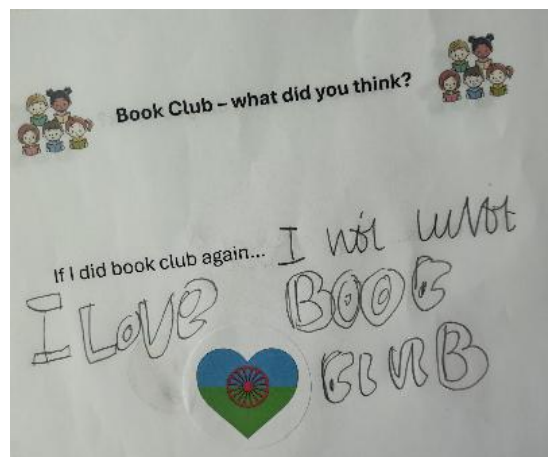


Traveller Education Support: Book Club Update

Following recent cultural competency training, Loxwood Primary School has hosted the second Traveller Education Support (TES) Book Club in West Sussex. This project continues from the initial sessions run at Barns Green Primary, earlier this year.

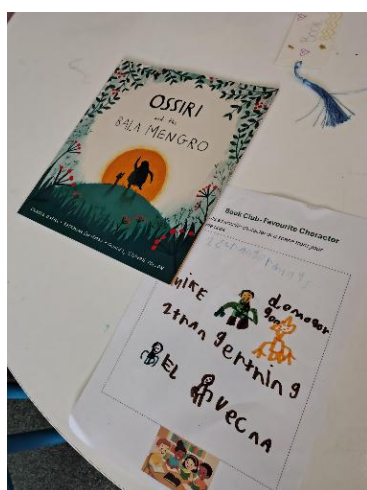
TES Book Club is carefully designed to support children from the Traveller community to foster a love of reading. It offers a safe, inclusive space where children can enjoy stories together, build confidence, and see their identities positively reflected.

The small group at Loxwood consisted of five Year 2 pupils, all from the Traveller community. During the first session, there was a clear sense of surprise among the children as they realised, they would be working together as a distinct group. For some, this was the first time they had shared their background and had been open about their heritage in school.



One child, in particular, expressed mixed feelings during the initial session. While he recognised that he was from the Travelling community, he explained that he did not want the rest of his class to know this. This honest and brave admission highlighted the sensitivities that some children carry around identity, belonging, and how they may be perceived by others.

The sessions... The first session focused on building trust, enjoyment of stories, and a strong sense of safety within the group. Through carefully chosen books and relaxed discussion, the children were encouraged to share ideas and experiences at their own pace. TES ensured the atmosphere was inclusive, gentle and affirming, with each session also including a craft activity to further engage the children.



By the time the second session took place, a noticeable shift in confidence and self-expression had occurred. During a creative activity, the same child who had previously felt hesitant created a bookmark decorated with the words **"Gypsy King."** He chose to take it proudly back to his classroom.

Staff feedback... Teachers reflected very positively after the first session, commenting on the early impact they could already see. The Deputy Head, Daisy Price, shared:

"The child who was reluctant to share his ethnicity initially left school very animated and was happily talking to his mum about it afterwards, which felt like a really positive sign."

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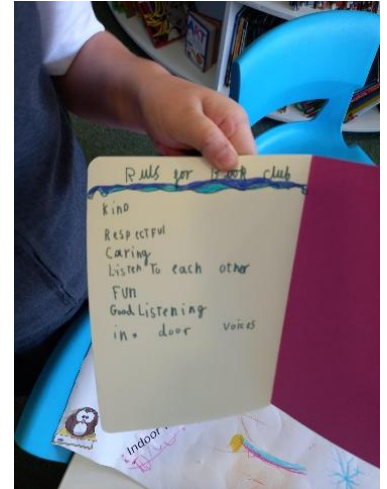
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"The girls were absolutely buzzing- excited, confident, and engaged in a way we honestly haven't seen before. They were so proud of what they'd learned that they spent the rest of the afternoon enthusiastically 'teaching' the teachers new words!"

It was a real joy to see their confidence and sense of belonging grow so quickly, and it's a huge credit to the way the session was planned and delivered. Thank you for creating such a positive, inclusive space — it has clearly made a big impact already."

Progress was also evident in the children's reading confidence. During the first session, only a couple of pupils felt comfortable reading aloud to the group. By the final session, every child confidently read aloud, demonstrating clear growth in self-esteem, trust and engagement.

Thanks to the charity **Give A Book**, each child was gifted their own copy of *Ossiri and the Bala Mengro* by Richard O'Neill, allowing them to take home a story that reflects Traveller heritage and culture: [Richard O'Neill reading Ossiri and the Bala Mengro](#)



An additional and valuable element of the project was support from a 15-year-old Traveller girl who had recently returned to secondary school in Year 11. As part of her timetable, she began a work experience placement at Loxwood Primary School. She initially supported the Book Club sessions as a Teaching Assistant, before also working in the Reception class.

Although keen to work in a school setting, she was initially nervous about how the sessions would run. However, by the end of the TES Book Club she had grown in confidence and asked if she could increase her placement, attending school for a day and a half each week. She has since completed an application to start college in September.

The school and staff were extremely supportive throughout, and this positive experience has had a clear and meaningful impact on her confidence, aspirations, and sense of belonging.

The Book Club concluded with **a special class assembly**, where TES staff read to the year group and celebrated the children's participation by presenting certificates in front of their peers and teachers. The assembly provided a meaningful celebration of the children's achievements and clearly demonstrated the shift in pride and confidence that had developed over the course of the sessions.

Traveller Education Support Book Club has already shown the powerful impact of targeted, culturally responsive support. Through stories, creativity and nurturing relationships, the initiative has **helped children grow not only as readers, but as confident individuals** who feel seen, valued and proud of who they are.

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