

# READING FOR PLEASURE AT CHEADLE CATHOLIC INFANT SCHOOL

By Claire Nelson

# WHY IS READING FOR PLEASURE SUCH AN IMPORTANT PART OF LIFE AT OUR SCHOOL?



Research shows that children who read for pleasure...

- Find it easier to empathise with others, improves wellbeing and builds more positive relationships (Reading Agency 2015).
- Have a positive attitude to reading which means young people are more likely to read at/ above expected age level (Clark 2014).
- Have a richer vocabulary at their disposal and often also do better in other academic areas such as spelling and maths (Sullivan and Brown 2013).
- Are more likely to be readers throughout their adult lives (Clark and Rumbold 2006)



# WE KNEW THAT WE WANTED TO RAISE THE PROFILE OF READING FOR PLEASURE. BUT HOW?

With all this in mind, we knew that we needed a plan so we decided that our initial priorities would be:

- To make sure children had time to listen to and/or read books everyday.
- To introduce children to the people behind the books.
- To get parents more involved in reading with their children.
- To make sure that staff and children had access to the most current, diverse and interesting texts to suit and engage all readers.
- To spread a 'buzz' about reading around the school.



# READING ROCKS NEWSLETTER

*"By fostering this love of reading in school, it's meant that we have been able to share lovely reading moments at home as my child is so enthused to cuddle up and read his favourite book- he never lets me miss a bedtime story!" Mrs M, Y1 parent*



Parents are a child's first and most important educators. They are the experts on their children. We know that children who see their parents and caregivers reading at home are much more likely to view it as a pleasurable activity and be more motivated to read themselves.

Response:

Pre-pandemic, parents and carers were regularly invited into school to read with their children. We knew that we needed to keep signposting parents to resources and reminding them of the importance of regular reading at home. The 'Reading Rocks' newsletter is written by me and goes out to parents once a term. This newsletter shares the exciting reading opportunities that are happening in school, it reminds parents of the importance of reading at home and it points them in the direction of interesting resources which they can explore with their children.

The school's library had been a place to informally borrow books for class. It was at the heart of the school and children could see the beautiful books but didn't have access to them independently. It was occasionally used as a place to enjoy reading but wasn't fully utilised.

*"She chooses to read now. Not her reading books but the ones she brings home from the library. She's really into the 'Isadora Moon' series and we have got her a couple from the shops. I'm a big reader myself and it's so lovely to see her choosing to read to a book by herself at bedtime."*

*Mrs G, Year 2 parent*

The school library is also used for lunchtime book clubs with Year 1 and 2 children who love to come in for some quiet time to read a book or listen to a story being read by an adult.

## SCHOOL LIBRARY



Response:

With help from the experts at the Cheshire Library Service and some parent volunteers, I have organised the library so that it can be used as a lending library. All books are set up in an attractive manner, a computer program has been installed so that they are all catalogued and all children take home a book on a weekly basis.

Children have helped to inform the books we stock and we have been so pleased to see that texts such as cookery books, craft books and poetry are becoming very popular as the word spreads from child to child. We are also committed to making sure that characters in our books mirror the diverse society our children live in. We have an increasing number of books written by and depicting characters of different colours, faiths and ethnicities.



# STAFF ROOM 'AUTHOR OF THE MONTH'

"This has opened my eyes to other books that I hadn't heard of or come across before. I have been able to share them and the children have loved them."

Miss Ward, Y2 teacher

"It's been very useful to help us find new books that link to our topics. We can then take them and share them with our classes."

Mrs Tetlow, Reception teacher



## Response:

Using resources from the Cheshire Library Service, Claire Nelson organises a staff room 'Author of the month'. This showcases talented authors who have a wide back catalogue that would appeal to the full range of Nursery to Year 2. These books can be browsed and borrowed for use as class reads or even in assembly by Mrs Glynn the headteacher.

New books are released every month and yet sometimes staff found themselves reaching for the same old favourites. We needed a way to make sure that as a staff we keep up to date on new releases and that we are giving our children the very best books available.

We know that modelling positive reading behaviours is an important way to show children that books are exciting, special and beautiful. This is emphasised to parents but school staff can also do plenty to help raise the status of reading and books.

*"I would like to borrow the book about too many carrots that Mrs Glynn read in assembly. Can you help me find it?"*  
Thomas, R2

## MRS GLYNN'S BOOK OF THE WEEK

### Response:

Every week in our 'celebration assembly' Mrs Glynn the headteacher chooses a book from the library to read aloud. She explains why she has chosen it to the children. Sometimes it fits with a particular theme and sometimes it is just because she enjoys it. The children are thrilled when they see these books in the library and get very excited about borrowing them.

Children need to see other children enjoying books to understand that books can be fun. Children also love to get reviews from their friends and sharing a love of books with peers is another way to engage reluctant readers.



## READING CHAMPIONS

*"To be a good reading champion you have to really like books and enjoy reading a lot."*

*Frankie, Y2 Reading Champion*



*"I really like it when people read the books that we chose. I feel proud when people read what we have suggested."*

*Olivia, Y2 Reading Champion*

Response:

Four children from each of the Year 2 classes volunteer to help spread a love of reading across the school. Their role is to recommend books to classes across the school, help organise special events such as 'Battle of the Books' and help to keep the library organised and tidy.

The reading champions are chosen as a true representation of our school with children with EAL, SEND and who receive Pupil Premium all helping to make up the team.

Part of their time is spent listening to stories and looking at books so that they have a good knowledge of books to share across the school.



As a school we wanted to find a way of getting an excited buzz around school promoting books and book talk. We wanted something that would engage all the classes and make sure that everyone could get involved.

# BATTLE OF THE BOOKS



"I loved making the videos for 'Battle of the Books'. I like how it showed other people new books that they haven't tried. It gives them ideas of what they might like to read next."

Oliver, Y2 Reading Champion



## Response:

Claire Nelson and the Reading Champions organised our first ever 'Battle of the Books'. The theme was 'Books to Make You Laugh'. The reading champions chose the books, created videos to engage the classes (as they were in post-covid bubbles) and helped to reveal the winner. Posters around school added to the excitement and discussions could be heard as children waited for lunch, queued up to go into the hall for PE and in the playground. All classes received a copy of the winning book for their class libraries. This has now become an annual event.

Pupil voice showed that if children in our school could name an author it was almost always either Julia Donaldson or Roald Dahl. While we all enjoy their books, we wanted to widen the experiences of the children and introduce them to other equally talented authors.



# ADOPT AN AUTHOR

## Response:

Every class in school has adopted an author. This author has a special place in the class library and their books are read and reread with the children regularly. Most of the authors are based in the UK (with the exception of Eric Carle in Nursery). The authors have been chosen to be a good representation of wider society with an equal number of male and females and three authors who are from a black or minority ethnic background, one for each year group. By the end of their Infant School journey the children will be able to talk about at least three authors in detail.

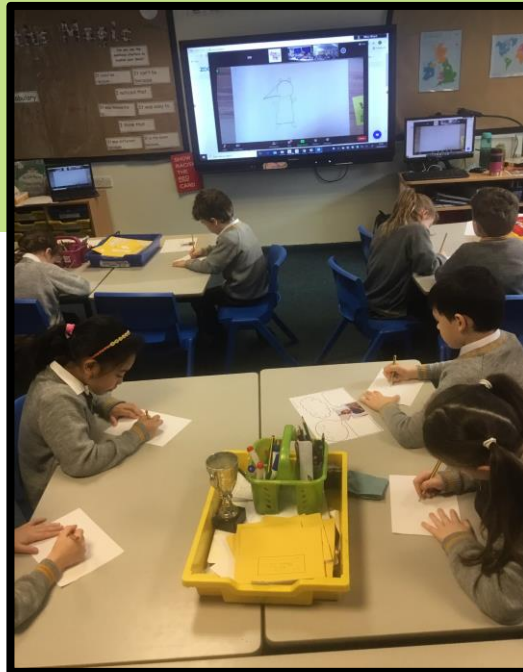
Class 1DW received this lovely reply from Caryl Hart after sharing their World Book Day activities



Hello!! This is so lovely, thank you so much for adopting me and for reading my books! Please do give the children a massive high five from me- and DM me your address if you'd like some stickers for your class!

Not all children instantly fall in love with books and stories and so we want to make sure that the children have exciting experiences which are connected to reading and take the children beyond the book.

*"The workshop with the illustrator blew his mind! He couldn't believe it was the person who had written the actual book. He wants to be an illustrator himself when he grows up. It has really inspired him."  
Mrs M, Year 2 parent*



# AUTHOR VISITS

## Response:

Children are given the opportunity to meet at least one author every year. The authors we have chosen in the past have led interactive workshops which the children have loved and also brought the books to life. We aim to keep introducing children to a range of different types of authors, so far we have had two local picture book authors (Mike Morris and Fay Evans), an online workshop with an author/illustrator (Hannah Shaw) and a poet (Matt Goodfellow). In this way, children feel more connection with the texts they are reading and return to these books independently.



Putting in the reading miles doesn't have to mean endless chapter books. We saw a huge uptake in engagement, especially from boys, when we added comics and magazines to our classroom offering.

"The pictures help me to keep the story going when the words start to get hard."  
H, Year 2 child

# NOT JUST BOOKS

Response:

Classes are building up a library of comics, magazines and other reading materials to entice children to try something new. Most of these are donated after they have already been read at home by our families. Many children who are identified as infrequently reading for pleasure have a more positive attitude when these are offered. It was also easily refreshed and created an excited buzz leading to children sharing articles and facts that caught their attention.



# SOCIABLE NOT SOLITARY

One of the factors putting some children off reading was the idea that it was done on your own, and done quietly. How could we ensure the children were reading but do it in a way that appealed to and suited our young children?

## Response:

By relaxing our ideas about what reading needed to look like, we discovered opportunities to use reading as a way to connect with others. Children explore books with friends. Children share texts together. Our library is not silent. Children can make choices and steer their own reading experiences.





# BUILDING POSITIVE ASSOCIATIONS

While most would agree that one World Book Day a year is not enough to change attitudes, the impact of exciting events throughout the year proves irresistible as part of a quality R4P offering.

## Response:

Events like 'The Battle of the Books', cosy reading day, mystery reader, DEAR session with parents, reading cafes, book swaps and more help children to see books in a positive light. They associate them with the activities which they enjoyed. It starts conversations between children and it introduces them to texts that tempt.





# WE ARE DELIGHTED WITH THE SUCCESS WE HAVE SEEN. BUT WHAT NEXT?

We know that the children at our school are now more interested in books and reading, their parents are getting more involved in the process and they have access to a wider variety of books. From here we would like to:

- Blethering together: find more ways to encourage children to recommend and discuss books, make connections between books and discuss the emotional impact on them as readers.
- Return to getting parents into school regularly to read and enjoy books with their children.
- Continue to intentionally diversify our books, making sure that everyone can find somebody like themselves in the books we offer.
- Get to know the children who don't read for pleasure and target them intentionally and strategically.

