



Caroline Chisholm School

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

When it was established in 2004, Caroline Chisholm was the first through 4-18 state school in the UK and now has over 1,800 students. One teacher who has been at the school since it opened is Emma Langridge. Having originally started as an Advanced Skills Teacher in Primary English, Emma went on to build the school's guided reading strategy and has subsequently qualified as a Lead Practitioner.

Emma 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 in November 2017, 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. The school ran Scholastic Book Fairs in 2016 and 2017, raising £700 and £850 respectively, and Emma was able to utilise this additional funding to sign up to Scholastic's Connectors programme. Connectors is a groundbreaking reciprocal reading series for peer-to-peer learning which sees children working in small independent groups of up to six, each taking turns to be the leader 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. "Connectors claims to improve age-related reading ability by nine months and I'm sure this investment will help get us to where we need to be. We are strict on measurement and will continually evaluate it but we have also introduced other whole-school interventions, and some specifically for boys where progress is particularly an issue, as part of our strategy. The main argument on whole-class reading is that it will require less planning – however, reading must be given the same planning attention as English and Maths and it's important not to lose depth. 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: "The book fairs have a good reputation and are a great way to make money for the school – without these, we wouldn't have been able to buy Connectors. 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 developed: January 2018