

REFLECTIVE READING ENQUIRY WALKTHROUGH

Oakdene Primary Academy

A strategic approach to the teaching of reading

The first, most overt feature of leadership at Oakdene is the determination that children will learn to read and read to learn. Teaching reading is the avowed core purpose of the school. School leaders take a highly professional, committed and personal approach to making this happen. They articulate the school's vision and its ambitions for children's reading and invest in the best teachers and teaching assistants. Together the Principal and English lead have built a cohesive team with shared values and consistent practice by exerting instructional leadership through demonstration, monitoring and dialogue. The team at Oakdene are uncompromising about the things that are important for their pupils. They recognise the vital importance of a secure grounding in phonics and provide the staffing, resources and structural framework for this to take place. They place a very strong emphasis on books, reading and writing, sticking to principles that the school owns. They give their staff the confidence to drive the reading curriculum throughout their teaching. Their results endorse their convictions.

The reading curriculum

There is a complete sense of deliberateness in the approach to the reading curriculum at Oakdene. Books have been carefully selected and refined over time, so children are immersed in the wonders of quality texts. They are the beating heart of every lesson. Transitions between year groups have been carefully considered so the curriculum is progressive, engaging and challenging at every level. The English lead has tapped into a network of local experts which enhances the curriculum through additional opportunities such as regular author visits, events and reading challenges. The English lead has a clear view of where the curriculum for reading sits within the wider school curriculum, so that each aspect complements and reinforces the other.

The reading curriculum in action

The children are immersed in reading from the moment they walk through the door. The meticulously curated curriculum begins in nursery where children quickly develop their oral language: speaking, listening and vocabulary. Skilled staff enhance pupils' vocabulary through a wide range of texts, experiences and good models. The learning environment was quite simply stunning! As pupils move through the Foundation Stage, they begin to develop their phonic knowledge and skills and are supported to apply these to reading and spelling through purposeful learning opportunities. It was delightful to observe children engaged in continuous provision which enhanced these fundamental skills in a meaningful way. In Key Stage 1, we observed the rigorous approach to the teaching of phonics. Teachers used a range of strategies to ensure that all the children participated actively, and that learning was enjoyable as well as productive. The phonic session observed was fast paced. Staff taught with passion whilst modelling how to use their knowledge and skills to read, spell and write. We also observed a 'Reading Workshop'. The carousel of activities ensured all children were engaged in reading tasks at an appropriate level which enabled the teacher to have quality time with a focused group. In Lower Key Stage 2, teachers spoke passionately about the ever-evolving curriculum. They

REFLECTIVE READING ENQUIRY WALKTHROUGH

Oakdene Primary Academy

were able to reflect on the impact text choices and 'memorable experiences' had on the motivation to read for pleasure. As we moved into Upper Key Stage 2, we observed how the broadening curriculum extends the range of reading and writing, progressing from simple texts that the children could read by themselves to a wider range of books and extracts. It was clear to see that children flourish whilst at Oakdene.

Assessment for Learning

Staff pay close attention to assessment of children as they learn to read to ensure that teaching is to match their capacity to learn and difficulties are to be identified when they first arise and subsequently rapidly overcome. The assessment of reading takes many forms. There is the assessment that takes place as part of teaching; we saw constant observation of children's progress through targeted questioning, collaborative discussions and written responses. Teachers gave specific feedback which moved the learning on. There is also the data analysis on a granular level that takes place which allows teachers and leaders to identify children who need additional support to keep up. Accelerated Reader and myON are also used consistently to support teachers in their assessment of reading.

Through the eyes of pupils

There was a real sense of the reading curriculum belonged to the children. Their voice is at the forefront of text choices, both for whole class reading sessions and core texts. The children are able to have their say from Reception where they vote on which book, they would like to read, all the way up to Year 6 where they help select books for the school libraries. Staff's expert knowledge of children's literature drives the children's abilities to talk about their favourite authors and when their next book is due to be released. The diligent librarians were able to talk extensively about which books are popular right now and how they support younger readers through book recommendations.

The reading environment

Everywhere we looked, we were intrigued by the offer to read. The school have developed libraries in any available space so that quality texts are always close to hand. Books have been hand-picked to reflect the reality of what it is like to live in Britain today. Year group key authors are displayed and referred to throughout lessons enabling children to make links. One of the most striking episodes we observed was a Y5 child draw upon prior learning from their Y1 key author to help justify their prediction in a poetry lesson.

The school oozes quality! The corridors, the shared spaces, the outdoor environment and every classroom we visited reflected the high expectations adults have of themselves and of the children in the school.