

## Reading for Pleasure at St. Michael's C of E Primary School

St. Michael's CofE



Abbie Moore, Reading for Pleasure Lead

### Context

St. Michael's C of E Primary school is a small primary school in a village in County Durham. Currently, the school has mixed year group classes, including an early years unit for nursery children (age 3+) and reception. The school currently has 103 children on roll. 20% of children are on the SEND register. 14% of children are eligible for free school meals.

Over the last two years, we have worked extremely hard on our reading curriculum, and this includes reading for pleasure (RfP). Previously, we have focused on increasing staff knowledge of books, invested in new and engaging books based on the interests of the children and meetings with parents to encourage reading and how to support reading at home.

### Explore

Following the first RfP CPD session with the Open University (OU) team, it was evident we needed to implement changes to continue to promote reading for pleasure across the school to '*...nurture positive attitudes to reading and the affective engagement as readers*' (Cremin et al, 2014). Further to the discussion with the Head of School and RfP lead (who were spearheading the work), children and staff across the whole of the school completed the [OU surveys](#). This provided us with baseline data.

### Key Findings - Staff Surveys

Staff knowledge of children's literature was highlighted as a strength. Staff were confident to hold discussions regarding books with pupils and recommend literature to their class; this goes to show the impact prior work into reading and increased staff's knowledge has had. Teachers identified their classrooms as positive reading environments and read aloud to their class every day.

However, in the staff survey, when asked how often they informally chat about books with children, it was identified that informal book talk is something that can be overlooked.

How often do you informally chat about books with children				
	Regularly	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
No. Teachers	2	6	6	0

Similarly, when looking at the survey results, staff rarely noted their children discussing books. While this could have been due to staff not knowing what book talk looks like or it simply being an oversight, we highlighted this as an area to improve. The importance of a book talk is significant. This is highlighted by Cremin et al. (2014) who identify *'...the core of reading for pleasure is the reader's volition, their agency and desire to read, their anticipation of the satisfaction gained through the experience and/or afterward in interaction with others.'* Therefore, if we want to make RfP a social experience, it is important to consider the importance of book talk and the interaction this provides for both teachers and children.

How often do you observe children talking informally about books or other texts with their peers?				
	Regularly	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
No. Teachers	1	4	9	0

Following the survey results, during a staff meeting, we asked staff questions relating to this. One staff member, who is a newly qualified teacher said, *"The children probably do it, I just don't know what to look for,"* and another teacher said, *"We do talk about books but it isn't all the time, and is heavily teacher-led."*

The final note on book talk is the low number of times staff noted children recommending texts to other children. Research draws attention to the profoundly social aspect of reading, even when reading alone (Cremin et al., 2014) and so we knew that we wanted to encourage informal book talk in order to engage children in recommendations to both staff and their peers.

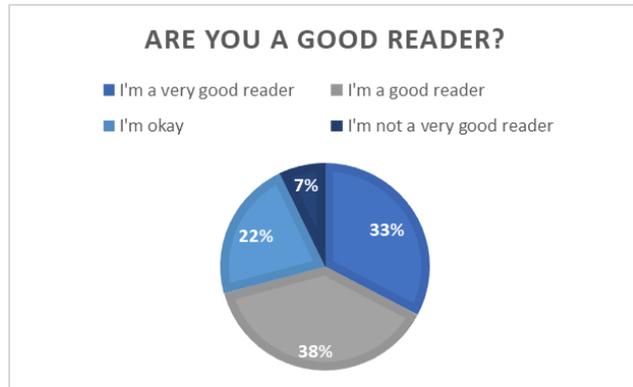
How often do you and the children recommend texts to each other?				
	Regularly	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
No. Teachers	3	7	2	2

Only three teachers regularly identified recommendations were taking place. Through discussions with these teachers, it was noted that these were discussions between friends and only when they were looking for a book to read. These teachers wouldn't approach any child in their class to initiate discussion and not one teacher identified discussing books with children outside of their own class.

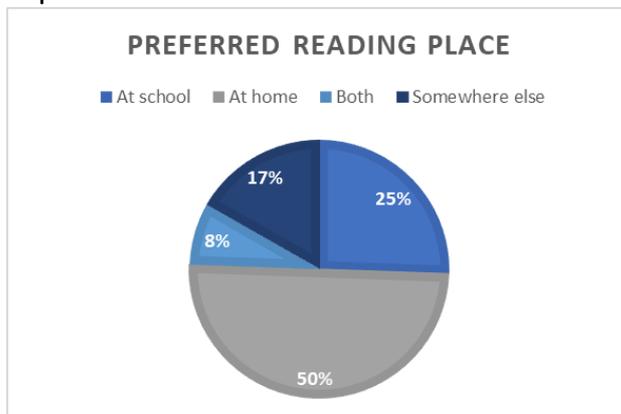
### Key Findings - Children's Surveys

When analysing the children's surveys, we found children saw their teachers as a reading role model; 85% of children identified their teachers as someone who loves reading. As with the staff surveys, children had a vast knowledge of children's literature and could name a variety of books and authors that were not just limited to class texts.

The majority of key stage one and key stage two children thought of themselves as being a good or very good reader (71%) with only 7% of children reporting they didn't think they were very good readers.



However, an element of the survey we found particularly surprising was the children's preferred reading places. Only 25% of children preferred reading in school and 8% of children preferred reading at school and home. When discussing with the children, they said, "I prefer reading at home because it is more comfortable" and "I can read books I want at home." This was unexpected and an area we identified we needed to improve.



### Analysis of findings

It was evident from the surveys that we needed to further embed an RfP pedagogy in school. While staff were enthusiastic about reading with their children, it was noted staff were not confident chatting about reading with their classes and it was rarely happening in classrooms. By improving their confidence in book talk and developing children's book talk we could '...rouse minds to life' (Tharpe & Gallimore, 1988). Developing book talk can make a significant difference to the overall lives of the children by promoting critical thinking when topics are related to children's developing identities, including race, gender, and class (McCarthy, 2001). Another area of improvement we wanted to impact upon was the social reading environment. 67% of

children preferred to read at home or somewhere else, so this was a clear area in need of change.

Our two aims:

1. Pedagogy: Informal book talk
2. Pedagogy: Social reading environment

## **Prepare**

### The Change Team

Initially, several members of staff across the school were invited to join the change team. This team consisted of the Head of School, RfP lead, KS2 HLTA and EYFS TA. The change team would oversee not only the impact of our work on focus children, but to help teachers with recommendations and prompts with informal book talk.

### Action Plan

Members of the change team, devised an action plan for our journey, outlining responsibilities and timelines to work towards. While the RfP lead would oversee the action plan, each member of staff and change team member were aware what was expected of them and this was shared at regular intervals.

### Staff Meetings

Regular staff meetings were organised and time was allocated to share information regarding our reading for pleasure journey. During designated meetings, staff were encouraged to bring a book with them and undertake book talk with colleagues. During staff meetings, time was allocated to share ideas to promote informal book talk in classrooms and how we can develop our reading environments to engage children.

### Focus Children

During a designated staff meeting, staff were asked to identify specific pupils to track using observation, informal chats, reading activities and analysis of survey information. Each year group chose three reluctant readers. Throughout the year each teacher would collect notes on their focus children in sheet. Regular check-ins were made with the class teachers and the change team.

## Deliver

### Aim 1: Pedagogy: Develop Book Talk

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<p><b>Padlets</b></p> <p>Each class had their own Padlet to add information about books they have read; either independently (teacher and child), as a class or at home. Children and teachers could then use this to instigate book talk or link with recommendations. The links were shared for home on the newsletter weekly and across our different platforms.</p> 	<p><b>Reading ambassadors</b></p> <p>Children of all reading abilities in KS2, each took part of being a Reading Ambassador with children in KS1 and EYFS. This has provided children with the opportunity to initiate book talk with children of all ages and promote a love of reading.</p> 	<p><b>Timetable sessions</b></p> <p>Reading sessions were already timetabled on the weekly timetable but the focus was altered to book talk. Teachers were informed about book talk and used the informal book talk poster as prompts.</p> 
<p><b>Time for recommendations</b></p> <p>As part of the allocated time, children were encouraged to identify books a peer may enjoy and share why. When children needed a new book, they were initially encouraged to ask a peer with similar reading interests - this then became second nature to the children, requiring less prompts.</p> 	<p><b>Book doors</b></p> <p>Children provided with the opportunity to add their review to their class book door with the aim to engage children who may be reluctant to verbally share. Staff created a staff book door too to share their reviews and recommendations.</p> 	<p><b>Links across the curriculum</b></p> <p>Books linked to display across the school were carefully selected. This was used to engage the children in book talk.</p>  

When looking to develop our first aim we looked closely how we can develop book talk across a range of platforms to engage children with making recommendations and encouraging book talk.

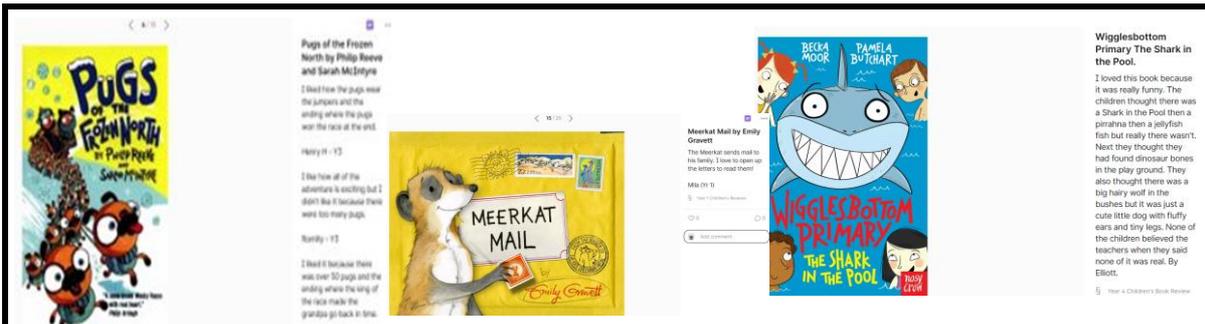
### Padlet

One technique we wanted to further develop was the use of Padlet for children to share write book reviews on. This was shared between home and school for children and parents to identify what they were reading at home and share their love of reading. Reviews were read out and shared within classes. Children were encouraged to use the Padlet independently.



### Impact

In KS2 this has been widely used by children and teachers. However, it is more difficult to facilitate in KS1 so has been completed as a whole class activity. While some parents use the Padlet, this has not been as successful as we had hoped. Going forward, this is something we are going to continue to promote and next year when we have meetings, we will be sharing with parents how to use Padlet so we can focus on trends and themes of what children are reading at home.



## Book Doors

Another way we wanted to encourage children to talk about reading and recommend books to their peers was for each class to have a book door; this was broken down into three sections. The top section of the door was linked to the class text. Here the children asked questions about the book at the beginning and at different sections for children to revisit later. The middle section was linked to a question for children to write their answers on (for example, what is your favourite book and why) and finally, children were given free rein to write their review of a book of their choice on the door.



## Impact

The reading doors were very popular - children loved writing on them! All children in KS1 and KS2 have had the opportunity to add their reviews. For EYFS and KS1, this was very much teacher led with some children needing a teacher to scribe for them but the words and ideas were very much from the children. Doors had to be cleaned regularly so children could write new reviews on.

A KS2 HLTA observed, "Children who can be reluctant to share their views to a whole class, are more confident to initiate book talk with the use of the book door." This coincides with the views of the children with one Year 4 Focus Child who said, "I like

writing on the book door. My friends can see what I think when I'm too nervous to share and I can point them to it."

### **Children as Reading Ambassadors**

Children from KS2 were all provided with the opportunity to buddy with children from across the school to promote a love a reading and intellectual curiosity. All children, even those who would not class themselves as a good reader took part.



During these activities, a variety of texts were made readily available for children so that they had lots of choice. Initially, we thought the children would require a lot of prompts regarding book talk, however, it soon became apparent then needed little prompting which showcased the high-profile book talk had begun to have in the classroom - even without the children and staff realising! We ensured time was allocated for this to happen as well as during playtime and lunchtimes.

### **Impact**

This has been very successful in the children's engagement in book talk and using the reading environment. Feedback from children and staff has been fantastic. The EYFS teacher said, "Children love the older children reading with them and listening to them engage with each other is amazing. They really love talking about the books and characters and it has become second nature."



## Aim 2: Pedagogy: Develop Social Reading Environments

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<p><b>Outdoor reading space</b></p>  <p>Due to the limited indoor space, we wanted to make use of the vast outdoor areas we had around the school grounds. We carefully identified different areas around that could be used as reading areas.</p>	<p><b>Indoor reading space</b></p>  <p>The indoor reading space was stripped back and children were asked what would make it a positive reading environment. KS2 classrooms had a selection a beanbags and pillows. Areas were kept simple, with the focus being 'quiet and relaxing' as asked by the children.</p>	<p><b>Resource the reading environment</b></p> <p>Children from each class were allocated a budget to select their own reading books. Children thoroughly enjoyed this activity - having ownership over their own books.</p>
<p><b>Audio books</b></p> <p>Children in EYFS were able to use tablets to scan a QR code and listened to their friends. Books were linked to the interest of the children. To engage the children further, they were able to use puppets as the story was being told or re-enact to a friend.</p> 		

### Indoor and Outdoor Environments

Our second aim was to develop the social reading environment to engage children with reading in school. To begin we initially reviewed our current reading environments; both indoor and outdoor. Due to being a small school, indoor reading areas were sparse and we made the best of the areas we had and used comfortable cushions and beanbags. We focused on the outdoor environments making the areas accessible for all children and making them interesting. As cited in Cremin et al. (2014) '...reading can take place anywhere...' and this is something we wanted to promote across St. Michael's.

### Reading Selection

Each class were provided with a budget to purchase books for their outdoor library. The children all selected their own class selection of books through organised book talk with their class teachers.



## Impact

When reviewing the social reading environments, we received an abundance of positive feedback from other children from being able to take ownership over what they are reading.

The children utilized the different areas, however, children also enjoyed creating their own reading environments. For example, the Year 5/6 boys liked to create their own dens using the tarpaulins and hide away with a book. One of our Year 5 Focus Children said, "Being able to pick my own book is really fun! I like to hide away sometimes and as Miss says, get lost in a book."

The use of the reading environments also encouraged pupil to pupil book talk and especially recommendations. Teachers noted that during play, children would sit and read and swap around their books, or read them together. This has been noted in the attitudes of the children too with one Year 3 child saying, "My friends and I like to read books and swap ones that we know each other will like."

## Review

At the end of the year, we asked teachers and children to complete the initial survey again so we could analyse the data from our baseline (September). Similarly, we also used the observations and discussions with staff and children as well as the data from the survey to generate a wider understanding of the impact this has had across the school.

### May Survey Results: Staff

The data from the staff survey results showed a vast improvement in the amount of book talk that they not only engaged in, but also saw happening regularly in their classroom.

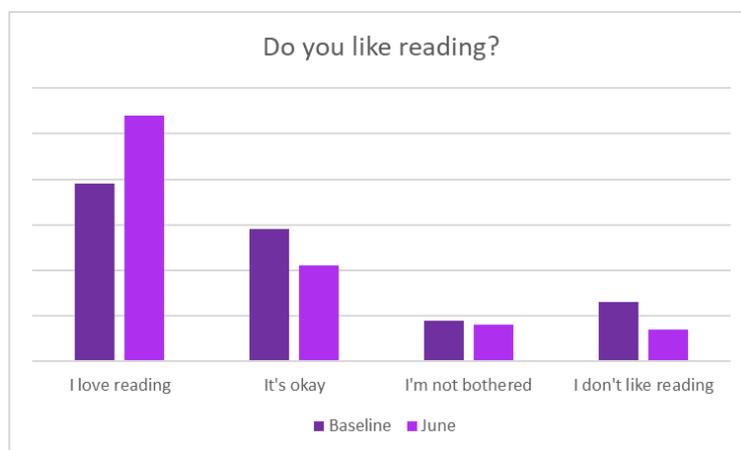
How often do you informally chat about books with children				
	Regularly	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
No. Teachers	14	0	0	0
How often do you observe children talking informally about books or other texts with their peers?				
	Regularly	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
No. Teachers	13	1	0	0
How often do you and the children recommend texts to each other?				
	Regularly	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
No. Teachers	12	4	0	0

The Year 5/6 HLTA noted, "Children will happily discuss books with their peers and ask for advice or recommendations on which book to read next." and the Year 3

teacher said, "Some children can still be shy to recommend books to one another but they are becoming much more familiar with it and will use different platforms to review books and initiate book talk."

### May Survey Results: Children

Overall, the love of reading in school has increased, with 73% of children identifying themselves as someone who loves reading. This is a significant improvement in the increase of children who now identify themselves as a reader. Teachers across the school have noted a difference in overall attitude to reading with the KS1 teacher saying, "Children come into school and are excited to share what they have been reading or facts they think their friends, or I will find interesting."



Another teacher noted the significant difference in children's attitude to reading and their want to share what they have read; noting a positive impact on their confidence and vocabulary when sharing with teacher or their peers.

More children now liked to read in school. When asked why, a Year 5 child said, "I have somewhere to go to read now. I can sit by myself and just read or with my friends and talk about what we are all reading but there is always somewhere for me to go and with a book of my choice."

### PREFERRED READING PLACE (MAY)



## Focus Children

Our focus children were selected because they were reluctant readers and they were difficult to be engaged during reading activities. From September's survey results, 73% of children identified themselves as children who didn't like reading. In May, this decreased to now only 33% who identify themselves as someone who does not like reading.

Year Group	Gender	Reason	View on Reading (September)	View on Reading (May)
2	Male	Reluctant reader	I don't like reading	I don't like reading
2	Female	Reluctant reader	I don't like reading	I like reading
2	Female	Reluctant reader	I like reading	I like reading
3	Male	Reluctant reader	I don't like reading	I don't like reading
3	Male	Reluctant reader	I don't like reading	I like reading
3	Female	Reluctant reader	I don't like reading	I like reading
4	Female	Reluctant reader	I don't like reading	I like reading
4	Female	Reluctant reader	I don't like reading	I like reading
4	Male	Reluctant reader	I like reading	I like reading
5	Male	Reluctant reader	I don't like reading	I don't like reading
5	Female	Reluctant reader	I don't like reading	I don't like reading
5	Male	Reluctant reader	I like reading	I like reading
6	Male	Reluctant reader	I like reading	I like reading
6	Female	Reluctant reader	I don't like reading	I like reading
6	Female	Reluctant reader	I don't like reading	I don't like reading

Staff covering lunchtimes and playtimes monitored reading areas carefully and paid close attention to the children who visited them. Staff noted a significant increase in the number of children visiting the areas with more than 80% of focus children visiting the reading areas at least once a week. Teachers also noted a stark difference in the children's confidence grew to share during book talk.

### **Year 2 Focus Child**

This Year 2 focus child has found reading difficult and has been reluctant to read. They wouldn't pick up a book without an adult present, would shy away during lesson time and wouldn't be found near the reading areas during playtimes unless it was an adult reading. During teacher led story time, the child would be engaged in the session but would be reluctant to share during book talk activities. In September, during a conversation with a member of the change team, the child said, "Sometimes I don't want to read because I find it too difficult. Even though I love listening to my teacher's stories, reading my own book is too hard so I don't."

By May, this child was more confident to talk about books with their friends. The Year 2 TA said, "They will now talk about books with their friends and they will share during book talk activities." When talking to the child about their new interests in books, they said, "My friends can help me and they tell me the best books to read." This child's confidence has grown significantly over the course of the year and will now read both in school and at home most of the time without needing prompts from adults. This child has now started writing and telling their own stories to their friends.

### Year 6 Focus Child

This child has always been a good reader and working in line with age-related expectations; however, they have been reluctant to read both at home and in school.. In September, this child was reluctant participate in reading time, either independent or class and wouldn't be found in the reading areas during breaktime and lunchtime. When asked why he doesn't like to read, he said, "At home I'd prefer to play on my Xbox and at school it just doesn't interest me. I just don't like to read."

In May, this child is well thought of by the younger readers as one of the reading ambassadors. They said, "I like reading to the little ones. They like my different voices. They also love my fact books." This child identified a preference in he liked and this was promoted in class. This child now regularly goes to an adult in awe at an amazing fact he has found out about from the non-fiction texts that are available. The child now initiates book talk in class and during playtimes and lunchtimes.

### Sustain

As RfP lead, I will continue to develop RfP at St. Michael's to promote a love of reading and stimulate curiosity. Reading for pleasure allows children to experience other worlds and cultures (Clark and Rumbold, 2006) linking with developing the cultural capital of children; allowing them experiences through other means.

We will continue to carefully identify our next steps (continuing work as a change team), identify areas for professional development and continue to monitor and evaluate our work. Cremin et al. (2014) states, '*Developing children's desire to read is a subtle process—we cannot demand they find pleasure in any particular text, but we can entice and engage them as readers, and create relaxed invitational spaces for reading.*' Following this year, we will continue to provide children with an abundance of opportunities, texts and areas to promote reading. One way we are going to continue to develop book talk is using the 'Headteachers Book of the Week' to encourage children to talk about books with all adults. Finally, we are going to continue to raise the profile of the reading ambassadors in key stage two due to the positive feedback from staff and children this received.

We have already begun to identify how to further promote RfP across the curriculum and at home too. Clark and Rumbold (2006) identify the home environment as essential to the early teaching of reading and fostering a child's love of reading. Therefore it is essential we continue to work with parents to promote this further. Covid-19 has had an impact on parental engagement and we aim to create book groups for parents and book clubs outside of school. We will promote the [Summer Reading Challenge](#) and encourage children and parents to participate. Furthermore, we will be looking to continue to develop home engagement in the Padlets so we can look closely the books children are reading at home.

In relation to the curriculum, we will continue to work with staff to develop their understanding of reading for pleasure. As cited in Cremin et al. (2014), '*...creating an*

*effective balance between reading instruction and reading for pleasure is neither simple nor straight forward.* This is something as a school we have worked had this year to develop and will continue to improve this throughout the next year. Raising the profile of poetry is high on our agenda next year. While we have poetry on our reading long term plan for literacy lessons, there is not an variety of texts children can access during their RfP time.