



ONE2ONE

Reading Matters

Three years ago Matthew Imrie left South Africa to expand his career horizons. Today, he is the driving force behind an imaginative reading group at Thamesmead Library where young people learn that reading can be a lot of fun. Themed workshops, interactive events and author visits are all part of Matthew's plans to help bring books to life.

Just 6 months after joining Bexley Council, Matthew launched the Thamesmead Reading Group in September 2003. It was a low-key start with only four girls turning up to the first meeting. However, his commitment to building up a rapport with them has seen the group grow and now there

are more than 40 names on the mailing list. From the very start, Matthew was determined to avoid the 'lone ranger' affect – an approach that has proved highly successful. He says "Too often adults set something up for young people and then never stick around to see it through. I have learned that it is absolutely vital that you are not some remote figure in the background. You must work with the young people and to deliver what you say you will."

Every month some twenty teenagers turn out to discuss, debate and enjoy topics ranging from Ancient Egyptian Mummies and pirates to chocolate eating and Harry Potter. These subjects are brought to life with stories,

activities and guest speakers. Matthew believes that this dynamic approach helps teenagers build up a reading culture and to develop a love of books. "Actually getting young people into the library for something other than the computers is the first challenge. Once through the doors they soon learn that a library is a safe and stable environment where they can be listened to and where they can ask questions."

Matthew's enthusiasm and creative ideas are helping break down the standard image of a library. The Teenage Reading Group enjoys lively and noisy discussions with no one saying 'quiet please'.

FACTFILE

- The Teenage Reading Group at Thamesmead Library is funded by Bexley's Areas of Opportunity programme.
- The Group meets on the last Tuesday of every month in the Junior Library from 5.30pm to 6.30pm
- It is open to anyone between the ages of 11 and 16 (any enthusiastic reader either side of this age group will not be turned away.)
- To book your place at the next event, please call in at the library to pick up a ticket or telephone 0208 310 9944.
- All events held at the library are free.

Coming Soon

- Exhibition and stories about Chinese Lion Dancing
- Visit from author Paul Geraghty 'Telling a story in pictures - digital photography'
- John Harris shares his Halloween scary stories