

Context

Dean Bank Primary and Nursery School is a one-form entry primary school located in Ferryhill, County Durham, with a total of 178 children currently on roll. Our student body is diverse, with a significant proportion (74%) of children eligible for pupil premium funding – the highest percentage in the county.

At Dean Bank Primary and Nursery School, our ethos is underpinned by a commitment to providing the very best education for all our children. We recognise the profound impact that reading for pleasure (RfP) can have on pupils' overall development, particularly in addressing the barriers associated with socioeconomic disadvantage. As highlighted in our most recent Ofsted report (2024), "The school prioritises reading... pupils develop confidence and fluency." This reflects our belief that reading is not only a tool for academic success, but also a powerful driver of equity and opportunity. As the OECD (2021) states, *"Finding ways to engage students in reading may be one of the most effective ways to leverage social change."* Through RfP, children are given access to new worlds, ideas, and perspectives—developing empathy, deepening understanding, and fostering a lifelong sense of agency as readers. This mission is particularly critical within our context.

We joined the programme to further develop our pedagogy to support all our children to have the tools and opportunities to become confident, enthusiastic readers who develop a lifelong love of reading. We believe that through the support from the Open University RSP, we can deeply embed RfP in our school vision and provide all our children with the best opportunities to achieve their full potential.

Explore

In the initial phase, we focused on collecting baseline data to measure the current state of reading for pleasure in our school. This was achieved through a combination of surveys, observations, staff discussions, pupil voice, and focused group activities with children. The goal was to gather a broad range of insights to better understand the strengths, challenges, and opportunities that exist within our school's RfP provision. Below are the key findings:

Strengths:

- **RfP Sessions Are Timetabled:** Every class has a dedicated RfP time in their timetable, which includes a mix of reading aloud, independent reading, and book talk. These sessions were largely learner-led, fostering social interaction around books.



Dean Bank Primary and Nursery School

believe, achieve and soar with pride

Believe, Achieve, Soar with Pride

Dean Bank, Ferryhill,

Co. Durham DL17 8PP

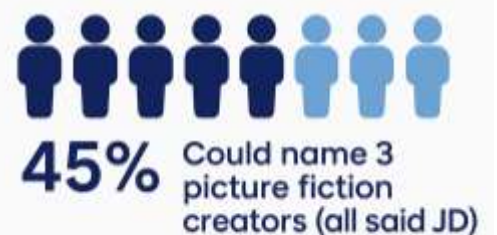
Telephone: 01740 651 512

- **Positive Library Changes:** The recent renovation of the school library, coupled with the removal of the Accelerated Reader programme, has been a positive change. Most staff (18/20) strongly agreed that these changes have contributed to increased pupil enjoyment and engagement with reading.



Challenges:

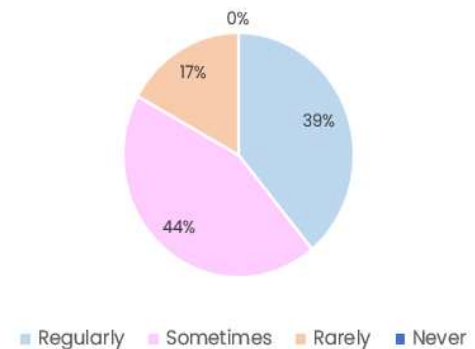
- **Outdated Knowledge of Children's Literature:** A significant challenge revealed through both surveys and observations was that many staff members have limited knowledge of contemporary children's literature. In the survey, 89% of staff referenced 'old but gold' authors such as Roald Dahl, Julia Donaldson, and Michael Morpurgo. Furthermore, during a book blanket activity held as part of the OU Conference Day, despite showcasing a range of contemporary texts—many of which had been recent award winners or featured as our 'author of the month'—the majority of staff selected works by the same authors. Additionally, staff reported limited knowledge of graphic novels, a genre that was notably popular among students. In a pupil voice survey, children identified teachers as their primary resource for book recommendations, underscoring the importance of improving staff familiarity with current literature.





- **Inconsistent Book Talk:** Although RfP time is scheduled, the intended 'book talk' session, where pupils and teachers engage in reciprocal discussions about books, was not consistently happening. Pupil voice data revealed that only two classes had a formal book talk each week. Additionally, 61% of staff reported that informal book discussions rarely took place, and 12 out of 18 staff members could not recall a time when they had made a book recommendation based on a student's suggestion.

How often do you informally chat about books with children?



Prepare

Based on the key strengths and challenged identified in relation to RfP within our setting, the following aims were identified to address areas for improvement:

1. To develop staff knowledge of children's literature, with a particular focus on picture fiction and graphic novels.
2. To increase the likelihood of spontaneous conversations between children and adults about reading.

Aim 1: To develop staff knowledge of children's literature, with a particular focus on picture fiction and graphic novels.

A strong knowledge of children's literature is central to supporting reading for pleasure. As highlighted by Guthrie and Davis (2003), children are more likely to become engaged readers when adults are able to recommend, read aloud, and talk about a rich variety of texts. When teachers know a wide range of genres and authors, they are better placed to match the right book to the right child at the right time, responding to individual interests, needs, and reading identities. Different text types—such as picture fiction and graphic novels—offer unique appeal, especially for readers who may be reluctant or who experience barriers to accessing longer or more traditional texts.

We began by focusing on developing staff expertise in picture fiction—a genre with some existing familiarity among staff, especially in Early Years and Key Stage 1, but less so in later



year groups. Following this, we turned our attention to graphic novels, which data and pupil voice indicated were highly appealing to our reading for pleasure disadvantaged yet were underrepresented in both class libraries and the school library. This dual focus aimed to strengthen staff knowledge of two engaging and inclusive genres, enabling them to confidently promote these texts in their classrooms.

Intended Outcomes:

- All teaching staff to identify and be able to discuss their five favourite picture books and graphic novels suitable for their key stage.
- Staff to share a book they recently enjoyed from these genres during staff meetings and make peer recommendations.
- Books from both genres to be integrated regularly into read-aloud sessions, with opportunities for informal discussion and response.
- Class libraries to include a core selection of agreed 'Books in Common' from each genre to ensure consistent access and familiarity across the school.

Focus Pupil Strategy:

To effectively engage reluctant or disadvantaged readers, we planned to focus on identifying their previous reading habits, preferences, and any known barriers. Teachers would then use this information to make targeted recommendations. By increasing familiarity with these genres, staff were better equipped to respond to individual reader identities and suggest texts that could re-engage pupils with reading.

Change Team Strategy:

We decided to take a different approach with our Change Team. Rather than selecting staff members, we chose children from Years 3 to 6—three-quarters of whom were passionate, volitional readers, and one-quarter identified were some of our focus children. This approach ensured that the changes we implemented were genuinely shaped by what children wanted, placing their voices at the heart of our decision-making.

Aim 2: To increase the likelihood of spontaneous conversations between children and adults about reading.

Research into Reading for Pleasure (RfP) consistently highlights the power of informal, social interaction around texts. Research has found that when teachers develop their knowledge of children as readers and are aware of their interests, it helps them to foster children's reading and build reciprocal and interactive communities of readers (Cremin *et al.*, 2014). Likewise, when adults and peers model enthusiasm and engage in relaxed dialogue about books, children are more likely to view reading as a meaningful and enjoyable part of their lives. We therefore prioritised 'book talk' as a strategy to help foster a reading culture across the school.

Our initial focus was to embed planned Book Talk sessions within a weekly 20-minute slot in each class. This structured time would provide a safe, inclusive space for children to talk about what they were reading, hear about books from their peers and adults, and develop confidence in sharing opinions. Over time, the emphasis would shift from these structured sessions to promoting more spontaneous, incidental book conversations throughout the school day, both in and outside the classroom.

Intended Outcomes:

- Every class to deliver at least 20 minutes of planned Book Talk weekly.
- Staff to be supported in developing strategies that encourage participation from all pupils, particularly those identified as reading for pleasure disadvantaged readers.
- Teachers to use Book Talk to learn more about individual children's reader identities and make more tailored recommendations.
- Increased instances of incidental book talk between pupils and adults, e.g., during transitions, break times, or linked to curriculum learning.

Focus Pupil Strategy:

Focus pupils would be supported to talk more confidently about their reading preferences, as well as make recommendations to others. As they develop a stronger understanding of their reader identity, we would hope to see them initiate or contribute to spontaneous book talk.

Deliver

Aim 1: To develop staff knowledge of children's literature, with a particular focus on picture fiction and graphic novels.

CPD for staff on the impact teacher's knowledge of children's texts has on RfP.	Staff share a book they would like to recommend at the beginning of each staff meeting.	Each class were given £100 to update their class libraries with new contemporary texts.
Coaching sessions to introduce staff to the 'Author of the Month'	Some staff are running the Spark Book Awards as an afterschool club across all key stages.	CPD to develop staff confidence on how to support children in choosing their next book.

- Aim 1: Strategy 1 – Staff share a book they would like to recommend at the beginning of each staff meeting.*

At the beginning of the year, many staff relied on familiar childhood favourites—such as Hairy Maclary—or well-known, 'old but gold' authors like Julia Donaldson when discussing books. As the programme developed and the focus on picture fiction and graphic novels became more embedded, staff began to bring more current and diverse texts aligned with our genre focus to share. This shift reflects a growing confidence and willingness to explore beyond their comfort zones.



To support this, a dedicated book recommendation space was created in the staffroom. This informal space has encouraged more regular peer-to-peer book swaps and reading conversations beyond the weekly staff meeting slot. Additionally, many staff have become more proactive in updating their 'What I'm Currently Reading' displays outside their classrooms. These updates have helped to visibly position teachers as readers, modelling positive reading behaviours to pupils.



The impact on focus pupils has been particularly encouraging. Staff now select texts with these specific pupils in mind, recommending books they believe will engage or resonate with them. These recommendations often feed directly into class read-aloud, ensuring all children benefit. Furthermore, we've observed focus pupils engaging in informal conversations with a range of staff around school—often sparked by noticing an updated 'What I'm Currently Reading' display—demonstrating growing confidence and interest in talking about books.

- *Aim 1: Strategy 2 – Coaching sessions to introduce staff to the 'Author of the Month'*



Each month, a new 'Author of the Month' is introduced to pupils during a whole-school assembly, typically accompanied by the sharing of an extract from one of their books. This initiative began in the previous academic year and has been successful in broadening children's awareness of a wider range of authors.

However, staff's responses to surveys were one indicator that many were not aware or did not value these authors. Upon further investigation, it became clear that some staff were missing the assemblies due to other teaching or leadership responsibilities. To address this gap, we introduced short, informal coaching sessions for staff to familiarise them with the author in advance of the pupil launch.

During these sessions, staff were introduced to the author's body of work, explored key texts, and had time to browse and read selected books. Several staff members took copies away to read independently or to consider for class read-aloud. As staff engagement grew, several teachers expressed interest in nominating future authors. As a result, responsibility for selecting and preparing the 'Author of the Month' began to be shared across the team, creating greater ownership and a wider range of recommendations. Staff surveys later showed a notable rise in references to 'Author of the Month' titles as personal favourites, and these books are now more frequently found in class libraries.





Impact on focus pupils has been particularly promising. Staff have begun incorporating 'Author of the Month' texts into class library sessions, using them as a springboard for one-to-one recommendations. Focus pupils have also responded well to creative follow-up activities linked to the featured authors, such as guided draw-alongs of main characters or designing their own comic strips. These interactive tasks have helped build enthusiasm and deepen engagement with the texts.

Aim 2: To increase the likelihood of spontaneous conversations between children and adults about reading.

CPD for staff on the impact of informal book talk on RfP.	CPD for staff where strategies to encourage 'Book Talk' were modelled.	Stickers introduced for children and staff to share texts they have read to build 'texts in common'.
Some teachers have created their own personal libraries with books children can borrow.	Opportunities for Book Talk within Independent Reading sessions.	School and class libraries to have dedicated space and resources for staff and children to make recommendations.
Staff have observed each other's Book Talk sessions.	Reading Ambassadors have created a 'Coming Soon' section in the library.	'Read & Respond' daily reading prompt used to develop incidental book talk through the corridors.

- *Aim 2: Strategy 1 - CPD for staff where strategies to encourage 'Book Talk' were modelled*

Early observations and pupil voice revealed that while Book Talk sessions were taking place across classes, they were not always enabling all pupils to share their reading preferences or supporting staff in developing a deep understanding of their class as readers. In many cases, Book Talk had become a routine task rather than a meaningful opportunity for dialogue. To address this, a targeted CPD session was delivered to strengthen staff understanding of what high-quality Book Talk looks like.

During this session, strategies from the OU RfP conference were shared, including the use of 'Book Blankets' and other interactive approaches. However, follow-up observations indicated that some classes were becoming overly reliant on a narrow range of strategies, and these were not always used in a way that uncovered the richness of children's reading lives.

To build on this, the next staff meeting was designed around peer modelling. A range of colleagues demonstrated different Book Talk strategies, with an emphasis on how each one could be used to discover more about pupils' reader identities. These sessions also included practical ideas for adapting and scaffolding discussions to ensure that all pupils—particularly those less confident in sharing—could participate meaningfully.

Subsequent peer observations showed clear improvements. Staff began using a wider repertoire of Book Talk strategies and showed greater confidence in tailoring them to the needs of their class. There was also a stronger focus on capturing and responding to what pupils shared, enabling staff to make more personalised reading recommendations.

Impact on focus pupils was particularly noticeable. These pupils were deliberately prioritised during Book Talk sessions, and staff were encouraged to use scaffolds—such as sentence stems or visual prompts—to support their participation. As a result, focus pupils were more actively involved in discussions and staff reported deeper insights into their reading preferences, which informed subsequent text choices and one-to-one recommendations.

Book Talk Reflection



What activity was planned to engage children in 'Book Talk'?

WH gave the children a book he thought they would enjoy and explained why he had picked this book for them. Chn were asked to read the blurb and then read some of the book to themselves. They then discussed it with a partner.

How did the 'Book Talk' session follow the LIST principle? (learner led, informal, social, texts that tempt)

L – Books chosen based on prior knowledge of the children as readers. They were encouraged to look for books that interested them.
L – All talking at once / reading to themselves. No pressure to read aloud. Chance to chat with others about books during book blanket activity.
S – Opportunity given to talk to partner about the book and what they thought about it. Chn asked to make recommendations for each other.
T – Books linked to previous interests e.g. superheroes, Egyptians, comedic books. Chn encouraged to make recommendations.

How did the teacher ensure all children engaged in informal book talk?

Spoke with LA pupil to support him to engage in the book talk.
 Circulated and asked questions while chn were discussing their books.
 Sentence stems and then questions given on w/b to support discussion.

Observation of 'Book Talk'
in Year 3

- *Aim 2: Strategy 2 - Some teachers have created their own personal libraries with books children can borrow*



Some staff in school were inspired by the teacher bookshelf, which contained books that they have enjoyed reading and would like to recommend to pupils. This is now in place in most classrooms. Where this has been most effective is when this bookshelf was moved outside of the classroom. I particularly enjoy more challenging texts best suited to KS2 and felt I was unable to make these recommendations as regularly as I like, teaching in Year 1. I created this bookshelf and promoted it within school assemblies, as a result I have had lots of conversations with children across school about their reading preferences and have been able to make recommendations. I have also been able to encourage conversations between pupils who have sought opinions on a text and I have told them about others that have also

read it. This influenced the headteacher and the Early Careers teacher to create their own bookshelves to display outside their spaces, giving children further opportunities for book talk. Other staff across school are keen to set up their own which is something that would be great to see moving forward into the next academic year.

There is one particular focus pupil this has had a profound impact on. Since introducing this she has only ever borrowed books from my bookshelf. Noticing this pattern, I dedicated considerable time to learning about her reading preferences and ensuring I had read and could offer her books that would match this. She comes to my classroom daily to have conversations about reading. This example shows the influence relational connections has on creating volitional readers.

Waiting List		
Write your name in the waiting list if you would like to borrow.		
Once you have borrowed it put the date you took it and the date it was returned.		
Name	Date Borrowed	Date Returned
Isabelle Devine	06/02	07/02
Brianna	10/02	12/02
Narda	22/02	returned

Waiting List		
Write your name in the waiting list if you would like to borrow.		
Once you have borrowed it put the date you took it and the date it was returned.		
Name	Date Borrowed	Date Returned
Isabelle Devine	07/02	10/02
Mufaro Makoni	10/02	11/02
LEO Baiskwick	11/02	18/02

Waiting List		
Write your name in the waiting list if you would like to borrow.		
Once you have borrowed it put the date you took it and the date it was returned.		
Name	Date Borrowed	Date Returned
Isabelle Devine	10/02	19/02/25
Talisha	19/02/25	-
Annabelle Hope	19/02/25	3/3/25



- *Aim 2: Strategy 3 – A 'Read & Respond' daily reading prompt is used to develop incidental book talk through the corridors*

One of the most impactful strategies for encouraging incidental book talk has been the daily reading prompt – Read & Respond – displayed at the entrance to the school playground. This interactive prompt varies in format: it might be a reflective question (e.g. *"Where do you enjoy reading?"*), a sentence stem to complete (*"I enjoy reading because..."*), or a photo of a staff member,

with the challenge to discover as many reading-related facts about them as possible.

The prompt is positioned where children enter school and pass through at break or lunch, making it an accessible and informal invitation to talk about reading. Children from all year groups have been observed pausing at the display, engaging in conversations with peers and staff that often continue onto the playground. These daily interactions are helping to normalise reading dialogue across the school and deepen pupils' understanding of themselves and others as readers.

In recent weeks, children have begun taking responsibility for creating the prompts themselves, a development which has further increased ownership

and engagement. Staff have been encouraged to use the prompts as a vehicle for connecting with focus pupils, and many have found this low-pressure context ideal for initiating reading conversations with pupils who might be less forthcoming in structured settings.

Example of questions created by children:

If you could be any character from a book, who would you be? – Kieren, Y6

What is your favourite graphic novel? – Rogan, Y1



If you could only read one book for the rest of your life, what would it be? – Mercy, Y4

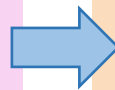
Would you rather read a book or write a book? – Harley and Lily-May, Y5



Review

Aim 1: To develop staff knowledge of children's literature, with a particular focus on picture fiction and graphic novels

End-of-year monitoring data and staff surveys indicate a marked shift in staff knowledge and engagement with contemporary children's literature, particularly within the target genres. In the initial baseline survey, 89% of staff cited classic, widely known, 'old but gold' authors such as J.K. Rowling, Roald Dahl, and Julia Donaldson as their most valued writers. This revealed a reliance on a limited and familiar canon. However, follow-up data collected in June demonstrated a significant broadening of author references, with word clouds evidencing increased recognition of diverse, contemporary authors—including those introduced during 'Author of the Month' coaching sessions, such as Nadia Shireen, Jon Klassen, and Tom Percival.



Qualitative evidence further supports this trend. Staff contributions at the start of weekly staff meetings have evolved significantly. Whereas early sessions featured recommendations of familiar texts like *Hairy Maclary* and *We're Going on a Bear Hunt*, more recent book-sharing activities revealed a shift towards more varied, inclusive, and genre-appropriate titles. The impact is visible in photographs and documented meeting notes, which highlight a richer diversity of picture books and graphic novels being discussed and recommended.



This growing expertise is also fostering a culture of peer recommendation. We have now created a dedicated area within the staffroom to recommend books we have enjoyed. This has become a valued resource, and the accompanying sign-in sheet indicates consistent participation. Staff are now actively seeking out and borrowing books based on their colleagues' suggestions—an encouraging sign of sustained professional interest.

Overall, these developments demonstrate that the intended outcomes for Aim 1 have been met. Staff now have broader and more contemporary knowledge of children's literature, particularly within the chosen genres. This has not only strengthened their ability to make informed book recommendations but also begun to embed a school-wide culture of shared enthusiasm and expertise in reading.

Staff Borrowing - Graphic Novels

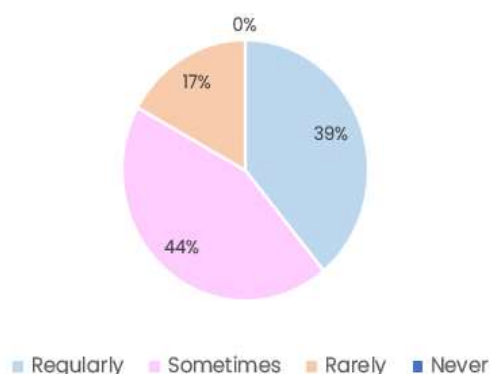
Name	Book	Date Borrowed	Date Returned
Lauren C	Narwhal 1	06/05	14/06
Will	Bad Guys 1	06/05	07/05
Carol	Bad Guys 1	06/05	14/05
Kirsty	Mystery Museum	06/05	14/05
Alex	Peanut, Butter + C	06/05	13/05
Lauren S	Babysitters Club 1	06/05	07/05
Lauren S	Babysitters Club 2	07/05	08/05
Lauren S	Babysitters Club 3	08/05	12/05
Craig	Goosebumps	13/05	15/05
Alex	White Bird	13/5	
Lauren S	When stars are scattered	13/05	22/05/25
Wendy	Grumpy Monkey who threw that?	13/5	02/06
Angela	Mystery Museum	14/05	20/05
Carol	Cat Run	15/05	02/06
Rakie	Puddle Splash	20/05	03/06
Kirsty	Bad and Squirrel	20/05	3/6
Angela	Bumble and Snug	20/05	9/6/25
Mannah	Detective Stories +	21/05	3/6
Craig	Agony Aunts	23/5	
Kirsty	Happy Hills	10/6	23/6

Prior to this, a staff survey revealed 10/18 members of staff had never read a graphic novel. This sheet shows a clear shift in staff reading habits.

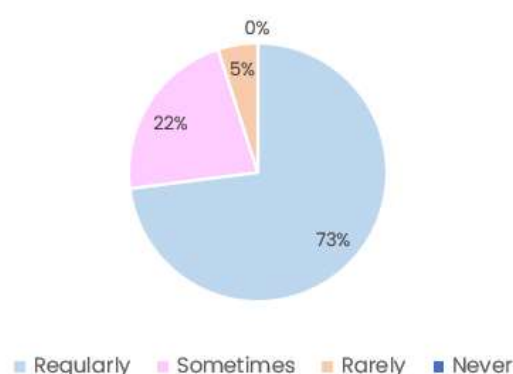
Aim 2: To increase the likelihood of spontaneous conversations between children and adults about reading

End-of-year monitoring and qualitative feedback suggest substantial progress in fostering a culture of meaningful book talk across the school. Evidence indicates that both structured and spontaneous conversations about reading have become embedded elements of daily school life.

How often do you informally chat about books with children?



How often do you informally chat about books with children?





Pupil voice interviews confirmed that weekly Book Talk sessions are now well-established. Children from each class could identify when these sessions occur and describe specific strategies that supported their reading choices.

"Doing a book blanket helps me find the next book I want to read because we get a chance to explore so many at once," AR (Year 3)

"Getting to talk to my teacher and my friends about the books they have read helps me to find a book I will enjoy," MS (Year 6)

These responses demonstrate that Book Talk is not only consistent but also meaningful, helping pupils make more informed reading choices and developing their reader identities.

Learning walks further corroborated this. During a single lunchtime, multiple instances of spontaneous book talk were observed, initiated by a range of school-wide strategies—including the *Read & Respond* board, 'What I'm Currently Reading' staff displays, and the classroom-adjacent staff libraries. Notably, two children approached me independently to recommend books they had recently enjoyed, reflecting genuine enthusiasm for sharing reading experiences beyond the classroom setting.

Staff survey responses also highlight a positive cultural shift. Comments revealed that spontaneous reading conversations are becoming habitual and intentional:

"I regularly engage in spontaneous book talk with children. I keep record of the books that the children have read and use the information to recommend books and discuss their thoughts."

"I talk to them about books at any opportunity—at lunchtime, in the library and on the playground."

These responses demonstrate that teachers are not only facilitating planned Book Talk but are also leveraging informal moments throughout the school day to connect with pupils as



readers. Importantly, several staff noted that these conversations have become a natural part of their interactions with children—evidence that the initiative is becoming deeply rooted in school culture.

Taken together, the data indicates that the intended outcomes for Aim 2 have been achieved. Book Talk is now a consistent, meaningful, and dynamic part of school life—contributing to stronger relationships, increased reader agency, and a more vibrant whole-school reading culture.

Focus Pupils

The impact of the RfP pedagogy on our focus pupils has been particularly significant. Throughout the year, staff engaged in ongoing professional noticing to track changes in behaviour, engagement, and attitudes toward reading. The Open University's *Venn Diagram of Professional Noticing* proved to be a powerful tool in this process. Staff annotated this regularly during staff meetings, which helped them to build a more nuanced and holistic understanding of their focus pupils as readers. This practice encouraged deeper reflection and helped staff to become more responsive to children's evolving reader identities.

In June, each staff member created and presented a slide capturing the journey of their focus child. These presentations were powerful. Staff spoke with genuine insight and passion, confidently articulating the shifts they had observed—not only in reading engagement but also in confidence, autonomy, and enthusiasm.

Focus Pupil: DD Girl, 6 years old

September:

"I'm so bored"

- Disengaged during read aloud, would openly say "I'm so bored". Once pretended to be asleep.
- Struggled to engage in Book Talk. Would just say "Dino" when talking about books she enjoyed.

June:

"I love books about dinosaurs but graphic novels are REALLY good too. Peanut, Butter and Crackers is my favourite"

- Pays more attention during read aloud and is keen to engage in repetitive phrases/actions.
- I shared a reading memory during a Book Talk session and it became Daisy's favourite book. She responds well to recommendations from teachers.
- Dinosaur books are still her favourite but when choosing books for the read aloud she chose a different selection despite lots of dinosaur books being available.
- Keen to engage in book talk related activities, will always answer the 'Question of the Day' and puts books on the golden bookshelf.

Focus Pupil: OG Boy, 10 years old

September:

"I don't read. I don't like it."

- Reluctant to engage in 'Book Talk' sessions. When asked what he liked to read, he simply replied with 'I don't like reading.'
- Appeared to choose books from the sports section, but did not appear to engage with what he was reading. It was as if he was only selecting a book because he had to.
- Struggled to engage in library sessions.

March:

"You should read this one, it's really good!"

- Developed an enjoyment for choose your own adventure and liked to share and swap these with his friend.
- Regularly asks about library sessions, has begun to ask to change book outside of library sessions.
- Said he has 'read all the football stories' that were in the library, asked if he would like some more and he said 'if they're there then I'll read them'.
- Really enjoyed reading graphic novels.
- Recommended a book to me. Heard us talking and said, 'You need to read this'. Then went on to explain about the book.
- Asked what he liked about these books and he said, 'I like the pictures and words, it's not too much and is easy to follow.'

As a team, we then collectively identified the common elements that had enabled this transformation. Across every reflection, one theme stood out clearly: knowing the child well and making personalised, intentional book recommendations was key. Staff consistently cited the importance of demonstrating interest, listening closely, and tailoring their support to each child's preferences and needs.

The greatest transformation was seen among pupils who were involved in the *Change Team*. These children, who were given leadership roles and regular opportunities to reflect on and talk about their reading, experienced the most profound shifts in both behaviour and attitude. Their increased sense of agency and ownership around reading played a major role in developing not just their engagement, but also their confidence to share recommendations and opinions with peers.

	Do you enjoy reading?		
	Scale (1 – Strongly Disagree to 5 – Strongly Agree)		
	Autumn	Summer	Change
MR	2	5	+3
JD	1	4	+3
TC	2	5	+3
LR	2	4	+2
JD	1	5	+4
HH	1	4	+3
OG	2	4	+2

"Getting to read the books for the Coming Soon display before anyone else is allowed them. Then I can talk about them in assembly" – JD

"Getting to organise events like the Book'nic and World Book Day is so much fun" – HH

This qualitative evidence, supported by consistent staff observation, points to a sustained and meaningful shift in reading identity.

Without question, the impact on focus children has been one of the most rewarding outcomes of this work. These individual stories not only affirm the effectiveness of the strategies introduced but also highlight the transformative potential of Reading for Pleasure when pedagogy is grounded in deep knowledge of children as readers. Moving forward, staff are motivated and committed to continuing this personalised, child-centred approach.

Sustain

While I began this programme with a solid grounding in Reading for Pleasure (RfP)—built through ongoing training and research inspired by a personal passion for the subject—this year has deepened my understanding of its practical impact, particularly through our work



with focus pupils. One of the most powerful insights has been the influence that peers and adults have on children's reading habits. The role of relational connections created through personalised, enthusiastic recommendations emerged as a central driver in transforming reader identity. This aligns closely with Cremin et al.'s (2014) research, which highlights the importance of social reading environments and reader-to-reader interactions in nurturing RfP. Moving forward, I plan to explore this further through additional research into effective recommendation strategies and how we can continue to build a community of readers across our school.

The structured support and guidance in the early stages of the programme—particularly the emphasis on developing clear, achievable, and manageable action steps—was pivotal in enabling us to realise meaningful change. This approach ensured consistency, clarity of purpose, and staff buy-in. As a result, I will adopt this model when writing next year's RfP action plan and also apply it to other subject leadership roles. I also learned the value of baseline and follow-up surveys in providing tangible, quantifiable evidence of change. These tools were essential in both diagnosing need and celebrating success.

In terms of leading and managing school improvement, one of the key takeaways has been the importance of continuous visibility. RfP was not confined to isolated CPD sessions—it was embedded into the rhythm of school life. Weekly staff meetings became platforms for sharing book recommendations and discussing focus pupils, helping to sustain momentum and reinforce RfP as a shared responsibility. This consistent integration helped shift RfP from an initiative to a cultural norm.

One of the most impactful developments this year has been the focus on graphic novels. The surge in pupil engagement in response to this genre has been remarkable. Ensuring staff remain confident and up to date with this format will be a priority. In practical terms, we plan to revisit picture fiction and graphic novels in the first term of the next academic year and then return to them periodically, while expanding into other genres based on emerging pupil needs and interests. Staff knowledge will no longer be a formal action point, as I am confident that the systems and strategies developed this year are now embedded into day-to-day practice and will continue organically.

With regard to pedagogy, Book Talk will remain a monitored strand; however, survey data and pupil voice suggest that a potential next area of focus could be *read aloud practices*. These findings will inform our planning and observations going forward.

Our key development priority for next year, however, will be parental engagement. Although this has historically been a challenge—with only around 15% of families typically attending reading-related events—recent developments are encouraging. In May, we held an OU *Booknic* event, and 87% of parents attended. This signals a promising cultural shift and an opportunity

to build momentum. We are currently in the process of developing a new action plan that centres on harnessing this increased enthusiasm and drawing families more actively into our reading community.

Next Steps:

- Maintain termly genre focuses, beginning with reviewing picture fiction and graphic novels.
- Explore and trial new strategies for book recommendations to deepen the social aspects of reading.
- Monitor read-aloud practices to identify and develop next steps in RfP pedagogy.
- Develop and implement a targeted action plan to increase parental engagement, using the success of the *Booknic* as a springboard.
- Continue embedding RfP into weekly staff meetings to ensure sustainability of practices.

RfP is now part of the fabric of our school, and the challenge—and opportunity—ahead is to sustain this ethos while evolving our practice in response to pupil and community needs. We are incredibly grateful to the Open University and their team for the guidance, inspiration, and high-quality resources they have provided throughout this programme. Their support has played a pivotal role in helping us reimagine what a vibrant, inclusive reading culture can look like in our setting.