



The Voice of Children

ANNABEL COOPER



Context

- My name is Annabel Cooper and I am the EYFS, KS1, Phonics and Reading Lead at Spalding Parish CofE Primary School in Lincolnshire.
- Our School Development Plan has a high focus on early reading skills with a specific reference to the teaching of phonics. It also looks at the development and implementation of providing children with high quality texts from a range of authors for both reading and writing.

OU Research inspiration and rationale

When embarking of our RfP journey, the first training session focused on the adult as readers. I soon realized that my own journey with reading had not been plain sailing. Raised in a culture where the classics e.g. Jane Ayre, Pride and Prejudice etc., were classed as 'reading' and anything else was not, meant that I quickly switched off to the reading process. Give me a poem where my imagination could run wild with interpretation, my enthusiasm lit up but this was NOT classed as reading.

Fast forward to our initial training and I quickly realised that I was in fact a reader just not in others' pre-conceived ways. It made me wonder about the culture in our school. Were there any teachers who still opted purely for the classics? Did people get stuck with one author (most commonly Roald Dahl)? Were there members of staff who had been through a similar process as myself but most importantly.... Were there children in our school who felt the same? Children who hadn't found the text type that lit a fire in their belly? Children who hadn't been given the chance to explore and more importantly discuss the texts that they like and equally those that they didn't like?

This prompted me to conduct initial research into the 5 findings from the Teachers as Readers research, Cremin et al., (2014). I wanted to find our first focus and to start making a difference not just to children's attainment but to children's love of reading.

OU Research inspiration and rationale.

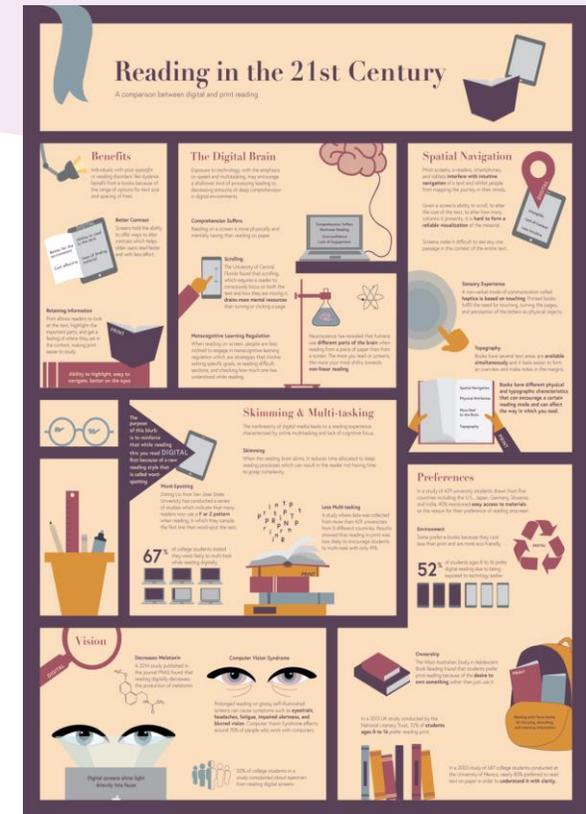
1. Considerable **knowledge of children's literature** and other texts

Through discussions with staff it became very clear **that knowledge of children's literature** was extremely **varied**. Those who had a vast knowledge tended to be **key stage or year group specific** and this information was very **rarely shared**.

It made sense that this was the first place to start as without this key strand, we did not have the **foundations to build a 'Reading Community'**

As the teachers developed their own reading communities in local groups, they came to value the time as adult readers to read, share and discuss their reading. Through this process, they widened their repertoires of children's literature and other texts and learnt about themselves as readers, about reading in the 21st century and the socially constructed nature of reading. As a consequence, they began to share their increased knowledge and enthusiasm for children's texts with their classes. Conversations about texts developed and reading aloud became for many a kind of bonding time. New and extended opportunities for interaction around texts developed.

This paragraph sited within **'Building Communities of Engaged Readers (Cremin et al., 2014)** really resonated with me. I knew that I wanted the children at our school to have these **special bonding times** amongst themselves, with their peers and their teachers; to have a **true understanding** of what reading in the **21st Century** actually looked like. To have texts recommended to them but equally to share their own voice and recommendations and that being a 'Reader' actually had **no stereotype!**



Aims

Initially, the aim of our RfP journey was to ensure that teachers had a...

- Considerable **knowledge of children's literature** and other texts

However, after completing both student and teacher questionnaires we also decided to add an additional aim to work alongside the above, which was to develop...

- A **reading for pleasure pedagogy** with a focus on
- Informal book talk, inside-text talk and recommendations

Outline

Everything Phonics

- **Policy and supporting documents**

We started by rewriting our **Phonics Policy**, ensuring that we had the **books** that **matched** the scheme and generally getting the whole staff excited about phonics. This was a crucial step in our journey in order to ensure that a **consistent approach** to early reading was being provided.

- **Training**

Ensuring that staff had a very **secure understanding** of phonics and early reading skills was imperative to the whole process. The whole school received face to face phonics training by our provider in order to ensure that everyone had the **knowledge and foundations** to provide early reading support to children. Without this understanding, it is hard to be able to identify a text that a child can **access independently** at any stage in their reading journey.



Outline

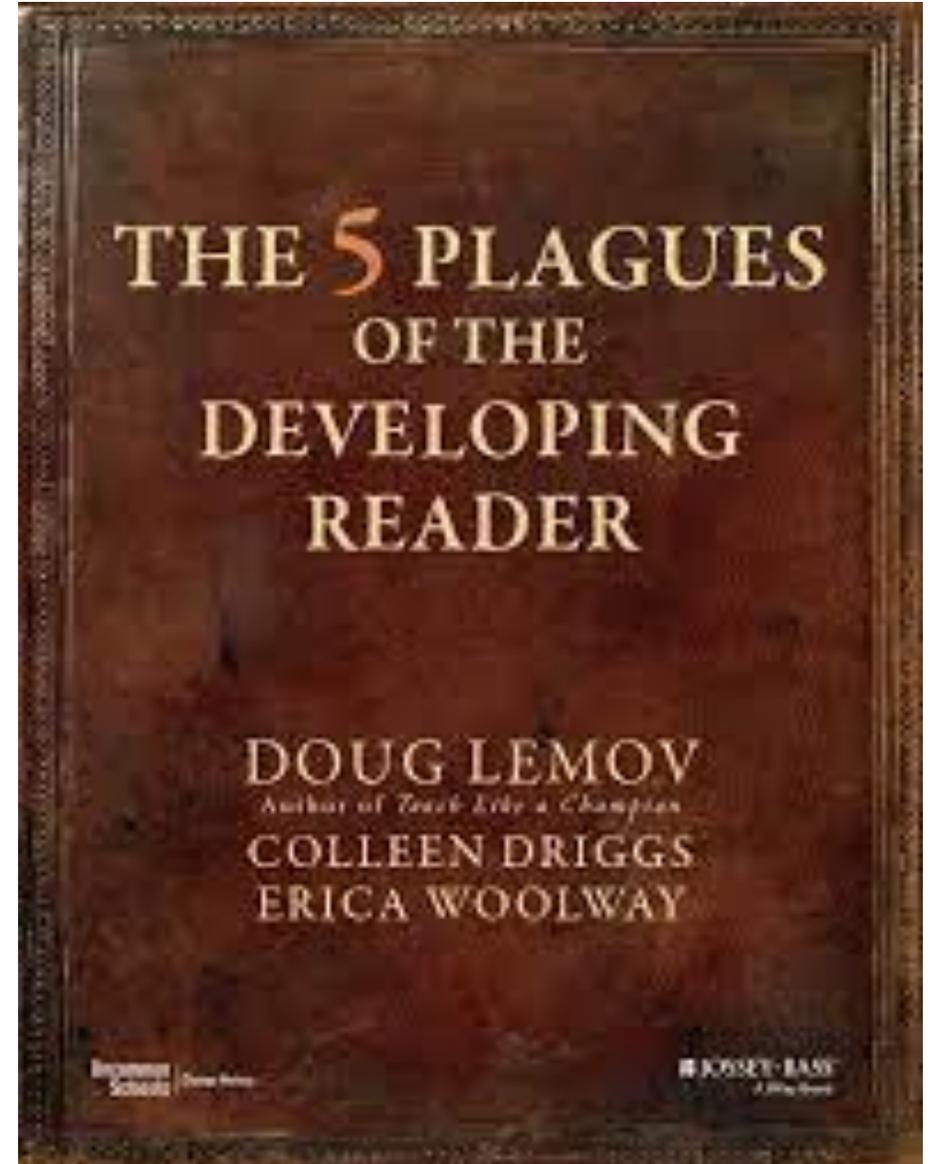
Reading Spine

- **Establishing a Reading Spine**

- After conducting staff questionnaires it was clear that our team had **a good knowledge of different authors and genres.**

However, they were not always confident with suggesting texts to children based on a theme or their interests.

- The Reading Spine for our school was established using the **'5 plagues of reading'** as basis and all staff contributed to ensure that their voice and knowledge was represented throughout.



Outline

- Reading framework
- Framework NOT Policy

Our **Reading Framework** began as a policy in line with the Phonics Policy that had been developed. However, it became apparent very quickly that the document was more of a **'how to'** document.

The document outlines all aspects of Reading, from **Early Reading skills** like decoding through to inference, deduction. The difference of this document was that **RfP underpins everything** that has been written and ALL of the teaching strategies being used. It ensures that the **'voice of the child'** is at the heart of our Reading diet.



Outline

RfP staff meeting

- **What we covered**

- What is RfP?
- Questionnaire analysis
- Action plan
- Reading Spine
- Shared strategies

- **Why was it so important?**

- Reading for Pleasure now **underpins** our whole **Reading ethos** but this was not always the case. It was essential to share with staff the **research** and the **voice** of our own team and children in order to ensure everyone had **a shared vision**. We focused a lot on **the skill v's the will** and how these were so strongly connected.

- The Reading for Pleasure journey can not be fulfilled by one person alone. It is about the whole school having a shared understanding and driving it in every place possible. Therefore, all staff need to also have their voice heard in order to value the process.



Outline

RfP staff meeting Questionnaire findings

Our initial data showed us that the children's views were that teachers did not read to them daily. Even in classes where this is not the case, the children's perception was that it didn't happen.

Teacher read out loud.

<u>KS2 I love reading</u>	Daily	Several times a week	Once a week	Less than once
Teacher read aloud	32	58	9	4
	31%	56.3%	8.7%	3.8%
<u>KS2 Reading is ok</u>	Daily	Several times a week	Once a week	Less than once
Teacher read aloud	5	6	6	
	29.4%	35.2%	25.2%	
<u>KS2 I don't like reading</u>	Daily	Several times a week	Once a week	Less than once
Teacher read aloud	9	5	2	
	56.2%	31.2%	12.5%	

Where children loved reading, they also enjoyed the teacher reading to them.

Where children were not as keen for the teachers to read, the following reasons were given...

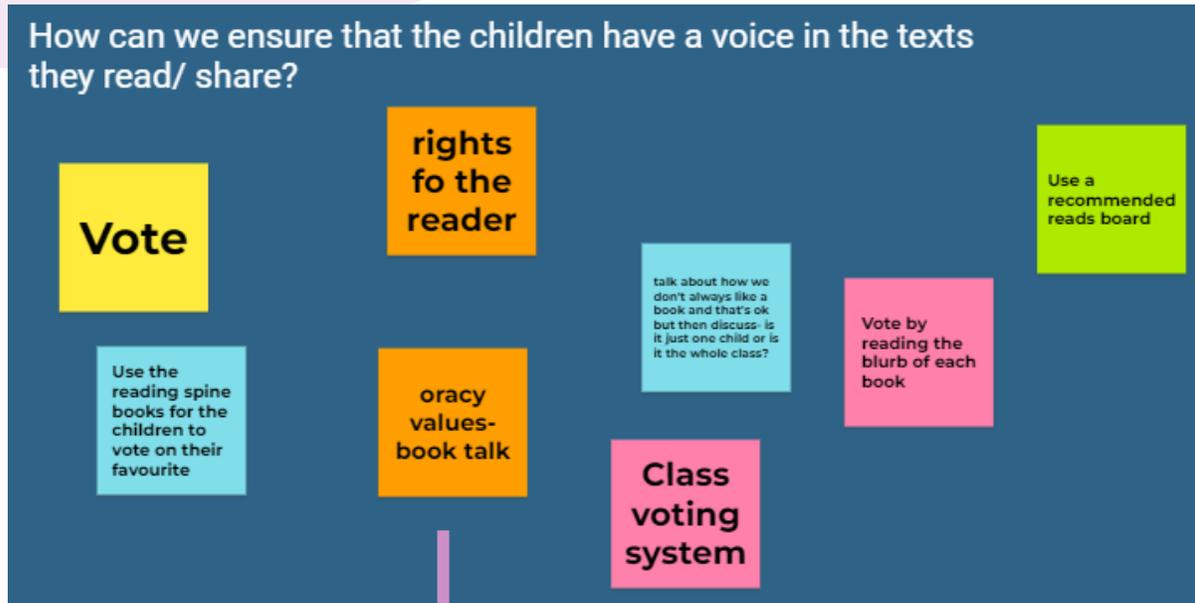
- I can't keep up.
- If I lose my place I can't go back and re-read it to check.
- I don't even like the books that get chosen so I just don't listen.

Enjoy the teacher reading?

<u>KS2 I love reading</u>	I love it	It's okay	Not bothered	I don't like it
Teacher reads aloud	73	25	2	3
	70.8%	24.2%	1.94%	2.9%
<u>KS2 Reading is ok</u>	I love it	It's okay	Not bothered	I don't like it
Teacher reads aloud	4	8	5	
	23.5%	47%	29.4%	
<u>KS2 I don't like reading</u>	I love it	It's okay	Not bothered	I don't like it
Teacher reads aloud	4	6	5	1
	25%	35.2%	31.2%	6.2%

We shared the data and came up with some suggested solutions using google Jam Board.

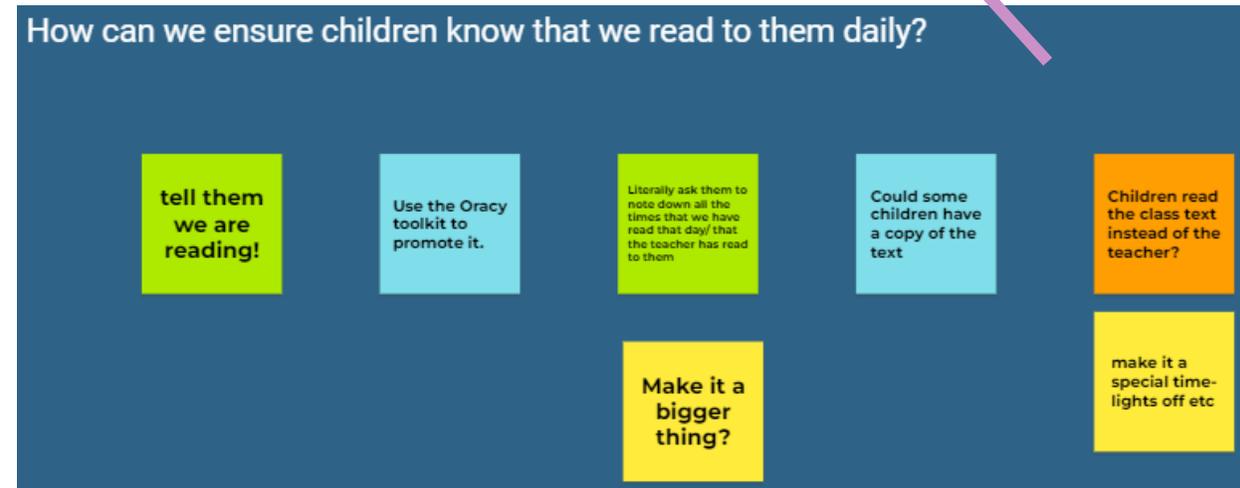
Outline



As a staff we decided that every class would have a voting system. How this looked in each class would be personalised BUT there had to be some sort of democracy within the choice of books shared. We also agreed that these should link to the Reading Spine OR one of the posters for recommended reads.

We also decided that Story Time would be a special time each day. This would be signified by the adult allowing the children to sit wherever they wanted in the classroom, turning the lights down and allowing the children to simply be still.

Repeating texts in the younger years was also something that we agreed was very important and would enable the children to listen first and then ask questions or join in with texts later in the week. This would mean that the children were more engaged and active within these sessions.



Outline

Reading ambassadors

- **Why Reading Ambassadors**

The questionnaires showed very clearly that the children didn't always feel that they **had autonomy over what they read** or heard read to them. Most KS2 children said that they enjoyed reading but they preferred to read at home as they '**could choose**' for themselves what they read.

Reading ambassadors give the children a voice. They become advocates for reading not only to their peers but to the whole school community including staff, parents and those within our locality.

The next few slides will take you through the process that we took to establish our Reading Ambassadors.



Step 1

Reading Presentation

- I delivered a reading presentation to our Year 5 cohort. We talked about the roles and responsibilities and also what they could expect to receive including training.
- I talked about my personal journey with reading, how this had impacted my life and how that had shaped what I wanted for our future generation.
- The children were able to ask questions and we were able to adapt the role to ensure that their voice was evident.



Reading Parish
Church of England Diocese of Exeter

The Open University

READING FOR PLEASURE

READING AMBASSADOR

Reading Ambassador Information

What does the position involve?
The role involves a lot of exciting things such as:

- promoting a reading culture across our school,
- attending reading events,
- helping in the library e.g. keeping it tidy
- choosing and sorting books,
- visits to Bookmark to choose new books,
- sharing ideas,
- storytelling in EYFS,
- helping with authors and illustrators,
- attending meetings with our local librarian,
- presenting in assemblies,
- helping across the school with reading,
- attending new starter evenings to promote reading
- organising and running events

Job description	What we will provide you...
<p>Must...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be committed. • Work well as a team. • Be able to share ideas. • A good communicator. • Enjoy books. • Have a desire to improve reading experiences within our school. • Be in Year 5. • Have good attendance. • Be a good role model. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training. • Time to help plan ideas. • Support in sharing ideas with the wider school community. • A friendly, safe place for you to develop your skills. • A reading buddy, matched to your interests and reading style. • A badge!

How to apply.

If you wish to apply for the position of Reading Ambassador, please write a letter of application to myself, Mrs A Cooper by Monday 9th May. Please ensure that you letter addresses the following aspects...

- Why you wish to become a Reading Ambassador.
- Your understanding of the role description- you may wish to include some examples of times that you have shown these qualities.
- What skills you already have that you think would benefit the role.
- Why you think reading is so important.

Should you be successful in your application, you will be invited to a Reading Day where we will undertake a number of activities focussed on skill building. You will also undertake two additional activities; -

- 1- A small group discussion about books- please come prepared to talk about your favourite book.
- 2- EYFS/ KS1 Book Nook sessions where you will encourage children to come and share books with you.

Following this, you will be required to attend a short interview where we will discuss;

- (a) Aspects of your letter of application.
- (b) Why you think reading is so important.
- (c) What you found easy from the day.
- (d) What you found challenging from the day.
- (e) Your opinions on Reading for Pleasure.
- (f) One thing that you would change or introduce

Thank you for attending today's information sharing and I look forward to receiving your letter of application.

Mrs A Cooper

At the end of the session the children were provided with a summary of the process.

Step 2

Letters of application

- During this stage, the children wrote letters of application as part of their English lessons to provide a real purpose for writing. They provided examples of when they have supported reading and their own passion for reading really shone through.
- Not all children applied and some children simply wrote to thank us for the opportunity but to give their reason for not wishing to pursue.

Spalding Parish C of E Day School
Clay Lake
Spalding
Lincolnshire
PE11 2QG
13-05-22

Dear Mrs. A Cooper,

I am writing to you today to apply for the Reading Ambassador job, as the words started flowing out of your mouth I was inspired and thought your speech was very eye opening. I want to show all my love and admiration of reading. I love sharing and ~~recomm~~ recommending books, as we went to the Spalding Library yesterday and would love to give something by helping others and helping you! I imagine a school full of books, where Boies Johnson banned them, where Reading Ambassadors came to life: they are the real heroes.

I have experienced lots of reading from...

You inspired me to apply for the job during your speech and reading my book every night so I can catch up on my book. Do you like reading? I love reading! I read to my sibling at home who is in Year One and I have already experienced taking after children, because I am really helpful I am showing you that I

Spalding Parish C of E Day School
Clay Lake
Spalding
Lincolnshire
PE11 2QG

13.05.22

Dear Mrs Cooper,

When you consider my application and give me the role of the reading Ambassador I will have good attendance, be a role model and work as a team. I would love to be a reading Ambassador since I love reading books, I like reading to friends and family. I particularly enjoy reading to little children, this is because there will imagination can dream anything. Some children love, love reading but others don't like reading. And when I'm in the role I can make children more confident in reading and encourage readers in our school.

I have lots of knowledge, from reading simple childrens books, to long books that can't be finished. I know that a book that is a favourite must be kept with care and read. My sister's and mum taught me to read and inspired me to read more, whilst my twin is more of a comic person. I read with my brother and I sometimes read with him. I've had experience from going to the Spalding library and reading my Eric book at school, we also read books as a class.

I have lots of skills and I hope I can apply them in my role when needed. My strongest skill is being friendly. I can also read books with understanding. I do this when I read the bible.

Spalding Parish C of E Day School
Clay Lake
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13.05.22

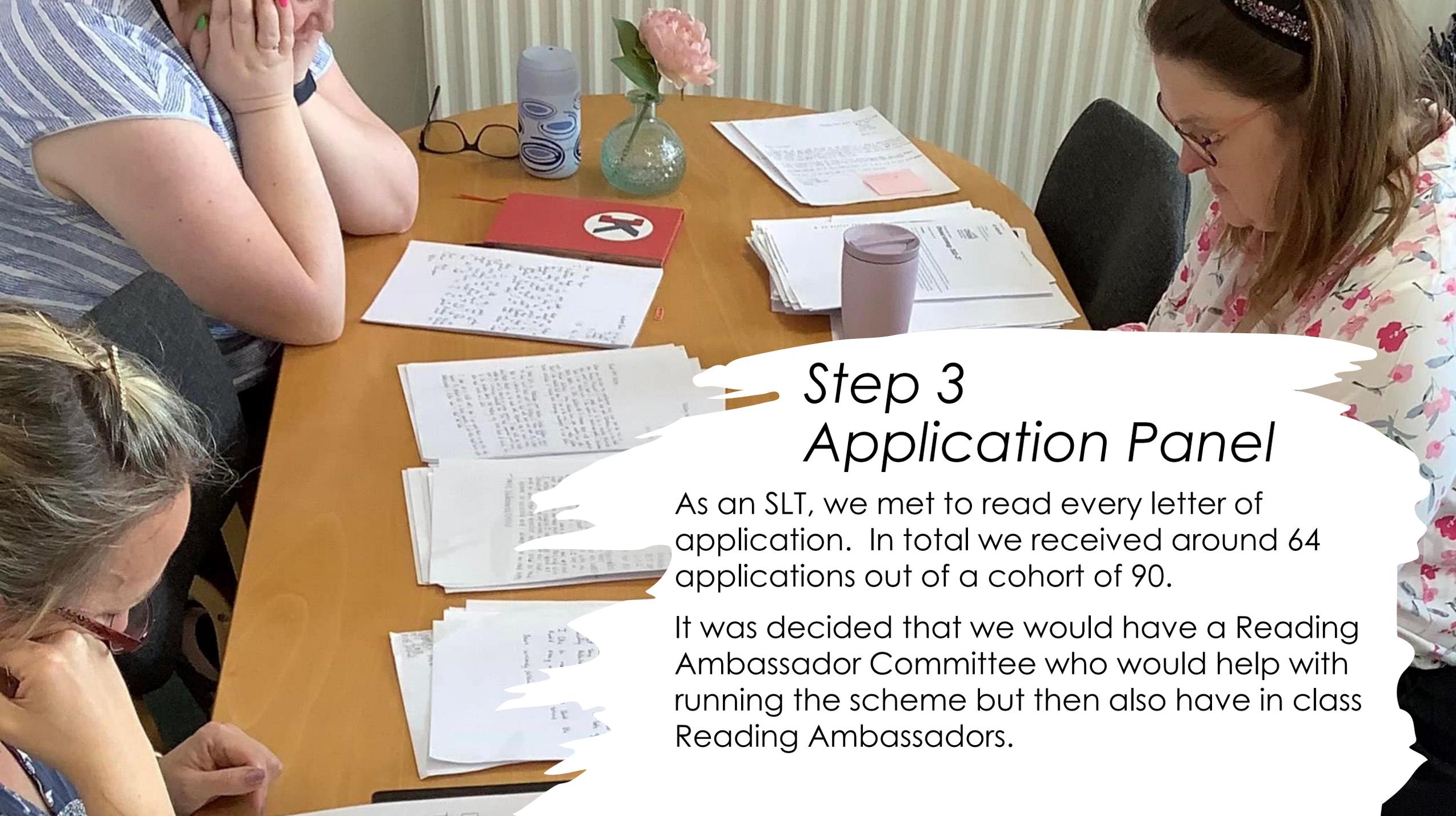
Dear Mrs. Cooper,

I am writing to you because I do not want to be a reading ambassador, instead I want to thank you for the inspiring talk. The reasons I'm not applying are because I need to focus on school council and with S.A.T.S being next year I do not think I am in the right position to help with events and stay after school. ANYWAY I think you should you should have experienced readers in your role, Curious, kind people who do not judge others.

In conclusion, I think that I will be continuing school council but I hope that I can help in the future.

I wish you luck in finding your Reading Ambassador

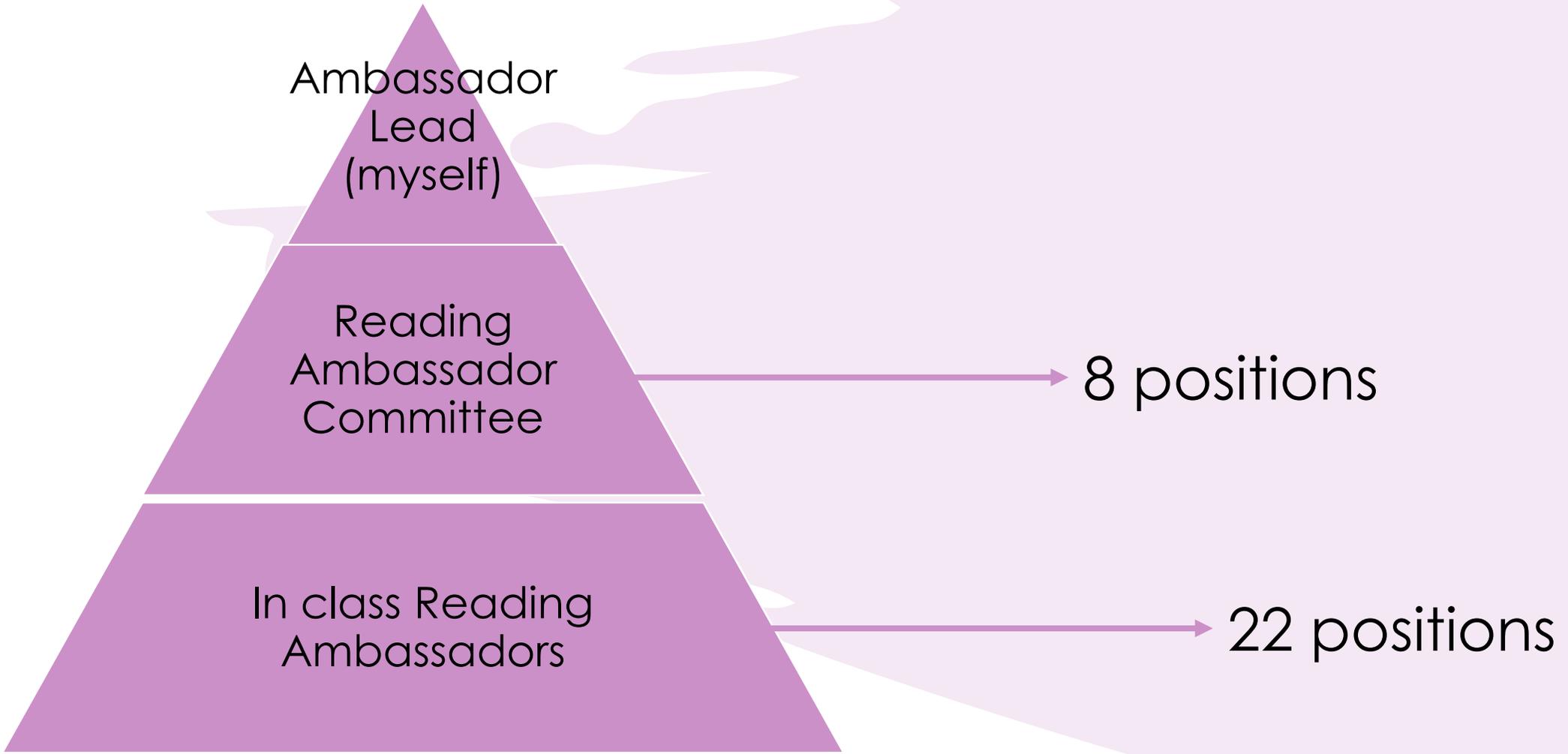
Yours Sincerely



Step 3 *Application Panel*

As an SLT, we met to read every letter of application. In total we received around 64 applications out of a cohort of 90.

It was decided that we would have a Reading Ambassador Committee who would help with running the scheme but then also have in class Reading Ambassadors.



The application letters were sorted into 3 piles.

1- Those suitable for the committee role.

2- Those suitable for the in class role.

3- Those who unfortunately were not successful at this time.

Successful applicants received a letter inviting them to the interview day.

Dear

I am writing to thank you for your application to become a Reading Ambassador for our school. I must say that the letters we received were outstanding, with so many good ideas and a clear passion for reading.

After careful consideration, we would like to invite you to the next stage of the interview process. Which will take place on June 9th 2022. Please see the roles available below and how the next stage works.

Reading Ambassador Committee

This role is where you work as a team of 8 in order to support in aspects such as fund raising, reading challenge days and really promoting reading within our school. This could mean attending events such as the new starters parents evening, creating blogs and developing how we share our reading pathway with the wider community. You would also be required to support myself when training parent volunteers in the new academic year.

In Class Reading Ambassadors

There will be two Reading Ambassadors per class from EYFS up to and including Year 3. This will mean that there are 22 roles available. Your responsibilities will involve aspects such as hearing children read, supporting to develop the reading book nooks, suggesting new books to class teachers and reading stories to children.

June 9th 2022- Morning session- Focus- In Class Reading Ambassadors

9.15 welcome in the hall and layout of the day including the way that the roles will work.

9.30- split into 3 groups

	Activity 1- Spare Y1 Classroom	Activity 2- Classroom	Activity 3- Parish Pioneers
	Create a poster...	Go into the classroom and support a reading session.	Small group discussion about books
9.30- 10	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
10. 10-10.40	Group 3	Group 1	Group 2
10.50-11.20	Group 2	Group 3	Group 1

June 9th 2022- Afternoon session- Focus- Reading Ambassador Committee

After the morning session, we will invite some of the candidates to a more formal interview to be considered for a role on the Reading Ambassador Committee. The interview panel will consist of myself, Mrs Mulley and Mrs Hill. We have invited Mrs Carter to join us via Teams in order to further support our process.

Once all interviews have been completed, the panel will meet to discuss who has been successful in the roles. We would all like to take this opportunity to thank you for applying and even if not successful in the next round, we hope that you will continue to share your passion for reading within our school.

Yours Sincerely

Mrs A Cooper

Step 4- The Interview day!

All of the candidates took part in 3 different activities throughout the morning.

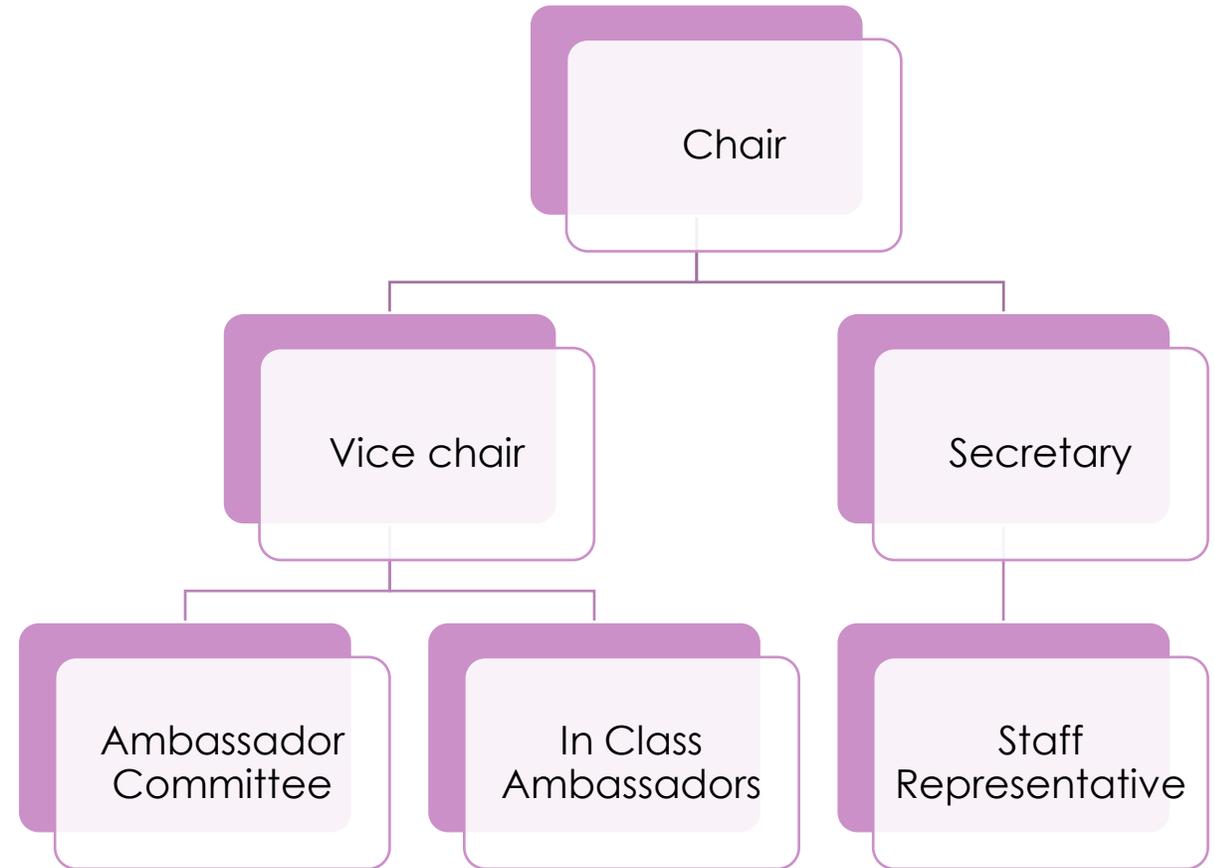
The interview panel then met to decide who we would be inviting to the formal interviews for the Ambassador Committee roles in the afternoon. In total 15 children were invited to interview for this role.



Step 5- Announcing and getting to work!

We met with all of the candidates prior to the official announcement in the hall to share who had been successful for each role. Reiterating our expectations of each member.

Later that week, I met with the committee members so that we could discuss and establish our committee structure. It was essential that they saw me as the person facilitating and that this was about their opinions, their drive for reading and their voice.



Impact

Reading Ambassadors

- **New Starters Evening**

Our Reading Ambassadors have already started developing their in depth book talk when they presented the Reading Spine at our New Starters Parents evening. They engaged in high level discussions, providing parents with recommended reads, their own opinions and also even suggesting ways in which they could support their child.

"I spoke to some of your Reading Ambassadors at the open evening, they were so well spoken and seemed to have so much knowledge about the books on the table! It was nice to see one of them shared by you at the first transition visit. We have actually already bought a few that we saw!" (new parent)

- **Summer Library Reading Challenge**

The committee members went to the library to learn about the Summer Reading challenge. They then create a video to share with the school and the wider community. [\(Click here to see the video\).](#)

"We're so pleased they enjoyed coming in this afternoon. What a lovely group of children they are, it was so lovely to have them here. Thanks for your support – it's great that they are enthusiastic about promoting the reading challenge!" (Amanda- Spalding Library)



Impact

Reading Ambassadors

- **Book Recommendations and links with local town library**

We are already seeing our book recommendations within Spalding library, making those wider links with the community and getting our voices heard.

- **Committee meeting and next focus**

The first formal meeting has taken place where we discussed the questionnaires that took place at the start of the process.

As a committee we decided that our Reading environments needed to be our next RfP focus with a real passion for driving reading more outdoors.

Fund raising ideas have been shared and the committee are looking into Reading Huts to be placed around the outdoor learning environment.

*"Our Reading Ambassadors, both committee and in class have already started to create a huge buzz about reading in our school!"
(Emily Hill- Assistant Head)*

"She is really taking the role seriously! It's great because it's teaching her so much about responsibility and all of a sudden she's reading more again. She even keeps suggesting books for me! (Parent)"



Impact Everything Phonics

- **Policy, supporting documents and training**
- The approach is now consistent as evident from our English Hub visit.
- New members of staff can access the online training before starting with us but will also receive face to face training with myself.
- There is a very clear intervention pathway in place.
- Children in year 1 who received the consistent approach and the intervention from Term 5 saw accelerated progress with 3 of these children attaining 28 on the Phonics Screening Check where previously they scored 2.
- Reading Ambassadors have helped to organise a Monster Phonics launch day- they are extremely excited and have suggested that we all dress up as the Monsters to create more of a buzz.
- In class Reading Ambassadors will be receiving training from Monster Phonics to have even more impact in the classroom.



Monster
Phonics



The reading framework

Teaching the foundations of literacy

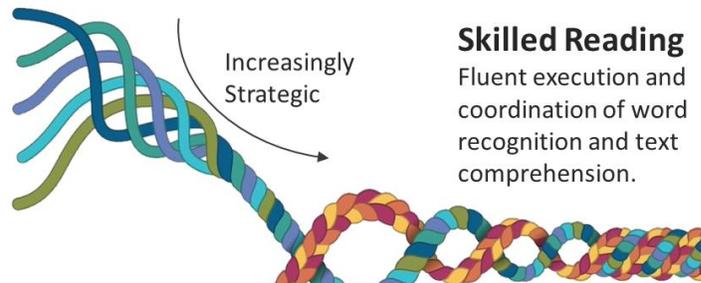
July 2021

Impact Reading Framework

- This document provides us a strong, consistent scaffold for the children and staff at Spalding Parish C of E Primary School.
- It ensures that we place Reading for Pleasure at the heart of our reading curriculum.
- It ensures that the monitoring of reading is extremely specific and refers to aspects of the document as a focus and priority.
- It provides new staff with a framework which they can refer to, in order to support them in ensuring high quality reading lessons alongside identifying when reading can be used throughout the curriculum.

Language Comprehension

- Background Knowledge
- Vocabulary Knowledge
- Language Structures
- Verbal Reasoning
- Literacy Knowledge



Word Recognition

- Phonological Awareness
- Decoding (and Spelling)
- Sight Recognition



Impact RfP Staff Meeting

Sharing the action plan

- A shared understanding of Reading for Pleasure and the Rights of a Reader.
- Extended knowledge about how the Voice21 Project links in directly to Book talk- everyone is now mapping this into all lessons.
- At the end of the staff meeting, the action plan was adapted slightly to reflect everyone's views.
- Staff took ownership of the project and could see how they could put in place some of the actions we shared.



OU Reading for Pleasure Development Plan to support TRG Members
Name: Annabel Cooper School: Spalding Parish CofE Day School

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Year 1	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Year 2	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Year 3	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Year 4	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Year 5	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Year 6	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Where teaching is good, book talk and a love of books is central to all learning.
821 has the lowest attainment which could reflect Covid and the lack of the basics in terms of skills- these children need a fresh start to the reading process- consider starting with picture books.

What specific RfP area of focus have you identified in relation to the RfP research evidence base that will benefit young readers?

1. Comprehensive knowledge of children's literature and other texts
2. Knowledge of children's reading practices
3. A reading for pleasure pedagogy, encompassing:
 - a. social reading environments
 - b. reading aloud
 - c. informal book talk, inside-text talk and recommendations
 - d. independent reading time
4. As Reading Teachers- teachers who read and readers who teach
5. Reciprocal and interactive reading communities

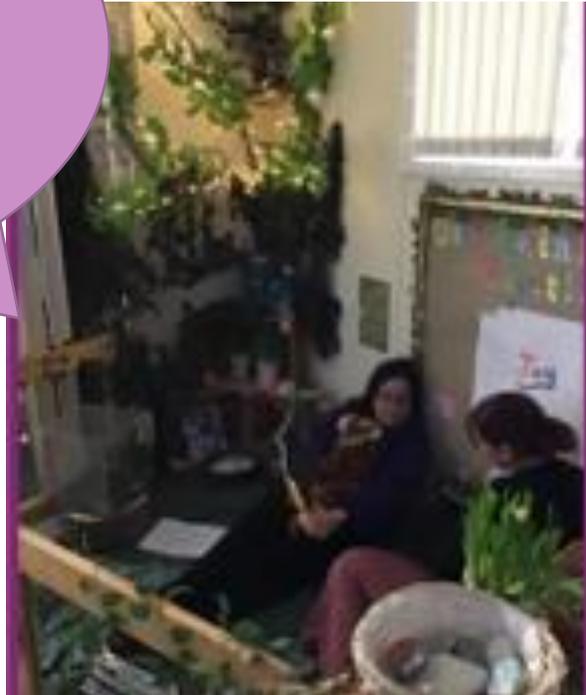
Prepared with the assistance of the OU Reading for Pleasure team on 10/10/2023

Impact RfP Staff Meeting

- Since the staff meeting and the agreed strategies to put in place, pupil interviews showed a shift in Reading attitudes.

"We didn't even finish reading our last book because we all found it really boring. The story was hard to follow and there was no picture for me to make".

"It's good with the little lights. It's dark".



"You can choose the book if you want to, you have to get a button and put it in the one that is your favourite".

"This is my favourite book that we have shared because I love the funny voices we can do".

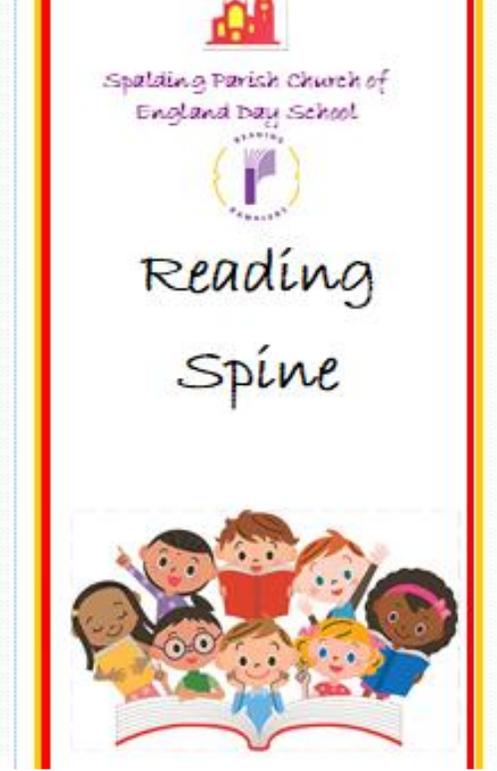
"I don't always like the book still but I do get to join the vote

- The more formal questionnaires will be repeated next academic year to compare the data.

Impact Reading Spine

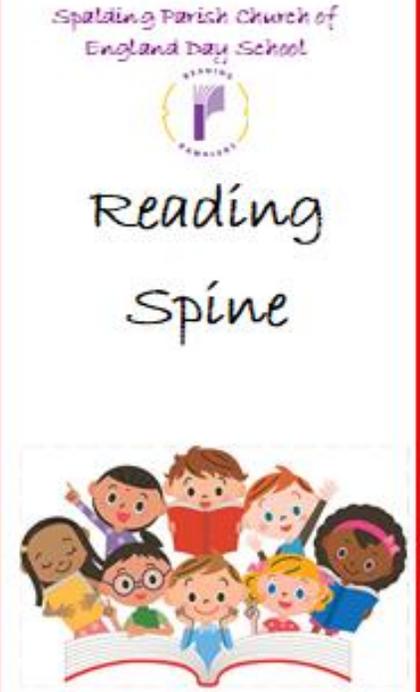
- High quality texts for children to read.
- High quality texts to be used as a stimulus for writing.
- Children are excited to read as many of the books as possible.
- Provides a really good base for class books to share in story time.
- Each year group has it's own booklet with a select number of texts to share with parents.

"I spoke to some of your Reading Ambassadors at the open evening, they were so well spoken and seemed to have so much knowledge about the books on the table! It was nice to see one of them shared by you at the first transition visit. We have actually already bought a few that we saw!" (new parent)



This is not a complete list but a guide to a quality reading diet. Each author listed has written further books which we would recommend you try too. Look out for our non-fiction list too. Remember the.

Spalding Parish Church of England



Impact Reading Spine

- The staff meeting also generated discussion about where to go to recommend books.
- The recommendations being made tended to be more author based.
- In order to widen the breadth of authors our children are exposed to we decided we needed to branch out on themes.
- Each class has a set of posters that support the adult to make recommendations or for the child to select from.
- Spalding library have a list of our reading spine and have got many of the books in stock, promoting more links with the community.
- These posters not only support our reading spine, but they also support staff in developing their own knowledge of authors, themes and texts.
- “Miss Bird just seems to get me! It’s like she just knows what books I like. We are like reading buddies. It’s great.”



Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

The questionnaires really highlighted the fact that many of our children do not like reading at school. With main reasons being...

- **“It’s too noisy”**
- **“I like to in a quiet space”**
- **“I prefer to read outside”**
- **“I don’t like sitting at my table”**

This is our next area of focus and the Reading Ambassadors have already started some work toward this for the next academic year.

Where do you prefer to read?

KS2 I love reading	Home	school	other	
	45 43.6%	28 27.1%	30 29.1%	
			Quiet space	2
			Both school and home	5
			Bedroom	6
			Nans house	3
			Outside	3
			Library	4
			Cousins	1
			Park	1
			Swimming	1
			Car	1
			Beach	1
			Garden	1
			Anywhere I can sit down	1
KS2 Reading is ok	Home	school	other	
	6 35.2%	5 29.4%	1 5.8%	
			bedroom	1
KS2 I don't like reading	Home	school	other	
	10 58.8%	3 18.7%	3 18.7%	
			1	Grandma
			1	Car
			1	both

Reflections on impact the TaRs research had on practice

- The questionnaires also highlighted the fact that children who loved reading said that they talked about reading at home. For those who did not like reading, those conversations are not happening.
- ***This is another area that we will be focusing on during the next academic year with regards parental engagement and support.***

Talk about reading at school and home?

KS2 Love it	Yes	No
Chat about reading at school	65	38
	63%	36.8%
Chat about reading at home	67	36
	65%	34.9%
KS2	Yes	No
Chat about reading at school	7	10
	41.1%	58.8%
Chat about reading at home	11	5
	64.7%	29.4%
KS2	Yes	No
Chat about reading at school	4	12
	25%	75%
Chat about reading at home	5	11
	31.2%	68.7%