

Case Study: Roy Moss, School: Teaching Assistant/ Librarian at Kaneshill Primary & Hightown Primary Schools, Southampton

Library improvement at Hightown Primary

Roy's goal was to invigorate library usage at Hightown Primary School, especially increasing the amount of intrinsically motivated readers. He felt that school library had previously been underused, the current way it was being used wasn't working, class library slots were unproductive and the library wasn't open after school. After conversations with the Literacy Lead to discuss how class library slots were not working or were not particularly productive to the enjoyment of reading - the children were taking out books because they had to rather than because they wanted to - class library slots were stopped and the library was opened for 1 day after school instead. This had a slow uptake at first but over time more children and, importantly, parents and guardians were coming into the library. This was essential as Roy felt that the children's adults needed to be involved. After this initiative became popular the library opened up on another day; both days are staffed by Roy for about 30 minutes after school.

Meanwhile, Roy completely revised the books in the library and rearranged the space. He removed old, damaged books and used the local SLS to get new books; hand-picking them. The new layout is more open, the picture books are now in face-out displays and the fiction has been well-stocked. So far about 25% of the school have visited the library each half term.

Roy introduced a library loyalty card. Every time a child takes a book out, they receive a stamp on their card; once they get six stamps they get a bookmark and their name goes into a prize draw to win a book token at the end of term. This has been very popular and a great way to celebrate those reading. He also started running a book fair once a year that has helped fund new books.

The school receive a small grant from the Siobhan Dowd Trust. Using this they took a group of children to a bookshop to choose

books for the library, which they loved. Roy has also encouraged parents and guardians to take out books as well. If the children can see their family members reading and enjoying books, then they are more likely to read themselves. This also encourages book talk between family members.

The library has managed to get many more children excited about books and reading than previously and they're reading because they want to. The children's love of reading is also being brought back into the classroom as they now engage with the books in class. To engender this, Roy always makes sure that the library is stocked with books relating to class topics as borrowing books for homework or for their own interest in the class topic is very popular.

The school is in a deprived area so the library has really added something to the lives of the children that use it. Roy always tries to stock it with the latest books as many of the children don't have the opportunity to visit bookshops and cannot afford books; he believes they deserve access to the newest books too. This is another reason for the book token prizes at the end of term as it enables the children to visit a book shop to buy their own book and keep it.

Roy was inspired to improve intrinsically motivated readers from reading past Literacy Trust reports including School Libraries: A Literature Review of Current Provision and Evidence of Impact (June 2017) Teravainen & Clark. He was also inspired after conducting his own action research project on a similar area.

To change the use of the library has been a slow journey and not a quick fix, the Library is currently into its 3rd year of the improvement. So far Roy has not collected any reading progress data yet but anecdotal evidence indicates that children are excited about coming to the library after school. They talk to Roy about the books they've read and ask for new ones that are coming being published.

It's not just the 'able' children using the library either; Roy has noticed that the children are very diverse with a range of ages, backgrounds and abilities. The more challenging pupils have found it helpful. One pupil comes every week with his mum; he was on a part-time timetable but loves coming to get a book. This is a pupil that struggles massively with behaviour but each week he is intrinsically motivated to come to the library and inspired to read at home with his family.

Library usage has stayed steady during the current school year with about 25% of pupils coming after school. However, with the library now open on two afternoons for those unable to make it after school there has been a much bigger uptake. It is too early to give a figure on this amount as it's only just implemented it but Roy is monitoring the situation.

Roy hopes to open the library on even more afternoons as well as at lunchtimes but staffing levels make this hard. The two afternoons he is in the school, he has started to invite children to come to the library during class time, especially if they are not able to come after school. This is to either get a book out or for browsing time. When use increases and the impact is clear, Roy will have more evidence to ask for further library investment; in addition to staff time, the furniture needs improving, proper desk should be installed as well as better shelves and, of course, stock needs to be constantly renewed. The library does not have its own budget which is something Roy is pushing for.

The library supports the Summer Reading Challenge and has invited a librarian from the local public library to promote this with the pupils. He also would like to organise an author visits to really boost the enthusiasm amongst the children.

Tips:

- This wasn't a quick and easy fix – it's important to remember that every school is different in terms of what would work best for them.
- Knowledgeable, consistent staff: who know books; can interact with children and parents; are enthusiastic and passionate.
- If you have a School Library Service use them as much as you can. Money raised is better spent on increasing your book allocation than buying books yourself.
- Keep progress documented: the more the library is used, the more evidence you have that future investment can be justified.
- We couldn't have got to where we are without a supportive SLT who listened and took on-board my ideas.