



Caroline
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School



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Caroline Chisholm School, an academy in Northampton, has used the Scholastic Reading Audit to reinvigorate its approach to primary phase literacy after identifying a need to improve reading progress between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

Emma Langridge a Lead Practitioner at the school explained that whilst the school is well above national average in reading at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, progress between the key stages is average. This was highlighted as a weakness by Ofsted in September 2017 and subsequently there was a need to review the school's approach to reading. “The Scholastic Reading Audit came along at exactly the right time,” Emma said. “Colleagues were questioning whether guided reading was the best approach and, as a school, we were considering dropping it and replacing it with whole-class reading. That didn't feel right to me and I needed to find some independent evidence for maintaining the guided reading strategy.”

The audit helps teachers to evaluate their school's reading performance across 12 types of reading – a simple ‘red, amber, green’ rating system highlights reading strengths and identifies areas for development. Having completed the audit, Emma shared the report with her Headteacher. “The audit was great – the report we received back mentioned whole-class reading but it also prompted different things around guided reading, especially new ideas around reciprocal reading and close

reading,” she said. “It explains what these are, how these can be implemented and subsequently their recommendations. The fact that an organisation with Scholastic's credibility outlined the best way forward with reading was hugely important. It gave me the evidence to make a case to our Head, at a time when many schools are moving away from guided reading.”

Caroline Chisholm has worked with Scholastic for many years and signed up to the Connectors programme in 2017. Connectors is a groundbreaking reciprocal reading series for peer-to-peer learning which sees children working in independent groups of up to six, as they read and debate a book together. Clear prompts show the leader how to focus the discussion and work with their team to predict outcomes, clarify issues, ask questions and evaluate content. This collaborative approach, recommended by the Education Endowment Foundation, develops teamwork as well as speaking, listening, comprehension and evaluation skills. Formal classroom trials of Connectors show children's reading age leaping forward by an average of 9.1 months in just 12 weeks.

“The books arrived at the beginning of this term, we have delivered training to all staff, and this is now being launched in the classroom,” Emma said. We are strict on measurement and will continually evaluate it but we have also introduced other whole-school interventions, as part of our strategy. At a time when we felt unsure about continuing guided reading, the Scholastic Reading Audit was great. It clarified valuable strategies to be used in guided reading and provided guidance on the areas we were falling short, such as the independent tasks. It was the springboard for us to revamp and embrace guided reading.”

Emma praised the role of Scholastic in helping to address some of their most pressing school improvement challenges: “I had not really explored Scholastic's resources or associated them with research prior to completing the audit, but both have been brilliant. Again, to have a respected body like Scholastic saying that guided reading is the right thing to do provided reassurance for me and helped me make my case for the continuation of this strategy.”

Case study approved: October 2017.



A CASE STUDY

The **Connectors** series of non-fiction reading books are shared among a small group of pupils for independent group reading and peer reading. Independently of the teacher or TA they analyse the text; making connections, sharing opinions and evaluating together.

The author states that the books can be chosen randomly, which is useful. In my own case, 'An Idea Seed' links very well to our theme of Inventions, and 'Extreme Environments' with our recent topic on hot and cold climates. Other exciting titles include 'Treasures', 'Wind', 'Civilizations' and 'Wind' (to name only some).

The reading books are vibrant with large appealing and informative photographs. The text holds just the right air of mystery and wonder at the world, combined with scientific and technological explanation.

The principles and methods of reciprocal reading are very clearly and simply stated in Stage 1 of the teacher resource book. It explains that reading comprehension is improved through the reciprocal reading strategies of predicting, clarifying, questioning and summarising.

Through independent group discussions, teamwork and speaking and listening skills are encouraged. One child is given a leadership role within the group, which encourages responsibility and organisational skills.

Stage 2 of the resource book gives suggestions on how to get started, including grouping, resources and goals. I particularly like the 'bright ideas' sections, such as, 'establish a prediction board and choose children to make predictions each day.' These ideas are short, to the point and very manageable. I shall certainly try some out. I also like the 'questions' section with prompt cards for children to cut out and use during group discussions.

There is also a section on assessment and evaluation, feedback about next steps and improving learning, as well as an observation template.

I shall be leading a staff meeting on reciprocal reading early next term and I shall use these materials to explain it. I enjoyed reading about the author Jill Eggleton and her prolific writing. This work must surely be one of her best as I am most impressed. The writing is some of the clearest I have read. The **Connectors** series is spot on.

Jean Bews, Literacy Coordinator, St Leonard's Primary School, Bridgnorth

Connectors: St Paul's Case Study

Anthony David, Headteacher, St Paul's CE Primary School NW7 December 2013

St Paul's, NW7, have been using the Connectors books to supplement our traditional reading schemes for the last academic year. We first became interested in the series for two reasons:

- a) It provided a range of non-fiction texts that addressed current themes
- b) It provided a clear structure to empower pupils to lead their learning

The initial impact was positive. Children enjoyed the title themes and were interested in the model. One child stated that he liked it because "I feel like we're in charge of our learning; we're the teachers."

From the teacher's point of view they were able to maintain support at appropriate ability levels (all of the Connectors books are banded with standard coloured book bands) but because the titles of age appropriate interest there wasn't a concern that children were being patronised. The books had universal interest from all abilities and were always a welcome aspect of reading.

Engagement is important from the child's point of view and from the class teacher's point of view it is more likely that engaged children are going to progress. Our focus group was pupils eligible to the Pupil Premium grant. What our data has shown is that all pupil within this group have made at least good progress in the last twelve months (which is 1.33 points progress per term, the average is 1.0) and in Year 3 the pupils made outstanding progress which is more than 1.33+ progress (one child made 2.33 points progress).

The resource was one part of a wider programme to improve reading but it is one of the key programmes that the children cite when they talk about enjoyment and what they feel has stretched their learning. The blend of ability appropriate reading, current and challenging themes that are child led have led to a deeper engagement with reading than we had experienced previously. It is interesting to note that the programme contributed to over 64% of Y6 achieving level 5 in reading this year.

I believe that this is a strong resource that challenges children to take responsibility of their learning and to engage with current and sometimes concerning themes in an intelligent way.