

More House School Library Loves Reading In All Its Forms

For eighty years, More House has helped bright boys who might struggle in mainstream schools to transform their futures and to realise their true potential. The largest school of its kind in Britain, More House offers a full range of specialist support for boys with specific learning and language-based difficulties, including Dyslexia, Developmental Language Disorders, Autistic Spectrum Disorder, Dyscalculia, ADHD and ADD, and Dyspraxia.

The majority of boys who come to More House have had very poor experiences in their previous schools, being told and believing that they will never achieve anything in life. They have low self-esteem, and the language processing difficulties that challenge them across all their learning means their experience of books and reading is incredibly negative.

Student participation in reading in any form is incredibly challenging with this cohort, and our goals may be quite different to other mainstream school libraries. The creation of the new library and everything the librarians have done, outlined below, has been with the end goal of encouraging a complete change of culture in the boys' participation in reading in all its forms.

After five years of fundraising, we formally opened a brand new library in October 2017, after decades of underfunding and sharing very basic library space with the music department! The librarians brief for creating their new space was for it to be a light, welcoming, friendly, exciting and interactive space, in the heart of the school to encourage all boys to come back to reading for pleasure and change their perceptions of what books mean to them. Ideas for new library layouts were on display during the build to encourage feedback of what the students would like to see, as well as a week by week photo diary of the new building as it came out of the ground. Our goal was to encourage student participation and ownership of the new library to come. The boys loved discussing furniture options and colour schemes with us, and eagerly looked forward to the next 'photo instalment'.

The librarians have spent the last 3 years on a dedicated project to radically update and re-catalogue the stock of 5000+ hard copy resources leading up to the arrival of the new library management system 'Reading Cloud' which was launched in January 2018. The goal was for boys to be able to successfully and easily search for all resources within the library, from school and home, giving them a sense of independence, ownership and personal empowerment in their reading abilities and study tasks. They had never had an OPAC system before but the Reading Cloud platform allowed us to create a user friendly online catalogue for them to enjoy.

Our goal in the layout of stock in the new library was to make it appealing and accessible to all of the boys with very clearly labelled curated collections. The majority of our pupils through their language processing difficulties find it incredibly difficult to browse information on rows of book spines, but respond well to highly visually presented information such as forward facing books, tilted shelves, bitesize small collections and colour coded subject and genre areas. We have had to be very creative and radical in the curating of our non fiction collection. As so many of our boys struggle with numbers, reading a dewey number to 3 decimal places at right angles on a shelf made previously accessing this collection incredibly challenging. We totally scrapped the Dewey decimal

system and created our own colour coded, simplified, topic based categories. The boys find this so much simpler to browse and borrow books, and some can even now attempt reshelving!

To encourage student participation, the updated stock now includes a wealth of different book formats. These include:

- Hi Lo spinners for younger and older readers
- A substantial graphics collection including classic graphics, non fiction graphics, how to draw and write your own graphic novels as well as super popular large manga series
- Choose Your Own Ending collections
- Short Stories
- Individual Harry Potter, Star Wars, and Doctor Who collections
- True History Stories to bridge the gap between fiction and non fiction for the reluctant fiction readers
- Careers and Study Guides Sections
- A substantial magazine supply covering study and leisure topics
- Spoof Newspapers for light relief
- CPD books for staff including text books for special needs teaching through to CPD related fiction books such as 'The Curious Incident Of The dog In the Nighttime'

Our current stock is now creatively displayed in a variety of spinners, window displays, zig zag shelf inserts, and is rotated regularly, all with the intention and goal of enticing our reluctant readers to have a go and love of reading in all its forms.

We have been incredibly lucky to have installed 2 interactive clevertouch screens which are both in use every day, showcasing our Reading Cloud platform, our Sora collections, current affairs such as BBC News, individual event websites such as World Book Day, and popular author websites. The boys gravitate towards these screens every break and lunchtime like bees around honey engaging in whatever is on offer.

We have had to take a different and more creative approach to our display boards and competitions compared to most mainstream school libraries. The text we use has to be as simple and minimal as possible, to encourage student participation; too many words simply put them off. We often invite them to participate in creating the displays by offering interactive fun ideas with their views, jokes, and ideas on themed post its to be added to the boards.

Following a soft launch last summer term, this academic year (2018/2019) we are fully up and running with Reading Cloud and the Friends of More House have committed to support the library by funding our annual Sora subscription as our limited annual budget would not be able to cover it. The new library is now firmly established as the hub of the school.

Due to our boys' language processing and working memory challenges, it is always very much 'back to basics' when launching something new like an interactive reading platform. Our autumn term was spent teaching small groups of boys in front of the interactive screens how to find, log in, and use the Reading Cloud. Boys were given house points for successfully logging in and we made it simple for them to participate by using their date of birth as their password.

In order to promote the new Reading Cloud throughout the school, and to parents, we ran a Book Review competition. This was no ordinary book competition. We created one that involved boys not only choosing and reading a book, but also finding the Reading Cloud online, logging in successfully, searching for their chosen resource, and then going through the steps of logging an online book review. For boys who find it difficult to even remember their usernames this sort of competition was a big challenge for them. However, despite the barriers they face in their learning, this Reading Cloud competition achieved our goal of being the most successful we've ever run with participation in excess of 100 book reviews. To put that in context, previous competitions have usually had under 10 entries! All qualifying entries were given an instant lucky dip prize with an overall prize for the best review. Some boys entered 5 or 6 times. This reinforced to us the attraction of anything 'IT' to the younger generation and how we could, through Sora, going forward encourage even more participation in library displays, competitions, and overall reading for pleasure.

In the same way as our Reading Cloud inductions, we introduced the boys to our Sora collections in small groups in front of the interactive screen from November 2018. We custom made our own Sora link from the home page of Reading Cloud, again to make access as simple as possible, and created custom made bookmarks with how to login to remind them of how to access the platform. It is an uphill struggle for the boys to remember information. Therefore constant revisiting of what Sora has to offer and how to access it is necessary.

We used library induction sessions on January 2019 inset days to staff to introduce the Sora platform, as our goal was for staff to become far more involved in using the library for accessing resources for their classes, both hard copy and eresources and also borrowing for their own reading. Our speech and language therapists love using the 'readalongs' in their small group literacy lessons and many of our English teachers now request specific eresources to support their teaching. They love that we can provide them not only with graphic and abridged hard copies of their set texts, but also ebook and audio book versions online. Some A level students get through their English literature without reading the full original text because of the variety of other 'versions' available to them in the library. Without these, their language processing issues would make it incredibly difficult for them to achieve the exam results they do.

In order to further encourage student participation, the library has created an opportunity for parents to visit during afternoon form time every Monday and many parents are now directly in contact with us to discuss their sons' reading, and in particular, what is available on Sora. This has achieved our goal of engaging the parents with the school library and creating a direct dialogue with them to improve their sons' reading experience. They love the variety of different collections that we have on our Sora platform, in particular the audio books, and many have said how their sons have fallen back in love with stories because of the audio books on Sora:

*'Thank you so much for the help you are giving ***** in setting him up with ebooks and the app, etc. I am unspeakably grateful. I don't know if I told you that in a recent reading assessment, ***** was given the result of a reading age of a 6/7 year old. I worry about his difficulty with reading more than I could ever say. So much of education and life is accessed through reading and it is a huge worry that he is not able to access his education through reading as other children do... Thank you SO much for what you are doing to get him set up. Massive, massive thanks.'*

We have always wanted to fully celebrate World Book Day, and in March this year we succeeded in doing this for the first time as interest in and enthusiasm for reading was returning to our boys. In the past they did not wish to participate in WBD, as they didn't identify themselves as readers. This time, years 4 to 8 were allowed to dress up as their favourite book character for the first time, and we had free WBD bookmarks in the library (most boys wanted 5 or 6 each!), it felt like a real school wide event. We again showcased 'Sora' on the interactive screens by running audio books during lunch breaks that week. This created so much fun, excitement and joy around reading. Some boys described it as '*the best day ever*'.

Looking ahead, we are convinced that creating a similar participation competition to our Christmas Reading Cloud Book Review one, but this time involving Sora will be super popular; a combination of promoting how to access the platform, with an instant mini reward, and an overall prize for maximum participation on what is on offer. We would like to do this by using the 'Me' tab and the 'achievement badges' and this is why it is so important for us to be able to access individual Sora reading data (not currently provided). If we could access this data, we could pursue and create more diverse competitions like this in the future, utilising inter form, inter year group, and inter house competition. We have so many creative ideas! We hope that through Sora investment and development our library will continue to go from strength to strength, using all our IT resources as the major incentive for student, parent and teacher participation.

The success and popularity of providing Sora at More House is clear from feedback from staff, boys and parents; 'more audio, more audio, more audio'. This is where our focus will be going forward in terms of creating future stock development, which of course will be very costly. Due to our budget restrictions we are investing so far only in OCOU titles in order to build a permanent online collection but it would be fantastic to also offer the most popular/recent titles in audio which are so often only available as MA.

A quote from our recent Ofsted inspection, in which the school was graded as 'outstanding' in all areas, talked about the new library and reading culture. This in itself is testimony of the new library's success as we have never before been included on an Ofsted report, let alone in such a positive light.

'Similarly, reading has a very high profile in school life. The well-stocked library is the hub of school where books and audio books are available. For some pupils, it is the first time they have discovered a joy of reading. Younger pupils revel in World Book Day and talk excitedly about the books they are currently reading. Older pupils recognise the importance of being able to read well in their future lives, and despite many having literacy difficulties, they develop a keen interest in reading literature in various genres.'

Sora is the highlight of our library, and the library is a highlight of the school. This is best illustrated on our Open Days when we always have the Sora platform on display on the big screens, to showcase our online resources to prospective parents and pupils. Feedback is always positive as the quote below demonstrates:

*'***** loves AudioBooks and a highlight of our visit was a trip to the library where the very helpful librarian showed us how that big interactive screen works when selecting an audiobook. I loved seeing the wide range of different books and magazines displayed for the boys, and we both appreciated how welcoming, comfortable and stimulating the library was.'*

We firmly believe that involvement in reading in all its forms, especially through harnessing the popularity of modern technology such as Sora, makes our pupils feel 'part of' rather than 'apart from' the library and transforms what was an individual's negative attitude into a whole school community positive reading culture. Our library is now busy with over 40 students every break and lunchtime. This success is not reflected in our usage figures either online or in hard copy, as so many boys browse books briefly during this 'down time'. There is a welcoming busy atmosphere of reading, studying, researching, and discussing books, never before seen at this school.

Future More House alumni will remember the creation of the new library and the year reading at More House was brought into the 21st century with the arrival of the Reading Cloud and Sora.

'The new library has provided me with the materials and place where I can continue to learn and inspire and achieve things that I couldn't before. Thank you More House School.'

Year 9 Pupil