



Maple Ridge School Book Trail

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Liz Taylor on setting up a book trail in a day special school

Liz Taylor, Assistant Area Schools Librarian with Hampshire School Library Service, got together with Pam Robinson, Teacher Library Coordinator at Basingstoke's Maple Ridge school, a day special school for children aged four to eleven, to launch a book trail to coincide with the School's Book Week. Geared closely to the needs and abilities of all 62 children, including pupils with moderate learning difficulties and some with autism, the aim was to promote enjoyment of books and access to libraries. **Liz Taylor** explains.<!--break-->

The forward planning for this book event started towards the end of the Summer Term when I arranged an appointment to visit Maple Ridge school to meet the Teacher Library Coordinator, Liz Boulton, to view the types of resources which were already successfully in use, and to discuss how the School Library Service could best serve the needs of the school. An outcome of the discussion was that it was felt that many of the pupils at the school did not have regular access to the public library. This was partly due to the fact that many children travel long distances to the school and by the time they get home a further trip to the local library may be difficult to fit in.

I then suggested that the children could be offered the chance to participate in an in-house book trail with the support of the School Library Service and the County Library and Information Service. There was an enthusiastic response to this idea and it was agreed that I should visit the school again to meet the new teacher in charge of the library, Pam Robinson, at the beginning of the Autumn Term to progress it. Maple Ridge had already made some initial plans for a Book Week at the end of October and it was felt a book trail would fit in very well with activities already planned.

Book trail packages

Meanwhile I viewed various book trail packages available from the County Library and Information Service and collected samples to show the school. Children's Specialists Linda Evans at Basingstoke Library and Nesta Perkins at Chineham Library were contacted to find out how they could help.

At the first meeting with Pam at the start of the Autumn Term it was decided to use the eye-catching Great Balloon Chase Book Trail materials, featuring a colourful hot air balloon. It was agreed that each child would be given a Great Balloon Chase 'passport' and there would be six achievable challenges for each child to complete in order to earn a certificate. For every task achieved the children would be given a balloon sticker to put in their passport. The aim would be to collect six stickers. This would obviate the need for the children to have to write much on their passports, which would be difficult for some of them.

Challenges

After discussion it was decided that the challenges for Year R to Year 3 (5-8 year olds) would be as follows:

* Listen to a story with the School Library Service Librarian.

- * Visit the Public Library (either Chineham or Basingstoke).
- * Look at a pop-up or other novelty book.
- * Look at a picture book.
- * Look at a nursery rhyme or poetry book.
- * Listen to a book/cassette pack.

For these Key Stage 1 children the phrase 'look at a book?' was felt to be more appropriate than 'read a book?' as some of the children would only just be starting to read. For the very youngest children in Class 1 the visit to the Public Library would be replaced with a visit to the School Library as all these children were still very new to the school.

The challenges agreed for Year 4 to Year 6 (8-11 year olds) were:

- * Listen to a story with the School Library Service Librarian.
- * Visit the Public Library (either Chineham or Basingstoke).
- * Read a picture book.
- * Read a poetry book.
- * Read a finding out book.
- * Listen to a book/cassette pack.

I took the advice of the school that it would be best if all the children could aim to complete the Great Balloon Chase challenges during the Book Week. This was because of the need for these children to have tightly focused activities; a book trail lasting several weeks would probably lose direction and impetus.

Consultation then took place with the County Library Children's Specialists to arrange class visits to either Basingstoke or Chineham Libraries. A regular slot was already in place at Basingstoke for one of the classes but other times had to be arranged for the class visits to fit in with availability of the School's minibus. It proved difficult to plan all these visits to fit in with the Book Week and in the end one class had to be timetabled to come to the library a week early.

The final planning meeting involved consulting with Pam about which books would be used for the storytime sessions in school to ensure they would be appropriate to the needs of each class. A number of carefully preselected books were taken along which I felt might be suitable. Pam advised using just one book per class for the storytime and suggested keeping the session to 15 minutes at the most to reflect the attention span of the children. Together we then chose a book to use with each class and Pam said she would work with the other teachers in the school to come up with some activities to tie in with the stories.

Brightly coloured posters featuring a hot air balloon were provided for the school to display in advance of the Book Week along with sufficient Great Balloon Chase Passports and balloon stickers for each class. The School Library Service also loaned a large number of novelty books, picture books, information books and book/cassette packs to support the event, which could be borrowed by the children in addition to the collection of resources already available in Maple Ridge's own library.

Launching the book trail

On the first day of Book Week I went to the school's Assembly to launch the Book Trail. I briefly explained to the pupils what they would be doing and showed them the Passports and stickers they would be collecting. The children seemed very interested and some asked questions or made comments. It turned out to have been useful that one of the

classes had already had their visit to the public library the previous week as some of the children mentioned the trip and the teacher in charge of the class said how much they had enjoyed it.

After Assembly, Liz visited each class, read them the agreed story and then stayed in some of the classes to talk to the children and watch them doing the activities pre-prepared by the school to link in with the stories told. She also helped them fill in their names or draw a picture of themselves on their individual passports.

Library visit

At the visits to the Public Libraries the children were shown around and given the opportunity to borrow a book on a group ticket. They really enjoyed doing this, especially those who had never borrowed a book from a public library before. They also had storytime with the Children's Librarians.

As well as being fun, these visits to the local libraries were seen as important for social inclusion and developing the children's personal and social skills.

During the Book Week the children engaged in a number of book related activities to enhance the Book Trail. Activities devised by the school to tie in with the storytime sessions included kite making, making collages, colouring pictures, measuring the weather and discussion. Each class teacher was responsible for dealing with the Great Balloon Chase Passports and organising the collection of the balloon stickers to go in them. A successful idea introduced by the school was the pairing up of some of the youngest children with the older ones to share a book.

At the end of the week the Book Trail was considered to have been great fun with every child completing the challenges and receiving colourful Great Balloon Chase Certificates to take home to show their families. Some of the posters created during book week were displayed at Chineham Library and visits to the local libraries continued for some of the classes. Equally important, it was a great opportunity for joint working between the Public and School Library Services to enable children who otherwise would not have been involved in a Reading Challenge to take part.

Stories chosen for the class story times

CLASS 1 (Year R/1; 5/6 yr olds)

Who's That Scratching at My Door?, Amanda Leslie, Little Tiger Press (1 85430 713 4, £4.99 pbk)

This was chosen because of the bold, colourful pictures and the opportunity for the children to guess which animal would be at the door next before turning a flap. The very simple story was also suitable for joining in with by making animal sounds.

CLASS 2 (Year 1/2; 6/7 yr olds)

The Blue Balloon, Mick Inkpen, Hodder (0 340 75738 8, £5.99 pbk)

This title was selected to tie in with the theme of the Book Trail and because it was felt that this class, having only been in school about a year, would enjoy hearing a story they had already come across. The children would be able to predict what would happen next and enjoy the novelty fold-outs.

CLASS 3 (Year 3; 7/8 yr olds)

Platypus and the Lucky Day, Chris Riddell, Puffin (0 14 056778 X, £4.99 pbk)

Chosen for the clear, amusing illustrations accompanied by a simple, yet humorous, story in an easy to read and familiar font.

CLASS 4 (Year 4; 8/9 yr olds)

Lost on the Beach, Ian Beck, Scholastic (0 439 97905 6, £5.99 pbk)

A story the children could identify with and talk about on the theme of getting lost but managing to find your way back safely.

CLASS 5 (Year 5; 9/10)

Squeaky Clean, Simon Puttock and Mary McQuillan, Red Fox (0 09 941349 3, £4.99 pbk)

A hilarious story with funny, appealing vocabulary which it was felt the older children would find amusing and relate to.

CLASS 6 (Year 6;10/11)

A Perfect Day For It, Jan Fearnley, Egmont (0 434 80786 9, £9.99 hbk, 1 4052 0176 2, £4.99 pbk)

A longer book than the others which the older children could cope with allowing the opportunity to join in with the predictable language.

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