

# Ilsham Church of England Academy



## English Hubs

Ilsham English Hub



Ilsham Church of England Academy is a smaller than average-sized (one form entry) primary school, located in Torquay in South Devon. It is the founding school of the Learning Academy Partnership South West Multi Academy Trust and has been designated as a Department for Education English Hub due to the track record in excellent phonics and reading outcomes.

The Trust's vision is '**Flourishing Futures**' and we are committed to social mobility, achieving social change and enabling all children to flourish. Reading for pleasure is the single most important indicator of a child's success (OECD 2002) and is therefore paramount to enabling all children to achieve their very best.

In 2019, 96% of pupils passed the Year 1 Phonics Screening Check. Results for reading in Key Stage 1 are above national with 88% children achieving the expected standard at Key Stage 1 and 96% of Key Stage 2 children achieving expected at the end of Year 6. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils and those for whom English is an additional language is below the national average. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/ or disabilities (SEND) is also below the national average.



**To fulfil our vision of 'Flourishing Futures', we view reading for pleasure as an entitlement for all children in our academy and not just for those who are disadvantaged.**

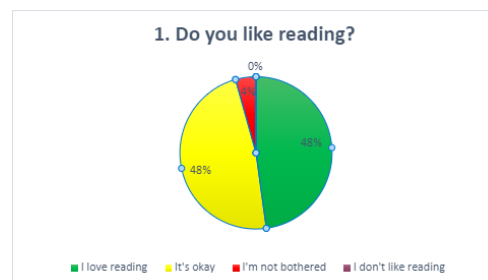
## Explore

### Intention: define the problem and establish a baseline

At the commencement of the project, teachers, support staff and children completed surveys to identify strengths and areas for development across the school. Alongside the surveys, other qualitative data was used such as conferencing with children and teachers' informal observations of children's reading habits and preferences.

### Strengths identified:

**91% of children, who were surveyed, had a positive attitude towards reading;** however, less children were able to articulate in depth why they felt this. In Year One, 64% of children said they loved reading with 0% of children reporting that they did not like reading. **This positive attitude was sustained throughout the school with only one child reporting that they did not like reading in Year Six.**



When considering children's perceptions about the skill of reading and their ability, **100% of Year One children felt that they were "good" or "okay" at reading.** This correlates with their positive attitude. Interestingly, **in Year Six**, none of the children identified themselves as not being a good reader but **only 9% of children thought they were "very good"**.

This caused questions to arise about what influenced the older children's perceptions and attitudes of what makes a very good reader and suggests that the attainment measures such as the KS2 reading tests might influence children's perceptions.

Furthermore, **when conferencing with children, it was found that children's attitudes towards their ability to read tend to be focused on whether their parents view them as a good reader and in the younger years their ability to decode fluently. A focus child from Year 4 commented, "I would read to my parents and if they said I was quick, that made me a good reader."**



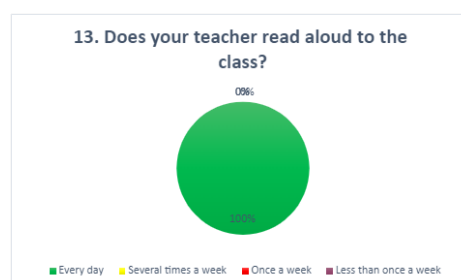
In addition, children's home reading practices are established early in KS1 with 92% of children agreeing that they read outside of school. This shows a positive correlation between children enjoying reading and reading at home. Parents were commonly cited as adults who supported children's reading; however, this fell in Year 6 with 75% of children responding that they read with someone at home.



At the early stage of the project, these strengths highlighted that **the majority of children have a positive attitude towards reading – the will – and viewed it as a social activity** which was encouraging.

Teachers regularly read aloud to children and this is timetabled daily. This was reflected in the children's surveys in KS1 and KS2.

Children's independent reading is formally monitored by teachers and all staff, including support staff members, were able to readily name children who were disadvantaged in terms of reading for pleasure and discuss their individual barriers/areas of challenge. These discussions informed the selection of focus children: children who were identified as being disadvantaged in terms of reading for pleasure. The staff cited pupil conferencing, informal book discussions, helping children choose their next book and monitoring of children's reading journals as examples of how they know their children's reading practices.



#### Areas for growth and development:

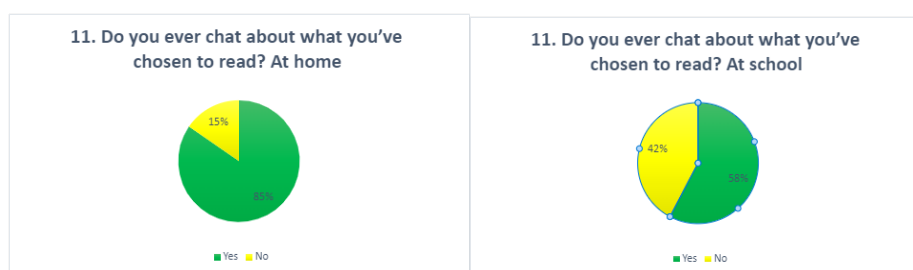
Many staff cited authors' work that they valued and particular expertise was evident in EYFS and KS1 classes with teachers citing a wider range of contemporary authors such as M.G. Leonard and Britta Teckentrupp. However, in KS2, most staff relied on a repertoire of classical authors and were unfamiliar with contemporary authors and how best to identify these. As a Trust, we have recommended reads list for all year groups and upon further discussion with all staff, it was felt that some staff relied and reused a core set of

texts rather than expanding their knowledge of newly published children's books. This would positively impact pedagogy and children's reading as teachers would have a broader range of books to draw upon when opening up dialogue to make recommendations and when engaging in book talk.

This area for development was also reflected in the children's reading surveys as well-known authors, or texts which the children had studied in reading lessons, were commonly cited by children.

Another area for development across KS1 and KS2 was teacher knowledge of how best to facilitate informal book talk and then maximise its potential: the passion and belief in the value of informal book talk was already evident amongst staff, but the gap was in how to facilitate and maximise it.

From the children's reading surveys, it was noted that in some classes more children engaged in book talk at home than in school. For example, **in Year Three**, 85% of children said that they talked about books at home whereas **only 58% of children reported they talked about books in school. This informed our aim to develop informal book talk.**



**This influenced the reading for pleasure pedagogy aim to develop more opportunities for informal book talk across the school alongside taught instruction for reading.**

## **Prepare**

**Intention: creating a clear, manageable plan for achieving your RfP aims**

### Establishing a Change Team

As Ilsham is a smaller than average school, it was agreed that all teachers would form part of the change team supported by the English Lead for Ilsham and the Trust English Lead. This would ensure a sustainable model of leadership and that all staff felt ownership and had a sense of agency.

### Focus Children

Following the surveys, teachers identified children who would become a focus for the project. In order to effectively evaluate the project's aims, it was essential, especially with the school and Trust focus on enabling social change and flourishing for all, that the implemented strategies had impact for the most disadvantaged children in terms of reading for pleasure. Each teacher selected two children from their class who they had identified as being disadvantaged when considering reading for pleasure. Some of the



children, who were selected, were also receiving intervention for reading as they were in the lowest 20%; however, this was not the sole criteria used for identifying focus children. For example, some children were identified because their reading choices were narrow with these children tending to read series of books rather than more widely or because from the teacher's knowledge of the child, they knew that they did not always have regular opportunities to read outside of school. **An online tracker, listing the focus children, was created so that all staff knew who they were and could therefore ensure that these children were focused on throughout the year.** The rationale for this is that it was viewed as all members of staff's responsibility to counteract and challenge these children's perceived reading for pleasure disadvantage and not solely the class teacher's.

### Research

Prior to formulating our aims, the Teachers as Readers (TaRs) research by Teresa Cremin and the Open University was used to develop thinking. In particular, the 'LIST' principles, to describe reading for pleasure, were shared with staff to provide a common framework and shared language across the school: learner led, informal, social and texts that tempt.

"Teachers' knowledge of children's literature and other texts is not commonly regarded as part of the subject knowledge required of teachers, yet the Teachers as Readers (TaRs) research has shown it is **highly significant in developing children as readers who can and DO choose to read.**" (Cremin et al, 2014). By actively engaging in expanding their knowledge of children's literature, the research found that teachers were enabled to more confidently engage in book talk, make recommendations and develop a culture of reading for pleasure. As the second aim of the project is focused on developing book talk as a pedagogical tool, it is vital that teachers have the knowledge to underpin and model this talk to children.



## Reading for pleasure pedagogy:

### Aim 1: To develop informal book talk.

#### Actions to create change:

- Every class to have a 'Qube' (a large break out space within the school) slot to engage in reading for pleasure in an informal environment on a fortnightly basis.
- **Informal book talk prompts to be displayed throughout the school**
- Every class to display their current read on their classroom doors to ignite informal book talk with children, staff and visitors and encourage corridor conversations.
- **All teachers to have a 'book talk' session weekly where the focus is purely reading for pleasure which is inspired from the CPD sessions. Children to make brief observations about their book talk session in independent reading records.**
- Trial strategies such as 'graffiti wall', 'draw yourself as a reader' and 'curiosity cubes' as vehicles for generating informal book talk whilst deepening teacher knowledge of their children as readers.

## Reading for pleasure knowledge:

To develop teacher awareness of contemporary children's authors by creating mini portfolios of interest, category and preference.

#### Actions to create change:

- **Share books which are published each month with staff during dedicated reading for pleasure briefings and emails to develop knowledge of new reads and contemporary authors. Draw upon resources such as Love Reading 4 Kids and Nikki Gamble's Book Blast to provide regular updates for staff. Teachers were also asked to ensure that they used texts that had been shared from this communication in their book talk sessions.**
- Collate new titles as a staff team to create a portfolio.
- **'Reader Teacher' posters to be displayed in all reading dens and social reading environments to promote contemporary author book recommendations child to child and teacher to child.**
- **Each class to have the opportunity each month to vote on a new book, which is wrapped up and presented in assembly to create excitement. (Start with focus children). This 'new read' to be celebrated with parents via the class newsletter and shared with our classes too in a book swap. Teachers to then become familiar with this book alongside their class.**
- Book lanyards for 'What I am reading...' ready to share to promote adult to adult informal book talk and develop subject knowledge.

### Focus children:

All staff knew who the focus children were so they could draw informal observations about the impact of the project on children's reading behaviours and attitudes. In addition, when the new book was presented to the class who chose it, we ensured that it was the focus child who it was given to. The rationale for this is to make the book feel special for them. During the book talk and 'Qube' sessions, teachers made informal observations on their focus children. These were then collated in a whole staff scrapbook so that all staff have the knowledge of who the focus children are and are responsible for observing change.

### Impact on children:

- For children to have informal opportunities to share their love of reading with others.
- For children to be immersed in an environment where books are frequently discussed and for teachers to model how to talk about books.
- For children to be exposed to a wider range of contemporary authors and share these books with their class and parents.

### Deliver

**Intention: implementing your development plan and ongoing documentation of impact**  
**Aim and strategy – bold three which are important**

### Aim 1: Pedagogical focus – informal book talk

Our pedagogical focus was developing informal book talk. To develop this, we reflected on the strategies we could use and the opportunities that there were within the school day that would enable this to occur spontaneously, naturally and frequently. Prior to the project, children were taught reading as a whole class daily and had frequent opportunities within these sessions to discuss books and answer higher order questions about what they had read. This contributed to high attainment for reading but did not necessarily develop a culture of reading for pleasure.

#### Strategy:

We decided to repurpose one of the sessions each week to focus purely on book talk rather than a skill based taught session.

#### Impact:

Having a dedicated timetabled slot for book talk has further raised the profile of reading for pleasure in the school. During these sessions, teachers are using the book recommendation road maps and 'Book Match' resources from the Reader Teacher as well as their own developing knowledge to recommend books to children. As the year has progressed, children have had more ownership of these sessions and as a result, children are now making suggestions about new authors to read aloud and books to share. In several classes, **teachers are now using the book talk sessions and the children's recommendations to inform the books read throughout the curriculum which is giving the children more ownership and choice.**

Strategy:

Impact:

[illegible]



Staff reflected that it was also useful as a teacher tool to learn more about their children's reading behaviours. For example, one Y4 teacher wrote, **"They discovered they use RfP to escape."**

It was very useful as a tool for developing ideas for our outdoor reading space (as part of World Book Week) because it encouraged the children to think about what they wanted from a reading environment (e.g. cosy, snug) and how they wanted to engage with reading (e.g. a performance space): children felt more confident articulating who they are as readers and their preferences.



Across the school, **'curiosity cubes'** were implemented a strategy to elicit discussion and develop book talk. Teachers placed curious and interesting objects in the cube to cause children to generate questions and spark interest.

#### Impact:

The children were very excited by these and teachers enjoyed having autonomy and planning how to be creative with them. Curiosity cubes were introduced into the classroom environment differently in each class e.g. just left on the side without explanation first (Y4), linked to the wider curriculum topic (Y3) or generating curiosity about a future event in the book that they had to piece together (Y6). All staff said that they will continue using this strategy.

**Aim 2: To develop teacher awareness of contemporary children's authors by creating mini portfolios of interest, category and preference.**

#### Strategy:

Informal book talk prompts of new contemporary authors to be displayed throughout the school

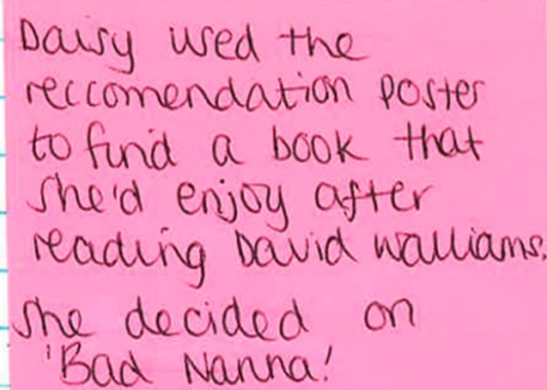
Impact: From the children's surveys, we found that an area for development was how often children experienced adults engaging in book talk with each other. As teacher modelling is an essential pedagogical skill, **we reflected on opportunities within the school day that this could naturally occur and implemented some simple strategies to spark these discussions.** For example, all classroom doors had a poster of the current whole class read on the exterior door as a book talk conversation starter. This was modelled initially by the Change Team: when entering a classroom, all team members



modelled starting a conversation about the book with the children. Furthermore, all members of staff wore **lanyards to promote a children's book they were currently reading** or could discuss further in order to initiate a conversation and promote a culture of everyone being a reader. Shared teacher and pupil discussions about reading choices in Y6 prompted the class teacher to recommend one of her own books from home by an

author the child was currently reading (Varjak Paw, by SF Said). The Y6 child was reading another SF Said book and then borrowed the teacher's to further pursue his interest in this author. **Posters were also on display in every reading den** from 'The Reader Teacher' which show 'If you like this author, you may also like...' During a learning walk with the Trust Lead, the prompt on the door of the current class read was a highly successful tool in generating informal book talk with others.

In conferencing, the children referred the visitor to it and were able to talk at length about how they had chosen their book, their preferences within the book and what they thought would happen next. Similarly, it was found that the **children could refer to the book recommendation prompts and used these well. For example, a Y6 child talked the Trust Lead through how we use the posters.** The Y3 teacher wrote in the staff scrapbook



Daisy used the  
recommendation poster  
to find a book that  
she'd enjoy after  
reading David Williams.  
She decided on  
'Bad Nanna!'

that:

Another example is when, after an informal chat on the playground (Y5 and Y6 share playtime), a Y5 child was then invited into Y6 to discuss book choices. This then led to his parent purchasing contemporary author titles as opposed to repeat reading of Diary of a Wimpy Kid! The Y5 boy is still reading books of this style but has added another two authors to his 'favourites collection' of authors that write books in this style.

#### Strategy:

Each class to vote on a new book following teacher CPD

#### Impact:

Following CPD on contemporary authors, teachers suggested a range of new books to their class and took a vote. The Head of Academy committed to purchasing the chosen texts for each class and each month, one year group received their new book during assembly and was presented to one of the focus children from that class so they felt it was special and to increase engagement. The expectation was that teachers would read this book to increase their subject knowledge and then share it with their class so they had another book in common. In Year Six, the children chose the book 'Saving Celeste' by Sarah Ardizzone and Timothee de Fombelle. This book then became highly valued in the class and many children throughout the spring term chose to read it for pleasure. A PP girl in Y6 said, "I thought it was amazing because she was experiencing what the planet was experiencing and there was a lot of mystery and tension."

Similarly, in Year Five, the children voted for 'Inside the Villains' by Clotilde Perrin. The children enthusiastically talked about the book with visitors to the school as well as each other. Year 4 chose the book 'Float' to inspire an English unit of writing (which shows that



children are starting to see that Reading for Pleasure can also inform more formal English teaching – they are starting to believe that they can influence book choices in their English units and even enjoy them!) The Year 4 teacher arranged a virtual meet with the author of Float and the children were incredibly excited and inspired: “...thanks to Daniel, I want to make my very own story books.”



## Review

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

Focus children were chosen from the lowest 20% or children who were disadvantaged because of reading for pleasure. A barrier analysis was completed prior to full engagement in the project so that teachers could be very specific about their aims with these children, to measure impact (as well as the children being part of the wider benefits aimed at the whole school). The barrier analysis was then repeated at the end of Summer 1 to measure impact.

Following this, pupil conferencing in ‘focus group only’ groups was conducted as well as part of wider pupil conferencing, informal observations and chats. In addition, the focus children in each class were chosen to receive the new book, voted for by their class, in assembly in the hope that this would **create a personal connection instantly with the new text**. Furthermore, by participating in additional Reading for Pleasure activities such as the spokesperson for their class, focus group children were encouraged to engage with the project: for example, by creating Trust-wide videos to share our love of reading or by speaking to Trust Leads on their visits to the school about reading for pleasure.

## Baseline to summative data for Focus children

At the beginning of the year, teachers identified the barriers for their focus children: lack of confidence, anxiety about own reading ability and lack of independent will to read outside of taught sessions. During the year, the focus children were closely monitored and observed to assess the impact of our actions in developing their reading for pleasure.

Following the OU research, teachers focused on developing informal book talk and creating a community of readers who spontaneously shared their reading preferences and passion for the activity.

When asked ‘**How does your teacher feel about reading?**’



- **100% of children in Year 6 reported that their teacher loved reading**
- **in Year 3, 96% of children said their teacher loved reading**
- **in Year 4, 80% of children also agreed that their teacher loved reading.**

This shows the impact of 'Book Talk' as children are viewing their teachers as readers very positively and see reading as a more social activity.

Furthermore, from the summative survey, a higher percentage of children responded that they talk to teachers and friends in school about their reading. For example, in September, 43% of Year 6 children reported that they talked to someone about reading in school. This has now increased to **76% of children which shows the impact of book talk**. This was a consistent increase across the academy.

From observations and discussion with focus group children, we also found that dedicated book talk had generated a positive impact.

As a result of book talk and participation in curiosity cube sessions, Child T (Y3) now finds reading more interesting now. (Class Teacher) In discussion, the focus child said, **'I really enjoy the curiosity cube and it gets you thinking about what may happen in the book'** The teacher also observed that she is **completely engaged within these sessions** and is always keen to share her ideas. In whole class reading, Child T is enjoying choosing their text as a whole class: 'I like it as we get to pick our own text and it is normally something that interests me.' (Child T).

Similarly, Child J finds the curiosity cube interesting but feels like we could use it more to encourage children to read and predict what may happen more often in the books that they are reading. **Impact is evident here as a focus child would like to be engaging in book talk even more.**

Similarly, in other classes, Child M (Y4) reported, "It's OK, I prefer books that are kind of fiction, like stories about sea creatures. **I think I am a good reader. I've got better because I am reading books that I like and it encourages me to read more.**" When asked about book talk, Child M shared, "I'd like to talk more about books with different people." Again, this shows that children are responding positively to book talk, seeing the value in it and **wanting to engage even more** in this.

Positive impact was seen on focus children throughout the school. For example, Child S's (Y6) teacher shared, **"Wow! What a transformation!"**

Quotes from this conference by Child S show the impact of the curiosity cubes and book talk sessions:

- **"It means I can concentrate solely on using my paintbrush tool."**



- “Curiosity Cubes makes it like the story has come out of the book and has come out in the Cube.”
- “All the books we have read together [contemporary authors in Book Talk sessions] have made me a lot more interested in reading than before because they have all inspired my ‘paintbrush tool’.”

How do focus children see themselves as readers? What impact has the project had on them?

The main observation across all Focus children was that they **do now see themselves as readers and can speak in this way, as opposed to ‘children who read’: they now recognise that they are readers with choices and opinions which they can share with their teachers in the knowledge they will be listened to and acted on.**

Pupil evidence:

- *Child J (Y3)* ‘I enjoy that we have **a lot of time within our school day to read independently or with friends.** It means I can also explore different books I may want to read.’
- *Child S (Y6)* A real transformation – **he LOVES to talk about reading** and contrary to other subjects, where the learning can ‘wash over him,’ he is completely engaged in Book Talk/Qube sessions and retains what we have covered. In the Focus children pupil conference on 17.05.22, Child S was very vocal about his favourite author and how he now very strongly feels that sessions which focus exclusively on Reading for Pleasure allow him to concentrate only on using his paintbrush tool.
- *Child J (Y6)* is **now a go-to advocate of Reading for Pleasure** in the Monkey Puzzles! She mentions no anxiety about her reading ability now as all her book talk is focused on enjoyment. Child J can now name a particular author she enjoys (Jennifer Killick) and refer to particular reading activities that she’s loved (especially the Outdoor Reading Area design). What was particularly lovely about conferencing with child J on 17.05.22 was how she recognised all the informal book talk opportunities we now enjoy, as well as the actual lesson activities, exemplified by this quote:

**“We’re involved in talking about books every day - it can happen whenever and doesn’t need to be a formal lesson.”**

*In response to a question about enjoyment of being read aloud to:*

**“Being read to, purely for pleasure, stops it being a stressful experience because I do not have to decode or access word meanings.”**

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

We are very lucky to have teachers and children willing to embrace and engage in Reading for Pleasure with commitment, passion and enthusiasm: the gap is not in the willing and enthusiasm but in the how to act on it and maximise its potential moving forward.

Teachers need to be given school time to act on Reading for Pleasure aims: if we say we are going to value it, we must give them time to do so. For example, in a RfP PDM, staff were given time to look through the RfP book stock which demonstrated that reading for pleasure is a CPD priority for staff. In Chapter 10, Cremin et al., it asks: "Primary teachers are generalists not specialists and are expected to teach across the whole curriculum... how can we help teachers to read 'outside their comfort zone?'" In response to this comment, we have learned that teachers need **signposting to contemporary authors and then regular updates from trusted websites** (e.g. The Reader Teacher, and LoveReading4Kids) to help develop their reading repertoire, as well as visiting libraries and wider reading in their own time. They will read outside their comfort zone if you give them this first step, they and the children are then able to work the rest of the magic!

Equally, teachers need time, professional reading and suggestions to support the development of informal book talk. We provided downloads from the RfP website and professional reading from the project's core text: 'Building Communities of Engaged Readers – Reading for Pleasure' to support pedagogy and subject knowledge.

Key learning is also that informal book talk needed to be given time and modelled. Ways to facilitate informal book talk were trialled by the Literacy Lead in school each time with her class and then adapted before being modelled to all staff in PDMs to provide leadership support.

### Plans for next year

We have planned an evaluative PDM scheduled for end of Summer 2 and are planning to implement individual scrapbooks for children as a way of recording their reading for pleasure experiences.

Our teachers have the passion and enthusiasm but need the time and prompts. It has challenged how we record informal observations so we have trialled scrapbooks, online shared documents and pupil conferencing. The scrapbooks and pupil conferencing have proved most effective because they are sustainable for staff and can be easily monitored.

Reading for Pleasure cannot be a tokenistic, surface-level approach: **it has to be a constant focus** – informally in an everyday capacity and more formally in whole-class or whole-school activities. This ensures that children and staff can articulate how Reading for Pleasure is linked to school improvement. "The enjoyment of reading can become tokenistic...not woven through the fabric of school life." Chapter 10, Cremin et al.

Specific next steps:

- Teacher knowledge of contemporary authors of fiction texts has improved considerably. This needs to continue into non-fiction.
- Poetry needs to be pursued with pleasure! We are often invited to participate in national poetry competitions: accept one of these invitations next year!
- Teachers need to expand their knowledge of their children as readers: their everyday reading practices and preferences and a sustainable, effective way of recording their independent book choices so that we can target suggestions
- To sustain independent book choices as empowering and motivating, the children still need to be able to access their book choices so a next step is to develop a way to monitor reading records regularly (individual classes are currently doing this but there is not a shared approach)