



A rosy future – thanks to Reading Recovery and *Every Child A Reader*



Alwin arrived in his nursery class in November 2003 from India, where he had been living with his grandmother. He had no English and was very shy and quiet. His parents spoke little English and the home language was the local dialect of Malayalam.

Whilst Alwin was in the nursery great emphasis was placed on language. He benefited from this and began to understand much of what was said to him. He acquired a few words and phrases such as “Yes please” and “Go out.”

His spoken language did not develop much beyond this, however, even though he had a great deal of group and individual support. He relied very much on facial expressions and gestures to communicate his needs.

Alwin’s language skills developed little during his time in his next (Reception) class as he continued to rely on non-verbal means of communication. He also struggled to make any sort of start with reading and writing.

Luckily for Alwin, his school was able to receive support from *Every Child a Reader* to implement Reading Recovery for their lowest-achieving children. When he transferred to Year 1 Alwin was assessed for the Reading Recovery programme. His results were extremely low. He could not identify any letters or read any words. He could just write his name in capital letters and otherwise only form the letter ‘S’. He knew where to begin reading and that print is read from top to bottom. Alwin was not communicating in English and it was difficult to know how much he understood. He never spoke spontaneously at all.

After about twelve weeks on the programme Alwin began to show signs that he was starting to make rapid progress in reading, writing and speaking. His confidence had grown. He began wanting to read his new book as soon as he saw it, and without talking about the story first with his teacher. He would say, “I can read that!” He still needed help with novel words, language structure and the message of the story but he was quickly becoming independent in working out unknown words in reading and writing. He also began relating his own life experiences, particularly in India, to the stories that he was enjoying.

He could tell his teacher about the forest and wild animals in India whilst reading about Baby Bear who got lost in a forest. He was also building up a good bank of words that he could spell correctly and his writing was beginning to flow.

He has gradually become able to check that what he reads makes sense. If it doesn't, he will re-read the sentence and correct his own errors using meaning, structure and visual clues.

Everyone in school has noticed the change in Alwin. He speaks to staff when he meets them, confidently saying, "Good morning, Miss." He is beginning to structure his spoken language into clear sentences and he likes to chat with teachers on the playground. Now he has enough self confidence not to worry if what he says is sometimes not quite right.



In the classroom Alwin is accessing the rest of the curriculum and is surprising his teacher with his rapid progress in written and spoken English. Alwin is now reading quite difficult books with good understanding and is predicted to be reading at or above the level of the average children in his class by the end of his Reading Recovery programme. He says he loves reading and it is quite remarkable that he has achieved so much in such a short time. His parents are thrilled with his progress.

Reading Recovery changes futures. Alwin's story, though remarkable, is not unique. After an average of 37 hours on one-to-one teaching, more than eighty four per cent of children who receive the programme attain literacy levels expected for their age. Before Reading Recovery these children were expected to continue to struggle and fall further and further behind. Their futures could so easily have been bleak, with constant and continued additional support, as the gap of achievement between them and their peers grew wider year-by-year.

The future for Alwin is a rosy one, thanks to Reading Recovery and *Every Child A Reader*. He will soon end his series of lessons. He is now a happy and confident member of his class and has the skills to make his school life a success.