



Let's Love the Library...inside out

**Empowering Children to Develop their Reading for
Pleasure Environments in Indoor and Outdoor Settings**

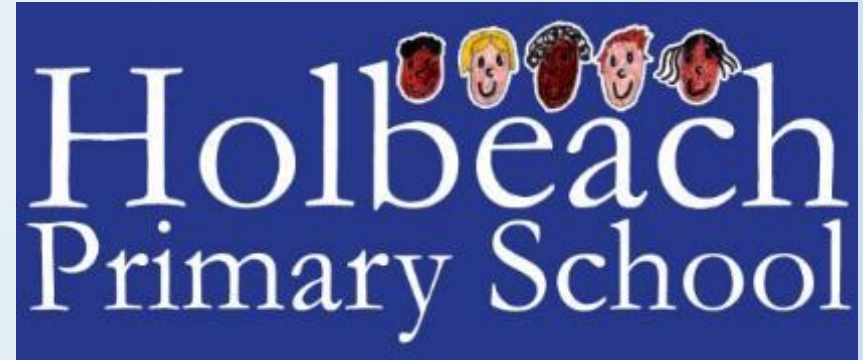
Karen Robertson
March 2020
Submitted to the Egmont RfP Awards –
Whole School category

(From Aims to Reflections the word count is 1497)



Context

- Holbeach Primary School is situated in Catford, South East London, England. (The town's name actually derives from the place where cattle crossed the River Ravensbourne in Saxon times.)
- We are a larger than average primary school and serve an ethnically and socio-economically diverse community.
- In my role as an Assistant Headteacher, I lead English and the Curriculum across the school.
- One of the English objectives in our School Development Plan for 2019/21 is to continue to raise achievement in reading. We strongly believe that this is more likely if children are excited and enthused by books and are choosing to read for pleasure.



OU Research inspiration and rationale

I read with great interest the Open University's Teachers as Readers Research findings (Cremin et al. 2014) and was further inspired to explore and develop Reading for Pleasure (RfP) at Holbeach, where we decided to focus on:
Developing a reading for pleasure pedagogy which includes social reading environments.

Other research which influenced me included:
Evidence from OECD (2002), which found that reading enjoyment is more important for children's educational success than their family's socio-economic status.

Clark and Rumbold (2006) argue that reading for pleasure could be one important way to help combat social exclusion and raise educational standards.

Here at Holbeach, we know that we have the power to change children's lives and are passionate about ensuring that our children have the best chances to grow into happy, successful people. Reading for pleasure will increase children's chances of success.



Teachers' knowledge of children's literature and other texts



Teachers' knowledge of children's reading practices



Reading for pleasure pedagogy



Reading Teachers: teachers who read and readers who teach



Reading communities

Aims

Who has ownership of the reading environment in your school library?

This was the question that really set me thinking about our library as a social reading environment, which had, despite being a fabulous, well organised and attractive space, become underused.

So our initial aims were to:

- Ensure that all children had access to the library.
- Find a way in which children's voices could be heard and harnessed and empower them to make changes to the organisation and resources in the library.
- Give children choices and opportunities to engage in reading for pleasure in a shared, whole school environment that they had helped to create.



Outline

Ensure that all children have access to the library

- Expectations for using the library (all classes visit at least once per fortnight) were clarified and re-visited in several staff meetings.
- A timetable was prepared and teachers chose a slot for their class.
- Buddy classes were formed across the school (e.g. Year 2 and Year 6) for blogging and reading together.
- Gradually, the library became well used once more and there was a real buzz of excitement again.



Outline

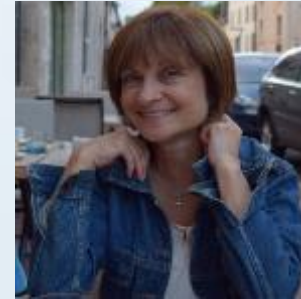
- A reception class set off to visit the library for the first time - on a bear hunt. Each child found a bear, chose a book and read to them. After that, we sat together and both children and bears listened to a story read aloud – ‘Where’s My Teddy?’ by Jez Alborough.
- When the children returned to class, one of them was bursting to tell a member of staff “This is the best day of my life! We went to the living room and had a story,” indicating that they felt so at home, comfortable and enthused by the event.
- The class have visited ‘the living room’ many times since and still regard it as “a special place that we love, with hundreds of books.”



Outline

Finding a way in which children's voices could be heard and harnessing and empowering them to make changes to the organisation and resources in the library

- Sue McGonigle visited Holbeach to view the library and to interview me for a blog post that she was writing for Great School Libraries:
<https://www.greatschoollibraries.org.uk/post/passion-and-commitment-are-key-to-successful-primary-school-libraries>
- During her visit, we talked about ways forward for the library and Sue planted 'The Suggestion Box' seed in my mind!
- The Suggestion Box was key to obtaining a range of children's ideas in a manageable way.
- The box was created, painted and decorated by our talented team - Mr Holmes, the Premises Officer and Mrs Carnell, one of our HLTA's - and launched during a whole school assembly.



Sue McGonigle



Outline

- In the first week of the Suggestion Box being introduced, we received 170 notes from children. By the end of the first month, there had been 479 suggestions.
- Some of the ideas could be implemented immediately.

Audiobooks and other
read-along devices please.
Grace

Please can we have
bears to cuddle and
read to.
Adrian25

- Other requests were from children asking for specific books and authors. However, budgetary constraints meant that we had to think creatively about how we might provide this new reading material.



"It's like a class of bears reading. I want to read with them!" a girl in Year 4 commented



Outline

- We booked The Book Bus for a visit, which was very exciting for the children. They had never experienced a book shop on a bus before! Book prices were reasonable, ranging from £1 to £15.
- At the end of the school day, parents were able to board the bus to buy books. There was a queue of about 100 people snaking around the playground, eager to make purchases.
- The books that we chose to buy with the commission were many of those that children had been requesting for the library. These new books were presented in assembly and, as the books were introduced, there were gasps of excitement from the children!
- Children helped to create displays of the books in the library and the following day, the shelves were half empty - it was as if a plague of locusts had consumed the new books!



Outline

The children decided how to categorize and display the new books that they had requested



Books to make you giggle



Popular books

Books to take you on an adventure



Books that are classics

Books to help you understand things better



Outline

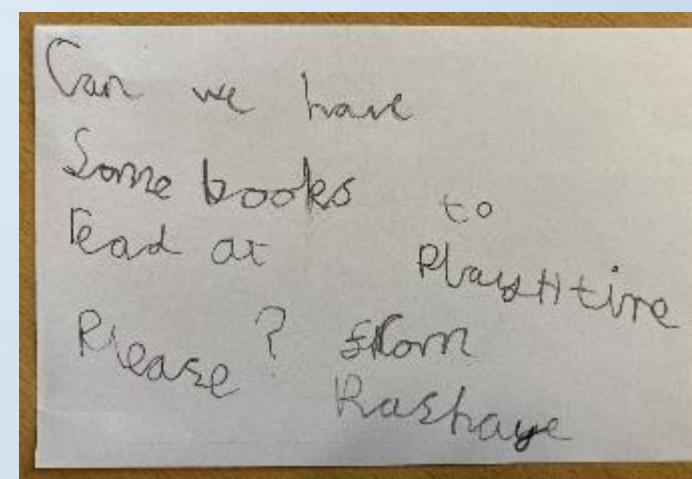
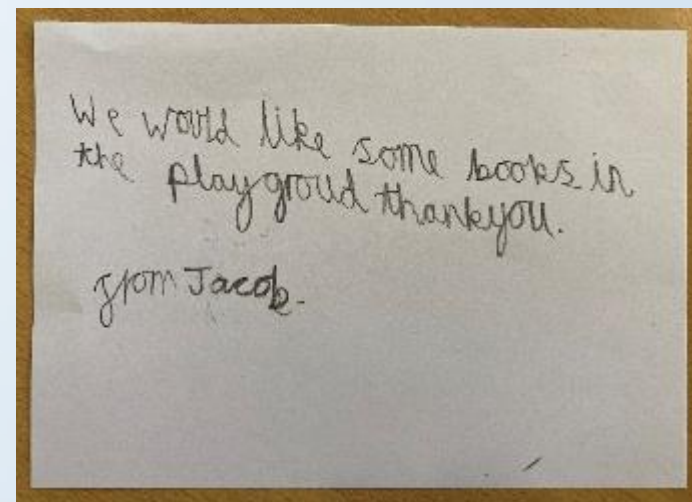
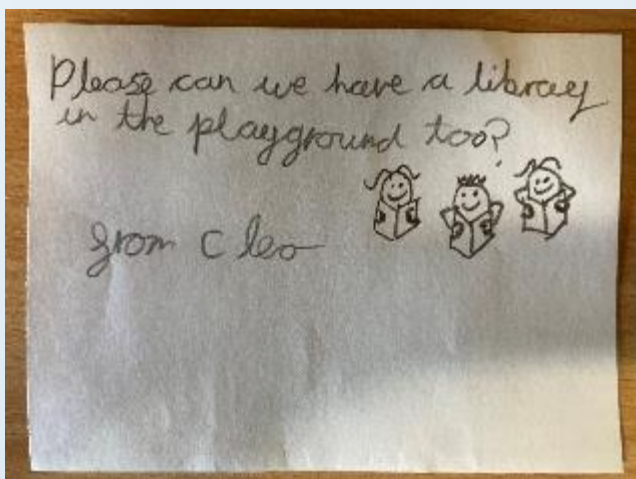
Upon return to school in September, we wanted to ensure that the library development continued and that children's voices remained an integral part of this. As a result, we:

- Sent applications for Junior Librarian posts to all children in Years 5 and 6 and were inundated with responses - a strong indication of the children's desire to be involved in the continued development of our library space.
- Re-painted The Suggestion Box gold and re-launched it in a whole school assembly.
- Reminded children of our successes so far.



Outline

- A huge variety of 'golden ideas' continued to be posted by the children.
- A new and common thread began to run through many of the suggestions – requests to be able to access books at playtimes.
- Through these requests, our next major step evolved - taking the library outside, to develop reading areas and promote reading for pleasure in the playground.



Outline

- Our school partnered with a charity run by a local estate agent who were able to donate over three thousand books to us to source the Playground Book Club.
- We purchased two trolleys on wheels (for KS1 and KS2) which were adapted by the premises officer to make them sturdier for use outside. Huge outdoor bean bags and snuggly blankets were also provided for comfort and warmth.



Outline

Estate Agent staff were onsite to celebrate with us during an exciting day of storytelling and reading workshops in the playground during the launch of our new outdoor reading club. A brief synopsis of the project can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o6jld9sMHaU>



Impact

- The library is now used regularly by classes and groups of children.
- Children are enthused to communicate ideas for developing their library – giving them ownership has really made a difference.
- The library environment has been enhanced and children are eager to use it.
- Historically, our library was always non-fiction based, where older children carried out research. Story books have always been available in the classroom book corners. However, 90% of the suggestions from the children requesting books were fiction, indicating that if we truly wanted to encourage reading for pleasure, the library needed to change. The children led that change.



Year 3 children, in role as teachers, read a story to the class of bears

Impact

- Children not only initiated the idea of a playtime reading club but also took control of the organisation and running of it. Several Year 5 boys offered to take daily responsibility for this; they even implemented a lending library at playtime, recording the names of children and the books being borrowed so that they could continue reading them at home!



Impact

Readers making choices in the library



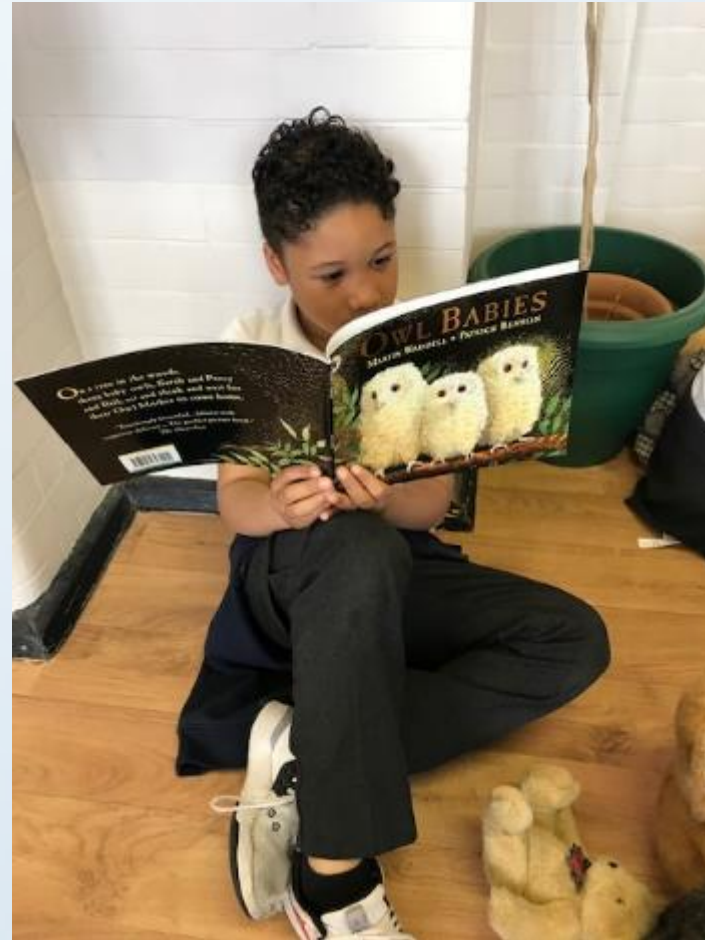
Impact

Readers making choices in the playground



Impact

Relaxing with books in the library



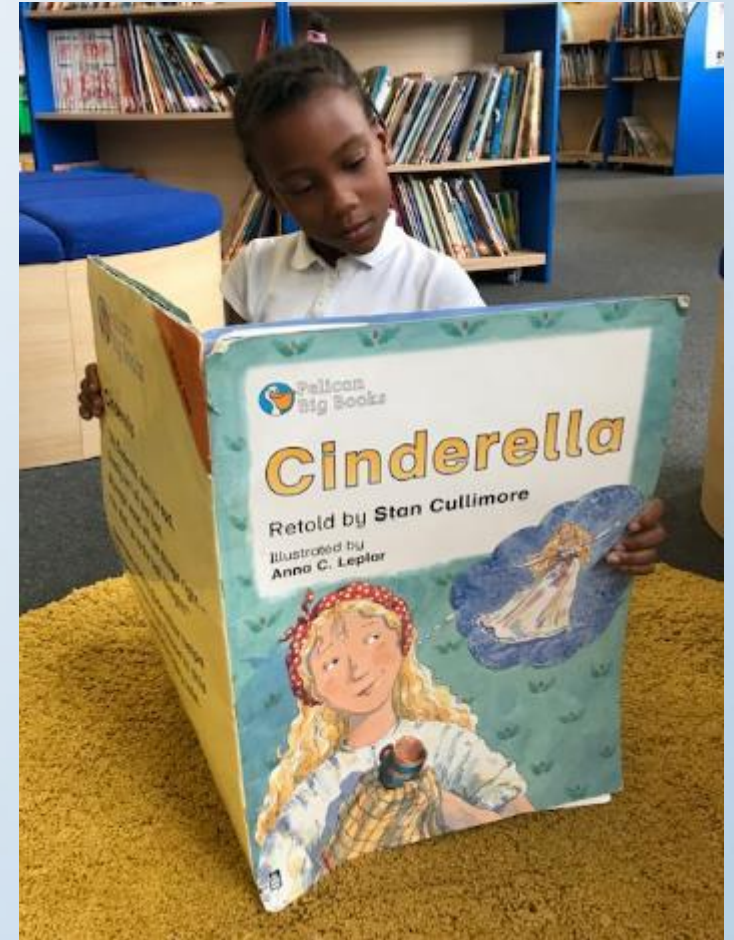
Impact

Relaxing with books in the playground



Impact

Engrossed readers in the library



Impact

Engrossed readers in the playground



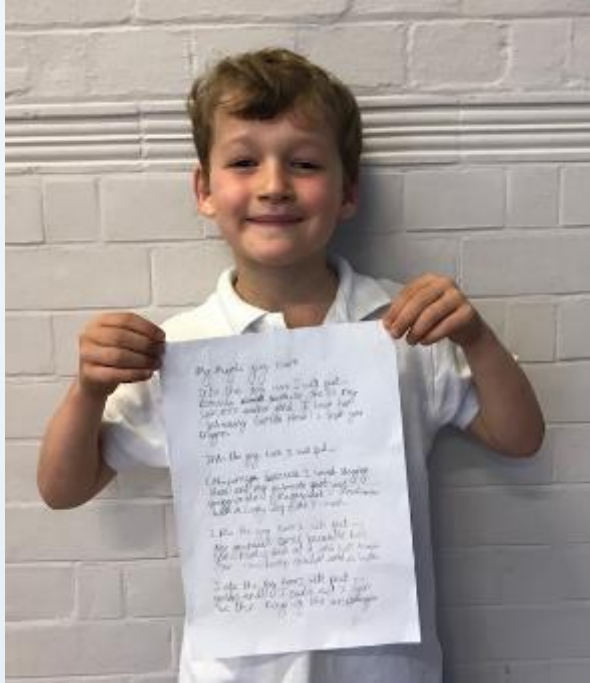
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Playtime Reading Club... a popular place to be!

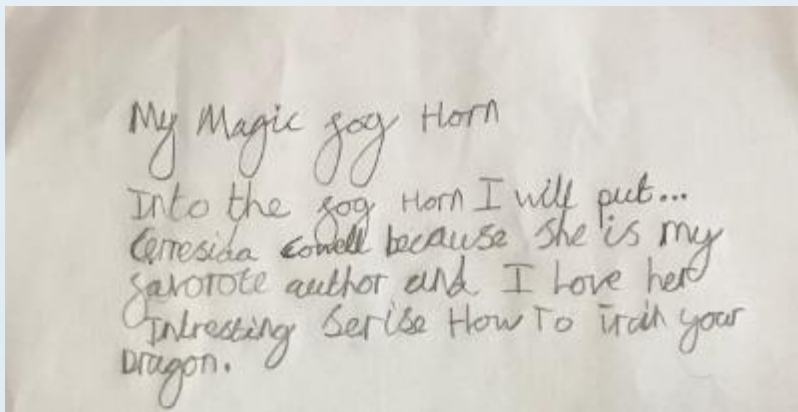


Impact

Reading for pleasure extending beyond the library



The love of books has had an impact in other areas of the curriculum too. For example, one of our Year 2 boys included his favourite author in his poem this week!



A parent and his son reading for pleasure together before school.

Impact

Reading for pleasure extending beyond the library



Inviting families into school to
share the RfP projects and our
love of reading



Reflections of impact on our practice

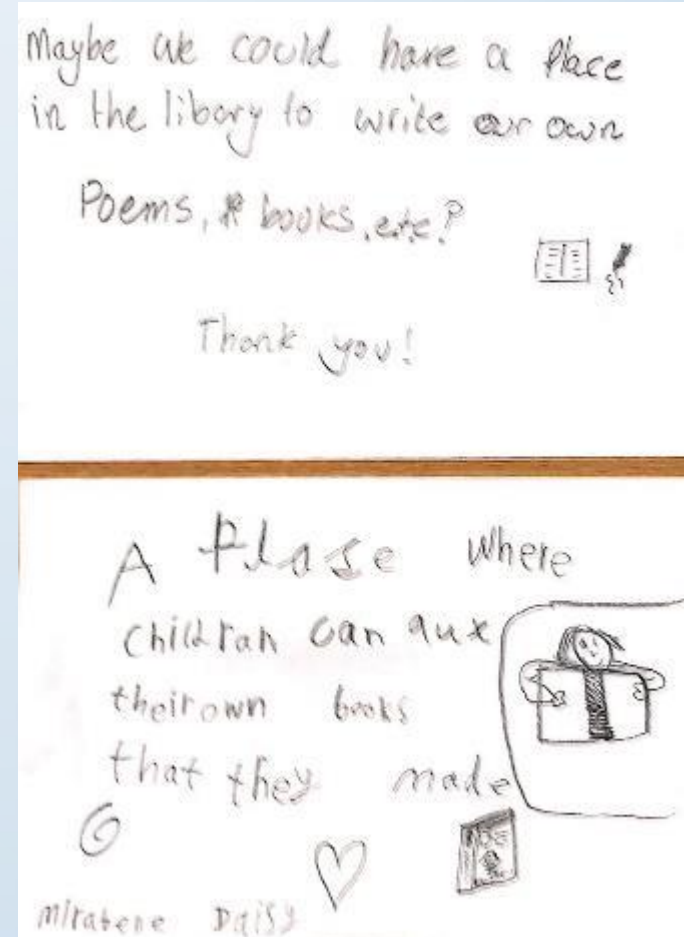
- So far, the projects have been a great success. Children now have ownership of **their** school library and the way that it is organised and resourced. Observations indicate that children are enthused, excited and engaged to browse, explore and discuss the books on offer and read both independently and with others.
- Working closely with the children, we have been able to create safe, relaxed and stimulating spaces where reading for pleasure is valued both in the school library and in the playground.
- These projects have clearly demonstrated that, in order to make successful changes in schools, pupil voice, teamwork and creative thinking are vital.



Next Steps

**Work is still 'in progress'.
Next steps for us will include exploring other OU TaR's; implementing more of the children's suggestions and other important considerations, including:**

- Developing and extending further the new fiction section in the library.
- Continuing to select new books carefully, ensuring that those we offer our children are of high quality and reflect the diversity of our school community so that they are able to see characters like themselves and families like theirs within them.
- Creating new areas within the library, e.g. a book making station where children see themselves as authors and can display their books for others to read.
- Using the Recommendation Wall to ensure that children are able to share responses and opinions of books which they have read.
- Ensuring that independent reading time both in the library and in the playground continues to be comfortable, relaxing, enticing and empowering.





Year 6 children reading for pleasure together



Reception children reading for pleasure with their Headteacher

Children and adults working in partnership will continue to lead us forward on our Reading for Pleasure journey.

