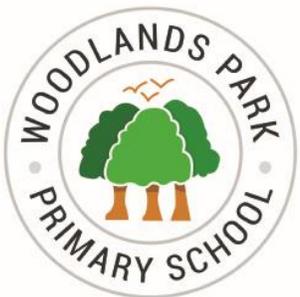




Let's talk about books

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Located on the edge of Dartmoor in South Devon and part of the Westcountry Schools Trust, our school, Woodlands Park Primary, is a mid-sized primary school with 340 pupils arranged into two classes per year group.

The initial idea for developing children's love of reading came from discussions with children by SLT and members of the schools governing body. Although the children spoke well about their own reading habits and our reading progress in data was positive, we realised the children gave little thought to how they **chose books**, **rarely talked about children's literature** and many of their chosen reads were from a **select band of authors**.



OU Research inspiration and rationale



Research from Cremin et al 2014 stated that teachers relied upon a narrow range of texts when discussing and reading aloud children's literature. Childhood favourites or common celebrity authors were often used within classes. As a school, we recognised studies (*Younger and Warrington 2005* *Kwek et al., 2007*) showing that **teachers' knowledge of children's literature and the reading interests of children** in their classes, was crucial in helping children to choose to read for pleasure...
'Those teachers are in a better position to create a community of readers in the classroom.'

Talking about texts and talking about reading is at the heart of RfP pedagogy identified in TaRs research. *'Book talk and recommendations are one of the four core practices for reading for pleasure'* (Cremin et al., 2014) and following the initial pupil conferences we felt addressing this pedagogical strand would have the greatest impact on improving reading for pleasure at Woodlands Park.





From the initial pupil conferencing and subsequent whole-school children's reading habits survey, the key aim for us in developing children's reading for pleasure at Woodlands was to improve the quality and opportunity for children to talk about texts.

We also recognised that this would have the most impact on those children who showed the greatest reluctance to read in and out of the classroom.

To ensure the aim above could be achieved successfully, and linked to the findings from the Teachers as Readers project, the development of teacher's knowledge of children's texts would be a crucial tool in ensuring its success.



Subject knowledge of teachers

- Training for staff on the impact of RfP and the effect of teacher subject knowledge of text.
- Guidance to all staff on where to find **quality age appropriate texts** and funds to purchase copies for own class.
- £20 book voucher to be used by all staff to **buy children's literature of their choice.**
- Front facing **teacher's library** of children's texts in the staff room.



Book talk

- The introduction of **timetabled book talk once a week** gave children a model of the way they might discuss texts and the opportunity to discuss a wide range of books.
- A bank of **ideas and strategies** for teachers to initially lead book talk such as book blankets and genre discussions.
- Staff across the school using formal book talk as means to begin **informal book talk at opportune moments** during the school day with children in own class but also across the school. E.g. partner teachers spotting children reading certain authors, head teacher talking about books in assembly. **Creating a community** where books are talked about constantly.



Identifying 'focus children' and providing texts that tempted them to read

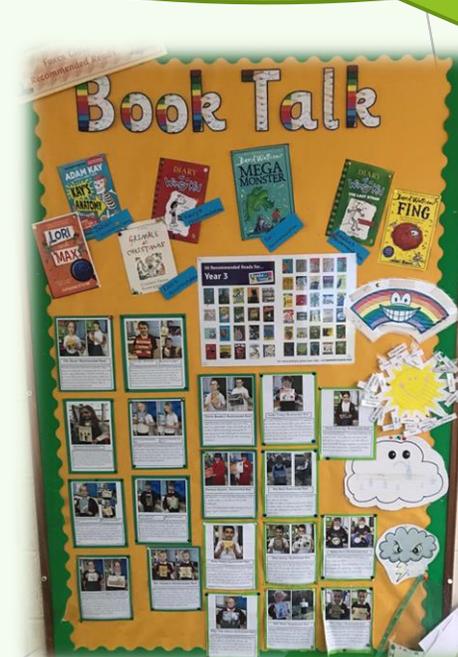
- **Whole school survey of every child to identify reluctant readers and texts children would like to read.** 3 'focus' children identified from each class and put onto school intervention provision maps. The children were then a **key focus in book talk, a priority for ordering texts and discussed in termly class reviews.**
- **Children suggested texts** they would like to see the school purchase for their classroom. All teachers were asked to submit a list of books their children would like to buy and the texts were **ordered quickly from our local book shop** and on the shelves within three weeks. For the first term the books purchased remain in the classroom before moving out into the school library.
- **Link created with new local book shop** in the town. Books ordered through shop and invoiced directly to the school with discount, allowing staff to purchase books requested by children quickly.

Teachers across the school commented on how their **teacher subject knowledge influenced children's book talk**. Although anecdotal, it provided evidence of the shift in children's motivation and reading habits.

I've used Twitter and books for topics Top 50 recommended texts to read many texts suitable for Year 3 children. Video calls with 2 authors and an easily accessible front facing book display are both strategies that have encouraged children to read different texts. Having the freedom to order books that my children have wanted to read from Ivybridge bookshop has instantly transformed the motivation for a number of children.

Regular weekly book talks have encouraged children to discuss different books they have read and the authors of those books. This has increased the range of authors the children have heard of and are then willing to read. Children are recommending books to each other and I'm able to order books they would like to read.

You Retweeted
Mrs Ham @PrimaryHam · 24/02/2022
It's been a good half term deciding what to read for my next class book. A fabulous collection of books! @Louiestowell @radiyawrites @ActualBenMiller @HGold_author



Further anecdotal snapshots of how teacher subject knowledge influenced children's book talk.

Reading/listening to lots of children's fiction myself has given me the ability to recommend a wider range of suitable books to Year 5 children. We have talked about these books publically so others become inspired. Choosing high quality texts for class stories including poetry, fiction and non-fiction has then motivated the children to read other texts by the same author.

Finding out about a variety of authors who are not so widely known has helped me to broaden my Year 2 class's exposure to texts they might not otherwise have found. Having this curiosity about unknown authors and talking aloud has promoted intrigue around unfamiliar texts.



When repeating the reading habits survey with every child in June 2022, we looked carefully at the impact of the strategies used on the motivation of the focus children for each class. From their responses in June, 18 out of 24 children put the responses to the question ‘do you like reading?’ as ok or love which was a significant improvement from September.

Year group child	Pupil survey Sept 2021	Pupil survey June 2022
3 Child A	Don't like	Ok
3 Child B	Don't like	Ok
3 Child C	Not bothered	Ok
3 Child D	Not bothered	Not bothered
3 Child E	Don't like	Don't like
3 Child F	Don't like	Ok
4 Child A	Don't like	OK
4 Child B	Not bothered	Love
4 Child C	Not bothered	Ok
4 Child D	Not bothered	Not bothered
4 Child E	Don't like	OK
4 Child F	Not bothered	OK
5 Child A	Ok	OK
5 Child B	Not bothered	OK
5 Child C	Not bothered	OK
5 Child D	Don't like	Don't like
5 Child E	Don't like	OK
5 Child F	Not bothered	Love
6 Child A	Not bothered	Love
6 Child B	Not bothered	OK
6 Child C	Not bothered	OK
6 Child D	Not bothered	OK
6 Child E	Not bothered	Not bothered
6 Child F	Don't like	Not bothered



In addition to the data, it was important to find out from teachers the strategies they felt shifted the 'focus children's' enthusiasm for reading.

Impact

L really struggled to pick up a text at the beginning of the year. The class teacher bought a number of magazines aimed at under 8s. L loved looking and sharing the magazines with his friends.



At the beginning of the year, R struggled to find a suitable book in quiet reading. When his class teacher asked for the books we'd like to buy as a class, he suggested the footballer biographies as he had read the Mane biography a number of times but it was the only copy in the library. 8 other examples were bought for the class and he soon rattled through them before progressing onto Marcus Rashford's autobiography suggested by another teacher.



In addition to the data, it was important to find out from teachers the strategies they felt shifted the 'focus children's' enthusiasm for reading.

Impact

E started the year as a shy, reluctant reader in Foundation stage. We asked the children to bring in books from home to share and a photo goes up on the reading corner wall with a speech bubble. He brought in 6/7 books over the course of the term including comics, non-fiction and fiction. He now enjoys reading and listening to stories in class.

B had struggled to settle into reading this year until our class story 'Can you see me?' She then went to the Ivybridge bookshop and bought the sequel 'Do you know me?' . She read a summary in book talk time which prompted 4 other children in the class to read it too.



In addition to the data, it was important to find out from teachers the strategies they felt shifted the 'focus children's' enthusiasm for reading.

Impact

Our regular weekly books talks, regular daily 1:1 sessions reading and discussing texts with an adult, and our 'recommended reads' display have transformed F's motivation to read. She loved recommended reads from authors such as Michael Rosen and then recommended books of her own such as 'Rabbit in the dark'.

In book talk time we recently discussed about what it was like when we reached a tricky or dull part of a book and whether it was worth keeping going. We discussed this a lot and H mentioned that he had really been struggling with reading the Midnight Gang. He was at the middle of the book and was finding it heavy going and boring. Other children who had read the book explained that they had found this part of the book hard too but had kept going and were glad they did as they thought it was a fantastic ending. Harrison finished the book and gave it 10/10.



Frances Trayte's Recommended Read:

My favourite pages!

If you are someone who likes to leave bedtime as late as possible, this book is for you. It is by an author called Nicola O'Byrne who grew up in Singapore and has an eye for lovely pictures in her books. (Yes she drew the pictures!). This story is about a little rabbit who doesn't want to sleep and wants to hide the 'dark' in a biscuit tin. Along the way we learn how important the 'dark' is. I recommend this book because of its lovely illustrations and its message.



At the end of the year, as a staff we agreed that **key principles** should be in place in each class, in order to continue the **momentum achieved this academic year in RfP** across the school. These would be strategies that have worked and would be easy to maintain when RfP was no longer a focus on the school improvement plan.

Key principles for next year:

- Regular (weekly) **formal and informal book talk**
- **Front facing book displays** in each class with a small number of **recommended texts changed regularly**
- Class teachers finding out the **reading preferences of the children** in their class. Lead teacher of the library asking for book needs twice a year so the children have texts the wish to read.
- **3 common class read aloud texts** for partner classes alongside a range of other books chosen by individual class teachers read 3-5 times a week.
- A record of **class read aloud texts displayed in the classroom**
- The continued use of the **staffroom library of children's texts** with every couple of weeks, texts presented to the children by teachers.

Development for 2022-2023:

- **School community partnership.** Supporting our families to help develop RfP in the home.

