

READING FOR PLEASURE

What we know works

Centre for Literacy in Primary Education



CLPE

CENTRE FOR LITERACY
IN PRIMARY EDUCATION



Reading for Pleasure

The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education is a UK based children's literacy charity working with primary schools. Our work raises the achievement of children's speaking and listening, reading and writing by helping schools to teach literacy creatively and effectively, putting quality children's books at the heart of all learning.

We exist to promote high standards in the teaching of literacy through our evidence-based, highly evaluated professional development programmes, including School INSET, and our renowned classroom-based resources. We also conduct research into all areas of primary literacy, using the findings to inform practice and contribute to national and international perspectives on literacy.

We particularly emphasise the importance of books and literature in enabling children to become confident, happy and enthusiastic readers and writers, with all the benefits this brings. Our work with teachers, children and authors, illustrators and poets over the last fifty years has given us a wealth of knowledge and understanding about teaching literacy in primary schools.

What we must understand is that reading for pleasure is not a bolt on, added extra or series of activities to tick off. It is an act; a coming together of skills, knowledge and attitudes, which does not happen after a phonics programme is complete, or when children achieve fluency, it begins from the moment a baby has their first encounter with a text. Children are far more likely to read for pleasure when they can read, when they have texts available that make them want to read and they are aware of the inherent pleasures that reading offers to them, resulting in the intrinsic motivation to read for themselves.



Since 2004, we have led and developed the 'Power of Reading'. This is an extensive school development programme, which provides schools with all they need to develop an English curriculum based on high quality children's books, supporting children to have the skills, motivation and an enabling environment to encourage them to read for purpose and pleasure. Teachers attend high-quality training, have access to a wide range of quality children's literature and lesson plans to use in their classrooms and work with their colleagues to develop practice around the teaching of speaking and listening, reading and writing in their school.

The Power of Reading project has given us a unique perspective on the successful teaching of reading, resulting in a closing of disadvantage gaps and more children choosing to read independently. Every year we collect data about children's achievement and progress, and we ask teachers to share examples of how they have changed whole-school practice and outcomes by putting the training into practice across their school.

This pamphlet brings together ten things the Power of Reading has taught us need to be considered and developed in schools that are successful in encouraging a lifelong love of reading and literacy learning. We hope that you find it useful.

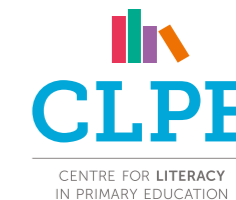
Charlotte Hacking

Director of Learning and Programmes, CLPE

Find out more about...

The Power of Reading Programme
<https://clpe.org.uk/books/power-of-reading/about>

CLPE's Research on Reading
<https://clpe.org.uk/research/reading>



1 Developing an ethos and environment that values reading and excites, enthuses and inspires readers

Carefully planned reading provision and routines are key to building a reading community in which reading is valued and in which children are engaged in rich reading experiences throughout their primary years. Book areas — where books and information about books are carefully selected, attractively displayed, and where browsing, choosing and reading can take place — are a visible way of raising the profile of literature and of establishing and promoting a positive ethos for reading for pleasure.

- Ensure children have access to a book stock rich in high-quality texts, across a breadth and range of genres and formats, in each classroom and across the school.
- Regularly review and update the book stock so that it remains relevant to your children, representing their lived experiences and that of contemporary society.
- Create reading environments in which books are organised and presented in interesting and enticing ways, that reflect and expand known reading preferences, and that support browsing, recommendation and selection.
- Plan regular routines for children to access, select and enjoy the texts available to them.



“We have totally reviewed our reading environments, improving both book areas and the school library. We looked at the quality of the books, how the books were displayed and the seating arrangements. Children are choosing to read a book any time of the day. They are reading and returning their books from home and asking for other stories written by the same author. They look forward to us sharing a book at the end of the day.”



[Learn more](#)

Find out more about the impact in schools of CLPE’s Power of Reading

2 Creating a community of readers with opportunities to share responses and opinions

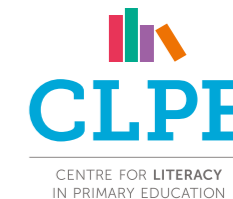
Reading is fundamentally a social phenomenon. Early shared experiences are internalised and become the basis of what children can do independently and what they understand reading to be. It is essential that the invitation to be part of the school reading community involves as many people as possible and includes all staff as well as parents and families modelling positive relationships with books and reader identity.

- Talk about your own reading habits and preferences, encouraging children to do the same, and provide free reading opportunities in which you can read alongside children and share recommendations.
- Develop a culture of formal and informal book groups throughout the school community to promote engagement in reading, wider discussion skills and inferential understanding.
- Build on strong relationships with families and knowledge of home languages, experiences of texts, preferences and perceptions, to establish positive relationships with books and engagement in social reading routines at home and at school.
- Create opportunities for books and reading to be celebrated through special events as well as regular involvement with libraries, bookshops, volunteers and creators throughout the school year.



[Learn more](#)

Read this research summary to discover the impact of creating a community of readers



“Children have ownership about their choices and preferences with books and reading. They have identities as authors and illustrators. Children can be clearer about what types of books they enjoy reading and independently access the reading area. They can join in with repetition, anticipate favourite parts of stories, and display preferences.”

3 A read-aloud programme

Reading aloud is probably the most important thing that teachers can do, so it needs to be a frequent and regular part of each school day. Reading aloud slows written language down, enabling children to hear and absorb the tunes and patterns unique to different types of texts. Reading aloud allows children to experience and enjoy stories that they might not otherwise meet, and gifts them access to texts of a greater sophistication and complexity than they would be able to access independently.

- Read aloud to your class so that they can experience enjoyment in the communal immersion in a story world or compelling plot line.
- Read aloud a breadth and range of texts so that children build a repertoire of books that they enjoy and get to know well.
- Choose high-quality, well-crafted books that allow you to draw attention to the way in which written language can sound and how it can create an affective response in us as readers.
- Prioritise reading aloud as a valuable and established routine across all classrooms in the school.



"All children regardless of ability can access high quality texts with an adult reading aloud to them. It's a great way to connect with my class. I have seen the impact on their enjoyment of both the class book and their wider reading interests."



[Learn more](#)

Find out about the importance of reading aloud from the CLPE Reading and Writing Scales

4 High-quality texts with depth and interest in story, character, illustration, vocabulary, structure and subject matter

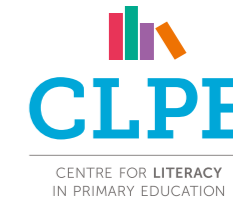
The highest quality books lend themselves to being talked about, thought through and revisited and children will find them engaging for a variety of reasons. They tend to be texts with powerful stories which stir ideas and feelings and excite the reader's interest and imagination. These are books that children will want to re-read and savour and will remember. They can take many forms: poetry, information texts, picturebooks (with or without words), short stories, graphic novels, chapter books, modern stories or famous classics; books that lend themselves to sustained study as well as those that support independent reading or wider reading across the curriculum.

- Build your English curriculum around high-quality books that lend themselves to sustained study of different literary forms and meaningful opportunities for deeper reader response and which inspire in-depth and real writing experiences.
- Plan meaningful ways to engage children in different kinds of quality texts across the curriculum.
- Ensure that the books on offer reflect the diversity of your class, school and community and of society as a whole. They should represent the broadest range of lived experience.



[Learn more](#)

Explore the range of high-quality books that lies at the heart of the Power of Reading approach



"Exceptionally high-quality books are everywhere. Reading is woven into every aspect of the curriculum. Older pupils talk passionately about 'getting lost in a book' and how they struggle to put a good book down. Teachers skilfully choose books to stimulate discussion. Leaders ensure that books in school reflect the diversity of the school community and the world in which pupils live."

[OFSTED INSPECTION OF AN ASSOCIATE SCHOOL]

5 Teachers who are knowledgeable about children's literature

Teachers who — as adult readers — develop their own experience, preferences and enthusiasms in reading find their personal engagement and reflective involvement helps them to be very clear about the nature of reading and the experience of being a reader. This has a significant positive impact on teaching practice.

- Draw on a range of trusted sources for contemporary book recommendations, such as librarians and independent booksellers as well as literacy charities and book awards.
- Read widely so that you are able to source and recommend books to suit the interests, tastes and needs of your children as well as to choose and use books to support literacy planning.
- Be a teacher who reads and a reader who teaches. Consider participating in teacher book groups to better develop responses and appreciate preferences of younger readers.



"One of the things I have enjoyed the most was the exposure to new literature. As a teacher we don't have much time to constantly look at so many books, so I have really cherished the time to learn about top quality texts."



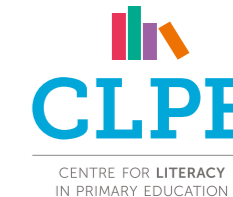
[Learn more](#)

Discover the wider range of high-quality texts in CLPE's Corebooks

6 Planning for talking about books and stories, providing structures within which to do this

Children should have frequent, regular and sustained opportunities to talk together about the books that they are reading as a whole class, building the reading community. This talk draws on their personal reading and strengthens their reader identity. The more experience they have of talking together like this, the better they become at making explicit the meanings that a text holds for them, which helps the class to arrive at a shared understanding of ideas and issues. While talking about books is supportive to all readers and writers, it is especially empowering for children who find literacy difficult.

- Put rich texts at the heart of the curriculum that allow children to meaningfully engage, share preferences, make personal connections and ask questions.
- Plan plentiful opportunities to facilitate reader response in whole-class, small-group and individual contexts, supporting children to develop confidence at clarifying unknown vocabulary, inferring and deducing ideas beyond the text and linking ideas and themes within and across texts.
- Plan for and invite readers to respond to books in ways that are creative and open-ended, all whilst keeping children engaged with the characters and the story as a whole.



"Through our rich discussions about author intent and decision-making, children were able to understand the purpose of word choices and structure and were able to use these inferencing skills to improve their own ability to communicate their thoughts and ideas. The booktalk that goes on in the classroom and around the wider school is wonderful to see."



[Learn more](#)

Explore the benefits of our patron Aidan Chambers' booktalk teaching approach

7 Understanding the importance of illustration in reading, both in terms of responding to a text and creating a text

Picturebooks and illustrated books are tremendously important resources for all readers. Understanding how pictures and illustrations work with the text to create meaning for the reader is a high-level reading skill. Opportunities to draw in response to texts can help and encourage children to move into an imaginary world or understand a character. Drawing helps children to begin to articulate their response to what they read and can help them to analyse the ways in which the writer has used language and images. For many children it is an essential step into writing.

- Provide access to a wide range of high-quality, age-appropriate picturebooks across the primary years.
- Unfold picturebook texts slowly, allowing time for reflection and response to the pictures and the way they combine with the text to tell the story.
- Plan for children, particularly older readers, to develop inference and critical thinking skills, by reading illustrations closely.
- Give licence to children to articulate responses to texts through drawing and use this to plan and compose ideas for their own writing.



“The most surprising thing is that it has given our children a voice and a language. The increasing understanding that the illustrator is an author has led to in-depth discussions around authorial intent. They have an increasing language and vocabulary to share their ideas.”



[Learn more](#)

Read more about the Power of Pictures programme and resources

8 Using dramatic approaches to help children understand and access texts

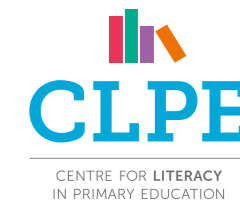
Drama and role-play provide immediate and effective routes into the world of a story and allow children to explore texts actively. Dramatic approaches enable children to stand in the shoes of a particular character and imagine how things would look from their point of view. Through drama and role-play children can deepen their understanding and imagining of characters and events; they can then extend this understanding to their reading and into their writing.

- Enable children to respond to texts through a variety of dramatic approaches, both formal and informal, and including role-play, readers theatre and hot-seating.
- Revisit and re-enact stories and scenes using small-world play, puppets or story props.
- Use real or imagined stimulus for oral rehearsal, enabling children to take on the mantle of the expert and assume authentic voice in more strongly imagined roles, before writing for information, instruction, storytelling, recount, persuasion, debate and discussion.



[Learn more](#)

Discover the benefits of using a range of dramatic teaching approaches



“Children became so immersed in their Power of Reading text that they were desperate to start writing. Using the drama sessions ensured all children felt equipped to fully access the writing task; we had far fewer children stuck for ideas.”

9 Working with authors, poets and illustrators to understand the process of creating books

In our work at CLPE, we have found how important it is for children to hear from, work with, and watch professional writers and illustrators. Writers are invariably readers themselves. Seeing a writer bring their own work to life and beginning to understand what that means and how it relates to the creation of their own writing helps children to see themselves as writers too. Teachers too have benefited from working alongside writers and illustrators as they have found their teaching is improved by understanding the creative process. Most writers immerse themselves in writing and enjoy the pleasures of reading and informed teachers can replicate this in the classroom.

- Listen to writers talk about their writing process; what inspires them, how they work, how they draft, edit and redraft.
- Consider ways to provide children with authentic writing experiences which afford them freedoms enjoyed by creatives as well as supportive structures.
- Bring authorial experience directly to the children by organising enrichment visits from inspiring writers, poets or illustrators. Recordings can also offer engaging insights into authentic writing practices.



[Learn more](#)

Browse a range of videos for insights into authors' practice



"I witnessed at first hand the power of starting the writing process by drawing. That may sound strange to some, but children who had previously struggled to transfer an idea in their heads on to paper grew in confidence as their ideas took shape on the page. Using words and pictures with a greater understanding of how the two can work together is when the magic starts to happen."

POWER OF PICTURES AUTHOR-ILLUSTRATOR TIM HOPGOOD

10 Provide opportunities for children to choose books that foster their experience of literature as well as supporting their interests and preferences

It is really important to listen to and respect children's choices while helping them to broaden their reading range. Children can be easily put off then they feel adults are making judgements about their reading choices so, to help children move forward in their reading, allow them to have say in the selection of books for the book corner and library. This might include funny books, comics and graphic novels, picturebooks and poetry. Children are more likely to finish a book that they have chosen for themselves.

- Get to know your children's background experiences and tastes and be sure to tailor the book stock to suit these interests and reading preferences.
- Support children in the specific skills of browsing and choosing, deciding whether a book is right for them or when it might not be.
- Value children's enjoyment of all types of reading material. Funny books, books in series, comics, magazines or graphic novels can draw children in, providing reading practice and encouraging reading for pleasure.
- Use your knowledge of contemporary children's literature to make recommendations about other texts they might be inspired to try.



[Learn more](#)

Discover a range of training to support you in using literacy beyond the literacy lesson



"The impact has been immeasurable in our school and a notable success has been in the teachers' confidence to review a text and decide whether it provides the richest learning experiences for children. It has helped teachers to look carefully at the opportunities that can come from a key text and how it can open up the imagination of the children."

Reading for Pleasure

What we know works

1. Developing an ethos and environment that values reading and excites, enthuses and inspires readers.
2. Creating a community of readers with opportunities to share responses and opinions.
3. A read-aloud programme.
4. High-quality texts with depth and interest in story, character, illustration, vocabulary, structure and subject matter.
5. Teachers who are knowledgeable about children's literature.
6. Planning for talking about books and stories, providing structures within which to do this.
7. Understanding the importance of illustration in reading, both in terms of responding to a text and creating a text.
8. Using dramatic approaches to help children understand and access texts.
9. Working with authors, poets and illustrators to understand the process of creating books.
10. Provide opportunities for children to choose books that foster their experience of literature as well as supporting their interests and preferences.



CLPE's Corebooks

CLPE's Corebooks list helps primary schools choose the very best children's books for their school or classroom libraries. Selected by our dedicated Librarian, this database contains more than 700 quality books to suit readers of all ages and stages of reading development. The Corebooks selection comprises of three collections for each phase of children's learning, including:



The Learning to Read Collection

These are books which are particularly supportive to children learning to read. This collection supports children in EYFS to Key Stage 2.

Find out more:



The Literature Collection

This collection has been designed to introduce children to a wider range of titles, authors and genres.

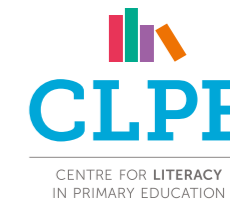
Find out more:

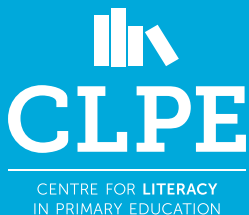


The Information Collection

These are high quality information texts to show how text and pictures can work together to provide comprehensive information and an enjoyable reading experience.

Find out more:





A charity transforming
lives through literacy

Working with schools to provide training and resources to raise outcomes for all children. Please visit CLPE's website for the most up-to-date information.

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"CLPE is one of the most wonderful places in London, full of hope, thought, expectation, experience, research, inspiration, belief, follow-through, commitment."

MICHAEL ROSEN,
AUTHOR, POET AND CLPE PATRON

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