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## **PERSONAL READING AT BOURNE GRAMMAR SCHOOL**

We are very fortunate that over the last 12 years personal reading has become established as an important part of the curriculum at Bourne Grammar School. All students in Years 7, 8, 9 and 10 have timetabled promotion of reading lessons, and students in Year 11 and Key Stage 5 visit the Learning Resource Centre (LRC) with their English teachers whenever possible. 'Reading' is also set as part of the homework timetable.

As Head of the LRC and Promotion of Reading I lead the reading lessons in Year 7 and I work with members of staff who lead the lessons for other years. The students meet every fortnight for 50 minutes. During promotion of reading lessons various activities are undertaken to develop reading skills using different forms of fiction, non-fiction and research material. The activities explore ways in which students can respond imaginatively, using different strategies to engage with texts, and to structure this response by evaluating the purpose of the novel and the overall effect of the text on the reader. We endeavour to make our students enthusiastic, discriminating and responsive readers, appreciating what they read on a critical level.

Our lessons usually start with a discussion of books we have read - some have been enjoyed and others have not been so popular – but as long as we can give reasons for our opinion that's fine. Discussion is very important as we are often influenced in what we read by other people's recommendations.

Our discussion is followed by "Book in a Bag", an activity I am never allowed to forget. Each lesson I select five students to choose a bag from our special box. They can feel the thickness of the book but they have no idea of the title or author. It is the only time they have to persevere with a book and tell us about it the next lesson. It has been known for a boy to select a book with a pink cover or for a girl to have a book on football but nevertheless these books are taken home and reviewed, much to the amusement of the class. The book with the pink cover is often a well written story, enjoyed by both girls and boys, and this has led to discussion about the importance of book covers and their appeal to audiences.

Every month the LRC selects an "Author of the Month" and I introduce the writer and their works and encourage students to try different books. We also have a board to illustrate books we have enjoyed reading in addition to reading suggestions linked to various genres. A book group is held every fortnight, and visiting authors are an important feature of the school calendar. We participate in Carnegie Shadowing and the Lincolnshire Young People's Book Award, and celebrate World Book Day and National Poetry Day. During the year there is usually an activity that appeals to someone from every year.

One of the main features, however, of our promotion of reading is our annual Reading Challenge. Every student in Years 7 and 8 takes part in the Challenge and many students in other years also participate, along with members of staff and parents. This year over 80 parents have requested

Challenge booklets and are busy reading a wide selection of books. Students in Key Stage 4 and 5 are also encouraged to keep a reading diary which records their personal response to a book.

Every year I design a new Challenge linked to a set theme. This year the challenge is called

‘The A-Mazing Challenge’ and has a link to historical features and also different mazes. The Challenge is divided into four levels-bronze, silver, gold and gold plus- and to complete each level students have to read a selection of books and complete tasks or research on set topics. The Challenge demands that students read books on a variety of subjects and genre including books on different cultures, classic novels, biographies, diaries, historical novels, poetry, Carnegie winning books as well as free choice reading. Book lists giving reading suggestions are provided but books from home or libraries can be read as long as they are a challenge. The students have to write a very short outline of the books read or tasks completed but a member of staff chats to them about their reading before the Challenge booklet is signed.

Last year Years 7 and 8 read over 7,000 books, with boys and girls reading an equal amount. A presentation evening is held at the beginning of the Autumn term and each successful participant receives a personalised certificate and book token and their name is put forward for a grand draw prize. The prizes are provided from sponsorship money and always consist of book tokens and cash – it’s always good to have some money to spend on whatever you like!

The Reading Challenges are a time consuming but rewarding activity and they would not be as successful without the support of the school, parents and also our sponsors. I do recognise that not everyone enjoys reading but to see a student reach a level that has been a challenge to them is very rewarding for both the student and teacher, especially at the presentation event when they receive full recognition of their achievement in front of friends and family.

We are also involved in the “Rooted in Reading” scheme and staff, as well as students, are being encouraged to participate. Books are available in the staff room as well as the Sixth Form area of the LRC. Reading books are also placed in the dining room and form rooms, and all students are encouraged to carry a reading book with them in their bag.

Reading should be enjoyable for all and we try to make it fun, thus allowing each student to gain in confidence as a reader. Research shows that reading for enjoyment is more important for children’s educational success than their family’s socio-economic status. Being enthusiastic about reading and a frequent reader is a great advantage in all aspects of life, being a gateway to learning, personal and social skills, a development for the imagination, a way of helping us make sense of ourselves and the world around us and a wonderful means of escapism. The promotion of personal reading should not be linked just to the English Department in a school but should be part of a whole school reading community and I am very grateful to the our Headmaster, the Learning Management Team and staff from all departments at Bourne Grammar School who encourage reading throughout the school and support me in the many activities I organise.

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