

Case Study: Melanie McGilloway, Library Co-Manager at Churchill Academy, Somerset

Bookbuzz and Reading for Pleasure at Churchill Academy

This year the school took part in BookTrust's Bookbuzz reading scheme. Bookbuzz is a reading-for-pleasure programme, organised by BookTrust, that aims to help schools inspire a love of reading in Year 7 and Year 8 students.

The aim of Churchill Academy's Bookbuzz programme was to inspire a love of independent reading amongst Year 7 students and help them develop their identities as readers; learning what they enjoy reading. The Library wanted to test the assumption that the best way to encourage a student to start reading was to give them the agency to pick their own book to keep and Bookbuzz lends itself to this approach. The launch pack was received in September and included two copies of each of the seventeen titles as well as a set of resources comprising bookmarks, posters and a guide. Bookbuzz introductory lessons were organised via English lessons where students were shown the Bookbuzz film in which authors and students discussed the seventeen books. It was also emphasised that students should think about what book they wanted to own and read. It was great to see the variety of books students picked; ranging from non-fiction to super readable titles and from mysteries to horror. Students acted as discerning readers; taking on board what others thought about the books and then forming their own opinions.

Melanie sent the order to BookTrust in October and the books arrived in November. The Library wanted to make sure that students receiving their books was the start of this project and not the end; a starting point for students to develop a love of reading for pleasure. One way in which this was done was to incorporate Bookbuzz into the school's Year 7 Reading Award; to complete the bronze award, students were required to read four books. Many students chose to make their Bookbuzz book their first reading award book and then wanted to read a book "like" their Bookbuzz book, continuing the journey.

As well as combining Bookbuzz with the reading award, the Library also ran fun reading activities linked with Bookbuzz. This helped them to continue the conversation about reading for pleasure throughout the year. For example, in the spring term they ran a poster competition where students made posters for their Bookbuzz books.

Churchill Academy's values are kindness, curiosity and determination. Helping Year 7 students to develop a love of reading for pleasure using Bookbuzz supports these values as well as the school's core purpose (to inspire and enable young people to make a positive difference). Encouraging students to read for pleasure supports the value of kindness as it helps students to identify with other people's feelings and improve their levels of warmth, compassion and empathy. Reading for pleasure and curiosity go hand in hand. Once students have the tools and internal drive to find something out, the worlds of fiction and non-fiction open up to them. They fuel one another leading to more reading and more learning. Reading for pleasure also helps students to develop their determination and is one of the best ways to develop reading stamina; reading longer books and developing literacy skills in order to find out what happens next.

Measuring the impact of Bookbuzz was built into the delivery of the programme. This was done with the aim of collecting evidence that showed its worth. When students received their Bookbuzz book they completed a first impressions sheet, which included questions to answer after reading the first chapter. They completed a second survey at the end of the year. This indicated what percentage of students had read their books. These results were used alongside the data collected in library lessons. At the start of the year, students complete questionnaires about what type of reader they were and they also kept reading records that were checked weekly by English teachers.

This combination of Bookbuzz-specific and more general reading statistics provided a wealth of quantitative data to show students'

reading frequency and reading enjoyment, and the impact of the Library. It also provided information that feeds into conversations with students about their reading and how the Library delivered our lessons. It was important for student voices to be included in the information that was collected therefore students were asked for qualitative feedback on both the Bookbuzz programme and the books they picked.

Bookbuzz was a major part of the approach to Year 7 reading for pleasure and literacy. It helped create excitement about reading amongst the year group throughout the academic year and it was important to sustain, and build upon, this excitement into Year 8 and beyond, helping students to continue to develop as readers. This has been done through both our programme of Year 8 library lessons and our extra-curricular activities such as book clubs and author visits. Giving students time to read and developing an environment where students can discuss books both in and out lessons helps the Library to continue the momentum that was created in Year 7.

Advice:

- Get the whole school involved. If members of staff know about the programme, and maybe even read one of the titles, they will be better positioned to “book chat” with students.
- Get parents and carers involved. We informed parents and carers about Bookbuzz through our newsletter. The reading for pleasure message is more powerful when it also comes from home.
- Get authors involved. We were very fortunate to have Bookbuzz author, Gill Lewis, visit the school. Giving students the opportunity to see the author of a book many of them were about to receive brought the book to life for them and created a real buzz.

Sources

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