



# FLORA NEWS



## Head's Blog

“There’s more to life than books you know, but not much more” - Smiths fans will recognise Morrissey’s line from ‘Handsome Devil’. He was absolutely right. According to research by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, reading for pleasure is a strong factor in determining future social mobility. It was also found to be the most important indicator of the future success of the child. Crucially, the research distinguished between reading for its own sake and reading as a result of external persuasion or for a specific purpose. Recent PISA data shows that reading for enjoyment is associated with reading proficiency: a crucial difference between students who perform well in the PISA reading assessment and those who perform poorly lies in whether they read daily for enjoyment, rather than in how much time they spend reading. On average, students who read daily for enjoyment score the equivalent of one-and-a-half years of schooling better than those who do not.

All of this suggests that young people who read for pleasure are predisposed, not only to reading but to learning in general - which would probably explain the increased social mobility findings.

The message is clear: we need to encourage young people to read for pleasure. But this is easier said than done. Statistics show a decline in the number of school students who read for pleasure. It is an ever-present challenge for parents and teachers to come up with reading materials that are interesting and relevant for young people.

I was more disturbed by the report about the books that cause mental illness. At first I thought it was a double-bluff to get children reading – nothing makes people want to read something more than banning it – but, a headteacher in Gloucester has urged pupils not to read Harry Potter claiming sadly it causes mental illness. The head also said other fantasy titles such as Lord of the Rings, The Hunger Games and Terry Pratchett books encourage 'difficult behaviour'. He told parents to steer clear of JK Rowling's 'frightening' books and that they should read classics like Dickens, Keats, Shelley and Shakespeare.

This is a preposterous notion: even a smattering of Dickens’ prose or Shakespeare’s drama would give us enough violence, gore and dark psychosis to make Katniss shiver. What Dickens, Shakespeare, Rowling and Pratchett have in common is that they can all tell damn good stories and that is what gets us all –children and adults – reading. And, furthermore, reading is what will, above all, develop children’s literacy skills.

So, I can just about put up with the Department for Education telling me that I must never end a sentence with an exclamation mark if I haven’t used ‘What’ or ‘How’ to begin it but I certainly won’t contemplate banning books that children love to read! (See what I just did, Mr Gibb?)





**What an achievement!**

Lila, Louise and Anshu completed the 5K run in 35 minutes and raised a grand total of £1,086 for Great Ormond Street Hospital! They are very grateful to everyone who donated.

(Anshu hurt her knee in training so ended up on her scooter, but you're allowed to complete the course in any way you wish - which makes it lots of fun)!

Well done girls, everyone at Flora Gardens is very proud of you for supporting this fantastic cause.

**Please vote for our friends at Stride**

Stride ran a fantastic business and enterprise course for our Year 6 this year, sponsored by The Duchess of Cambridge pub - your children will have shopped at the Enterprise Fair at the end of the course. We're delighted to announce that Stride will be running the course again next year, so your children will benefit, and it's absolutely free! They've entered Richard Branson's Virgin Voom 2016 enterprise competition and now have to do a Perfect Pitch of their own. We'd really like to support them, so please watch their pitch and vote for them if you like it. The deadline for voting is 23<sup>rd</sup> May. Thank you!

<https://www.vmbvroom.com/pitches/stride>

Carpe diem

**Come and see a musical spectacular!**

Wigmore Hall have been working with our Early Years classes this term on a project called '**Chamber Tots**'. Miss Owolabi and Miss Nightingale would like to invite Nursery and Reception parents to a workshop and celebration of the children's learning. This will take place on **Monday 23rd May**. The **Nursery** session will be **9am-10am** in the Nursery **classroom**. The **Reception** session will take place **2pm-3pm** in the **hall**.

**End of Topic Events**

Next week some classes will be hosting a culminating event. Parents will be invited to come and enjoy a fulfilled afternoon, focused on the topic the class has been learning about this half term. There are some fantastic ideas flying around – Y1 will be inviting parents in to explore our beautiful wildlife garden and share what they have learnt about their topic 'plants' and Y3 will be sharing what they have learnt about healthy eating during their topic 'taking care of me'. Your child's class teacher will be writing to you with more information about these events.

★ **Superstars!** ★

- Nursery – Haadiya**
- Reception – Sabrin**
- Year 1 – Samira**
- Year 2 – Whole class!**
- Year 3 – Tayon**
- Year 4A – Alesha**
- Year 4S – Hopi**
- Year 5F – Lila**
- Year 5G – Yusra**
- Year 6 – Safaa**

**Well done!**