt....

KS2

Talk partners



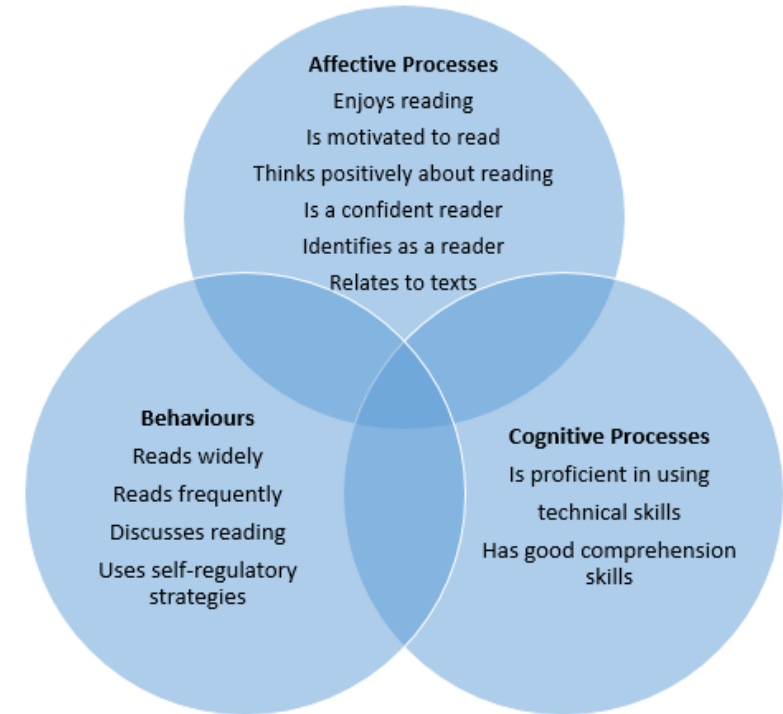
A part that disappointed me was...  
I was confused when....  
Some words I am not sure of are...



# Impact

- Through observations & talking to children, not only in my class but across the school from EYFS to Year 6, more children are more confident in discussing books, what they like to read and about what they don't like to read. I have been reading lead for 11 years and this has made the most impact in my discussions over the years with children.
- The attitude towards books and reading within my own class has seen a massive shift. There has been a buzz around discovering a new favourite author, who currently is Humza Arshad or a new book series. Children will ask me what should I read next and I know what every child is currently reading in my class. My class have started asking for specific books, more graphics novels and recommendations. I have introduced 3 brand new books per week, which I display in class reading the blurb and bringing attention to books they would perhaps not always chose, which has caused much excitement. Across the school, teachers have developed their own school systems such as: a scrap book with their reading comments and journey as a class, reader of the week and show and tell of books from home. Overall, the profile of reading for pleasure has risen across the school.
- The NLT diagram demonstrates the 3 areas a good reader has. The affective processes and reading behaviours are two areas that have been given many opportunities and promoted this year.

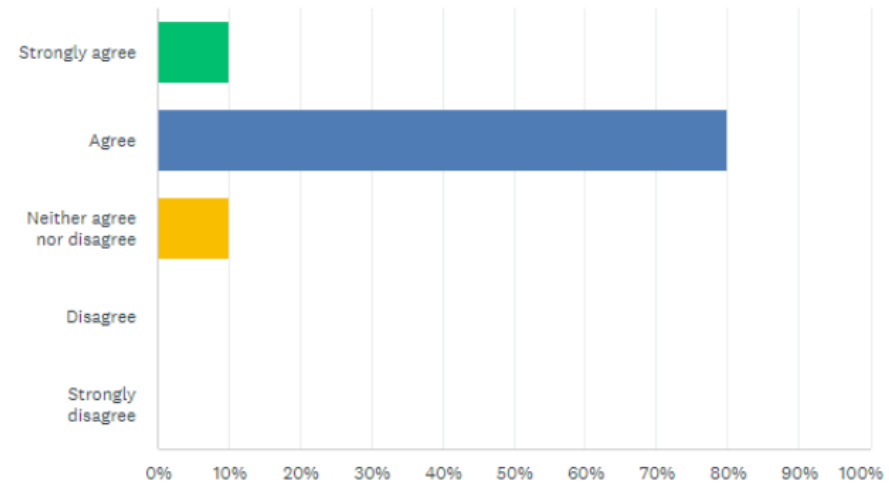
## Reading...



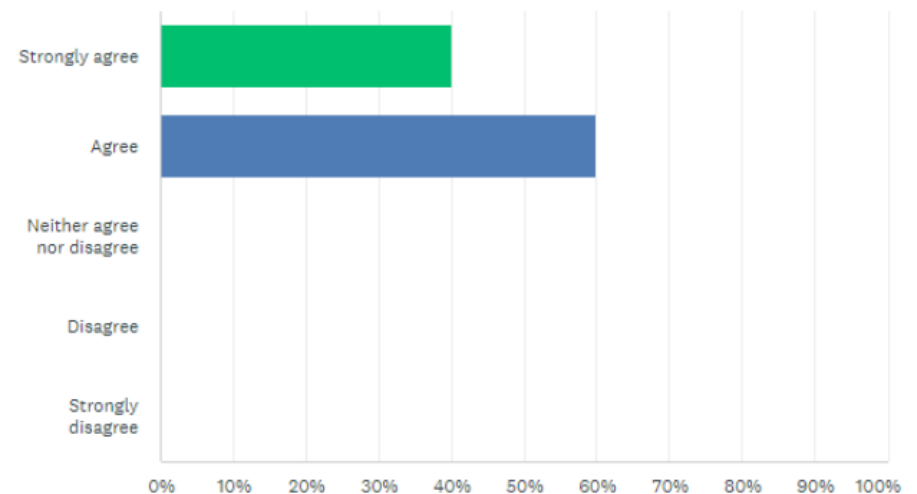
# Impact-Staff Survey

- I carried out an online survey where I posed questions about reading for pleasure about their own practice and the results they have seen in the children.
- 90% of staff strongly agree or agree that children talk about books more.
- 100% of staff strongly agree or agree that they feel more confident in understanding what reading for pleasure is.
- 80% of staff strongly agree or agree that their knowledge of children's literature improved.
- 90% of staff strongly agree or agree that their class are more excited about books this year.
- 90% of staff strongly agree or agree that the Books of the Month have made an impact.

The books of the month have made an impact on reading for pleasure.

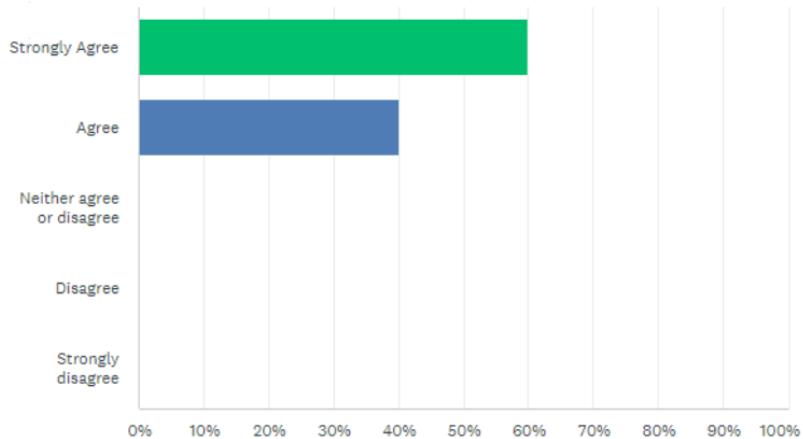


know what children are reading in my class and what engages them.

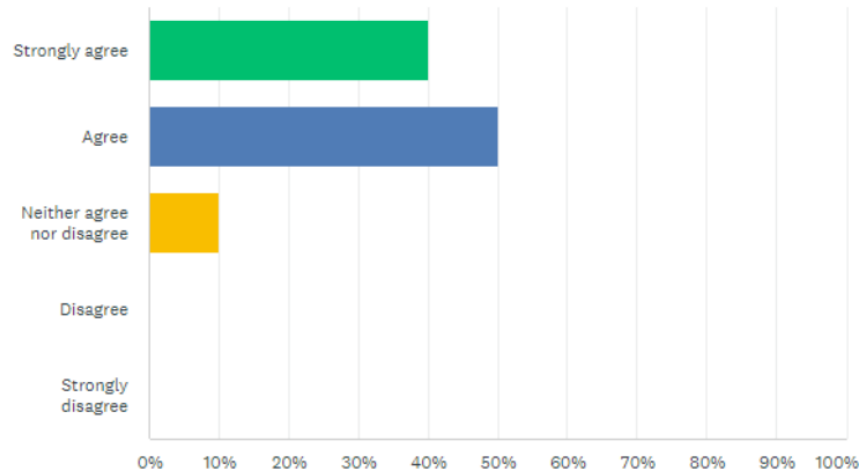


# Impact-Staff Survey

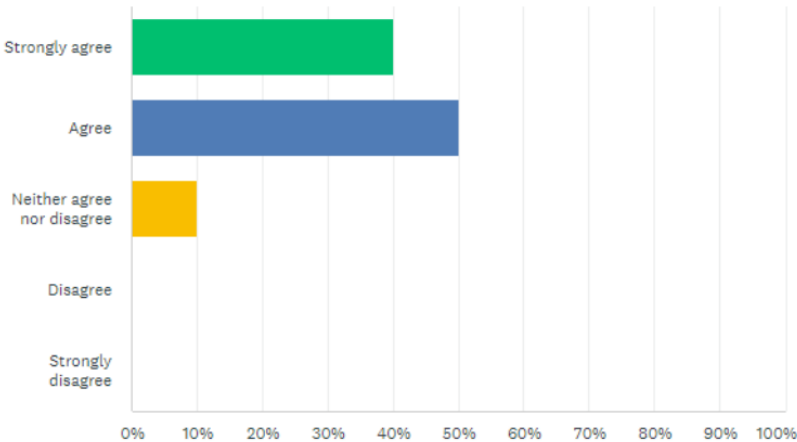
I am more confident in understanding what reading for pleasure is.



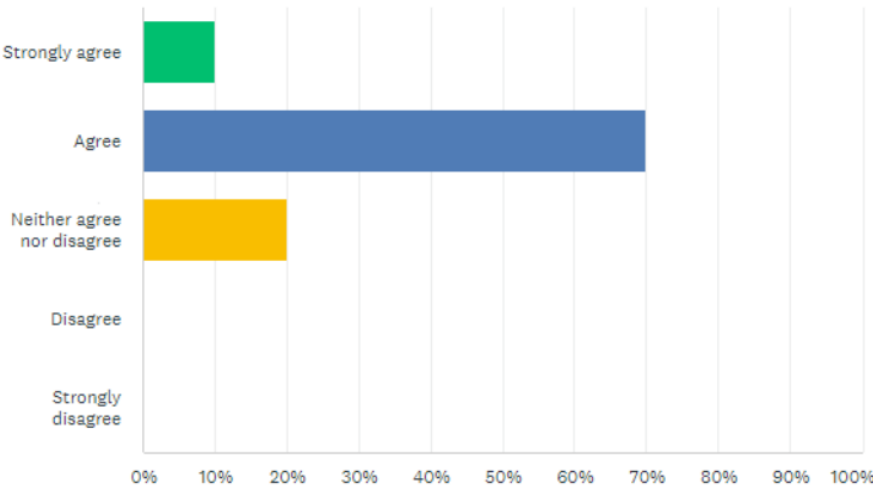
Children talk about books more.



My class are more excited about books this year.



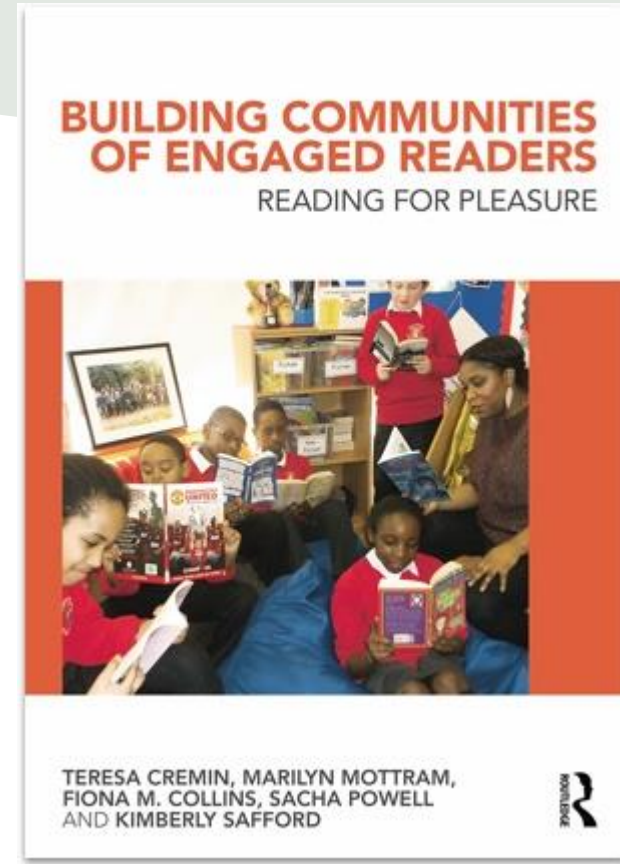
My understanding of children's literature has improved.





# Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

- 'Through discussing their own current reading of adults' and children's books with one another in TaRs sessions, the teachers began to appreciate the motivating power of such book talk, the non-assessed nature of it and the way in which it led to book recommendations, tempting them to try new authors or texts.' (**Building Communities of Engaged Readers: Reading for pleasure, 2014**)
- The above was evident from our staff meeting where teachers started to recommend texts to one another, which organically developed within my own classroom. Children naturally sparked conversations and asked for my opinion about what they should read. My weekly books of the week in my class have tempted children to read books they would not have previously picked up. Overall, much of the TaRs research specially on book talk was supportive and I could see evidence of it within my classroom and elements in the whole school setting.



How do you feel the school could develop further to become a reading community? e.g. parents, training, mixing year groups, texts etc.

# Next Steps

- Continue to buy new books and add to my own repertoire of children's literature
- Continue to promote reading for pleasure
- Continue to allow opportunities for Book Talk
- Reading Heroes to start making decisions about which books should be the Books of the Month
- Magazine Clubs at lunchtimes
- Parental Engagement (as a result of the survey 80% of staff feel this should be developed further)
- Staff training opportunity to share more book recommendations, best practice, videos from the RfP website and opportunities to reflect on reading for pleasure
- Reading outside in the Summer to change the reading environment

