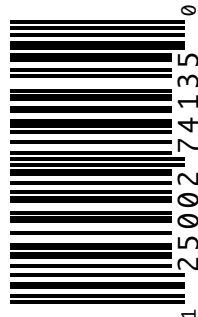


**WHAT DO YOUNG PEOPLE
THINK ABOUT **READING**?**



Celebrating Reading Connects



The hottest reading news

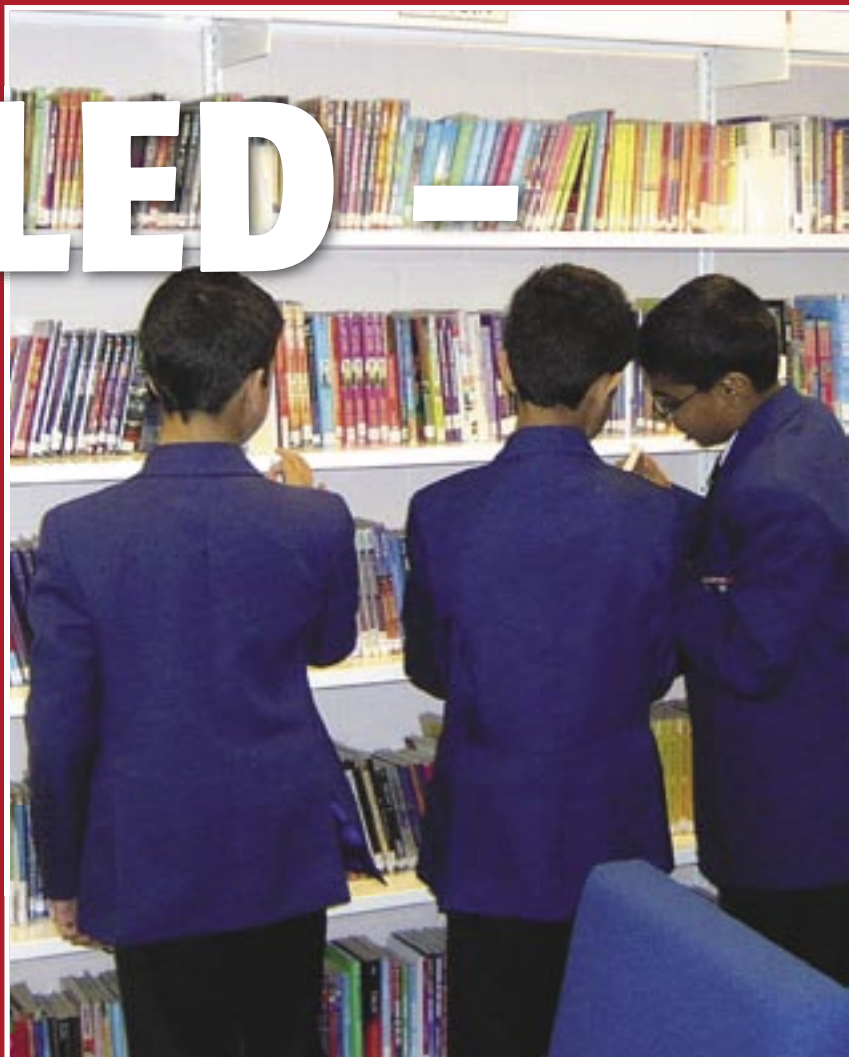
December 2005 Free (in all countries should be sold as free)

EXCLUSIVE

REVEALED —

THE BEST READING CONNECTS SCHOOLS OF 2005!

Pages 8-11 and 18-21



Helping schools build a READING CULTURE

Reading Connects

would like to thank all its member organisations

- **Arts Council England**
www.artscouncil.org.uk
- **Arts and Kids**
www.artsandkids.org.uk
- **Association of Senior Children's & Education Librarians**
www.ascel.org.uk
- **Booktrust**
www.booktrust.org.uk
- **Campaign for Learning**
www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk
- **Centre for Literacy in Primary Education**
www.clpe.co.uk
- **Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals**
www.cilip.org.uk
- **ContinYou**
www.continyou.org.uk
- **English and Media Centre**
www.englishandmedia.co.uk
- **Learning and Teaching Scotland**
www.ltscotland.org.uk
- **Museums, Libraries and Archives Council**
www.mla.gov.uk
- **National Association for the Teaching of English**
www.nate.org.uk
- **National Association of Advisers in English**
www.naae.org.uk
- **National Association of Head Teachers**
www.naht.org.uk
- **National Literacy Association**
www.nla.org.uk
- **Ofsted**
www.ofsted.gov.uk
- **Poetry Society**
www.poetrysociety.org.uk
- **Primary National Strategy**
www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary
- **The Publishers Association**
www.publishers.org.uk
- **Qualifications and Curriculum Authority**
www.qca.org.uk
- **Quality in Study Support**
www.qjss.org.uk
- **The Reading Agency**
www.readingagency.org.uk
- **Reading Is Fundamental, UK**
www.rif.org.uk
- **Reading Matters**
www.readingmatters.org.uk
- **Read On – Write Away!**
www.rowa.co.uk
- **School Library Association**
www.sla.org.uk
- **Secondary Heads Association**
www.sha.org.uk
- **Secondary National Strategy**
www.dfes.gov.uk
- **Training and Development Agency for Schools**
www.tda.gov.uk
- **United Kingdom Literacy Association**
www.ukla.org
- **Volunteer Reading Help**
www.vrh.org.uk

Reading Connects is a DfES-funded National Reading Campaign initiative.

Reading Connects
National Literacy Trust
Swire House
59 Buckingham Gate
London SW1E 6AJ
Tel: 020 7828 2435

Email: readingconnects@literacytrust.org.uk
Website: www.readingconnects.org.uk

Our love of reading...

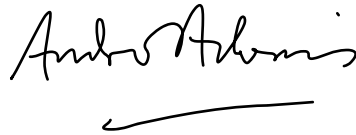
Research tells us that learning to read well increases children's chances of success both at school and in their life beyond education. Inspiring enjoyment of reading is vital to developing children's reading skills and helping them to become confident, independent learners. By working together we can create an excitement and enthusiasm for reading for pleasure and help every child to love reading.

The DfES and the Primary and Secondary National Strategies are working with a number of partners, including the National Reading Campaign, to promote reading for pleasure in schools and the wider community. Reading Connects, a National Reading Campaign initiative, provides schools with the tools and information needed to promote an environment that encourages children's enthusiasm for reading. The creative

approaches to reader development offered by Reading Connects include ideas to help parents develop a home reading culture and working in partnership with public libraries and community services to develop reading activities.

Since the launch of Reading Connects in September 2004, around 900 schools have shown their commitment to promoting reading for pleasure and signed up to

become part of the Reading Connects network. As well as celebrating a year of Reading Connects, this magazine also looks at the excellent work that schools all over England have been doing to develop a reading culture. I am delighted that so many schools have received recognition of their work through Reading Connects and encourage those yet to do so to raise the profile of independent reading and build a school community that reads. ■



ANDREW ADONIS
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools
Department for Education and Skills

Congratulations to Avenue First school and Loxford school of science and Technology on being the best Reading Connects schools of 2005.

In addition to a growing network of schools, Reading Connects brings together all the key organisations involved in promoting and developing reading for pleasure in schools. In this magazine we hear how, by working together, we are all working to promote and develop a love of reading in our schools.

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Photograph: Peter Arkell

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16 Let's all get reading
Children's Laureate Jacqueline Wilson calls for us all to get reading

// **Imagine**
what a
difference it
would make
if every child
loved to
read... //

Celebrating Reading Connects

Amelia Foster introduces this celebration of Reading Connects and outlines the thinking behind its development.

Imagine what a difference it would make if every child loved to read; if every child was able to find out that reading had meaning in their lives and that reading was for them. The more you read, the more you enjoy it – and the more you enjoy it, the more you read. Studies suggest that reading for pleasure can have a bigger impact on academic achievement than socio-economic background. So putting it at the centre of a school's ethos is a key way to raise standards and help children to achieve their full potential, as well as ensuring they experience the joy that those of us who are readers derive from this activity.

Maximising the power of reading is at the heart of Reading Connects. It supports schools by providing them with the tools to build a reading culture; by offering tried-and-tested practical ideas, drawn from schools' best practice, funding advice, case studies and resources. And, most importantly, it provides a hub for all schools to share their expertise in building school communities that read and to learn from each other.

In addition, Reading Connects brings together the key organisations involved in working with schools on reading to raise the profile of reading for pleasure and ►►

“In this magazine we hear from many of these organisations about their activities and how they support the aims of Reading Connects...”

7 to work together to maximise our impact. We have a common aim – to create readers – and working together enables us to do this more effectively. In this magazine we hear from many of these organisations about their activities and how they support the aims of Reading Connects.

For our shared vision to become a reality, children need to be allowed to find their own path to reading. This can be hard to do because, with the best intentions, adults want to guide children to the books they love, and to those they believe to be the best writers. This means that adults sometimes act as gatekeepers to reading and inadvertently deny pupils the key. Children need to be able to recognise themselves in what they read. We must acknowledge that everyone has a unique reading personality and so pupils may not share our reading tastes. We must start where children are as readers, not where we want them to be. We know, from our own research (see page 24) for example, that boys tend to prefer non-fiction. Even children who class themselves as reluctant readers read a wide range of text types and genres but these might not be what they perceive as reading¹. They may associate reading with print-based

materials² and negatively associate this with school.

So we need to take the ‘school’ out of reading for pleasure in school and put the reader first; relax our inner literary critic and encourage children to read, to follow whatever interests them and to make judgements for themselves.

Of course, at the same time, we should offer children the beautiful, the creative, the well-written. We can do this and also allow children to take their own path to reading.

As long as we maintain that there are acceptable reading choices and not-so-acceptable reading choices, we will exclude those who don't fit into our notions of what a reader should read and enjoy. The student who comes into school with a tabloid is a reader as much as the Jane Austen fan. The issue is whether they are choosing to read the tabloid, or whether it is the only thing they are able to read. If we encourage them to follow their interests, we can help them progress as readers.

Over 80 schools a month are joining Reading Connects and receiving

Want to become a Reading Connects school? It's quick, easy and free...

1. Visit www.readingconnects.org.uk
2. Download and fill in the whole-school reading-for-pleasure audit
3. Click on 'Join Reading Connects' and fill in the online form with two action points.

Benefits include:

- a certificate to celebrate your reading school status
- a logo for use on school materials
- a copy of the Reading Connects *Creating a Reading Culture handbook*
- ongoing support

recognition for their work to promote reading for pleasure. Reading Connects schools bring in people from the outside community to talk about what they read and why, to make reading real and take it beyond the boundaries of school; they set up buddy reading schemes, using peer pressure as a force for good; they use comics and magazines, websites and graphic novels to tempt even the most reluctant of readers; they hand over sections of their school library to pupil librarians to manage, stock and create displays for. This magazine is a celebration of their work and, in particular, that of our two winning schools – Avenue First School and Loxford School of Science and Technology. If we work together, our combined expertise could make every school a reading school; every child a reader. ■

Amelia recommends...

Eve magazine, especially the **Organiser** section (and not just for women), *Attention All Shipping* by Charlie Connelly and www.wearewhatwedo.org.

1. C. Clark and A. Foster (2005) *Children's and young people's reading habits and preferences: the who, what, why, where and when*, London: National Literacy Trust (see article on page 24).

2. D. Myhill and R. Fisher (2005) *Informing practice in English: a review of recent research in literacy and the teaching of English*, HMI 2565, London: Ofsted



“There is no tension between promoting children’s skills as readers and their appetite for reading”

Excellence and enjoyment in reading

Mike Lloyd-Jones, a literacy regional adviser for the Primary National Strategy, highlights its shared aims with Reading Connects.

The Primary National Strategy is an enthusiastic partner in the work of Reading Connects. Being a reader depends on acquiring the skills of reading, but it is also about attitudes and a sense of self as a reader – including tastes, preferences and appetites. There is a vital connection between the development of reading skills and the development of a personal appetite for reading. Good teaching of critical reading provides the skills needed to read for enjoyment; and an appetite for reading strengthens children’s reading ability. When good teaching is set in a school culture that actively encourages and celebrates personal

reading, you create a virtuous circle.

An important study on the link between reading skill and reading attitudes put it in a nutshell: “cognitive skills and reading motivation are mutually reinforcing... rather than being alternatives, schools need to address both simultaneously.” (Reading for Change, OECD, 2002)

The core approaches of the National Literacy Strategy – shared reading, guided reading and the emphasis on time for independence – provide rich opportunities to promote reading as enjoyable and intrinsically rewarding. That’s why we have placed such an emphasis on choosing a broad range of fiction and non-fiction texts that enrich children’s experience and help them extend their tastes and preferences. The national network of literacy consultants has done a huge amount of work with teachers, schools and public libraries to gather and share information about great books to use.

Another way to ensure children experience of a variety of texts is through reading aloud to children outside of the time set aside for teaching reading.

That’s why so many of the examples in the NLS Planning Exemplification include encouragement to read aloud to children (including serialised reading of novels) outside of the literacy hour. There is also an increasingly important role for electronic texts, including video and film. They play a growing part in everyone’s daily reading experience, but they are also significant because of their power to motivate and engage readers.

There is no tension between promoting children’s skills as readers and their appetite for reading. The Primary National Strategy applauds the work of Reading Connects and its contribution to the virtuous circle – developing skills and attitudes together. Excellence and enjoyment in action. ■

The Primary National Strategy literacy team recommends...

Who are Wallace and Gromit?, an interactive text with words, pictures, video and sound clips - www.filmeducation.org

The best Reading Connects primary school of 2005 is...



says, "They were reading for pleasure!"

As planned, children got involved in selecting and budgeting for new classroom stock, which allowed them to discuss with each other the merits and suitability of a range of titles. It also meant they had ownership of the resulting selection and valued the books more.

The school monitored the children's awareness of authors before and after the renaming of the classes and found that it introduced them to new writers and raised their profile across the whole school. It also increased the children's readiness to pick up books by the chosen authors. For example, before the renaming, only seven children were familiar with books by Anthony Browne. Now one of the classes is named after him, all pupils have read at least one of his books and this is the case for each class and their respective author. The school's visits to the public library have been themed around the authors and library staff have been able to provide additional copies of texts.

The authors have also been made the focus for peer group recommendations through displays, whole-school assemblies and class discussion. Children have been using the authors' works as a springboard to

Avenue First School Norwich, Norfolk

Avenue First School used signing up to Reading Connects to kick-start its focus on reading for pleasure. The judges were particularly impressed by the simple yet innovative approach to keeping children's literature on the whole school's agenda through the naming of classes after children's writers.

On joining Reading Connects, headteacher Serena Dixon outlined a range of ways in which the school would promote reading. These included providing opportunities for relaxed reading sessions for whole year groups, where children could choose from a range of materials and share their choices and experiences with others, and setting up a lunchtime reading group for Year 3. Other plans included booking visits from authors and illustrators, and organising special

activities to mark occasions such as World Book Day. Children were also to be involved in selecting new reading materials for their classrooms, thereby giving the children some autonomy over what they were reading and encouraging peer-to-peer recommendation.

Sessions were held in the library to encourage pupils to choose books for themselves and talk about them, both with other children and adults. Serena says children were soon readily discussing illustrations and comparing them to others they'd seen, recommending books they'd enjoyed and reading their favourite bits to each other. They were following up author selections and seeking out information related to their own hobbies and interests – in short, she

"They were reading for pleasure!"

“The school plans to start its own newspaper, and a book club for staff; the children’s book club will be developed further.”

create their own images and puppets.

Children have been able to access a wide range of websites to find out

encouraging them to find time for reading for pleasure, which in turn feeds back into the reading-for-pleasure focus.

There are daily opportunities for parents to come into the school and read with their children as they drop them off in the morning.

“The school has made a great start and Serena has stated their commitment to ‘continue to work with public services to expand children’s reading horizons’.”

more about each author, and they have made greater use of magazines about children’s literature.

All the staff were involved in the naming of classes, and they have since supported each other by sharing information and texts, as well as throwing themselves into dressing up as book characters. They have developed their own book-swapping culture, allowing them to share reading recommendations and

The renaming has also had an impact on awareness of children’s literature among the pupils’ families. The changes have encouraged parents to find out more about the authors themselves, using the internet and other sources; some have written to individual authors to request information and booklists. Other parents have worked together with their children and teachers to create storybags and story boxes to support texts.

A range of book-related events and activities have been held in the school, including making use of film-screenings to compare text and film versions of titles such as Roald Dahl’s *Matilda*, and creating storyboards of *Boy*. Drama and role-play have also been used regularly to explore stories further.

There are many plans for developing this activity, including making greater use of peer recommendation and reviews written by teachers and other members of the community, such as middle school pupils, parents and pre-school providers. The school plans to start its own newspaper, and a book club for staff; the children’s book club will be developed further. ■



NEXT: WHO'S JOINING IN?

Highly commended

The primary school highly commended for its start-up activity is...



Eastover Community Primary School Bridgwater, Somerset

Eastover Community Primary School has been highly commended for making an excellent start to creating a whole-school reading culture. Literacy coordinator Jan Nicholson says she is still in the early stages of implementing the school's plans to promote reading for pleasure, but wanted to enter the competition because, "I was so pleased with the impact of our initial actions I wanted to put them on record".

"I was so pleased with the impact of our initial actions I wanted to put them on record."

One of Jan's action points when joining Reading Connects was to engage parents and the local community in helping children to enjoy reading, and she believes that this is where they have had by far the biggest impact to date.

Family workshops with a reading theme have been run by all class teachers and feedback has been very positive.

Jan says, "The enthusiasm and gratitude shown in the feedback forms is just tremendous... We are encouraging these people to spread the word and hope that this will become something we can offer regularly."

A survey of parents revealed that children were mostly read to or heard reading by their mothers, many of whom were eager to find out more about the reading process. Dads and granddads were encouraged to join the family workshops, too, and they

proved to be very enthusiastic. A visit to the course by an Ofsted inspector also provided positive feedback.

In addition to surveying parents, the school asked key stage 2 children about their reading preferences. This showed that while they already have a great deal of enthusiasm, their choice of authors is limited. Jan hopes that, by next year, the children will have a greater range of choices and increased confidence in talking about them.

The school has recently employed a librarian, who Jan believes will play a crucial role in promoting reading. The children previously had little opportunity to browse and read for pleasure in the library and a staff survey and audit showed there was a need for appealing non-fiction, boy-friendly titles and additional resources for less-able pupils.

As a result of the surveys, new ICT-based resources have been bought, including talking books and a borrowing and retrieval system that allows pupils to check out and return their own books. These have proved popular, particularly with the boys. There has also been positive feedback, from both staff and pupils, on the new book stock – one class has even sent Jan a thank-you note.

The survey process itself was important in opening up the debate and raising awareness of the significance the school was giving to reading for pleasure; it also made staff aware of how valued children feel

“The school plans to give the children increasing responsibility for running their library and taking charge of their learning.”

when they are consulted. A dedicated Inset session, where staff were given the opportunity to contribute to the decision-making process, meant everyone felt enthusiastic and committed to the process, as well as being aware of its potential impact on achievement.

The school plans to give the children increasing responsibility for running their library and taking charge of their learning. Links with the public library are being strengthened and communication with parents will remain strong. Jan says she hopes they have begun a cultural shift and she aims to “maintain the impetus, monitor progress and, above all, enjoy the ongoing debate”. ■

“I hope we have begun a cultural shift.”

READING FOR PLEASURE...

Positive feedback

DADS JOIN IN TOO!

Reading workshops for families



“You can hold your book week at any time; the important thing is not when you hold it, but just that you do”

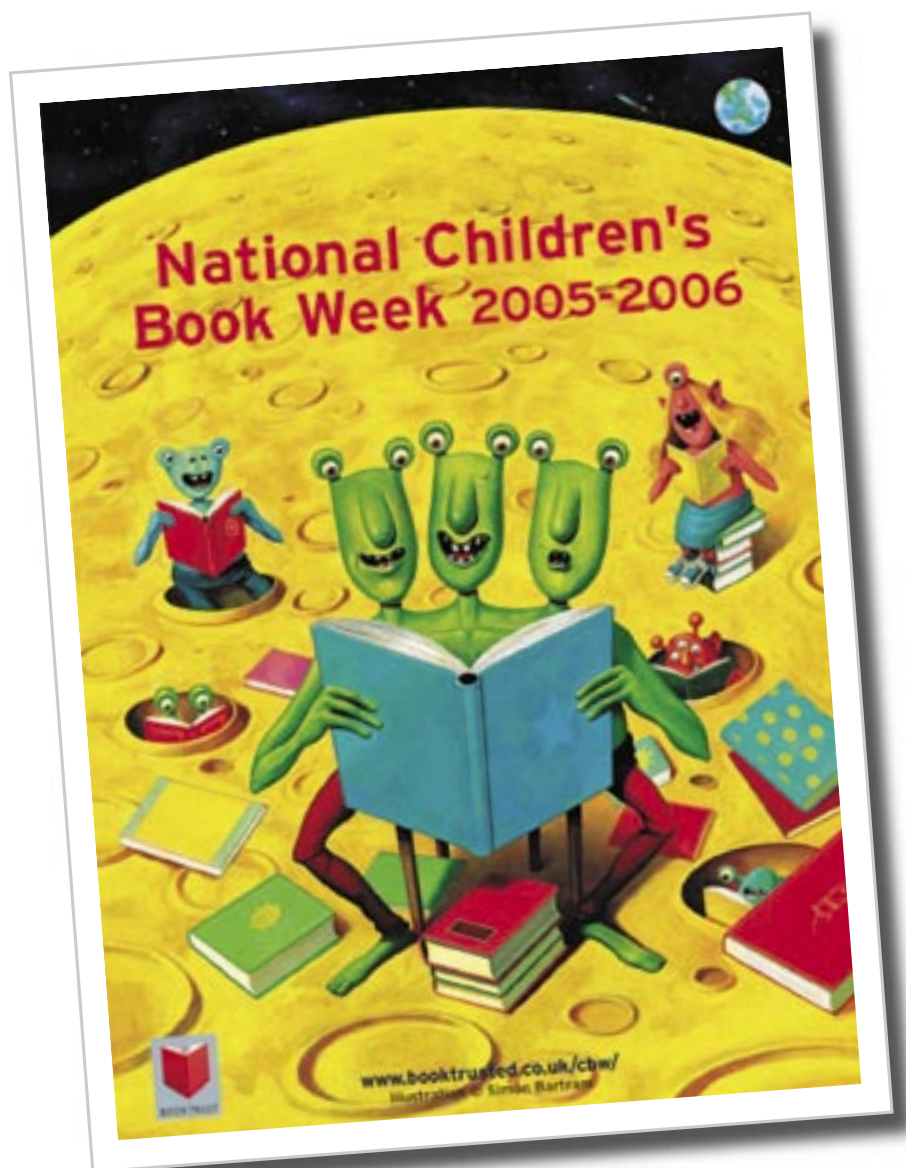
Making the most of book week

Emma Phillips, education officer at Booktrust, provides ideas for your book week.

National Children's Book Week aims to encourage schools and libraries to focus on children's literature for a special day or week of the year.

At Booktrust, we believe that designating a special day or week for fun activities – whether at home, in the library or at school – can actively encourage children to view reading as a pleasurable activity and books as a source of interest and enjoyment. The annual celebration is held in the first full week of October, but you can hold your book week at any time; the important thing is not when you hold it, but just that you do.

Successful events have included book-themed competitions, plays, treasure hunts, fancy dress, collages and craft activities. Many schools use a book week as an opportunity to arrange class visits to the local library and to get every child to join. Alternatively, children can prepare questions to ask a visiting librarian.



A message from Chris Meade, director, Booktrust

What started you reading for pleasure as a child? For me it helped that my father read stories to my sister and me every morning before school. Later the poet Ted Hughes gave a reading at our school and a supportive teacher encouraged me to write poems for the school magazine. We had a local bookshop (where I ended up working for a while), and the local library was a haven – I even went there when I bunked off school! One uncle gave me exciting if daunting tomes for Christmas, an aunt gave me schoolboy yarns that I read voraciously... We remember forever those first tasters – they unlock doors that stay at least ajar forever after.

Every child is entitled to these kinds of temptations to read and write creatively, and every school has a duty to provide them. National Children's Book Week is the perfect opportunity to look at your strategy and give it a boost – refreshing it with new ideas and experiments.

Children's Book Week is a key part of Booktrust's work to bring books and people together. Let's work together to make more time for books in the life of every child.

Staff from Hampshire's Schools Library Service join school planning meetings for book weeks and provide comprehensive guidelines for schools. They also provide extra book loans for any chosen theme or visiting authors/illustrators, and visit schools to give book talks and tell stories. Janice Goldie, Area Schools Librarian South, says, "Over the years we have had some successful 'cluster book weeks', which have involved a secondary school and its feeder schools working together to have a joint event. This has had the added bonus of bringing schools closer together, particularly the staff involved in the planning."

Morpeth Secondary School in Tower Hamlets, London, used National Children's Book Week to launch its ambitious book club website, www.planetbook.org.uk. English teacher Melanie Hall believes that the main aim of a book week should be, "to share teachers' and pupils' love of a good book so that this enthusiasm can be passed on. This is important as reading isn't an activity many pupils see going on at home; they need to find their reading role models elsewhere."

"Designating a special day or week for fun activities can encourage children to view reading as pleasurable."

The school highlights reading as much as possible during book week, encouraging all teachers to talk about their favourite books in assembly and display extracts in their classrooms, so that the pupils can see that enjoying reading is not just for English classes.

Working with a writer is an exciting and rewarding experience for both pupils and staff. Entering a dialogue with a professional writer encourages young people to see themselves as writers and to recognise that they have a voice deserving to be heard. Writers can also bring the unusual, the exciting and the emotionally moving into the classroom.

Gallions Primary School in Newham, London, invited author Neil Arksey for a three-day visit with key stage 2 pupils. Neil suggested ways to best use his visit and before he arrived, literacy coordinator Lisa Naylor taught a week-long project based on his latest book, *As Good as Dead in Downtown*. This ensured the children became familiar with the story and explored a number of the key themes and characters. The creative art work and writing was displayed in the entrance hall of the school, as a welcome display for Neil's arrival.

The children loved Neil's workshops on character development and were very keen to work on their character profiles after Neil had left and complete the follow-up work he provided. Neil also shared many

ideas at an Inset session for teachers. For key stage 1 and foundation stage classes, the school invited two storytellers. There were also story and poetry writing competitions, celebration assemblies (where each class performed a short piece of drama or dance or showed artwork), 'My favourite book' assemblies by the headteacher and other members of staff, and lots of exciting story-related displays around the school.

Lisa says, "We had never worked with an author and were very excited about the prospect. The children and teachers learnt an enormous amount from the project; the school was buzzing and the library was inundated with children borrowing books that week. Neil reignited the children's enthusiasm for reading and writing. The impact of his visit was huge and didn't end when the project had finished. His legacy and enthusiasm for stories and writing live on!" ■



Emma recommends...

Looking for JJ by Anne Cassidy, a powerful novel exploring the circumstances behind the murder of a child.



"A 1 pass

Public libraries - the missing link

Miranda McKearney, director of The Reading Agency, explains how public libraries can provide the missing link in the reading-for-pleasure puzzle.

“I can't believe he now wants to read instead of sitting playing on his Playstation all weekend. I used to drag him to the library; now he drags me!” Mother of a boy in a library Chatterbooks group.

Public libraries can play a crucial role in the development of young readers. They offer free access to books in a safe community atmosphere, with expert staff whose job is to build people's enjoyment of reading and widen reading horizons. The vast network of libraries offers access to reading when schools are shut, through 4,169 library sites plus 650 mobile libraries. There are 341 million visits to public libraries a year, and their services to children are developing quickly. Many now offer homework clubs, reading groups and summer holiday reading activities.

Libraries complement schools' support for young readers. They provide expertise from beyond the school to support children's reading for pleasure and make links between reading, writing and ICT. They have specialist expertise, for instance, in finding suitable texts for boys. They provide a chance for children to explore reading in a different community setting; to talk to different adults; share reading with children from other schools; encounter live literature and library websites featuring reading; and to participate in public library-led reading groups and other activities.

Chatterbooks' patron Jacqueline Wilson at the initiative's launch

Library ticket is the passport to belonging"

More choice = wider reading

None of us can buy all the books we'd like, and that's especially true of children. Libraries offer a huge selection of up-to-date reading, and favourites from the past. Encouraging children to explore these selections helps them read more widely and develop their own critical tastes.

Joining = sharing and belonging

A library ticket is a passport to belonging to the wider community. Talking about books with library staff helps young people develop their opinions and understand each others' points of view.

Creative spaces = creative experiences

Libraries can be an amazing introduction to a wealth of other cultural and social experiences, whether it's working with authors or illustrators, or with actors, poets, or other creative artists.

The Reading Agency runs a number of special library programmes that schools can link up with. **Chatterbooks** children's reading groups take place in 80 UK library authorities and involve 3,000 children, aged four to 12, usually meeting once a month. Sponsored by Orange, the initiative gives children the chance to meet, have fun and widen their reading horizons, and receive special Chatterbooks resources including reading diaries, 'post-it' review notepads, and book choice games.

The local school is ideally a key partner; some run groups jointly with the library and share hosting. Schools help recruit most of the children, sometimes targeting either reluctant or less-confident readers, or using the groups to stretch very able readers.

The **Summer Reading Challenge**, the country's biggest annual promotion of children's reading, reaches 600,000 children aged four to 11 and creates 48,000 new library members a year. They finish the challenge by reading six books of their own choice and receiving stickers to complete the frieze on their collectable folder. Each gets a certificate and a medal.

The Challenge has grown steadily in scale and impact since it started in 1999 – 94 per cent of the UK library network takes part. Research in 2003 found that 75 per cent of children doing the Challenge felt they were "better readers". Just as importantly, it boosts their reading enjoyment and confidence: 95 per cent wanted to read lots more books, 98 per cent liked choosing books for themselves and 65 per cent wanted to tell their friends to read a book they'd enjoyed.

Libraries work closely with schools to encourage children of all reading abilities to take part. There's a real momentum to build on in the autumn term, when children come back fired up about reading. Schools run special assemblies where children get their certificates, create displays of books read over the summer, and invite library staff in to talk about other reading opportunities and events.

The DfES-funded **Enjoying Reading** pack, published by The Reading Agency, is designed to help public library and school staff work together to inspire young readers. It includes case studies, research, practical templates and checklists. The hard copy pack is available for sale or a digital version can be downloaded from the 'Enjoying reading' page of the Reading Agency website at www.readingagency.org.uk.

All the research shows what a difference

joined-up community support for children's reading makes, and formal educators are increasingly recognising the difference public libraries can make to helping children enjoy reading. We know that where schools and public libraries work together, often with the expert support of a specialist School Library Service, great things can happen. But this integrated working is still patchy.

In the new climate created by Every Child Matters, there's a real chance to put properly joined-up support for reading high on the agenda. It's time to work together to put the pleasure back into reading. ■

Ideas for working in new ways

Schools and libraries are already working in new ways to bring all these benefits to children, for example:

- focus groups recruited in school, with children advising the public library about stock and activities
- linked reading notice boards, one at school, one in the library, run by children
- library exhibitions of children's reviews and artwork
- mobile library visits to the school and class visits to the library
- library-led reading groups, with schools encouraging pupils to join
- shared family reading challenges
- joint book awards and shared author events
- jointly-run special activities, like poetry slams.

Miranda recommends...

contemporary fiction for sheer relaxation – most recently, Vikram Seth's *Equal Music*. When fed up, poetry by James Fenton, Alice Oswald and Eavan Boland does the trick.

“We all know the joy and stimulation of reading”

Let's all get reading...

Children's Laureate Jacqueline Wilson calls for us all to get reading, in edited extracts from her Laureate acceptance speech.

I'm very pleased and proud to be the Children's Laureate. I'm fiercely determined to continue the energetic and innovative work done by Michael Morpurgo, Anne Fine and Quentin Blake. The role was created by Michael to spotlight the role of children's book creators in making readers of the future. That's certainly what I want to do. I'm passionate about reading. I don't go anywhere without a book. We all know the joy and stimulation of reading.

But how did we become such avid readers? Did we decide to take up reading as a new hobby as adults, when we got tired of Spanish lessons and Salsa dancing? I don't think it works like that. I think you become a keen reader in childhood. If you get children reading eagerly when they are young, then they're

generally hooked on books for life.

So how does this initial passion for books get ignited? It's not by stumbling through the whole deciphering process of the 'C-A-T sat on the mat'. It's having someone read you a story about Orlando or Mog or Fat Cat or Boots or Six-dinner Sid or Slinky Malinky and there they are, conjured out of thin air, waving their tails at you. In fact there's a whole picture book menagerie barking and trumpeting and roaring their terrible roars. We didn't read those books ourselves. We were read to. That's how it works.

When I was six I was off school for weeks with measles, bronchitis and whooping cough. I could read fluently for myself then, but all I remember is my Dad reading me the three Enid Blyton *Faraway Tree* books, and then for some weird but delightful reason, reading me the first few chapters of *David Copperfield*. I don't often read Enid Blyton now, but whenever I pick up a Dickens I hear an echo of my father's voice, reading in a simple, straightforward but utterly spellbinding way.

Reading aloud is not just for under-fives. It's a lovely bonding mechanism for parents or carers and their children; it's also a way of encouraging children

to enjoy long complex books they might not tackle themselves. While audio books are splendid – and keep us all sane on long car journeys with fidgety children – there's nothing quite like a real person, an arm cuddling you, a smile at the close of a chapter.

That's the way a love of reading starts – and thank goodness this is a new golden age of children's literature, with so many rich and varied and wonderful books in shops and libraries just waiting to be opened. We should be so proud of our children's literature. We're the country that created *Alice*, *Wind in the Willows*, *The Hobbit*, all the Beatrix Potters and now we have J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* and Philip Pullman and so many other exciting and inventive authors whose work enriches our children's imaginations. Let's celebrate this vast treasury of children's literature – the old gems and the new glittering diamonds. Let's all get reading. ■

Jacqueline recommends...

reading aloud to share much-loved classics; *Little Women*, *Treasure Island*, *The Secret Garden* and *The Railway Children*.



“The Framework for Teaching English, Years 7, 8 and 9 has clear and ambitious aims for developing pupils’ reading.”

Raising standards and creating excitement

Gerry Swain, English programme director for the Secondary National Strategy team, looks at the twin challenges of raising standards and creating excitement and enthusiasm for reading.

The English team in the Secondary National Strategy congratulates Reading Connects and all the schools, teachers, pupils and others who have been involved for their energy and commitment to promoting young people’s reading.

Developing young readers’ confidence, independence and enthusiasm is one of the most rewarding aspects of English teaching and it poses some of the greatest challenges. We strive to combine teaching pupils the reading skills they need with ways to develop the attitudes and habits that will put reading securely into the competition for their time and attention beyond the classroom. The goal is precious. We all take joy in young people who get lost in a book, who pore over a magazine article, who browse the bookshelves and choose their books, who talk to their friends about what they’re reading, who recommend books to their friends.

The Framework for Teaching English, Years 7, 8 and 9 has clear and ambitious aims for developing pupils’ reading. By the end of Year 9, we expect each pupil to orchestrate a range of strategies to get at meaning in text, to read in different ways for different purposes, and to be sensitive to the way meanings are made. They should be shrewd and fluent independent readers who can respond to a wide range of printed and visual texts reflectively, with a critical and discriminating eye. By

the end of key stage 4, we expect them to read with insight and engagement. Their perception of how authors make meanings should be sharp; enabling them to detect bias, understand influences and allusions, recognise inconsistencies and how style affects meaning. Equally important, we want them to have the reading habit – seeking pleasure, fulfilment, knowledge and inspiration from books and other texts; from the way others craft and shape language to communicate ideas. They should be eager to share their reading enthusiasms and responses with others.

The Secondary National Strategy has supported the work of English departments and librarians with a CD of professional development materials and resources, focused on improving pupils’ reading. Young people benefit hugely from opportunities for developing the range and scope of their independent reading in school – opportunities that include adults and students sharing and demonstrating the skills and strategies they use as readers, for example by modelling book talk and ways of responding to texts as well as offering ‘tasters’ of recent young people’s fiction. Reading Connects is a valuable contributor in this area of work.

Local partnerships will be crucial and we will continue to work with Strategy consultants in local authorities and schools to make sure there is a wide

Secondary
National Strategy
for school improvement
Improving Reading
An interactive study resource



audience for the vision and drive schools and communities can bring to bear on teaching and promoting reading. It starts, for us, with being a vibrant reading community ourselves. The Strategy team regularly reads new children’s literature and shares its enthusiasms (and the books). Our sessions with consultants to collect ‘recent good reads’ and ‘established good reads’ has supported local work on encouraging and sustaining a reading culture in English departments – striving to put reading back into busy schedules as a priority, not a luxury, for all of us involved in teaching English.

We wish Reading Connects continued and increasing success as we all continue our close focus on improving reading and the twin challenges of raising standards and creating excitement and enthusiasm for reading. ■

The best Reading Connects secondary school of 2005 is...



In 'Multilingual March', stories from many cultures are celebrated and members of staff tell stories and share books in their home languages. Refugee Week is celebrated throughout the school, too. Most recently, the theme of food was chosen for a library-based project drawing on both books and the internet. This work culminated in a library lunch for many students and members of staff, which helped spread the message that the library is a community space for everyone, and that books and words are essential to all that we do. There are plans to hold monthly storytelling sessions in the library, too.

Four reading groups meet regularly, one each for key stages 3, 4 and 5 and another for staff. These will be further developed by involving staff from as many curriculum areas as possible, and looking at special interests, such as Manga, to support enthusiasts who want to produce their own books.

Alongside their own reading group, there is a list of recommended reads for staff, many of whom visit the library to find inspiration for their holiday reading. There is also a book-swap box in the staff room that has proved extremely popular. Posters featuring staff reading profiles are displayed around the school describing each individual's reading history. In future, all new staff will be interviewed about their reading by students and their posters added to the displays.

Loxford School of Science and Technology London Borough of Redbridge

Loxford School of Science and Technology impressed the judges with its well-developed whole-school ethos around reading for pleasure. The school had already been doing some work in this area before joining Reading Connects and activities were well-embedded. However, librarian Louise Kanolik completed the audit and identified two areas where they could develop their approach further. The action points submitted were to double the number of author visits

“The work to encourage reading does not stay inside the school walls.”

and workshops in the library, from a minimum of at least three each year, and to improve the quality of the books provided for their paired reading scheme, in which sixth-formers buddy younger students with English as an additional language or special educational needs.

Of the 1,500 students on roll, 45 per cent receive free school meals; over 95 per cent are from minority ethnic groups and the vast majority of these are beginner readers in English.

Louise says, “Reading has always been fundamental at Loxford. A huge amount of support has been given to developing reading skills and we are working hard at nurturing the love of reading in a range of languages as well as English.” Students are encouraged to always carry reading material with them and teachers promote the view that books are as essential to their school equipment as items such as a ruler or a pencil.

“Teachers often leave out books they are reading or read sections to students to encourage discussion.”

In addition to the displays, teachers often leave out books they are reading or read sections to students to encourage discussion. The aim is to show that all staff are avid readers, no matter what their other interests or which subject they teach, and it promotes much discussion – “even PE teachers read!”.

“Reading has always been fundamental at Loxford.”

The school holds many competitions and initiatives each year to create excitement about reading – for example, its own ‘Loxford Big Read’ to coincide with the BBC series. There are also many dedicated reading activities for staff, including performances by poets and visits by children’s authors. To ensure maximum impact, staff lunches are held so that everyone has the opportunity to join in discussions with visitors, and they are always well attended.

The school magazine, *The Newsletter*, always has articles celebrating reading and reading events around the school and copies are distributed to all parents and visitors, as well as the students. A successful funding bid will support out-of-hours community literacy classes and the purchase of books in a variety of community

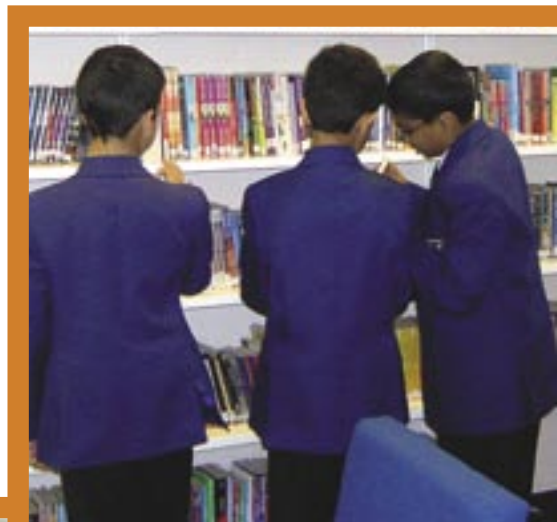
languages for family learning. Louise also plans to develop links with feeder primary schools by inviting pupils to borrow books from Loxford’s library and visiting the primaries to develop reading activities.

Evidence of students’ increasing enthusiasm for reading comes from library borrowing figures, which have steadily increased over the last four years. In 2001-2002, 3,450 books were issued, an average of around 2.2 books per pupil per year. By 2004-2005, this figure had increased to 12,901, an average of 8.2 books per pupil per year.

The impact has also been reflected in the school’s national test results, which have improved significantly despite the profile of the intake remaining the same. In 2003-2004, 52 per cent of students achieved level 5 or above in key stage 3 national tests for English; by summer 2005, the figure was 72 per cent. The school attributes the increase to the work

they have done around promoting reading for pleasure to all students.

One of the school’s additional points of action was to go beyond the snapshot Reading Connects audit and undertake a more extensive examination of reading within the school. This work is ongoing. Louise says she hopes this will enable the school “to continue to move forward and build on present activities to enhance our vision of Loxford as a reading school.” ■



NEXT: WHO'S RECOMMENDING READS

Highly commended

The secondary school highly commended for its project activity is...

Cranbrook School Cranbrook, Kent

Cranbrook School was one of the first to join Reading Connects in September 2004. It has been highly commended for the Cranbrook Big Read project, which contributed to all three of its action points: promoting reading for pleasure, promoting peer recommendation and highlighting the importance of talking about reading.

There are three schools in Cranbrook: Cranbrook School (a selective secondary school), Angley School (a non-selective secondary) and Cranbrook Primary School. The project was undertaken as a partnership between all three, in order to pool resources and capitalise on shared enthusiasm for reading for pleasure.

The aim was to raise the profile of reading and give children and teenagers the opportunity and motivation to read and discuss books of their choice as a leisure activity. During the summer term, the schools worked with pupils aged four to 18 to gather their opinions on favourite reads.

The pupils' views were collected in *The Cranbrook Big Read*, a publication including recommendations, reviews and artwork. It was launched towards the end of July and a copy was given to every pupil in all three schools.

The students were keen to see what others had recommended and try them out for themselves, experimenting with new authors as well as revisiting old favourites. Borrowing rates for all the recommended titles increased during the time of the project, and have remained high since, and there has been a knock-on effect for other titles by the same authors. The titles were also popular among the staff, who have suggested trying a non-fiction Big Read next.

The success of the project at Cranbrook School has helped inspire other activities. There had been a book group for several years but, says librarian Christine Newman, it had lost its focus. However, the group was reinvigorated by the Big Read and, in the summer term, shadowed the Carnegie Book Award. Partner schools were encouraged to join in.

Once a month, the three groups came together to discuss the shortlisted titles and their own thoughts on which should win. Christine also took a group of Year 9 students to visit Year 2 pupils at the primary school, where they spent what she describes as "a magical afternoon" sharing the titles shortlisted for the Kate Greenaway picture book award. "The 'big' pupils loved the enthusiasm the younger ones had for the books and the little ones loved sitting on bean bags with the 'big' ones, reading and discussing the pictures," she says.



The Cranbrook School book group has gone on to shadow the Booktrust Teenage Book Prize, and meetings with the Angley School book group are planned. An additional book group for sixth-form students and their parents is also being developed by the Parents' Association.

Christine believes that peer-to-peer recommendation has been a major success; Kent School Library Service is using the project as a model for others. In addition, staff are now more up-to-date with children's and teenage literature.

A new library induction questionnaire has highlighted the scope of pupils' reading interests, including magazine titles and non-fiction, which has helped the library to meet their needs. There are also plans for a focus on short stories, with a continuation of the partnership through a joint story writing competition between all three schools and, potentially, the publication of the Cranbrook Big Write. ■

The secondary school highly commended for its library provision is...

Don Valley School and Performing Arts College Doncaster, South Yorkshire

Don Valley School has been highly commended for the strength of its library activity to promote reading. Both of its action points on joining Reading Connects were related to library provision: giving students a much bigger say in stock selection, and developing links with feeder primary schools to enable facilities to be tailored to new pupils' needs.

A postcard project was devised to help meet both of these priorities, based on an idea to support transition presented at a Reading Connects Inset session. At the start of the summer term, librarian Lyn Hopson contacted seven primary schools and provided them with a number of postcards, visiting four of them to run half-day sessions helping pupils fill them in with their three favourite reads and a line or two about the kinds of things they like to read and why. She also talked about the library at their new school and what it could offer. Lyn says, "It turned out to be great fun. The students were really receptive and friendly and it was a lovely way to get to meet them all."

Lyn looked at all the pupils' choices and bought many titles that were not already in stock. The postcards were used in a 'Celebrate Reading' display to welcome the new pupils in

September, along with a collection of all the titles they'd listed. She says, "The new students were delighted. They all came in and had fun looking for their card and book choice. I felt I already knew them, and they all felt 'at home' very quickly... A great result for very little outlay."



Children are involved in library stock selection using children's book magazines and publishers' catalogues to choose new titles. Again, Lyn says this has been an easy and inexpensive way to let the children feel they have a say in what the library stocks, and to hear about forthcoming titles.

The library has a programme of regular themes, which have included rock and roll, the environment and D-Day, with accompanying displays and promotion of a range of related titles. For each theme there are quizzes and wordsearches with prizes to encourage those who might not otherwise come in. About 40 students attend the weekly reading group, which uses a 'Reading Journeys' scheme with a map of different 'locations' (genres) to encourage wide reading. The school



shares the Carnegie and Kate Greenaway Book Awards, holding joint activities with other schools.

Links with other schools have also been supported by the Doncaster Book Award, which Lyn helped to set up and now chairs. The scheme has been "completely student-driven," she says. They choose the long list and vote for a shortlist and the winner, and have created a logo and joint website. There are plans to expand the scheme and involve primary schools.

Lyn also plans to involve parents more, possibly by inviting them along to the final gala event for the book award and related school assemblies. She says, "We have already attracted lots of favourable publicity in local newspapers and radio, raising the profile of books and reading all over Doncaster, and promoting library use. I hope to increase this to maximise the effect." ■

"Children are involved in library stock selection using children's book magazines and publishers' catalogues."

The school library is where the magic is

Eileen Armstrong, librarian at Cramlington High School in Northumberland and vice-chair of the School Library Association, describes the powerful partnership formed by teachers and school librarians.

The school library is where the magic is – and not just the Hogwarts, through the wardrobe or looking-glass variety. This magic is the kind that is sparked when the reader engages with just the right text and, crucially, with other readers. School librarians, with their unique relationship with students, have a vital role to play in building up confidence and validating all reading choices.

The school librarian is an unrivalled source of reading expertise, keeping up with publishing trends and innovative promotional ideas through publications, training and conferences such as those provided by the School Library Association (SLA).

As well as understanding and responding to the individual reading preferences of all students, the school librarian has a unique overview of the reading needs of the whole curriculum. The wider community, too, can share the magic as the school librarian conjures up opportunities for students to run storytelling sessions in the public library, read to the elderly, or invite community figures into assemblies as reading champions.

A visually stimulating, safe school library sparks a genuine buzz about reading across the school. Book trolleys in the canteen, posters in the toilets, staff reading profiles in department corridors and a book browsing collection in the foyer, for example, take the library out to readers and create a reading school.

The school library is where the magic is – and the school librarian has a critical, hugely exciting, role to play in helping the whole school community share in it. ■

Eileen recommends...

Louis Sachar's *Holes* as a book that works with absolutely every child.

Reading and writing together

Sue Horner, head of English at the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, explains the reasons behind its support for the Writing Together initiative and the use of writers in schools.

Reading and writing are different sides of the same coin. Reading widely is essential to the development of children's writing; writing in a range of forms extends children's appreciation of the choices writers make. Bringing professional writers into school invigorates both reading and writing as it means pupils can experience the creative process that brings the words to the page. Reading several texts by an author takes on a new dimension when they are there to be quizzed about why they chose different settings for their stories or why they use specific forms for particular poems.

Working with writers, children soon learn that there are no right or wrong ways to go about writing. It gives them permission to approach their writing in creative ways, move beyond formulas and become independent. Single visits can provide a valuable kick-start

to enthuse pupils about their reading and writing, and longer-term projects provide the opportunity to craft writing over time. In either case, the sense of achievement and ownership of a finished article provides motivation for the future.

Writing Together is a partnership of literature organisations and official bodies, aiming to develop practice in residencies by writers in schools. Working with writers inspires teachers and children in new, creative ways. It helps children to understand what writing can do and that it matters to write well. At the same time, it deepens their understanding and enjoyment of the books they read by giving an insight into how they came to be written.

Writing Together offers training to teachers and writers and support in getting together. Visit www.booktrust.org.uk/writingtogether. ■

For practical advice, Sue recommends...

***Our Thoughts Are Bees: Writers working with schools* by Mandy Coe and Jean Sprackland (www.wordplaypress.com).**



“Reading offers nothing to people who see no point in the activity”

The key to all knowledge

David Bell, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector Of Schools, believes we need to re-establish the link between reading and pleasure.

I am very pleased to have this opportunity to join Reading Connects in celebrating the past year. Ofsted is well aware of the excellent job that Reading Connects has done in promoting reading for pleasure and providing practical guidance for schools, parents and others. I am especially pleased that Ofsted has been able to work closely with Reading Connects on a number of projects, including some joint conferences.

The aims of Reading Connects are close to my own heart. I am an avid and eclectic reader. Recently, for instance, I've enjoyed a wide range of titles, from *Freakonomics* by Steven Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner to *Russia's War* by Richard Overy. I always enjoy a good thriller and *Hunter Killer* by Patrick Robinson fell neatly into that category. For me, reading is both a professional interest and a private passion. However, too many young people take a different view of reading. Ofsted has

recently reported¹ on the unacceptably high variation in standards and attitudes towards reading in primary schools that are often contextually similar.

One of the problems is that many students do not associate reading with pleasure. You will find no pleasure in books if you cannot read, but it is equally possible to be able to read and derive little pleasure. We need to remember that reading offers nothing to people who see no point in the activity. One of the most significant passages in the 1975 Bullock Report² is where it states that when students admitted to an adult literacy scheme were asked why, in their opinion, they failed to learn to read at school, the common factor that emerged was, "...they did not learn from the process of learning to read that it was something other people did for pleasure".

When my inspectors visit schools, they frequently ask pupils why they think that reading is important. The answers are illuminating. Most pupils, even those in primary schools, give essentially pragmatic answers. They say that reading helps you to get a job, do well in tests or improve your writing. Few mention the joy of reading. Even more disappointing is

how few will articulate the wider benefits of reading, how it contributes to our knowledge, understanding and wisdom. Just occasionally, we get a response like this one from a 10-year-old Bangladeshi-heritage girl in a school on the Isle of Dogs, who said that, for her, reading "was the key to all knowledge".

There has been an unquestionable rise in the standards of children's literacy since the National Literacy Strategy was introduced in primary schools in 1998. However, we need to re-establish the link between reading and pleasure; and teachers, with their power to influence young minds, need to speak more directly with pupils about the purposes and benefits of reading. It is worth remembering what Ian McEwan has written: "Studying English literature at school was my first, and probably my biggest, step towards mental freedom and independence. It was like falling in love with life." ■

David recommends...

one of the books he recently enjoyed, *Winning* by Jack Welch, the 20-year head of GE.

1) *Reading for purpose and pleasure*, HMI 2393, Ofsted, 2004

2) *A Language for Life*, the Bullock report, DES, 1975

What do young people think about reading?

Christina Clark, senior policy and research analyst at the National Literacy Trust, reports findings from a survey of reading habits at Reading Connects schools.

Why do some pupils choose to read when others do not? What could be done to engage reluctant readers? These are some of the questions that were explored in a recent survey of over 90 primary and secondary schools in England, conducted by the National Literacy Trust. This article reports on some of our findings related to the differentiating characteristics of enthusiastic and reluctant readers.

The research literature shows that reading for pleasure or independent reading benefits children in numerous ways. For example, the amount that children read for enjoyment and for school has been found to be a major contributor to their reading achievement (Cox and Guthrie, 2001). Similarly, independent reading volume is a powerful predictor of differences in children's vocabulary and general knowledge differences, even after controlling for relevant general abilities such as IQ or text-decoding skills (Cunningham and Stanovich, 1998).

Yet, recent research shows that while reading skills have improved in the UK, there is some indication that fewer pupils nowadays read for enjoyment.



For example, an international study of reading and literacy, the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), compared 35 countries on a variety of literacy-related measures. It ranked England as third in reading achievement of 10-year olds, following behind Sweden and the Netherlands (Twist, Sainsbury, Woodthorpe and Whetton, 2003). However, the same study also found that primary school children were less confident about their reading ability and enjoyed reading less than children in other countries. A recent UK survey, Children's Attitudes to Reading (Sainsbury and Schagen, 2004), also indicated that children's reading enjoyment had declined significantly in the last five years, especially among older children.

“It is vital that more emphasis is placed on reading enjoyment both at school and at home.”

The cause of this possible decline is unclear. Some critics would claim it is the result of national strategies and tests; others would argue it is the result of competing media, such as computer games and television. However, given current political concerns about reading and the clear benefits that reading for pleasure can bring, it is vital that more emphasis is placed on reading enjoyment both at school and at home.

Therefore, in summer 2005, the National Literacy Trust conducted a survey for Reading Connects to collect evidence about children's and young people's reading preferences and reading behaviours, with the aim of helping parents, teachers and other literacy professionals to promote wider reading.

All the schools (422) that had signed up to Reading Connects by then were contacted to see whether they would like

to participate in this survey. The final sample consisted of 8,206 pupils from 57 primary and 41 secondary schools, who completed a 23-point self-report questionnaire. There was an almost equal representation of boys and girls within the sample (52.9% and 47.1%, respectively). The ages ranged from four to 18 years, with the majority of students being 12 (27.9%) and 13 (21.1%) years old. 11.9% (263) of primary pupils and 11.5% (652) of secondary pupils said they receive free school meals, which are comparable to national take-up figures (primary: 14.5%, secondary: 10.7%; DfES, 2004). There were no significant gender differences in the number of pupils receiving free school meals.

When asked how much they enjoy reading, 51% of pupils stated that they enjoy reading “quite a lot” or “very much”. However, girls were significantly more likely than boys to enjoy reading. Similarly, in line with previous research (e.g. McKenna, Kear and Ellsworth, 1995) pupils in primary schools were more likely to enjoy reading than pupils in secondary schools. Although previous research has indicated that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds may not read for pleasure as much as those from more advantaged ones, receiving free school meals, which was used as a rough indicator of socio-economic status in the present study, did not affect reading enjoyment. Perhaps unsurprisingly, pupils who enjoy reading were significantly more likely to read outside of school every day or almost every day, while those who do not enjoy reading were more likely to state that they never or almost never read outside of school.

Materials read outside class

Pupils indicated reading a wide variety of materials, with magazines, text messages and websites being the most frequently cited types of reading material. Table 1 shows that pupils who enjoy reading indicated reading a greater range of material than those who do not

Table 1. Materials read outside class

	Pupils who don't enjoy reading %	Pupils who enjoy reading %		Pupils who don't enjoy reading %	Pupils who enjoy reading %
Websites	65	63	Emails	55	51
Newspapers	45	50	Poetry	18	47
Teletext/Ceefax	24	27	Plays	18	36
Magazines	77	77	Catalogues	44	50
Jokes	54	63	Songs	41	47
Factual books	14	42	Posters	52	61
Fiction	30	73	Cookbooks	15	28
Graphic novels	11	27	Encyclopaedias	9	27
Comics	43	59	Travel books	13	26
Annuals	13	27	Audio books	9	19
Manuals	22	35	EAL books	11	24
Text messages	66	58	TV books/ mags	53	62

enjoy reading. However, newspapers, magazines, websites, text messages and emails were read outside of class by an equal percentage of pupils across the two groups.

It is often said that alternative literacy practices, which involve magazines, computer games and the internet, are not recognised as literacy in the classroom (e.g. Blair and Sanford, 2004; Livingstone, 2004). In line with Coles and Hall (2002), present findings stress the importance of respecting the popular reading cultures in which pupils live. The young people surveyed showed a diverse range of reading interests. The findings suggest that schools should examine the materials they provide in order to guarantee that young people's interests and choice of reading materials are reflected in the reading opportunities in school. This is particularly important in the light of Ofsted (2004) findings that schools rarely build on pupils' own reading interests and the range of materials that they read outside school.

Pupils were also asked to rate how good a reader they thought they were on a scale from 1 (not a very good reader) to 10 (excellent reader). Most pupils ranked themselves as rather proficient readers: 8 (22.7%), 7 (18.4%) or 9 (15.8%). However, pupils who enjoy reading rated themselves as significantly more proficient than pupils who do not enjoy reading.

This finding is consistent with previous research, which has shown that "reading proficiency is a key factor that influences children's level of reading enjoyment" (e.g. Brooks, Schagen and Nastat, 1997; Rhodes, 2002).

As well as being asked about their reading enjoyment and reading proficiency, pupils were also asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with nine statements about their attitudes towards reading. As one would expect, those who do not enjoy reading tended to have more negative attitudes towards reading. They were more likely to agree with statements that reading is more for girls than for boys, that reading is boring, that reading is hard, that they find it hard to find interesting books and that they do not read as well as other pupils in their class. By contrast, those who enjoy reading were more likely to agree that reading is important, that they read outside school, that they like going to the library and that they would be happy if someone gave them a book as a present.

Different attitudes towards reading were not the only characteristics that distinguished between those who do enjoy reading and those who do not. The two groups also differed significantly with regard to how many books they perceived were in their home. Numerous studies show that access to books and other reading materials is particularly important

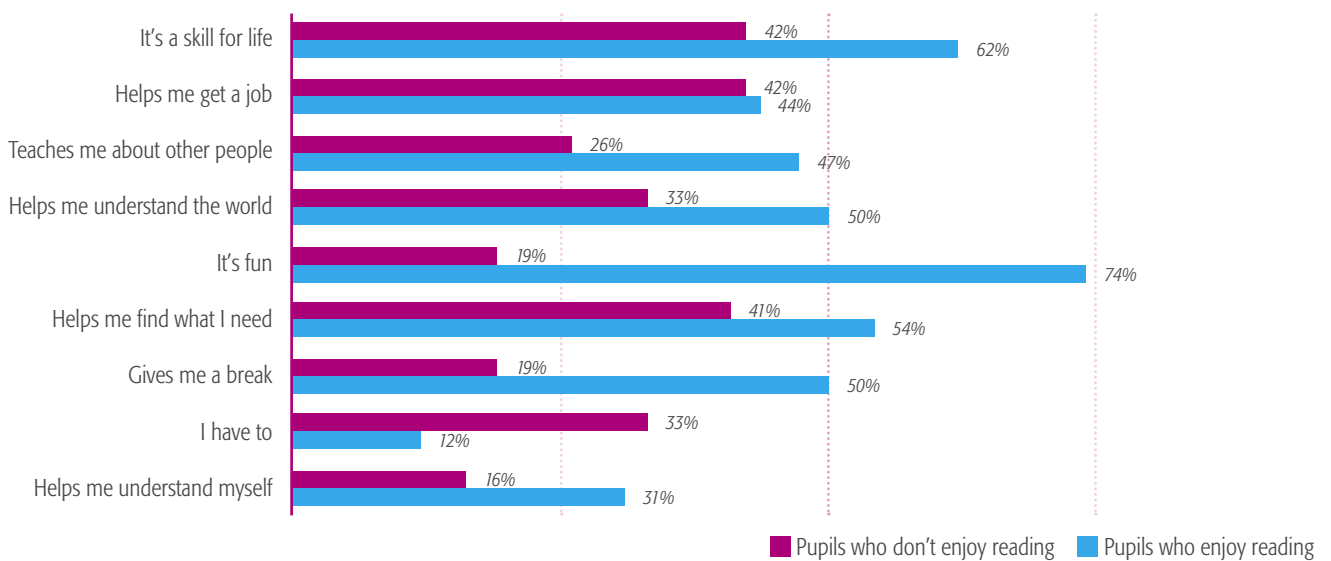
in children's language and literacy development (e.g. Bus, van Ijzendoorn and Pellegrini, 1995). Results from the present survey show that pupils who enjoy reading thought that they had twice as many books at home as those who do not enjoy reading. As well as thinking there were a greater number of books in the home, pupils who enjoy reading also talked about reading with their family more frequently than pupils who do not enjoy reading. Indeed, the majority of pupils who enjoy reading stated that they talked with their family about reading once or twice a week, while pupils who do not enjoy reading were significantly more likely to report that they never or almost never did this with their family.

Reasons for reading

Pupils were also asked to indicate the reasons why they read. Figure 1 shows that both readers and non-readers reported reading because it will help them get a job. However, pupils who do not enjoy reading were more likely to state that they read only because they have to, while pupils who enjoy reading were more likely to report reading because it is a skill for life, it teaches them how other people live and feel, it helps them understand more of the world, it is fun, it helps them find what they want/need to know, it gives them a break and it helps them understand more about themselves. ►►

RESULTS

Figure 1. Reasons for reading



I would read more if...

In addition to reasons for reading, pupils were asked to indicate what would make them more likely to read. Time constraints were one of the greatest barriers to reading, both for pupils who enjoy reading and those who do not. Figure 2 shows that a third of reluctant readers and two-thirds of readers said that having more free time would encourage

them to read more books, a finding that is consistent with that made by Nestlé in 2003. Pupils who enjoy reading were more likely to say the cost of books was a barrier, with almost half saying that they would read more if books were cheaper. Two-thirds of reluctant readers said that they would read more if they enjoyed it more, while a third also said that they would read more if books had

more pictures and stories were shorter. These latter two points are reflected in the reading choices of reluctant readers (Table 1). While they were less likely to read fiction outside class, a higher percentage of reluctant readers indicated reading comics, magazines, websites and other materials that are more visual and less text-heavy.

Figure 2. I would read more if

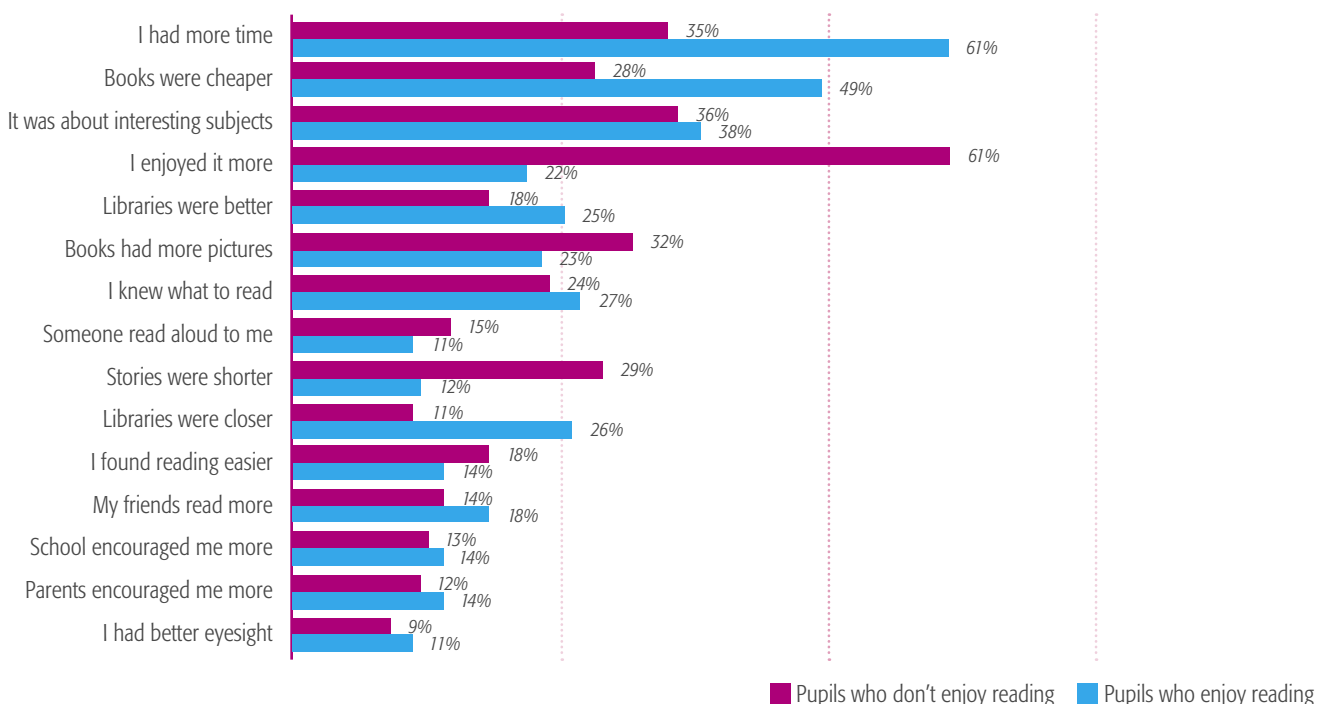
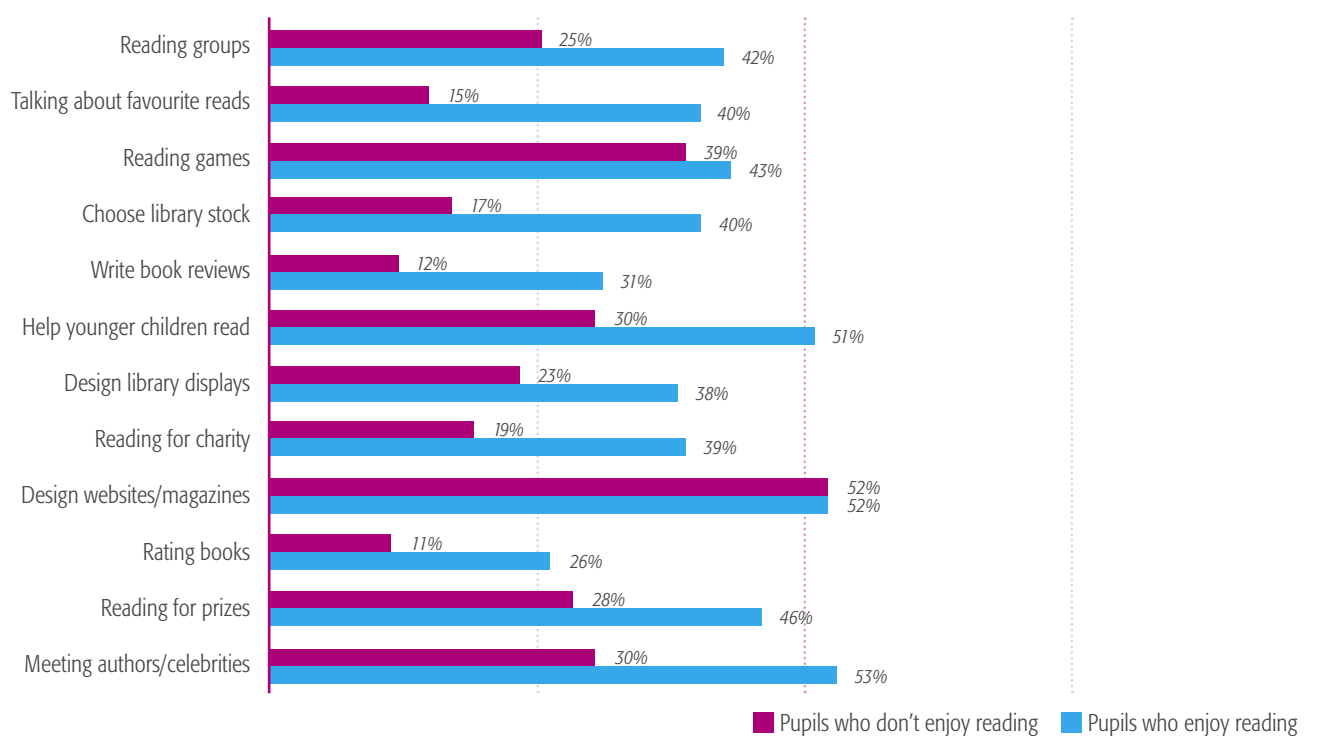


Figure 3. Activities that would encourage more reading



Activities that would encourage more reading

Finally, pupils were asked to indicate which of 12 activities would encourage them and others to read more (see figure 3). Pupils who enjoy reading and those who do not were equally likely to say that designing websites/magazines and reading games would be activities that would help them and others to read more. Meeting authors/celebrities and helping younger children read were chosen as motivating activities by a third of reluctant readers. Rating books and writing book reviews were the least frequently chosen activities by both groups. These results highlight that young people can be drawn into reading when their creativity, personal interests and competitive nature are harnessed.

Overall, these findings show that pupils' reading is rich and diverse, incorporating materials not traditionally regarded by schools as acceptable reading matter. Yet, a recent Ofsted report (2005) noted that too few schools have given sufficient thought to promoting pupils' independent reading. Results from this survey show that schools and families need to ensure

they tap into this richness in pupils' reading, which is not necessarily print-based, in order to hook boys and girls into reading. However, present findings also indicate that in addition to targeting pupils' reading interests, their attitudes and views about reading need to be addressed. In particular, reluctant readers need to be shown that reading is not only a skills-based activity that helps them get a job.

“We cannot know what will make each individual child love reading. If pupils are not engaged in reading, we need to look at why and challenge their perceptions of what reading is and why we do it.”

These are the issues addressed by Reading Connects. We cannot know what will make each individual child love reading. If pupils are not engaged in reading, perhaps we need to look at why this is and consider how to challenge pupils' perceptions of what reading is and why we do it. The Reading Connects approach is not about 'dumbing down'; it is about offering a breadth of reading material and approaches so as to engage the widest possible audience.

A full report on the findings of the survey, including references, can be downloaded from www.readingconnects.org.uk. ■

Christina recommends...

reading anything by Haruki Murakami, whose wacky storylines, strange characters and unique language never fail to amaze; and, for when time is tighter, short stories, particularly those by Nicola Barker.

“Children from homes that value reading are much more likely to read for pleasure”

Reading begins at home

Julia Strong, director of the National Reading Campaign, explains how schools play an essential role in the Family Reading Campaign.

In a survey of young people's reading, conducted by the National Literacy Trust in spring 2005, most children felt it was their parents, and their mother in particular, who had taught them to read. Of the 1,500 children surveyed, 85 per cent cited their mother, with fathers being credited by 67 per cent and teachers by 62 per cent.

Doubtless Rhona Stainthorp, director of the Language and Literacy Research Centre at London University, was right to comment at the time, “The children's perception is charming but a little exaggerated. It is the teachers who build on the strategies that parents, with luck, have given the children, which enable them to read.” However, what is clear, is how important the home is in the children's perception of themselves as readers; how central the home is as the foundation of reading.

The evidence about the benefits of parents being involved in their children's education in general, and their literacy in particular, is overwhelming. Research findings can be summed up by the following quotation: “Parental involvement in their child's reading has been found to be the most important determinant of

language and emergent literacy” (Bus, van Ijzendoorn and Pellegrini, 1995).

It was findings like this that motivated key national organisations concerned with developing reading to come together under the auspices of the National Reading Campaign's Strategic Forum to set up the Family Reading Campaign.

The essence of the Family Reading Campaign is strategic – to ensure that the centrality of encouraging reading in the home is integrated into the thinking of all the key organisations concerned with education, health and parenting. It is hoped to be able to ensure that the benefits of home reading are incorporated into the message and aims of Every Child Matters, a strategy that not only aims to protect children, but also to maximise the opportunities open to young people to improve their life chances and fulfil their potential.

Reading holds the key to opening so many doors. The Family Reading Campaign, therefore, is working to ensure that all families see reading as an important part of their daily lives. This can only become reality if a home reading culture is encouraged and supported by schools, the local community, the media and wider society. Reading Connects can play a vital role in helping to make this vision become reality.

Children from homes that value reading are much more likely to read for pleasure. But how much effort is put into helping homes develop this culture? How many parents are encouraged by their children's



Photograph: Peter Arkell

schools to become readers?

The BBC's Reading and Writing (RaW) campaign, launched in October 2005, is its biggest literacy campaign yet. In 2007, RaW will be focusing on family reading. So, as we prepare for this high-profile celebration of family reading, there has never been a better opportunity for every school to work in partnership with their parents to help build communities that read.

For more information about the Family Reading Campaign see www.readon.org.uk. ■

Julia recommends...

Louis de Bernieres' *Birds Without Wings*, a novel set against a backdrop of the collapsing Ottoman Empire.



“Learning is about much more than what happens in school”

Building learning communities

Gill Morris, family learning development manager at ContinYou, argues for the importance of involving the whole community in creating opportunities for learning.

Learning transforms our life chances, our outlook and health, and our communities. It is one of the key ways in which we can change our lives. ContinYou uses learning to tackle inequality and build social inclusion, through a range of learning programmes and services that offer fresh opportunities to people who have gained least from formal education and training.

Learning is about much more than what happens in school. Our aim is to create learning opportunities with a difference – opportunities that reflect different

learning styles and needs – and engage people in making decisions about their own learning and well-being.

It has been proved time and time again that young children learn much better if their parents are involved. However, many parents who want to help their children with reading, writing and maths at home are prevented from doing so by a lack of confidence, either in their own skills or their knowledge of the best way of going about it. The Share project was established as a pilot in 1996 in order to improve the educational attainment and achievement of children, to motivate parents to take an active interest in their children’s education, and to enable parents to gain accreditation for what they learn as they support their children’s learning. It is now being used in 104 local education authorities, in over 2,000 settings throughout the UK.

Share sessions are run by a trained facilitator, who introduces parents to materials that they can work on with their children at home. Materials are

geared towards parents and intended to complement class teaching, rather than supplement or replace it. This means that children whose parents are not participating are not disadvantaged.

To reach adults who have the most to gain from taking part in learning, it is essential to work in partnership with a wide range of community organisations. Therefore, Share groups are run by Children’s Trusts, local authorities, Excellence in Cities programmes, Education Business Partnerships, groups of schools, Sure Start programmes, early years development and childcare partnerships, and other agencies. Parents can choose whether or not they want to take part in Share and, if they do take part, whether to go for accreditation, which will be much more important to some than others.

Many parents do not appreciate the importance of education and the vital role that they can play in their child’s learning. Share, along with other parental involvement initiatives running in schools, contributes to the implementation of a whole-organisation parent-liaison policy. For some schools, their implementation of Share has contributed to positive comments in Ofsted reports about the support that is offered to pupils and parents. Broadgate Primary School in Horsforth, Leeds, was commended for its “web of support for pupils and parents that places [the school] at the centre of their lives”.

Involving parents and the wider community in reading, literacy and other learning activity contributes to a virtuous circle: it creates adults who are better able to support children’s educational achievement and aspirations, and are more confident in following their own ambitions and developing their skills.

Learning lies at the heart of successful community regeneration. By building individuals’ skills and confidence, we hope to help them to engage with learning both in schools and in the wider community. ■

Gill recommends...

Driving Over Lemons by Chris Stewart and defies you not to fall head-over-heels in love with Andalusia.

“WORLD BOOK DAY’S celebration of reading for pleasure found a natural home in schools”

Celebrating World Book Day

Cathy Schofield, World Book Day coordinator, describes how the celebration has become established in the national calendar.

World Book Day has become so well established that it is hard to imagine early March every year without it. However, World Book Day in the UK and Ireland approaches only its ninth year in 2006.

The first World Book Day in the UK and Ireland was launched on 23 April 1998 with an enormous fanfare and the attention of the new Prime Minister but its international roots go back much further. More than 80 years ago Catalonians augmented their tradition of giving red roses to loved ones on St George’s Day by adding the gift of a book. Following UNESCO’s official designation, World Book Day’s celebration of reading for pleasure found a natural home in schools. However, this meant that the wonderfully appropriate St George’s Day (Shakespeare’s birthday) became problematic; a Saturday, Sunday or other day during the Easter holidays does not lend itself to school activities and events.

So a compromise was found; World Book Day here now takes place on the first Thursday of March and is eagerly anticipated in schools, pre-school settings, libraries, bookshops – any setting willing to put the time and effort into the

celebration. Every year, countries around the world approach the UK’s World Book Day team for advice on how to create a similarly successful initiative, which is a huge endorsement of our activity.

The idea of bringing World Book Day to the UK and Ireland came from a number of senior people in the book trade who were concerned about the increasing competition for the attention of the population, young and old. They saw a clear responsibility to act. While others could look after the educational side of supporting literacy skills, it was the role of publishers and booksellers to promote the pleasure and benefits of books and reading by encouraging children to develop a habit that could last a lifetime. As a long-term project, no one could question that it is enormously worthwhile. World Book Day Ltd achieved charitable status in 1999; the bulk of its funding and support in kind still comes directly from publishers and booksellers working in partnership, unusually, and our main sponsors, National Book Tokens.

World Book Day is now the biggest annual celebration of books and reading in the UK and Ireland. The established and unique activity aimed at children – the World Book Day £1 Book Token, specially created £1 books and support

material in the form of a schools’ pack filled with ideas, activities and display material continues. We have even had the confidence to create a new logo for 2006.

We are extremely happy to have been able to extend our reach with the launch of the most effective element of World Book Day aimed at adults – Spread the Word. By encouraging adults to recommend books to friends and family through the medium of free postcards and e-cards, we hope to engage the whole population in our celebration. For those who have lost the reading habit or who are reluctant or under-confident, a new series of books, Quick Reads, will be launched on World Book Day 2006. Written by established authors to specific guidelines, they are real reads for adults that promise to be challenging in their ideas but not in their language. Quick Reads will be the final piece in the jigsaw of World Book Day – an inclusive initiative with something for everyone. Well, at least until a new idea comes along that is too good to miss... ■

Cathy recommends... Agatha Christie’s memoir, *Come, Tell Me How You Live*, about her time with her archaeologist husband in Syria and Iraq during the 1930s.



www.worldbookday.com

“Boys are reward-oriented. They need to understand ‘what’ and ‘why’ each step of the way”

Reading Champions for schools

Stephen Torsi, Reading Champions project manager, describes how the National Reading Campaign scheme supports the use of male role models to encourage reading.

When it comes to reading activities, boys are often reluctant to get involved – particularly if girls are present. The Reading Champions framework gives boys the opportunity to take ownership of a scheme devised exclusively for them. It aims to use competition, responsibility, peer opinion and role model involvement to motivate boys. During the pilot, boys stated that these factors are key to their involvement. They also showed a broad range of interests and reading preferences. Reading Champions helps schools to build on these interests to hook boys into reading.



The School Reading Champions scheme was launched in June 2005. In a few weeks, over 200 schools signed up to use the pro-active yet flexible framework that encourages boys to aspire to three levels of Champions:

- Bronze Champions stand up and declare their enthusiasm for reading
- Silver Champions are involved in schemes to encourage other boys to read
- Gold Champions make an outstanding contribution to the school reading culture.

Schools are encouraged to adapt the scheme to support girls but national recognition is reserved for the boys. Margaret Cornish from pilot school Hreod Parkway in Swindon observed, “I am convinced that success depends on pupil involvement – staff need to take a back seat, becoming motivators and facilitators – the boys themselves need to have ownership of the scheme. The boys are reward-oriented. They need to understand ‘what’ and ‘why’ each step of the way and be able to measure their success.”

There are currently two suggested methods of implementing the Champions framework: schools can choose one or a mixture of the two techniques. The first relies on boys who are already keen on reading or actively involved in a reading scheme. The boys may already qualify for a Reading Champions award or may be keen to help implement the scheme and raise the profile of reading. The second approach involves directly targeting the boys who have a measure of status and are seen as “cool” by other boys and giving them the challenge and responsibility of changing other people’s attitudes. Adults such as dads, other family members,

professionals or local celebrities can also be recruited to further inspire and support the boys. Schools can nominate them to receive certificates and badges from the National Reading Campaign.

The work done in schools is complemented by celebrity Reading Champions, whose book recommendations can be found online. They include international footballers, cricketers, world wrestlers and authors. Schools can also download a range of support materials, including bookmarks, bookplates, book stickers and leaflets, featuring the Reading Champion superhero. The character can be used in classroom activities such as story development and the materials can be used with the posters to ‘brand’ a Champions space, either a corridor or library display of boys’ reading material.



On joining the network, schools receive a welcome pack and ongoing support from the National Reading Campaign. Those that nominate boys as Reading Champions automatically become part of the Reading Connects network. Find out more and join the network at www.readon.org.uk. ■

Stephen recommends...

reading song lyrics by storytellers and social commentators such as Bob Dylan, Thom Yorke, Roger Waters, Mike Skinner, Common or Stephen Sondheim, who can give as much pleasure and insight as any novelist.

Have you heard?

www.readingconnects.org.uk

“It was re-assuring that lots of the suggestions are already part of our usual classroom practice across the school, but some ideas we had not thought of and will now consider. Thanks again.”

“Reading Connects is a really important initiative. The website is full of ideas and is easy to navigate. Well done the DfES.”

“The audit process was in itself really useful. I thought we already did quite a lot to promote reading for pleasure in our school but the audit gave me new ideas and inspiration.”

“Thank you for some brilliant ideas for promoting reading for pleasure in school. I’m certainly going to give some of them a go.”

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

“The audit process was simple, easy to manage and acknowledged what we were already doing. So many awards are paper-chasing, time-consuming mechanisms that can actually prevent a school from doing what it’s meant to be doing - not so Reading Connects.”

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

“Thanks to Reading Connects for making me give some thought to ways of making reading important to the children.”

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

“I was feeling stagnant... Thanks for the new ideas.”

“The range of achievable ideas meant all my colleagues are now on board.”

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Please pass this magazine on to partner schools, librarians, local authority consultants, or anyone else with an interest in helping schools build a reading culture. If you need more copies, email readingconnects@literacytrust.org.uk or call 020 7828 2435.

This magazine has been supported by

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