

Love it!

Nurseries and schools are building a love of reading with Lovemybooks, says co-founder *Sue McGonigle*

Launched in July 2015, www.lovemybooks.co.uk is a free website for parents of young children. It is packed with practical ideas and resources for creative story play linked to carefully selected picture books. The aim is to help parents share and enjoy books confidently with their children, fostering a love of reading. Many early years settings and schools will also find the resources invaluable for sharing with children and for developing links with parents.

CREATORS AND PATRONS

As literacy specialists, the creators of Lovemybooks have drawn on our extensive experience of leading a national centre for primary literacy and learning, developing transformational reading projects and working

closely with parents, teachers, children, authors, publishers, the DfE and the media to develop a creative and accessible resource.

Lovemybooks has the support of patrons from the world of children's literature and education: Michael Rosen, Chris Riddell, David Almond, SF Said, Mini Grey, Jessica Souhami, Marilyn Brocklehurst, Dr Julian Grenier and Professor Myra Barrs.

ADDRESSING A NEED

Research has shown the positive impact that parents can have on children in terms of their interest in books and reading, and the impact of reading for pleasure on children's cognitive development, future success and well-being (see references).

Our experience of working with parents has shown us that they often

CASE STUDY

An increasing number of schools and settings are recommending Lovemybooks to parents, introducing the website at induction meetings or during home visits. Some schools are going further, such as Hill Mead School in Lambeth, south London, which has built Lovemybooks into its reading support programme.

Deputy head Becky Lawrence says, 'Lovemybooks is special because the resources and ideas have been developed for parents. We have relaunched our parent reading cafés as Lovemybooks Cafés to promote reading at home as fun and creative. This has transformed them, parents

are so engaged, they recognise Lovemybooks is a resource made especially for them.'

I visited Hill Mead's first

café for Year One parents and children. It was really exciting, the room was buzzing with so many parents attending. Staff introduced the Lovemybooks website to parents who then had a chance to browse the site on iPads. Responses were very positive: 'It's really easy to navigate and useful with lots of ideas. I am going to have another look when I get home.'

Using our ideas for *Beegu* by Alexis Deacon, one of the teachers demonstrated how to share a book with a child; reading it aloud and talking about how the characters might feel.

Children joined their parents for the second part of the session, making mini books, masks and puppets together. One child said, 'I made a book with mummy, she did good drawing.'

Lovemybooks Cafés have now become a regular feature at Hill Mead for parents and children from nursery to Year 2.



Hill Mead parents browse the Lovemybooks website



MORE INFORMATION

- Lovemybooks: Go to www.lovemybooks.co.uk or email info@lovemybooks.co.uk. Subscribe to the newsletter at <http://bit.ly/1PPWn7> or follow at @lovemybooksUK and www.facebook.com/lovemybooksuk

REFERENCES

- Knowland V and Formby S (2016) *Early Literacy Practices at Home in 2015*. National Literacy Trust
- Sullivan A and Brown M (2013) *Social inequalities in cognitive scores at age 16: The role of reading*. UoL
- Booktrust (2016) *Time to Read*
- OECD (2002) *Reading for Change*
- O'Sullivan O and McGonigle S (2010) *Transforming Readers*. The UK Literacy Association

underestimate the impact of their role in supporting their children with reading, and welcome advice on choosing books and how to share them.

Our research for the Power of Reading project (UK Literacy Association, 2010) has also shown the importance of capturing children's imagination and making links with children's play so they feel that they are 'stepping into a story'.

Lovemybooks co-founder Olivia O'Sullivan explained this concept to a group of teachers and students at The University of East London, 'For children, reading needs to be an active pleasure, it isn't just about saying the



Sharing *TRAIN!* by Judi Abott (left) and



words on the page. It is important to unlock the pleasure of reading, and get children to see you can play inside the book, that the book is saying something interesting, you've got a relationship with the story and the characters. This is what Lovemybooks is all about.'

ON OFFER

The website includes more than 150 activity pages based on carefully chosen picture books; both old favourites such as *Owl Babies* by Martin Waddell and recently published books such as *How to Hide a Lion* by Helen Stephens. You can search for books and ideas by



bringing the story to life with activities

age group (0-3, 3-5, 5-7 and 6+) or by theme. Topics include space and aliens, dinosaurs, toys and animals.

For each book we have created an activity page with an introduction, advice on how to share the story and activity ideas. The emphasis is on play and having fun with the story. Online resources and linked videos are also included.

Another feature of the website is a 'make and do' section with instructions for making simple puppets and folded books. There are Our Top Ten lists of new books, apps, bedtime stories and more. General information and advice for parents on 'becoming a reader' and 'reading with your child' is also included.

Early years and Key Stage 1 teachers and students will find lots of interest in the themed book selections, activities, ideas and resources. Schools and settings looking for innovative ways to promote and support reading for pleasure, develop home-school reading and partnerships with parents are also likely to find the website valuable. One teacher commented, 'This website is such a great idea, why hasn't it been done before?'

HUGE INTEREST

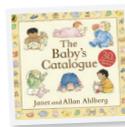
Lovemybooks is attracting huge interest from parents, the children's book world, schools, early years settings, teachers and students. Our reach is growing both nationally and internationally with nearly 30,000 visitors to our website in our first year and more than 1,450 followers on Twitter. We have a monthly newsletter with regular updates for subscribers.

Building on this success, we are adding to the site all the time with new books, activity pages and other features. Our latest theme is 'Our World', with stories about the environment, weather and different places. We are also developing an area for schools and settings with ideas for using the site with parents.

Do visit Lovemybooks. We would love to hear what you think about the website and the ways you use it in your schools and settings and with parents and children. ■

Sue McGonigle, a lecturer in primary education at UCL Institute of Education, created Lovemybooks with Sue Ellis and Olivia O'Sullivan. They were formerly the senior education team at the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education and are now university educators and independent consultants.

Lovemybooks' top 10 babies' books



The Baby's Catalogue

By Janet and Allan Ahlberg

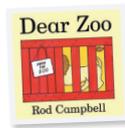
A classic treasury of the world of babies, available as a paperback or board book.



Brown Bear, Brown Bear, Who Do You See?

By Bill Martin Jr and Eric Carle

This classic picture book is rhyming, rhythmic and memorable. It's about colours and animals and builds up slowly with a satisfying reverse pattern at the end.



Dear Zoo

By Rod Campbell

An interactive, open-the-flaps book about receiving surprise presents from the zoo. Each one has to be unwrapped and then sent back until the most perfect present of all arrives.



It's a Little Baby

By Julia Donaldson and Rebecca Cobb

A new book with an interactive rhyme to say or sing, containing flaps and actions for joining in.



Mine! (Bear and Hare series)

By Emily Gravett

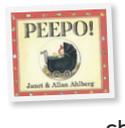
Bear and Hare went for a walk and found lots of interesting things along the way. "Mine!" said Hare. But Bear didn't care until Hare found honey and the bees gave chase!



My Very First Mother Goose

By Iona Opie and Rosemary Wells

A magical compendium of classic nursery rhymes collected by renowned folklorist Iona Opie and illustrated by the irrepressible watercolourist, Rosemary Wells.



PEEPO!

By Janet and Allan Ahlberg

With a wonderful rhyming refrain and peep holes on every page, this book is great fun. Young children can join in with the cry of 'Peepo!'



Ten Little Fingers and Ten Little Toes

By Mem Fox and Helen Oxenbury

In this book we meet babies born all over the world and discover that although their skin colour may vary and they are born in very different places, they have a lot in common.



The Very Hungry Caterpillar

By Eric Carle

A firm favourite of generations past present, and no doubt future, this book is a must-read for babies and young children. It's about food, the lifecycle of butterflies, days of the week, counting and fun.



Wow! said the Owl

By Tim Hopgood

When little owl stays awake one night he is amazed by the beautiful colours around him, but he discovers the starlit night-time sky is most beautiful of all.