

# Woolpit Primary Academy

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Woolpit Primary Academy

NURTURE • RESILIENCE • INSPIRATION • RESPECT

## Context

Woolpit is a smaller than average primary school in a village in semi-rural Suffolk. We currently have 118 children on roll, and 44% pupil premium children.

Over the last 2 years the school has been making rapid improvement with a heavy focus on developing and embedding a rich curriculum, which has reading at its heart. We have since received support from Myland Hub and have developed a rigorous blueprint for the teaching of phonics to ensure consistency across the school. We have worked hard to raise attainment in reading. Amongst other actions, we have purchased Accelerated Reader and developed our English curriculum, implementing CLPE's the Power of Reading. Teachers read with and to their classes and these strategies have all had a significant impact on raising standards.

## Explore

In order to establish priorities for the programme year, I used the following information to establish a baseline:

- [Open University pupil surveys](#): children took part in the surveys
- [Open University staff review surveys](#) and discussions regarding the reading activities which take place in the classrooms
- learning walks exploring how reading is celebrated in classrooms and around school
- conversations with pupils.

The pupil surveys demonstrated a significant majority of pupils felt their teachers loved reading and read every day to their class; 84% of pupils loved reading and 74% acknowledged their teacher read every day. This showed how successful our school improvement work for reading has been.

Does your Teacher...



■ love reading ■ think it's ok  
■ not bothered ■ Doesn't like it

Does your teacher read aloud to the class?



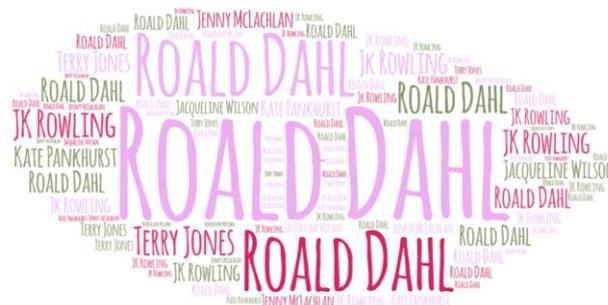
■ everyday ■ several times a week  
■ once a week ■ less than once a week

However, one of the most surprising elements of the surveys completed was the lack of book talk children felt took place in class. This was particularly surprising given the strong emphasis our curriculum has on reading and the embedding the Power of Reading in every class. In KS2, 37% of children felt they chatted with adults in school about what they had chosen to read, while at home this was 63%.

This made me begin to think about the type of reading that happens in school: children were not necessarily having time to read individually with an adult. Our class reading environments have changed as all books are located in the library and many classes lacked reading areas.

56% of KS2 children stated that they preferred to read at home. 23% stated somewhere else and only 21% of children claimed they preferred reading at school. The reasoning for this was because home was comfier and quieter. This again brought me back to considering our school and class reading environments.

Alongside this, when the staff surveys were evaluated, it became evident that although we have heavily invested in books linked to the Power of Reading and the children are exposed to a vast range of authors linked to Power of Reading, when questioned about authors, illustrators and poets, staff reverted back to popular authors and those from childhood. Two members of staff were unable to name any poets and one member of EYFS was unable to name more than one illustrator.



When asked, ‘how do you find out about children’s attitudes to reading’ the response across school varied considerably with one member of staff unable to answer, one member stating, ‘*We don’t do this enough,*’ and several members of staff stating that it’s discussed during reading times and through children’s choices of books. However, when asked, ‘how often do you seek out specific books or other reading material for particular children?’ A quarter of teachers stated that they rarely found specific books for children.

Seeking out Specific books for Children



■ regularly ■ sometimes ■ rarely ■ Never

## Prepare

Woolpit is a small primary school where everyone is thoroughly invested in developing every child as a reader. Reading is at the heart of our curriculum. However, due to different challenges, the ability to develop a **change team** has been difficult. Originally this group was made up of our English team: me (Deputy Head, Year 6 class teacher and Reading Lead), our Writing Lead (Year 5 class teacher) and Phonics Lead (EYFS and Year 1 class teacher), as well as a HLTA, who previously worked at Woolpit as a teacher and English lead and is also a school governor with the responsibility for English. Once the pupil and staff surveys were completed, I shared the findings with the change team and then with the rest of the school staff. From the evidence collected and discussions with the change team, I made the decision to focus on our school reading environment and teacher's own book knowledge.

### **1) Reading for pleasure subject knowledge aspect: teacher knowledge and use of children's literature**

**Aim: to develop teachers' knowledge of children's literature and other texts so staff can use growing expertise to promote a love of reading across the school**

*'Primary teachers do not appear to keep abreast of children's literature, they have a limited subject knowledge of quality authors, picture books creators and poets and seem to rely on their childhood reading' (Cremin et al., 2014).*

This was very apparent in our staff surveys. They had limited knowledge of authors. Research also states when 1,200 teachers were questioned regarding the last book they had read aloud to their class: 143 teachers stated Roald Dahl (Cremin et al., 2008). This was highlighted in our research; Roald Dahl was predominately the 'go to' author. As part of our discussions in school, we considered why this was and through further analysis concluded it was due to childhood choices and preferences.

Only 37% of children felt that their teacher carried out any type of book talk, and 63% stated this took place at home.

### **2) Reading for pleasure pedagogy: reading environment**

**Aim: to develop a comfortable and engaging space for the enjoyment of reading in the classroom.**

We had established a library with the Accelerated Reader books taken from our classrooms. This left our classrooms short of books and without a class library – a comfortable area which children enjoyed using when reading independently, in small groups and browsing.

We suspected that the lack of books in class and the limited presence of reading in classrooms fed into the children's preference of reading at home. We wanted to encourage children: *'to read anything, to read anywhere, and to dip in'* (Pennac D., 2006).

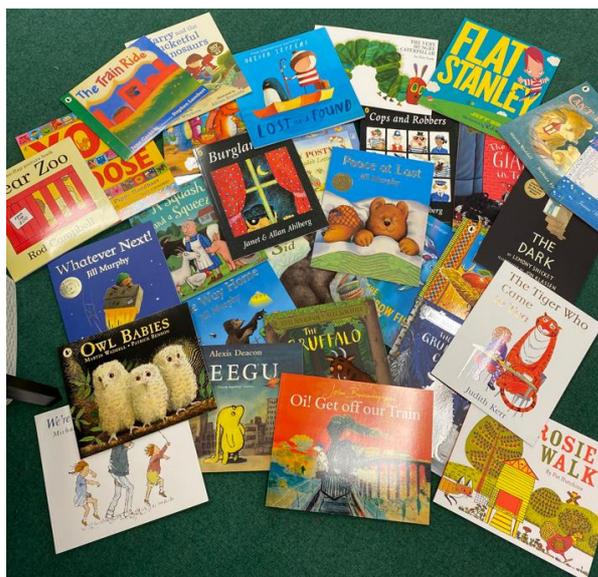
## Deliver

**Aim 1: to develop teachers' knowledge of children's literature and other texts so staff can use growing expertise to promote a love of reading across the school**

Action	Success criteria	impact
Staff to research and purchase new books	Staff are knowledgeable about a range of new books and authors  Staff can promote a range of books and authors to children and staff, including discussions with class/individual children and other staff	Children's motivation to read will increase. This will be evident through informal observations and pupil perceptions
Staff to create book recommendations of books read	Staff can promote a range of books and authors to children and staff, including discussions with class/individual children and other staff	Children will have a wider range of genres and books available for them to read. This will be evident through pupil perception chats and informal observations
Each class teacher to choose a spine of books to read aloud to class throughout the academic year	Children will be exposed to a range of new quality texts in library  Children's range of genre read will increase	Children will have a wider range of genres and books available for them to read. This will be evident through pupil perception chats and informal observations

We shared the findings from teacher surveys with staff and discussed the choices of authors. During this discussion, it became apparent that teacher choices were dependent on their own reading experience as children and whether teachers had children themselves and how old they were. Teachers were given the opportunity to **visit a book shop** instead of a staff meeting to immerse themselves in the books and discover new children's literature. They were also given a **budget to purchase a selection of books for their class**. Children and teachers spent time looking at and reading the purchased books, which were then used as a basis to purchase more. Each class now has more ownership over their book stock – the texts are tempting to them, and they are well-known by the teacher. One focus child in Year 6, who had always felt embarrassed by the books he read was ecstatic because we bought several graphic novels from the Young Bond series. He had wanted to read these books but struggled with them. After choosing to read one of the graphic novels, he said, *'Maybe once I've read the graphic novel, I'll be able to read the book, because I'll understand the words better.'*

Every class added a **'book chat' session** into their weekly timetable. This was time where teachers modelled book talk. They discussed who was reading what; how reading makes us feel; who might like what and talked about the new books added to the library. Children and teachers were taking part in informal book talk. During pupil voice conversations, children have begun saying, *'I choose this because M suggested I might like it.'* Through these conversations I have come to realise book talk often take place in the library when children are changing their Accelerated Reader books, but we don't always witness this.



Class teachers put together a **spine of books for each class - books which the class will or have read together**; they are then added to the class reading area with other suggestions by the same author or on a similar theme. This was a **growing bank of books which each class has in common**, adding to the sense of being a reading community.

On a regular basis, book recommendations for feature books have been added to part of our reading displays. These are book reviews from any adults or children within school. They

can be as simple as a post-it note, but they promote books and book talk, and mean that the reading environment is interactive and always changing. It's alive.

**Aim 2: to develop a comfortable and engaging space for the enjoyment of reading in the classroom**

Action	Success criteria	Impact
Develop a range of reading boxes within the classroom reading space. Boxes to include: featured author box, new texts, picture books, magazines and graphic novels	Books are well organised and accessible to children  Children will take part in informal discussions about texts read	Children will talk with enthusiasm regarding their choice of reading  Children will recommend books to other children based on informal discussions
Class teachers to provide reading recommendations (as seen in Waterstones) short recommendation hung over front cover of book	Reading surveys will demonstrate an increase in types of genre read  Staff will be able to promote a range of genres to individual children	The breadth of children's reading will increase. Children's interest in different topics will improve and children will form opinions and knowledge regarding what read

<p>Ask Friends of Woolpit Primary Academy to purchase magazine subscriptions for the school: Junior News/Kids National Geographic/Story Box</p>	<p>Reading surveys will demonstrate an increase in types of genre read</p> <p>Staff will be able to promote a range of genres to individual children</p>	<p>The breadth of children's reading will increase. Children's interest in different topics will improve and children will form opinions and knowledge regarding what read</p>
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Each class now has a **well-developed reading area**. They have a bookshelf to showcase high-quality texts and staff have made these areas more inviting and comfortable by adding cushions, rugs and throws. Classroom **reading areas are informal**. They now encourage browsing and book talk. Boxes of books have been established to include teacher's choice, children's recommendations and titles linked to our class work, as well as graphic novels. We have increased the accessibility of texts that tempt our pupils. We subscribe to magazines and the School Council discussed and explained in assembly how the magazines would be shared out amongst the classes. Due to the success of the magazine subscriptions, children have voted for more.

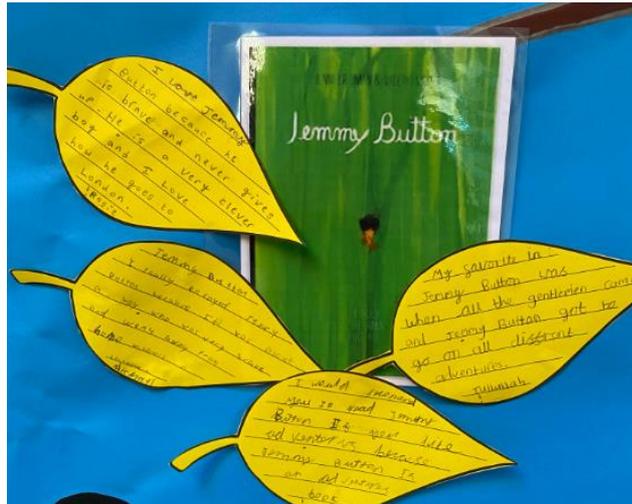
Professor Teresa Cremin (2019) stated: *'much depends upon the extent to which these pedagogic practices are RIST, that is: reader-led; informal; social and with texts that tempt. If as teachers we hold the reading reins too tightly and don't ensure that our reading for pleasure pedagogy is reader-led, reader-directed and reader-owned, we will never create communities of engaged readers.'* At Woolpit, we were trying to involve everyone and give children more say over their reading for pleasure with the teachers as fellow readers.

### **Review**

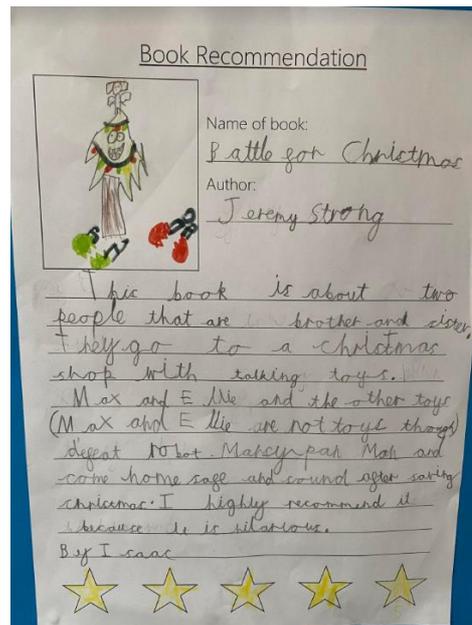
Reviewing the impact of our work began by revisiting the pupil and staff surveys. We collected data from class teachers and TAs and carried out reading perception sessions with focus pupils.

**Aim 1: to develop teachers' knowledge of children's literature and other texts so staff can use growing expertise to promote a love of reading across the school**

The most positive aspect of the survey was linked to the question: 'Does anyone talk to you at school about the books you read?' The first survey indicated 37% children felt they talked about what they were reading in school, and 63% at home. The second survey indicated 92% felt they talked with someone at school about what they were reading. This demonstrated to us that by upskilling staff through different CPD opportunities, e.g., researching books,



modelling book talk and setting aside weekly book talk sessions across school there had been a culture shift. Our reading environments were interactive and lively. The teachers were able to talk to the children about their reading.



**Aim 2: to develop a comfortable and engaging space for the enjoyment of reading in the classroom**

We hadn't previously considered the impact moving all books into a central library would have on children's view of the enjoyment of reading in school. However, with the loss of books in the classroom and without a dedicated reading area, 56% of children stated they preferred reading at home because it was comfier and quieter. Therefore, we aimed to provide a more inviting reading area in class with a wide range of reading material for the children to read, share and discuss. The most successful aspect of this was subscribing to magazines such as Junior This Week, Match of the Day and National Geographic Kids. During pupil voice meetings, children talked about enjoying sharing magazines with their friends; they discussed their opinions on what they had read and were keen to explain that they had heard about events from the magazines in the news. The children looked



forward to the next addition arriving in school: *'I like to be the first to see the new Match of the day on the shelf before anyone else.'*

We developed boxes of books in our reading area, which were themed differently, e.g., linked to an author the children had been exposed to in other areas of the curriculum; books on a similar subject; books recommended by the teacher or children themselves and specific genres of books - graphic novels, magazines or poetry.

Teachers and other staff members began adding recommendations to books and children began writing their own reviews independently. There is still a long way to go in developing the classroom reading

environments, but our second survey data indicated that 56% of pupils now preferred reading at school: a significant increase.

## Focus children

Over the year, we identified and monitored the impact of the approaches on a small number of children across the school.

### Focus child 1: AB, Year 6

A is a child who has struggled with reading and although not diagnosed has dyslexic traits. This have impacted on their reading and all other aspects of their education, and this child has very low self-esteem. We believe this child has not shown an interest in reading to avoid highlighting they have an issue with reading. A is a child who wants to please. They have enjoyed the texts used in Year 6 for English work and through focused reading intervention to support fluency and decoding, they have made significant progress. This has supported their self-esteem and they now demonstrate an enjoyment of reading. A recently told me, *'I couldn't read these words last year- now I can read so much more.'*

Observations of A and conversations with them have shown that they have developed a love of graphic novels and the Beast Quest series of books, which they have worked their way through, talking about which one they want to read next and which season of book

they are reading. The Beast Quest series was recommended to this child by another child in the class – they are listening to others and sharing recommendations, showing autonomy, a stronger reader identity and choice. This child's reading and writing attainment has been positively impacted. They use vivid and imaginative description in writing and have reached age-related expectations at the end of this year.

### Focus child 2: LS, Year 6

LS is a child who has consistently worked on pre-key stage scale for English. At the beginning of Year 6 they were a child who refused to read and became fairly disruptive and negative during reading sessions.

Over the course of the year, LS has relaxed more around books and started to make their own preferences. This has been supported by the classroom environment: boxes of books by the author we've studied in class and similar genres, as well as a range of magazines and books recommended by the teacher and children. This child now squirrels books away under their desk and are able to talk about ways they choose a book, *'I look at the blurb and see if it's about things I like.'* LS gets excited when new books arrive in school, *'There are so many books I want to read.'* LS has recently bought the text *Malamander* so they can read it alongside the teacher in class. They recently asked, *'Can I go past the point we've got up to in class?'* LS has shown an interest in everything we have read this year and observations of them demonstrate that their world is being opened up by the texts made available to them. On a recent trip to Dunwich, they exclaimed that they couldn't wait to come back and read the information with their parents, as they'd run out of time on the day – they are reading for pleasure for different purposes – a real achievement!

### Sustain

Through our year long journey to develop reading for pleasure at Woolpit Primary Academy the most important thing myself and the rest of the staff have learnt is that **reading for pleasure, doesn't just happen and can't be left to chance.** As role models, we need to model and enthuse children to read by sharing our knowledge of texts, ensuring children feel we listen to their preferences and struggles and provide opportunities for them to enjoy, relax and thrive with a book.

Unfortunately, our change team weren't able to meet regularly and due to the varied commitments of the team, this group did disintegrate. However, due to the small size of our school, conversations regularly took place in the staffroom, corridors and in staff meetings and this supported us to implement and monitor the impact of change. Our Headteacher is completely committed to developing a strong reading culture and therefore reading for pleasure will always be part of our school's curriculum intent.

Even though our staff are stretched, we have made rapid and hopefully long-lasting changes. We value reading for pleasure as the most important part of our curriculum. Reading quality texts underpins every aspect of our curriculum. With this in mind, we will continue to give teachers time to read and research texts to share with their classes. Informal book talk within classes will be a non-negotiable aspect of each class timetable.

Our second set of data showed no improvement in the number of children reading at home (16%) and a decrease in the number of children talking to their parents about what they are reading. Therefore, as part of our 2022-23 Reading Action Plan, we intend to include parents in our reading for pleasure journey by inviting them in to school to share books with their children and offer workshops providing opportunities for parents to spend time reading and talking about their own book preferences, sharing stories and developing book blethers between each other and their own children. This will involve members of our change team delivering the workshops and of course the expectation that our teachers are experts and role models.

We intend to continue to monitor our focus children as they move through school. We are going to establish book clubs for our more vulnerable children to ensure we are constantly developing and exposing them to a love of reading. This can follow the staff model - the buzz around book talk has been so infectious that our school staff have established a book club and our staffroom is full of recommendations – another library!