

Conference Reviews

In November, we held two major conferences at St Matthew's. One on Reading for Pleasure and the other on the place of RE within the primary curriculum both have highlighted the importance of ambitious reading. We would like to share the key research.

Reading for Pleasure

BUILDING COMMUNITIES OF ENGAGED READERS READING FOR PLEASURE



TERESA CREMIN, MARILYN MOTTRAM,
FIONA M. COLLINS, SACHA POWELL
AND KIMBERLY SAFFORD



At the OU/UKLA Reading for Pleasure conference, **Teresa Cremin** reminded us of the significant evidence base which underpins the Reading for Pleasure philosophy.

Reading for Pleasure is a social justice issue. International evidence indicates it offers cognitive, social and emotional benefits. It helps children make connections with each other, their teachers, their families and the wider world.

While skill in reading is important, the will to read significantly underpins the skill. We need to build communities of readers who support and challenge each other.

RE within the Curriculum

“We are a challenge-seeking species”

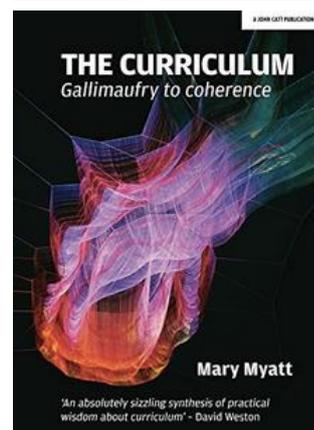
We were delighted to welcome **Mary Myatt**, whose book on the curriculum has informed our curriculum journey at St Matthew's. Mary made a powerful case for the importance of high challenge and low threat in RE, she made the case that all children should have access to the most demanding tasks in a supportive context. This is informed in particular by the research work of cognitive scientist Daniel Willingham, whose book “Why Don't Students Like School” has already informed our thinking at St Matthew's.



Elements of the curriculum

To make this a reality, the following elements matter within the curriculum:

- good subject knowledge, clearly presented
- opportunities for structured discussion
- assessment should be used wisely
- responsive teaching
- content is remembered long term
- texts and materials support the ambitious intent
- reading is prioritised



Reading high quality texts aloud

Mary's final point was underlined by the results of a recent research study into the potential impact of reading high quality texts aloud. The findings are published here:

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/eci>



Mary Myatt @MaryMyatt · Jun 13

'Simply reading challenging, complex novels aloud and at a fast pace in each lesson repositioned 'poorer readers' as 'good' readers, giving them a more engaged uninterrupted reading experience over a sustained period.'

onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/eci thanks for link

@stevewillshaw

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Implementation

Implementation of a high challenge, low threat curriculum needs to be based on key principles to:

- privilege thinking over task completion
- mastery
- beauty (high quality resources)

Visual resources

In RE, using resources from authentic sources of information increase the accuracy of subject content as well as the power and beauty of pictures and photos. Using the following websites as a first port of call can make an immediate difference:

The following websites are good for different religions:

- **Islam:** Museums without Frontiers <http://www.museumwnf.org/> and Khan Academy
- **Judaism:** The Jewish Museum <https://jewishmuseum.org.uk/>
- **Christianity:** The Visual Commentary on Scripture <https://thevcs.org/>

Big concepts and holding baskets

RE is concerned with big concepts which encourage deep thinking. Approaching these in a scholarly way helps children understand and link them together. Using etymology can both demystify concepts, introduce a greater level of scholarship and provide a 'holding basket' for a big idea. For example, teaching the meaning of carn (meat, flesh) in incarnation explains both the word and the concept.



The importance of story

Our brains privilege story and RE is rich in stories. Texts must be the 'beating heart' of a lesson.

We are back to the importance of ambitious reading.

Thank you to all who attended these conferences – over 350 delegates altogether.

Remember to sign up for our newsletter <https://researchschool.org.uk/stmatthews/news/newsletter/> and look out for more Research School training and conference news.