

Does reading for pleasure support accelerated progress?

Orchard Primary School, Upper Phase

Abstract

This study aimed to explore whether children would make more progress if they were provided with more opportunities for reading for pleasure. In order to trial its effectiveness, a focus groups were selected from Years 5 and 6. These children were all working below the expected standard for their year group, in the hope that the project would support them in reaching the expected standard by the end of the research period. Result showed that 61% of the children moved from working towards the expected standard, to working at the expected standard. However, the levels of pupil engagement showed that learners are all more passionate about reading as a result; whether they remained working towards the expected level or if they moved, to working at the expected standard. This impact highlighted the importance of children reading books that interest them and how engaging children in dialogue and written feedback around their chosen text allows for the children to be active readers.

Introduction

This case study aims to support children working below the expected standard. This concept aims to further embed children's passion for reading by allowing them more time to read for pleasure and to their record verbal responses to comprehension questions. The objective is to create opportunities for the lowest 20% of readers to make accelerated progress in line with the School Development Plan.

The selected children had additional time, each day, to read a book of their choice (in line with their current book band) and then discuss the text with the teacher or member of support staff before writing a comment about the book in their home-school diary. OECD (2002), published in 'Reading for Pleasure', stated- "Reading for pleasure is more important for children's educational success than their family's socio-economic status." This publication from Oxford University Press, also stated that "Outstanding reading schools believe in both the importance of developing children's discrete word-reading skills and comprehension, and the need to engender their love of books and reading. These schools recognise that the two elements are intertwined; each relies on the other if children are to become life-long

readers.” (Building an Outstanding Reading School). For the purpose of the action research project it was a priority to ensure that these two aspects were met.

Data sources across Upper phase were used to review the research. Three classes participated in the project (Both Year 6 classes and one Year 5- the other year 5 class didn't participate due to their NQT status). The aim was to analyse whether the children with additional time 'reading for pleasure' and comprehending what they had read, would close the gap and be working at the expected standard, by the end of the project. Samples of home reading diaries, from each class, were reviewed to note the impact on an individual basis and the reading tracking grids showed an overall picture of progress. The project ran for 1.5 terms, from the beginning of Spring 1 to the end of Summer 1.

Research Process

In order to collect a research sample, children working below the expected attainment level in reading were selected from each class. Class teachers and support staff were briefed in regards to how to implement the project. This sample of children would read additional every day and answer an additional question in their diary. Children were interviewed to share their thoughts and opinions regarding how they felt about having additional reading time and what impact it had on their reading progress. Letters went home to parents to engage them in the process and to ensure that they were promoting the same level of interest in reading at home. A sample of the children's diaries was collected. The data of the focus group was analysed to assess the level of progress made from starting points.

Findings

The findings of the study showed high levels of pupil engagement in reading. The Building an Outstanding Reading School- stated that, 'reading independently at school for a sustained period is important if children are to develop as self-reliant readers, able to select a book and sustain their concentration. Providing time for independent reading is equitable because it means that every child, including those who do not read at home, has time to enjoy a book.' Providing additional time for children to read for pleasure enables them the time to engage in literature.

Children are now able to independently answer questions in their home school diaries. All examples of work highlighted that the children have answered their comprehension questions- every time. This illustrated that they began to take ownership over their reading. The children interviewed all clearly indicated to the fact they enjoyed having additional time to read and supported them in completing their diary, which they were in turn they were very proud of.

The focus group was pupils who were working below the expected standard for their year group. In Year 6 (Class A), 5 out of the 7 chosen focus children are now working at the expected attainment level. In Year 5, 5 out of the 6 children are now working above the expected standard. In Year 6 (Class B), 2 out of 5 are now working at the expected standard. This is 61% of the sample that have moved from below expected to at the expected level.

Name	Book band before	Book band after
Child 1 Year 5		
Child 2 Year 5		
Child 3 Year 5		
Child 4 Year 5		
Child 5 Year 5		
Child 6 Year 5		FR
Child 1 Year 6		FR
Child 2 Year 6		FR
Child 3 Year 6		FR
Child 4 Year 6		FR
Child 5 Year 6		FR
Child 6 Year 6		
Child 7 Year 6		
Child 1 Year 6		
Child 2 Year 6		
Child 3 Year 6		FR
Child 4 Year 6		
Child 5 Year 6		FR

Interviews carried out with child participants show how children felt more valued if they had time to read a book they had selected and enjoyed the additional time to read with an adult. The overall feeling highlights that reading for pleasure was enjoyed by the sample of children and enabled them to feel more confident and on observation, facilitated greater opportunities for them to engage during 'Destination Reader' sessions, as a result of having more time to openly discuss a variety of texts.

The effectiveness was also measure by the teachers, this highlighted that 'Children are more passionate when they get to choose their own book. They feel a sense of ownership over the text as they have selected it themselves.' They also felt that 'If the text is well planned by the teacher and takes into consideration the views, opinions and preferences of the child then the text can be enjoyed by the children. If the teacher is able to fully immerse the children in the text then even though they haven't self-selected it, it can be enjoyed and challenge pupils, as readers. However, reading for pleasure will always show high levels of engagement.' This indicates the importance of teachers understanding the needs and interests of their class. Another teacher stated that, 'Children's fluency skills improved, as well as their confidence. They were able to discuss new texts with a greater understanding.' This links to our school development plan, in ensure oracy skills are nurtured and developed. Positive feedback from both staff and children, with positive results is a clear indication of success.

Impact and Conclusion

Evidence concludes that enabling children to have additional time to read for pleasure promotes autonomy and encourages fluency within reading. This active process as enabled children to feel more engaged in the reading process. As a result children have fostered a greater love for reading, even if they have not closed the attainment gap.

The set-up of the project and the implementation proved to be a very natural transition. However, next time I would focus on how to further support teachers and support staff to ensure the project was carried out with greater rigor and children didn't miss any additional sessions. This could be achieved by providing the adults with daily record sheets. Parents were informed about the project but could have been a more prominent feature with regular points of contacts and organising targeted groups to share and discuss reading strategies to further support.

This project raised questions in reference to the core text list for each year group, to ensure that they are supportive of our children's interests. When receiving the core text list for next year we will be mindful to ensure children's views are taken into consideration when up-dating the book list. The research project also highlighted the importance of raising the profile of home-school diaries and how additional questions in their diaries really scaffolded children to engage further with reading.

The research project highlighted the importance of raising the profile of home-school diaries and how additional questions in their diaries really scaffolded children to engage further with reading. It has confirmed by believe that children's passion for reading will increase if they have self-selected the text they are reading.

References

Building an Outstanding Reading School

Six strategies to make reading for pleasure work in your school

www.oxfordprimary.co.uk

Why is reading for pleasure important?

The Reading Agency

<https://readingagency.org.uk/news/blog/why-is-reading-for-pleasure-important.html>

Example of in class home reading diary sticker chart to promote children to bring their diaries to school everyday

_____ Class Spring 2
 Home Reading Diary Sticker Chart

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Child 1						
Child 2						
Child 3						
Child 4						
Child 5						
Child 6						
Child 7						
Child 8						
Child 9						
Child 10						
Child 11						
Child 12						
Child 13						
Child 14						
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Child 16						
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Child 30						