



Bishop's Hatfield Girls' School

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Dear Parents / Carers,

Since September, our pupils in Key Stage 3 have been taking part in our new Form Time Reading sessions. These sessions take place during form time on a Monday and a Friday and the students are read aloud to by their Form Tutor, the Head of English and members of the Senior Leadership Team. The aim of these sessions is to promote literacy and a love of reading amongst our pupils. Children are sometimes reluctant to read independently because they are not fluent decoders however being read to has many intellectual advantages including vocabulary, conceptual understanding and cultural capital.

In our research for this initiative we discovered the following concerning national statistics:

- While 1 in 3 (34.9%) children and young people from White backgrounds say they struggle to see themselves in what they read, this increases to nearly 1 in 2 (45.2%) children and young people from Black ethnic backgrounds.
- More than 2 in 5 (42.5%) of those receiving free school meals (FSMs) report finding it difficult to see themselves in books.

(Picton, I and Clark, C. 2022. National Literacy Trust)

This prompted us to select books that explore the many diverse cultures we have in our school and provide an opportunity for the children to see aspects of a world that is different from their own.

'Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience.'

Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop

A team of staff members including Mrs M Jackson (Assistant Headteacher), Dr A Bune (Literacy Coordinator), Ms S Herlock (Head of English) and Miss S Maisiey (Equality and Diversity Lead) set out with a list of recommended books from the "Lit in Colour" collection by Penguin House and read a large number of the books over the Summer term. We eventually whittled the list down to six books which we believed were the best fit for each Year group. All tutors were given a copy of the book to read over the Summer holidays and a "Teacher's guide" to support them in their understanding and delivery of the text. All tutors were also provided training at the start of the academic year.

The books are as follows:

"Pupils flourish and support each other to succeed"

Year 7:



Year 8:



Year 9:



All of these books are written for the appropriate age group. They do at times include some challenging and controversial themes, and occasionally language that may be upsetting. The themes in the Year 9 texts cover issues around race and gender discrimination and a racial slur is used in one text that we recognise is offensive. We want to reassure you that such language is dealt with within the context of each book and we feel that in each case the texts provide our pupils with important insights and opportunities to reflect on their own and other people's experiences. As stated above, the books are published with a young readership in mind.

Now that it has been running for nearly a term, students are going to be asked for their feedback on this initiative. If you could take the opportunity to talk to your child about the book they have been reading and their views on how the reading sessions are going, we would also really appreciate your feedback.

You can complete the following Google Form here: <https://forms.gle/5N9okY382QDP161r5>

If you have any questions about any of the texts, please also feel free to contact us.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs M Jackson
Assistant Headteacher

Mrs S Herlock
Head of English

Dr A Bune
Literacy Coordinator

Miss S Maisey
Equality & Diversity Lead