

Reading for Pleasure

SMALL CHANGES MAKE BIG DIFFERENCES



Walter Evans CE Primary and Nursery School

Context

Walter Evans C of E Primary and Nursery School serves an area of mainly private housing to the north of Derby City centre. There are approximately 440 pupils on role from Nursery to Y6.

I am a Year 1 teacher in my seventh year of teaching at Walter Evans CE Primary and Nursery School. For the past 3 years, I have lead Reading at our school and been part of the English Team. Although our outcomes in Reading have always been good historically, we recognised that the children were good at comprehension and using the skills for reading but did not necessarily enjoy it. Developing a reading for pleasure culture is an essential part of my role.

Explore

Reading outcomes at Walter Evans have always been good. However, when we embarked on the Open University Reading for Pleasure Project, it became clear that there was a disparity between the reading outcomes and the children (and staff's) enjoyment of reading and our reading surveys confirmed this. All staff and children in school completed surveys to gather baseline data. We also carried out observations of a case study pupils in each year group to gather information about their interests and motivations.

Teachers

When speaking to staff, they shared that they did not feel confident with keeping up to date with new texts independently. Without visiting bookshops frequently – particularly due to Covid-19 restrictions – they were unsure of how to keep their knowledge current. They did not feel confidently when naming authors and poets and felt as though they relied on “the old classics” in their reading lessons. Our school had recently embarked on a Talk for Writing project where quality texts are paramount. Teachers wanted support with choosing these high quality texts to elevate their reading and writing lessons. The OU Teachers as Readers project found that when teachers widen their knowledge and pleasure in reading children's literature and other texts, and become more aware of their own and the children's reading practices, they ‘reconceptualise reading from the inside out, and more effectively build a reading for pleasure pedagogy and strong communities of readers within and beyond school’ (Cremin *et al.*, 2014)

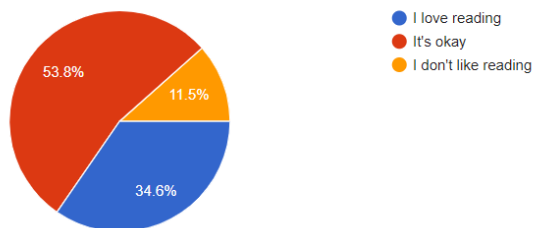
The teacher survey showed that 10% of 20 teachers were confident with naming many contemporary children's authors however; most staff relied heavily on narrow selection of authors and personal childhood favourites with an extremely limited knowledge of poets. These findings aligned with recent studies which suggest, ‘Teacher's knowledge of children's literature is

dominated by Dahl and 'celebrity' authors and is insufficient to support reader development' (Cremin et al., 2009; Clark and Teravainen, 2015).

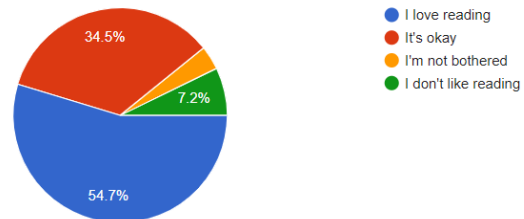
Children

We found children's attitudes to reading were more positive higher up in school, less children in KS1 had positive responses to the survey.

KS1:



KS2:



Children reported that:

"I think this is because it is boring you can't take it in as well as if you watch the movie, and what is the point. I just don't like it."

"I haven't found a book that I like"

"Because I need books THAT I LIKE"

"Because I don't read that much and maybe I'm not really in to them"

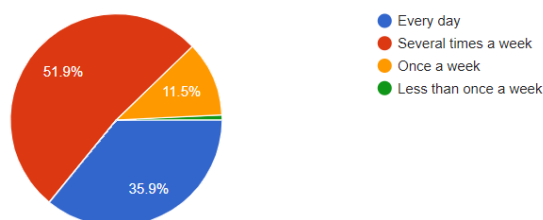
"I think this because reading doesn't excite me a lot and I have other hobbies."

"waste of time"

"It is because I have to move my eyes too much."

It was clear that children were not engaged in Reading for Pleasure for a multitude of reasons. They had other interests, the book choices were not exciting the children and they weren't listening to engaging texts often enough in class:

Does your teacher read aloud to the class?



Research indicates that 'Teachers who encourage students to read books of their choice for pleasure is a major contribution towards students developing a positive attitude towards reading and a life-long interest in reading'. (International Reading Association, 2014). The research is pointing clearly to the importance of Reading for Pleasure in schools, and the importance of choice. Something that our children were lacking.

Children were disengaging with reading and action needed to be taken.

Prepare

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

After completing surveys, pupil interviews and a review of the School Improvement Plan, we decided on two key aims:

1. Improve teacher's knowledge of age appropriate contemporary fiction and poetry books and authors so that they can use their growing expertise to further promote a love of reading across school.
 - We wanted teachers to know their children as readers.
 - We wanted staff subject knowledge to improve so that they are able to recommend texts to engage all pupils but particularly those considered as 'reading disadvantaged'. Cremin (2022) categorises those pupils as reading disadvantaged where they lack the 'will' to read, or are not engaged with reading for pleasure over those pupils who lack the 'skill', although you may see the two together.
 - *"Those teachers who have a secure knowledge of a range of children's literature are not only more able to recommend the right text for the right child, but are also better positioned to create a community of readers in the classroom" (Younger and Warrington, 2005; Kwek et al, 2007) in (Building Communities of Engaged Readers, Cremin et al 2014)*
 - *"Unless a school is staffed by people who enjoy books and enjoy talking to children about what they read then it is unlikely that they will be very successful in helping children to become readers"" (Chambers, 1973: 22)*
2. Increase the frequency, quality and value placed on read aloud to encourage all pupils to love reading.
 - Whilst our outcomes in reading are historically good, our data collection revealed that reading in school is not LIST:
 - Learner lead
 - Informal
 - Social using
 - Texts that tempt
 - Cremin reports that, 'reading for pleasure is more closely associated with intrinsic motivation; it is reading that children do for themselves at their own pace, with whom they choose and in their own way' (2019). Our children were only really listening to texts that were to improve their skill in reading and were not truly engaging with texts for pleasure.

With these aims in mind, a change team was established and each member chose two 'reading disadvantaged' pupils to focus on and track throughout the project. Staff were given the choice on how to record their findings, from post-it notes to online records to make the workload manageable for them. Pupil conversations took place with each of these children each term and staff closely monitored their reading habits over the course of the academic year.

The change team worked together to and decided on actions which would help us to reach our aims.

Reading for Pleasure Aims	Actions
<p>Improve teacher's knowledge of age appropriate contemporary fiction and poetry books and authors so that they can use their growing expertise to further promote a love of reading across school.</p>	<p>Staff electronic noticeboard – share new texts for each phase weekly.</p> <p>Staff room display –book award winners, recommendations, staff voice and pupil voice. Have a basket in front of the display to create a lending library of new texts.</p> <p>Staff recommendations for little display cards like bookshops.</p> <p>Assess budget to see if there is scope for regular purchasing of latest releases to be shown through staffroom lending library basket prior to sharing with children.</p> <p>Trip for staff to Waterstones with “spending money” for new book(s) for classrooms?</p>
<p>Increase the frequency, quality and value placed on read aloud to encourage all pupils to love reading.</p>	<p>Assess budget to see if there is scope for regular purchasing of latest releases to be shown through staffroom lending library basket prior to sharing with children.</p> <p>Trip for staff to Waterstones with “spending money” for new book(s) for classrooms?</p> <p>Timetable – all staff to find 10 mins per day for read aloud time.</p> <p>Implement ‘Reading Relay’ initiative. Every Friday morning, teachers to swap classes for read aloud on a rotation. Head teacher to be part of the rotation.</p> <p>Staff to use the library to explore new texts whilst Head teacher takes class in reading relay.</p> <p>Staff set up pupil choice station for read aloud.</p>



The project initially started positively, although we were still in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic and classes were still in bubbles. So often the pressure of the timetable impacts classroom practice and staff had reported in conversations that they felt as though if someone


were to walk in their room whilst they were reading aloud for pleasure, they may question what learning is happening. Staff were extremely enthusiastic and were eager to get started – they looked forward to increasing their subject knowledge and engaging in Reading for Pleasure knowing that theory and research were underpinning their practice and that reading aloud was going to be valued in school.

Deliver

Intention: implementing your development plan and ongoing documentation of impact

Aim 1: Improve teacher's knowledge of age appropriate contemporary fiction and poetry books and authors so that they can use their growing expertise to further promote a love of reading across school.

Action	Impact
Library – reorganise the library so that the texts are arranged according to genre rather than all texts being in order of surname of author.	After initial trepidation, staff engaged with the new library layout well. They reported that if they were relying on celebrity authors, or older authors such as Roald Dahl, they were able to go to the library, find the book they knew, and look around the area for books which are similar. Books like Harry Potter were stocked next to The Golden Compass graphic novel by Phillip Pullman or The Weather Weaver by Tamsin Mori. This gave the staff opportunities to find new texts with ease.
Library plinth – create a plinth of texts which are changed each month and are in line with a current national event (e.g. Black History Month or Pride).	<p>The library plinth revolutionised the library and gave the space the feel of a bookshop. It helped staff associate texts with current calendar events (such as Mental Health Awareness Week, Pride or Black History Month) with current, contemporary fiction which could be shared just at the right time with pupils and with ease. Staff were not having to research. An initial concern was that the plinth looked empty at times however, we realised that this meant the books were being taken to be read!</p> 
Staff room display –book award winners, recommendations, staff voice and pupil voice.	 <p>Staff reported that this was extremely helpful when finding out about true, high quality texts to share with children. Staff knew that book awards existed but this display took away the need to do the research themselves, something which can easily slip the mind. The board had an extension of the plinth with a monthly focus mirroring the contents of the plinth, and this means staff could see the books which they could use even when the plinth was empty.</p> <p>Staff recommendations were engaged with by staff and it created an informal talking point in the staffroom. Staff were</p>

	beginning to build 'books in common' and reading was a conversational point informally. This led to the increase of staff knowledge organically.	
Lending library – have a basket in front of the display to create a lending library of new texts.	The lending library basket in the staffroom acted as an extension to the board described above. Staff were able to dip in to quality texts with minimal thought. We used the basket as the 'go to' place for new books in school before they were placed in to the library system. This meant staff knew the books before the children and were then empowered to recommend or discuss them. Staff reported that this meant they were constantly exposed to new texts and therefore were increasing their subject knowledge with ease.	
Sharing stories in staff meetings.	Sharing stories in staff meetings was something that I lifted straight out of the OU Reading for Pleasure training. Those precious moments of stopping, listening and engaging with a new text was really valued by staff and the books shared went straight in to the lending basket; creating a cyclical process of hearing about and engaging with new texts without any research needed by staff.	

Aim 2: Increase the frequency, quality and value placed on read aloud to encourage all pupils to love reading.

Library – reorganise the library so that the texts are arranged according to genre rather than all texts being in order of surname of author.	The library reorganisation was reported to be 'a triumph' by one of our School Improvement Officers. As previously mentioned, staff found the ease of use instrumental in selecting new texts to read aloud with their classes. Pupils engaged with the new space with excitement! Pupils reported that they were able to find new texts similar to those that they already loved and felt as though the books that they were listening to in class had improved in quality.
Library plinth – create a plinth of texts which are changed each month and are in line with a current national event (e.g. Black History Month or Pride).	The plinth, as previously stated, helped the staff to stay current. Pupils reported that even when they were in the middle of a novel, their teacher would sometimes share a picture book from the plinth as it related to something happening now, such as International Women's Day. Children felt as though books weren't being read to enhance their reading skills but to simply just enjoy a story.
Timetable – all staff to find at least 10 mins per day for read aloud time.	In the initial survey report, most children reported that their teacher read to them 'several times per week' – this increased in the second survey. In the initial survey, children reported that they didn't enjoy the read aloud as it wasn't necessarily a book they liked. This improved dramatically in the closing survey. Pupils reported that they ' <i>liked the acting he does for the characters</i> ' when their teacher reads aloud or ' <i>I get the story better when she reads it out to me</i> ' (a pupil with low reading skill) and even ' <i>because teachers pick good books</i> '.

<p>Staff set up pupil choice station for read aloud.</p>	<div data-bbox="603 197 938 443" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>This action was implemented to tackle the issue which arose in the initial survey where children who had reported that they don't like read aloud had specified that it was because it wasn't a book they liked. The staff gave the children choices and the stations were set up in their own way, giving staff autonomy over what worked for them. Some used google forms, some used named pegs, others had a voting system with cubes. In the latter survey, pupils reported that they 'loved getting a choice so they got books that they wanted to hear not just books the teacher wanted to read' (Y3 pupil). Staff reported that giving children a choice meant that a larger range of books were selected rather than just choosing a novel linked to the topic or writing each time.</p>
<p>Implement 'Reading Relay' initiative. Every Friday morning, teachers to swap classes for read aloud on a rotation. Head teacher to be part of the rotation.</p>	<p>This initiative unfortunately did not work. It was an initiative that was to be implemented once the library was reorganised, staff had managed to implement and sustain pupil book choice and a minimum of ten minutes read aloud per day. The reading relay's first hurdle was that it had to happen at the same time spread over 13 classrooms – something that was difficult to agree on. Once this was agreed on, Covid-19 rates rocketed after Christmas and class bubbles were reintroduced. We then had a number of staff off work consecutively. The initial idea came from staff reporting that they wanted a chance to build or maintain reader relationships with pupils beyond their class. This is an idea we are going to revisit next year, not as a weekly event as initially planned but as a half termly or 'one-off' special occasion read aloud as pupils and staff have shown a keen interest.</p>

Review

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

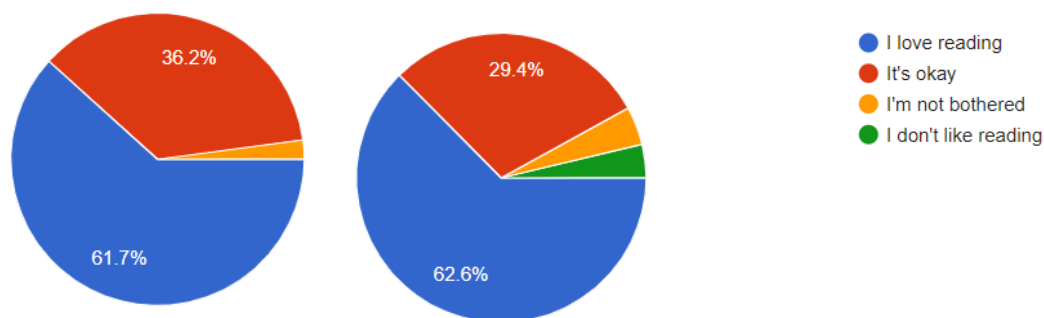
The voices of the children and teachers at our school express so much about the school's Reading for Pleasure journey so far. Reading conferences with focus pupils gave a clear insight into the impact on the Reading for Pleasure actions as we had focused on the reading disadvantaged for the focus children.

A focus child in Lower KS2 was unable to move from not liking reading, and not being sure why, to reporting that he liked reading and being able to explain himself further:

Question:	Term 1:	Term 2:	Term 3:
Do you enjoy reading and why?	No. It's boring. I don't like books because I just like playing and doing other things.	No. Some of the books are good but I don't like it when I have to	Sometimes. I like it when we can go to the library and choose a good book. I don't like reading

		read my stage book and it takes ages.	my stage book because I can't choose good ones from the box.
Does your teacher read aloud to you in class? How often?	Yes a few times a week.	<u>Yes every day before we go home.</u>	<u>Yes every day before we go home.</u>
Do you enjoy this and why?	Sometimes. I don't like it when it's a book with pictures and we can't see them. And sometimes the books are really long and we have to keep reading it.	<u>I like it when we listen to the story before we go home because we can just listen and relax. I like it when Mrs -xx- reads the different voices! She's so funny. And I like getting to choose a book.</u>	<u>Yeah I like it every day. We calm down and sit and listen and it's really good. I like getting to choose the books. I get a special job because I help choose the 3 books that everyone else votes on. I choose funny books. Mrs -xx- is really good at reading the books.</u>

Survey results show a true increase in the love of reading across school. When asked 'Do you like reading' there was an increase in number of pupils who say they love reading. There was also a decrease of pupils who say they do not like reading (now 3.% KS2) and pupils who say they are not bothered about reading (4% KS2).



However, what is more pleasing than this is seeing that children were more able to verbalise exactly *why* they felt the way they did – they understand themselves as readers more.

Children who answered yes when asked if they love reading, reported:

"I love reading because when I read I always feel like I'm in that world and its an awesome feeling."

"It is like being somewhere to go when you stay were you are"

"Because it opens my imagination and creativity."

"Reading gives me a chance to see the world as it could be, and I love that"

"I really like reading because it can picture an adventure in my head"

"I love reading because it can upgrade your imagination"

"The world we live in is corrupted with pain and loss, when i read, its as if all of this leaves me alone, like I am living the life of a different person, who does not stress"

"I think this because when I read more than 2 pages I get engaged and can't but the book down."

"I feel like it's real and when I read I'm never alone."
"it gives me nolog (knowledge) for the future"

When asked why they liked their teacher reading aloud, children who answered yes reported:

"A imaginative world is being described to me, although sometimes I like to describe this world to myself."
"its because its more easier to follow it instead of reading"
"I prefer someone reading to me but it depends on what book and if I enjoy the book or not"
"I like the acting he does for the characters. I also love the books we get to choose"
"I think this because, he reads speech like the character is actually saying it."
"It makes me feel relaxed"
"It's really fun listening to Mrs -xx- read because she always makes it very clear and easy to listen to."
"Because teachers pick good books"
"Because he puts so much suspense in it."
"I don't have to do the reading and i can just listen when the words are hard to read"
"I love books, and being read to is like listening to an audiobook, which I really enjoy"
"I think I like it because they use Good expressions for the Character and they create a mood."

Staff reported that they felt empowered to select texts that they know pupils will enjoy. There was also a big increase in the amount of contemporary authors listen in the teacher survey at the end of the project.

Sustain

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

The main thing that this project has opened up for me as a reading leader is knowing what Reading for Pleasure truly is. I can now see clearly the difference between the 'skill' and the 'will' when reading and I understand that equal value needs to be placed on both, as seen in the table below from Building Communities of Engaged Readers: Reading for Pleasure (Cremin et al., 2014):

Reading Instruction		Reading for Pleasure
is oriented towards:		is oriented towards:
Learning to read		Choosing to read
The skill		The will
Decoding and comprehension		Engagement and response
System readers		Lifelong readers
Teacher direction		Child direction
Teacher ownership		Child ownership
Attainment		Achievement
The minimum entitlement:		The maximum entitlement:
The "expected standard"		A reader for life
The standards agenda		The reader's own agenda

Distinctions between reading instruction and RfP (Cremin et al., 2014: 157) ©Open University

Next year, our school will have a new reading leader as I move to take on a position at a new school next year. I will be able to transfer all of my learning on Reading for Pleasure in my new context, where there is lots of work to be done. The great news is that the current teachers feel empowered to continue the work, with many wanting to take the part of reading leader next year. A comprehensive handover and transition of the role will take place.

The read aloud sessions will remain timetabled next year and staff are already thinking of how to elevate reading aloud even further in their new classrooms. The school is becoming a reading community; staff especially discuss reading and books informally in the staffroom and therefore the reading display will remain next year too. The new leader will know where to look for book prize winners and the calendar of key national events is displayed.

Staff are keen to continue developing their knowledge of new texts by visiting Waterstones as a staff and looking for new books together. The survey results from the end of the project showed 16/20 members of staff request some developmental work on poetry and poets, therefore this is on the action plan for next year as a focus.

Before leaving the role, I am going to write a Reading for Pleasure policy to ensure that the changes we have made continue as the impact has been so positive.

When reflecting on the project on a whole, I realise that generating a reading for pleasure culture in school extends so much further than a 'gimmick' or a 'one off'. As the Education Endowment Foundation (2022) state, 'Ultimately, it doesn't matter how great an educational idea or intervention is in principle; what really matters is how it manifests itself in the day-to-day work of people in schools'. The reading relay didn't work but we didn't need it to, in order to make progress on our journey. Small changes really do have a big impact.