



Talk for Writing



Suzanne Wootton explains how Burnley Brow Primary, where children make a journey from 0% to over 90% achieving expected level, has built such an effective reading community with the active support of the school's teaching assistants

Burnley Brow Community Primary is a larger than average school in an inner urban area of Oldham that has significant pockets of social and economic needs. It serves a large British-Bangladeshi community in the north-east area of Chadderton. Almost all our children enter the Nursery with very little or no English, and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above that found nationally. Our parental survey highlights that our children are often first and second generation British-Bangladeshi, with approximately 70% of parents not speaking any English at home. We have a very small number of children from White British and other backgrounds (less than 1%). Given such a context, we knew that if we were to get the whole school reading, we were going to have to reach out to the parents.

Involving parents

Throughout Early Years and Key Stage One, parents are invited into school to read with their child first thing in the morning. During this time, staff model to parents how to listen to a child read; how to discuss the pictures in their home language and English, and how to ask questions about the setting, characters and plot. This enables the parents to build their confidence as many of our parents have not been through the British school system or, indeed, any school in their home country. As the year progresses, staff will target parents of children who do not read often at home and invite them to attend classes to read with their child.



How the Reading Challenge helps

We have introduced the Reading Challenge in Years 5 and 6 to encourage the children and their parents to visit the local library. The children and teachers have to read 5 books, from a given list of books of high-quality texts, and then complete a book review. As teachers are also completing the challenge, the children have excellent reading role models and the Challenge is really making a difference.

For example, Child A is a boy in Year 6 who was a reluctant reader below expected attainment. At the start of the Reading Challenge, his teaching assistant recommended 'Once' by Maurice Gleitzman. This did not appeal to him as it had a 'bland' front cover. However, the teaching assistant in Key Stage 2 had read many of the children's current books and was able to hook him in by describing some of the plot and characters. He read the book and absolutely loved it. Over the next few weeks, he visited the library on numerous occasions to read the rest of the books in the series and, when two of them were unavailable, he then asked his teacher to buy them for school (which his teacher did). His family had not visited the library before. His younger brother in Year 4, who is on the SEND register was really struggling with reading. He also visits the library now and brings his books in to show his teacher.



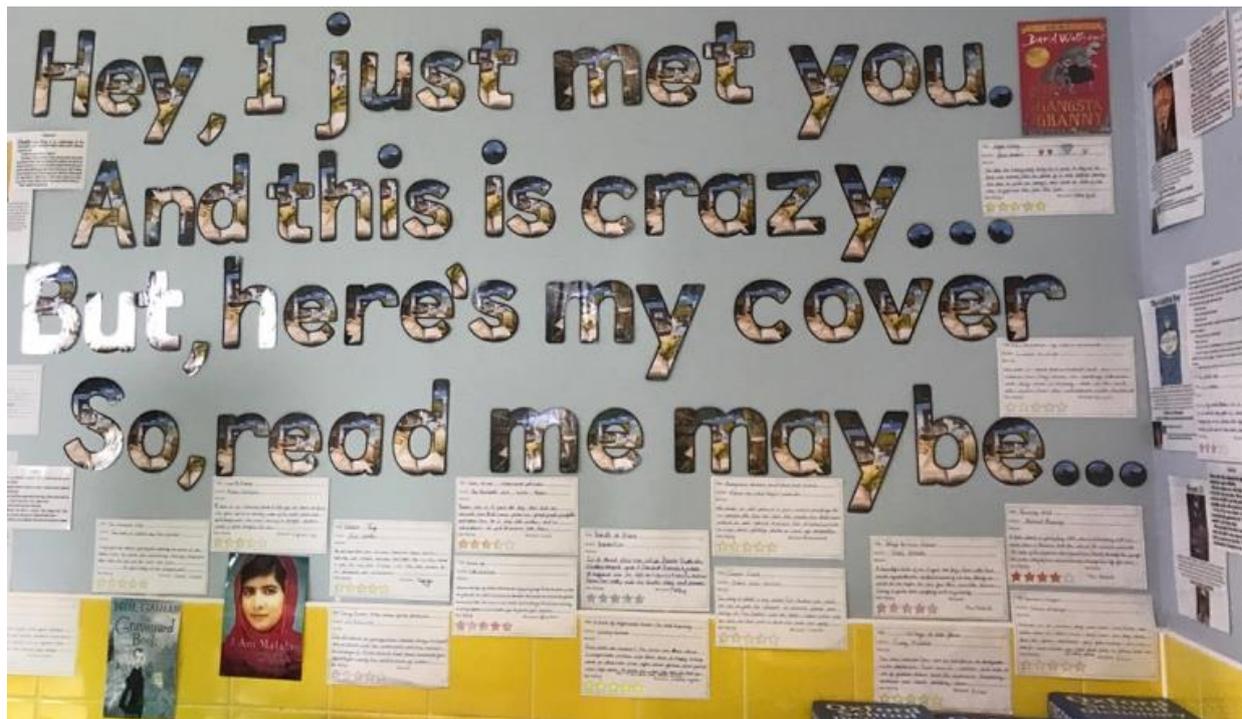
The Role of Teaching Assistants in Key Stage Two

Teaching Assistants in Key Stage 2 are the adults who change the children's books with them and have an ideal opportunity to discuss their likes and dislikes. When new books arrive in school, the Teaching Assistants read many of them before the children. They can then recommend books to certain children based on their likes and dislikes and can have a meaningful discussion with the children about the plot, theme, characters, twists etc of the books they are reading. We often have a waiting list for certain books within a series of books and children will also ask teachers to source the next in the series.

Groups of children who are reluctant to read at home or who don't have the support at home are identified. A Teaching Assistant will then read with these children each day with the child also reading a chapter in their own time to discuss the next day. This strategy worked particularly well for a boy in Year 4 who loved reading but had some older brothers at home who would tease him if he read. He was able to read at school and then share his thoughts with other children and an adult in a group, without feeling uncomfortable.

Reading Environment

From the moment the children begin their journey with us at Burnley Brow right through to Year 6, the school environment promotes reading at every turn. The reading areas are highly effective and purposeful as the children interact with them to review books and authors and provide recommendations for others. This has proved highly successful in Key Stage 2.



Impact

We have seen a huge impact in the children's and parents' attitude to reading. The parents have become more confident to read at home with our early readers in Early Years and Key Stage One and the children have immense enthusiasm for reading in Key Stage Two and confidently discuss authors, themes, story plots with adults and their peers. Our children enter Nursery with little or no English and minimal experience with books. We have tracked the children's attainment from Nursery to Year 1: In Summer 2017 at the end of Nursery 0% attained expected age appropriate, this rose to 46% by the end of Reception and 67% at the end of Term 2 in Year 1. In Year 6, over 90% of the children have made expected progress in 2017 and 2018 with 91% making expected this year by the end of Term 2. This increase in reading attainment and progress is reflected across the school.