

# Build a 'reading for pleasure' culture



School name:	Great Heath Primary School	School type:	Community First (3-9 years)
Region:	Suffolk	Ofsted rating:	Satisfactory (Dec 2009)
Area type:	Town	Pupil premium %:	31.8%
Number of pupils:	200	EAL %:	16.8%

**Why Bug Club?** A high proportion of children at Great Heath Primary were not achieving level 2 in their Year 2 SATs. This was leaving them at a distinct disadvantage by the time they entered KS2. **Kate Ruttle, SENCO** at Great Heath decided to try Bug Club to improve attainment and foster a culture where reading was enjoyed and valued by the children.

## Key points to take away

- Significantly **helps to improve attainment** for underperforming children.
- Enables teachers to **put strategies in place to monitor children and tailor their reading.**
- Exciting characters **encourage children to engage in the books** and enjoy reading.
- Online access **helps parents support children's reading outside of school.**

## Background

Kate Ruttle, SENCO at Great Heath Primary School, discusses the impact of Bug Club on reading at the school in this study.

Too many children in our school don't get level 2 in their Year 2 SATs and these children are at a clear disadvantage as they enter Key Stage 2. We had already made the decision to train a teaching assistant to follow the FFT programme\*, when we received the Bug Club books. Since the books are so carefully levelled, and they are all unfamiliar books, we decided to use them with our children. We did the FFT training in early October, so we have only been following the programme for six weeks by the middle of November.

Initially, we decided to select two children who were already well behind at the beginning of Year 2:

- **Child A** is a summer born girl. Initial teacher assessment put her as reading at about a level P8 which we decided to match to Bug Club level Red C.
- **Child B** is a summer born boy. He was virtually a non-reader so he started reading the Pink A books.

The programme follows the basic structure of Reading Recovery with alternate writing days and reading days. Children read each book a minimum of three times: it's introduced on a reading day, re-read on a writing day and re-read again as a familiar text at the beginning of the next reading day. The children each have 20-25 minutes a day one-to-one support for reading and or writing.

### Child A: from P8 to 2B in one year

Part of Child A's problem with school has always been confidence. She joined the school nurture group when she was in Reception in order to boost her confidence and this was largely successful, but A always finds it hard to start a new class with a new teacher. She has been assessed by the Educational Psychologist who thinks that A is potentially an able child who is underperforming.

At the beginning of Year 2, the reading observation was again that A had lost ground from a 1C back to a P8 and wasn't really doing much in class at all. After the first couple of sessions of FFT, we decided to move her back to Red A in order to give her some confidence. This approach worked and she soon began to look forward to her daily sessions. Within a week, she was reading confidently back at Red C – and she has continued to make amazing progress. Six weeks into the programme, she is now reading confidently at Green A and will move to Green B next week. This is a jump from a struggling P7/8 to a confident 1B in a matter of weeks.

Child A has obviously been supported by the daily reading sessions and the opportunity to develop a trusting relationship with an adult in school. However, the small and pragmatic steps in Bug Club have been invaluable

\* The FFT provides results analysis to schools and LAs in England and Wales.

because she has had the confidence to learn, to try out the strategies she is being taught and to enjoy reading. Her confidence is already impacting on her general class work too, and her Mum is thrilled that A is reading and re-reading all of the books in her online Bug Club world at home.

Once A is reading securely at Green C, which should be before Christmas, we will gradually withdraw the programme. However, we will make sure that the TA reads with her at least once a week. By the beginning of the Spring term, A will be back on track and her end of year predications are now a level 2B which was unthinkable only a few weeks ago, but now seems like a real possibility. From P8 to 2B within one school year is very good progress.

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### Child B: enjoying becoming a reader

Child B is a very active little boy who has always been unwilling to sit down to read or write. Assessments suggest that he has low average receptive vocabulary (BPVS standardised score of 89 in July 2010) and a poor short term memory. By the end of Year 1, he was realising that he was falling behind his peers and his behaviour worsened. This pattern continued at the beginning of Year 2 and we were hesitant about taking him into the FFT programme because of it. However, we made the decision that since he needed to learn to read, we would see what impact the programme might make.

For B, one of the big draws to the programme was the familiar characters in some of the books. Although he couldn't yet read the *Star Wars* books or the *Wallace and Gromit* books, he understood that if he worked hard, this might happen.

Initial assessment showed that B was still at an early stage of learning phonics: although he recognised most of the letter sounds, he wasn't blending successfully. All of the children in school have daily phonics sessions in attainment sets. B was doing the phase 3 work for the third time because he hadn't made the progress we had hoped. This had previously been put down to his behaviour but it quickly became apparent that part of B's difficulty was that he didn't 'get' the point of phonics.

We started B reading the *Trucktown* books, starting with Lilac and quickly progressing through Pink A and Pink B. Once B realised that he could use his phonics to work out the words in the text, he took off. We revisited the *Harry and the Dinosaurs* books at Pink A and Pink B to ensure that he was secure reading at these levels and then

moved onto Red. Six weeks into the programme, B is now reading the Yellow books and he will soon be ready for Blue.

For B, the value of Bug Club is twofold: the small steps are allowing him to make progress without fear of failure, and the clusters of books are giving him incentives to move on. The pattern of his progress has continued to be that he will read all three books in a cluster, then go back a couple of sublevels and read all three books in the next cluster. In between times, he reads some of the non-fiction books. Reading the third book in a cluster can be a trial so we read it with him. By the time he has read through two clusters at the same level, he is easily able to read all three books in the next. The motivation of reading another book about a character has proved to be sufficient to spur him on and given him the incentive to try. As an additional incentive, he is sometimes allowed to read his familiar book on the computer as he doesn't have internet access at home.

“The small steps in Bug Club have given the children who were falling behind the confidence to learn.”

Child B's behaviour is now much improved and he is generally willing to make an attempt at anything that is offered to him – including writing which was once a significant trigger for temper tantrums. Once he realised why he was learning phonics, he discovered that he had been inadvertently learning the phase 3 graphemes after all and he was promoted into the Phase 4 group. He will move to Phase 5 after Christmas.

### The outcome – small steps lead to great readers

We will continue to work with B for at least another three months in order to see if we can achieve a level 2 by the end of the year. It's a tall order, but we are optimistic that he will at least gain a level 2C at the end of this year. Although he is still working behind the expected level for his age, B is now beginning to learn and enjoying becoming a reader. The small steps in Bug Club have given the children who were falling behind the confidence to learn, to try out the strategies they have been taught, and to enjoy reading.

### Find out more

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