EVALUATION

Reading Schools

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EVALUATION OF READING SCHOOLS

01 INTRODUCTION

About this report

This is an evaluation report of Scottish Book Trust's Reading Schools pilot programme during 2020/21. It explores how the programme is delivered and the outcomes achieved, as perceived by school staff and stakeholders.

About Reading Schools

Reading Schools was first developed in 2019. It is an accreditation programme that aims to help schools build and sustain a reading culture. In total, the programme has been taken up by 101 schools across seven local authority areas during the two pilot phases that took place in the 2019/20 and 2020/21 school sessions.

The programme began with a pilot, which was delivered in 39 schools during 2019/20. The pilot was delivered across the Forth Valley and West Lothian Regional Improvement Collaborative (RIC), which includes Clackmannanshire, Stirling, Falkirk and West Lothian local authorities.

In 2020/21, the pilot programme was expanded to include all schools in Forth valley and West Lothian and 30 schools across the Tayside Regional Improvement Collaborative, which includes Angus, Dundee City and Perth and Kinross local authorities.

The programme has been delivered in partnership with the Regional Improvement Collaboratives. Each area is led by a working group which includes partners from the RIC, the local authority, the library service, Education Scotland and Scottish Book Trust.

Schools signing up to the programme are supported to engage through workshops and professional learning sessions, delivered by Scottish Book Trust. Each school then submits an action plan, outlining its current practice and plans for development. The plans are informed by the Reading Schools framework.

Schools can then submit their completed evidence plan to Scottish Book Trust for accreditation. Schools taking part in the first pilot were given a deadline to submit their evidence in order to inform programme development. However, firm deadlines have not been used in subsequent years to give schools the flexibility to engage meaningfully in the way that best suits their setting.

During the 2020/21 academic year, Scottish Book Trust received completed action plans from **79** schools, up to June 2021. Subsequently, 24 schools submitted evidence for accreditation and **19** schools were accredited.

14 Core   **3 Silver**   **2 Gold**

Schools involved during 2020/21 have been encouraged to submit evidence for accreditation by the end of November 2021, and it is likely that more schools involved in this pilot will become accredited.
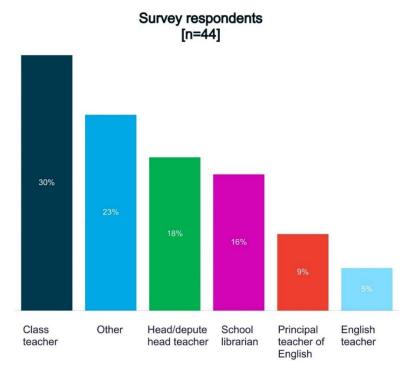
Evaluation method

Survey

We conducted an online survey of the schools involved in the 2020/21 Reading Schools pilot. The survey was issued to 100 schools and received 44 responses. Respondents could complete the survey anonymously.

The survey ran from June to September 2021. To encourage schools to engage in the evaluation survey, respondents were offered the chance to win £100 of book tokens for their school, from Scottish Book Trust.

Respondents were a mix of staff from primary and secondary schools, including class teachers, subject-specific teachers, library staff and staff with specific roles around literacy and learning.

**Survey respondents
[n=44]**

Class teacher	Other	Head/depute head teacher	School librarian	Principal teacher of English	English teacher
30%	23%	18%	16%	9%	5%

Those who selected 'other' identified their roles as: Principal teacher or acting principal teacher (primary), literacy leader/teacher/champion and library assistant.

Stakeholder interviews

We conducted interviews with seven individuals who were involved in Reading Schools through their role in the Regional Improvement Collaborative (RIC). These interviews explored their views on the programme, their expectations, their experiences, their perceptions on the impact of the programme and suggestions for development.

Case studies

We developed four case studies – three with primary schools and one secondary school. The schools were selected based on a range of characteristics, including location, size and pupil demographics. The schools were also at different stages in their reading journeys.

The case studies demonstrate how each school has engaged in Reading Schools to develop a reading culture, and the impact this has had so far.

The case studies are included as an Appendix to this report.

02 OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

Introduction

This chapter explores the outcomes achieved for pupils, staff and schools, through the Reading Schools programme. It is based on a survey of schools conducted from June to September 2021.

Impact on pupils

Most respondents felt that there had been a positive impact on pupils as a result of Reading Schools activity.

Respondents reported that as a result of Reading Schools, pupils were:

Modelling positive reading behaviours **76%**
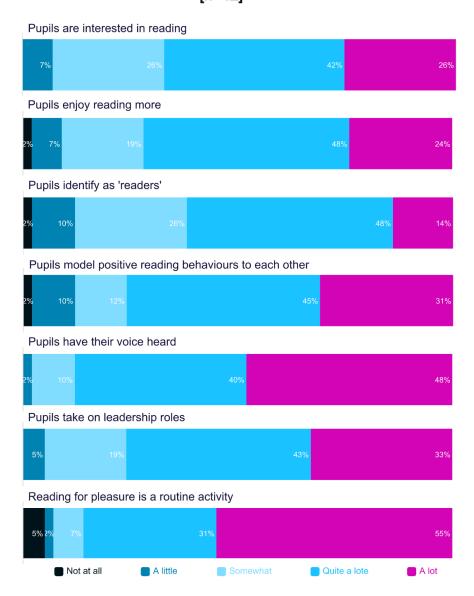
Taking on leadership roles **76%**

Enjoying reading more **71%**

Interested in reading **67%**

Identifying as readers **62%**

Respondents particularly felt that Reading Schools activity helped pupils to have their voices heard (88%). In addition, most respondents felt that reading had become a routine activity at the school (86%), and that pupils had appropriate and comfortable spaces to read at school (79%).

Impact on pupils
[n=42]

Pupils are interested in reading

| 7% | 26% | 42% | 26% |

Pupils enjoy reading more

| 2% | 7% | 19% | 48% | 24% |

Pupils identify as 'readers'

| 2% | 10% | 26% | 48% | 14% |

Pupils model positive reading behaviours to each other

| 2% | 10% | 12% | 45% | 31% |

Pupils have their voice heard

| 2% | 10% | 40% | 48% |

Pupils take on leadership roles

| 5% | 19% | 43% | 33% |

Reading for pleasure is a routine activity

| 5% | 2% | 7% | 31% | 55% |

■ Not at all   ■ A little   ■ Somewhat   ■ Quite a lote   ■ A lot

Respondents noted that because of the Reading Schools activity, there had been more discussion around books, and more sharing of books between staff and pupils.

> **We see more children being confident to come and speak to Library Staff about books, and being more confident in their reading choices."**
> School librarian

> **Children are taking more ownership of the Reading teams page and engaging lots by recommending books."**
> Class teacher

Respondents provided a range of examples, demonstrating how the activity had helped pupils to read for pleasure and lead their own learning.

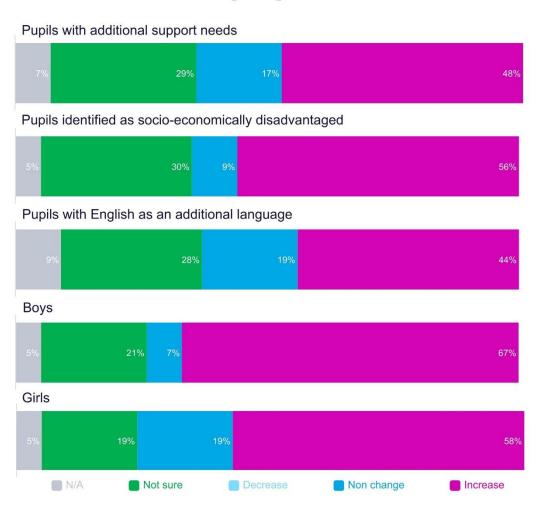|	
Example: Reading Ambassadors	In one school, the Reading Ambassadors programme helped develop a range of skills for pupils, including confidence in reading, digital literacy and inter-personal skills. During lockdowns, the Reading Ambassadors delivered activities remotely through virtual assemblies and podcasts, supporting and encouraging their peers with book recommendations. The Reading Ambassadors' podcasts were branded as Prêt Radio to align with the school's existing Prêt-à-Lire reading scheme, and have subsequently been picked up by a local radio station. **"**This has been hugely thrilling and rewarding for students.**"** **School librarian**
Example: Pupils leading their learning	**"**We have a focus on outdoor learning this term and pupils have been enjoying taking their reading outdoors in the sunshine and losing themselves in a good book. This has also allowed pupils to facilitate discussions about texts as they are relaxed and enjoying being outdoors, meaning they feel less restricted by the classroom led discussions used previously.**"** **Class teacher**
Example: Pupil leadership	One school developed a Reading Leadership group with pupils acting as Reading Champions. The group was established to promote a reading culture and to encourage pupils to read for pleasure. At the beginning of the school year, the children used the schools' Pupil Voice forum to explain what activities they enjoyed last year and to plan new activities for this year. The Reading Leadership group then organised activities for Book Week and World Book Day. The group also had the responsibility of collecting and managing the Reading Passports for the whole school, totalling the number of books read by each class and awarding top readers with certificates. Staff felt that the pupils enjoyed being Reading Champions, and that the leadership role gave them confidence.

Some respondents said that pupils in specific groups were reading for pleasure more, such as pupils with additional support needs. Most respondents felt that there was in increase in reading for pleasure amongst all of the target groups, and especially for boys.

Reading for pleasure within specific groups [n=43]

Pupils with additional support needs

| N/A 7% | Not sure 29% | Non change 17% | Increase 48% |

Pupils identified as socio-economically disadvantaged

| N/A 5% | Not sure 30% | Non change 9% | Increase 56% |

Pupils with English as an additional language

| N/A 9% | Not sure 28% | Non change 19% | Increase 44% |

Boys

| N/A 5% | Not sure 21% | Non change 7% | Increase 67% |

Girls

| N/A 5% | Not sure 19% | Non change 19% | Increase 58% |

Legend: N/A | Not sure | Decrease | Non change | Increase

| **Example:** Developing a love for reading | In one school, a boy who does not speak English at home discovered a love on non-fiction books. He was able to access a lot of information using the pictures, his knowledge from class discussion and sharing books with another child. His vocabulary improved, along with his confidence as he began using the new vocabulary. He was also very excited to access more books and go to the school library to select books. "It was wonderful to see him so motivated to read and choosing to read when he got free time as well as whole class ERIC time." **Class teacher** |

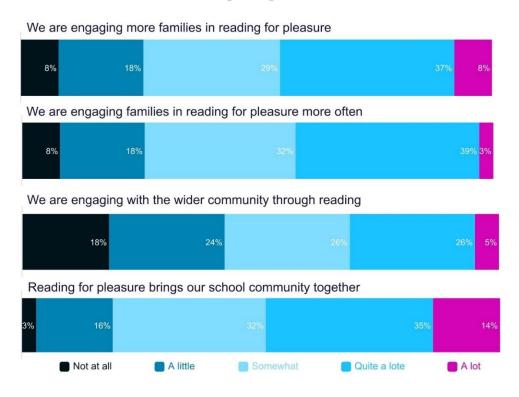# Families and communities value and engage in reading

There were mixed responses to the impact of Reading Schools on families and the wider community.

Most respondents felt that they were engaging families 'a little' or 'somewhat', with a few feeling that they were engaging them 'a lot'.

A few respondents from primary schools noted that there was wider involvement from nursery classes or across cluster schools. However many schools were not able to comment on family and community engagement in reading.

This is likely to be for two main reasons. Firstly, the Covid-19 pandemic limited engagement between schools, families and the wider community. Secondly, previous research into reading-based initiatives indicates that family engagement is a challenging area, which often takes time to develop. The Reading Schools programme is still in its pilot phase, and it may take time for schools to develop this area to a point where outcomes are measurable.

Impact on families and communities
[n=38]

We are engaging more families in reading for pleasure

| 8% | 18% | 29% | 37% | 8% |

We are engaging families in reading for pleasure more often

| 8% | 18% | 32% | 39% | 3% |

We are engaging with the wider community through reading

| 18% | 24% | 26% | 26% | 5% |

Reading for pleasure brings our school community together

| 3% | 16% | 32% | 35% | 14% |

■ Not at all ■ A little ■ Somewhat ■ Quite a lote ■ A lot

| **Example:** EAL Family Learning | "Using digital platforms during school closure has allowed parents to witness the initiatives used to engage children in more reading. |

	One particular family who are Polish got involved in translating a Robert Burns poem from Scots to Polish. The child recited the poem in Polish and this was widely received by the Polish community and made our Robert Burns day celebration far more inclusive to EAL families. This presentation was shared with Scottish teachers on social media and used in their schools also. There was over a thousand teachers who responded to the Robert Burns Celebration presentation.**"** **Class teacher**
Example: Family learning in a rural area	"We are a rural community and do not have local access to a library or book shop. Many families have to travel by public transport to our nearest library and shops. There is not much spare money in families to purchase books and they are not seen as an essential item. Many of our children do not own a book. By promoting reading in school and providing the children with a wide variety of texts to choose from we have noticed their interest in reading has grown. One family in particular have four children in school and had no access to books at home. We noticed that they were becoming interested in reading different types of books in school either through recommendations from friends or book tasting sessions facilitated by class teachers. Their parents attended our book reading lunch which was a first for them to become involved. We also noticed an increase in their attainment in reading and writing.**"** **Principal teacher**

Improved health and wellbeing

Most respondents felt that Reading Schools activity contributed to improved health and wellbeing for pupils and for staff, with 63% feeling that it had improved 'quite a lot' or 'a lot' for pupils, and 58% feeling that it had improved for staff.

Broadly, respondents felt that reading helped pupils to feel relaxed and calm. They felt that this was because the reading activity focused very much on reading for enjoyment, rather than it being associated with work. One respondent commented that they chose books based on specific health and wellbeing outcomes.

" It also helps children to relax and enjoy an activity rather than frantically moving from activity to activity.**"**
Class teacher

One respondent noted that as pupils read more, their reading ability improves, and this in turn gives them a sense of achievement.

> " More children are engaging with reading and more focused on the activity. Through this increased focus they are experiencing success and pride in what they can actually read."
> Class teacher

Respondents felt that creating dedicated time and space within the school for reading helped encourage staff and pupils to unwind. For example, classrooms with 'reading corners', periods of 'ERIC' or 'DEAR' time. Staff also said that they used reading to support calm transitions between activities within the school day.

> " Being able to encourage staff and pupils to access books and have that time to relax with a story and take themselves off to another place for even a short time has been really helpful for everyone's mental health."
> Class teacher

> " Provides time for learners to be calm, quiet and reflective."
> Head/deputy head teacher

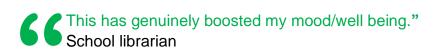| **Example:** Space to read	"Through the introduction of regularly timetabled 'Readaxation' lunchtimes, we have created space for pupils to expressly do nothing but read. I think pupils often feel pulled in many directions but having a clear message of voluntarily meeting with peers to do nothing but read and that this is the only expectation can be very freeing." **School librarian**

During the Covid-19 pandemic, when staff and pupils were engaging remotely, book clubs provided a useful way to connect and relax together. A few respondents mentioned that this was particularly valuable during a challenging and isolating time.

> " Staff feel they have a connection with each other through reading. Our staff book club was a real support during lockdown. People who might not otherwise chat have formed a stronger working relationship."
> Head/deputy head teacher

School staff commented that they had benefitted from the Reading Schools activities. They felt that the reading activities helped to improve mood and morale, and fostered a sense of cohesion amongst staff. Again, this was particularly valued during periods when pupils were educated remotely.

> " This has genuinely boosted my mood/well being."
> School librarian

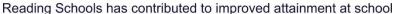## Improved attainment and gap narrowed

Most respondents felt that the programme was a good way to highlight pupils' achievements at school. Some felt that it was contributing to improved attainment, or closing the poverty-related attainment gap, however few felt this strongly.

Some respondents commented that the disruption to education over the past year had affected their ability to robustly monitor these changes. And a few felt that it was challenging to attribute and measure these changes at such an early stage in the programme.

Impact on attainment and closing the attainment gap
[n=38]

Reading Schools helped us to recognise and reward pupil's achievements

Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Quite a lote	A lot
3%	9%	24%	43%	22%

Reading Schools has contributed to improved attainment at school

A little	Somewhat	Quite a lote	A lot
16%	34%	42%	8%

Reading Schools has contributed to reducing or closing the poverty related attainment gap for pupils

Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Quite a lote	A lot
3%	21%	58%	16%	3%

■ Not at all ■ A little ■ Somewhat ■ Quite a lote ■ A lot

Most respondents did not comment greatly on improvement in attainment or closing the poverty-related attainment gap. However, a few respondents provided specific examples, indicating that there was increased attainment for pupils, through Reading Schools activities.

" We have seen children's reading ages increase. Pupils have a broad knowledge of books and authors and are always looking for ways to improve their reading skills, knowledge and understanding and reading habits.**"**
Acting Principal Teacher (Primary)

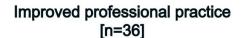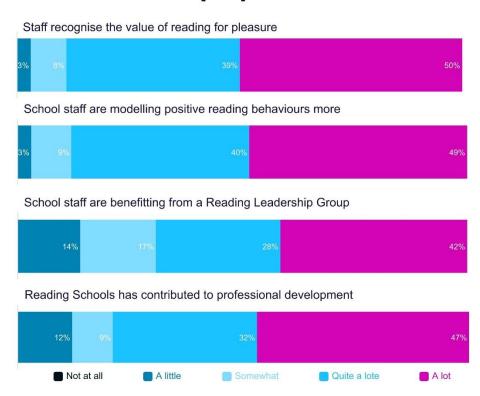|	
Example: Increased engagement in learning	In one school, an S1 pupil who has Dyslexia spent time in the library as part of the school's lockdown hub. During this period the school librarian was busy processing new books and doing work for the reading schools project. The pupil was curious about the library activity, and so was encouraged to help the librarian. She was then encouraged to try some of the reading materials, beginning with comics, progressing to Manga and ultimately to picking young adult, adult and a range of books that piqued her interest. **"Her English teacher has said that she's more engaged in class, a keen reader now and she was back in the library recently asking to volunteer."** **School librarian**
Example: Increased engagement in learning	In one school the reading activities have had a significant impact on a pupil who speaks English as an additional language and does not have access to books at home. Prior to the Reading Schools activity, the pupil would not choose to look at a book in class unless told to. Through lots of shared reading and an increase in the range of books available, he now frequently chooses to read during free periods. Although he is not able to understand all of the text, he applies many of his reading strategies, particularly using the pictures, to help him interpret the information. **"His enjoyment of books and pleasure and pride in gaining knowledge is clearly evident and he is now very keen to share his learning with any adult in the room and many of the other pupils."** **Class teacher**

Improved professional practice

Improved professional practice
[n=36]

Staff recognise the value of reading for pleasure

| 3% | 8% | 39% | 50% |

School staff are modelling positive reading behaviours more

| 3% | 9% | 40% | 49% |

School staff are benefitting from a Reading Leadership Group

| 14% | 17% | 28% | 42% |

Reading Schools has contributed to professional development

| 12% | 9% | 32% | 47% |

■ Not at all ■ A little ■ Somewhat ■ Quite a lote ■ A lot

Respondents indicated that the programme helped them to develop a community of practice for teacher support and increase teacher knowledge around reading for pleasure.

Some respondents appreciated that the programme helped give them ideas around how to engage pupils, and the range of children's literature available. With this new knowledge, they felt more confident developing and delivering reading-based activities to pupils.

> **Staff have been more interested in introducing different types of book into the classroom offering the children a wider choice of reading material."**
> Principal Teacher

> **A member of staff who wasn't confident reading aloud to her class before joined our staff book club and is now choosing more books she can share with her class."**
> Head/deputy head teacher

One school librarian commented that Reading Schools activity prompted them to try a new genre, which they would not have tried otherwise.

Most respondents (69%) felt that Reading Schools had engaged staff across their school, beyond those directly involved. In primary schools, respondents commented that there was whole-school involvement through events and challenges. Within the school, class teachers were able to adapt activities to suit pupils and to connect with other curricular activities.

> **"**All activities were passed onto the class teachers who delivered them to their classes. The teachers could also choose and adapt the activities to suit their classes needs and abilities.**"**
> Class teacher

> **"**All staff including class teachers, pupil support workers and office staff have taken part in our Masked Reader competition and engaging in discussion with pupils about what they are reading.**"**
> Class teacher

In secondary schools, there was involvement from different subject departments through subject-specific mini-libraries, **"**What I am reading**"** posters on doors and school library events. Respondents mentioned involvement from a range of different individuals and departments, including: art, history, modern studies, modern languages, maths, sciences, support staff, canteen staff, janitorial staff and administrative staff.

> **"**Events in the library have brought the whole school together (Big Book Swap).**"**
> Library Assistant

Respondents commented on the creative ways in which different departments had incorporated reading for pleasure into the curriculum. For example, in one school the Modern Languages department has subscribed to foreign language magazines for students, to encourage reading for pleasure, whilst actively engaging in learning languages.

> **"**The art dept has been involved through a joint project whereby students designed logos for an initiative dreamed up by the student-led Reading Ambassadors.**"**
> School librarian

All respondents felt that Reading Schools helped them to monitor their schools' progress, to some extent, with 64% feeling that helped 'quite a lot' or 'a lot'.

The Reading Leadership Group

Reading Schools encourages schools to develop a leadership group to promote reading for pleasure. Staff responding to the survey felt that this had been a positive experience, which helped them develop a community of practice. They felt that it

provided a useful and focused way to talk about reading for enjoyment, and to share ideas on how to develop the school's reading culture.

> **"** Simply having the opportunity to talk to pupils and staff about reading for pleasure.**"**
> School librarian

Several respondents also felt that this was an important way to hear from pupils, giving them a chance to have their views heard and take on some leadership activity.

> **"** It has helped involve the pupils more in our decision making.**"**
> Head/deputy head teacher

> **"** The reading leadership group has provided pupils with a forum to discuss their thoughts and opinions about reading in our school. They have enjoyed being part of the library project and have really taken ownership of this and how they see the space and what they would like from it.**"**
> Class teacher

For staff, having a leadership group helped to share the responsibilities of activity. This ensured that the workload associated with developing reading for pleasure did not rest on one or two individuals. Having a group of staff and pupils involved in the work also helped to make the most of different areas of expertise, keep up the momentum and spread the message about reading for pleasure more widely.

> **"** A group of people across the school community has let us pull in a wealth of ideas and support. The load isn't on one person - which was really important this year especially.**"**
> School librarian

Example: Benefits of a reading leadership group	"It has allowed us to share ideas, run through suggestions and choose what will work best for our school from different suggestions. The leadership group has also allowed us to allocate tasks and use people's strengths to achieve more. By splitting up the work load it keeps it more manageable for each person and in turn keeps up our enthusiasm and drive to keep reading high profile within the school." **Class teacher**

Some respondents noted that they had not been able to develop a leadership group yet, or that their group was still in early stages. They were positive about the benefits of having a leadership group, and hoped to develop it further when circumstances permit.

Views on programme management

All respondents rated their experience of Reading Schools programme management positively, with most saying it was 'good' (44%) or 'very good' (50%). Respondents also rated specific aspects of the programme. Almost all aspects of the programme were felt to be useful, with self-evaluation, training and accreditation being the areas schools found most useful.

Views on programme management
[n=34]

Accreditation
- A little useful: 12%
- Very useful: 88%

Self evaluation and action planning
- A little useful: 6%
- Very useful: 91%
- N/A: 3%

The framework mapped to HGIOS 4
- A little useful: 15%
- Very useful: 82%
- N/A: 3%

Professional development opportunities
- A little useful: 32%
- Very useful: 65%
- N/A: 3%

Training and support from Scottish Book Trust
- A little useful: 15%
- Very useful: 85%

Collaboration with other schools
- Not useful: 6%
- A little useful: 35%
- Very useful: 32%
- N/A: 26%

Legend: ■ Not useful ■ A little useful ■ Very useful ■ N/A

03 VIEWS ON ENGAGING IN READING SCHOOLS

Introduction

This section explores the views of school staff on the process of engaging with Reading Schools, including the success factors, challenges and areas for development. It is based on surveys conducted with school staff.

What works well

School staff responding to the survey were largely positive about their experiences of taking part in Reading Schools. They identified the following success factors:

- providing a framework to help focus activity
- being flexible, without a prescribed programme of work
- training and support from Scottish Book Trust
- linking to existing education policies
- offering a digital submission portal
- offering accreditation
- sustained engagement.

A framework and a focus

Most respondents commented positively on the action plan and monitoring framework. They felt that it was well structured and easy to use.

> **"** We appreciate having a framework to work towards, which is providing us with a clear structure for the 2021-2022 school year.**"**
> School librarian

> **"** The action plan is easily set out and targets are clear.**"**
> Class teacher

> **"** It focuses us on the importance of reading and in involving a wider audience, like families and the wider community.**"**
> Class teacher

> **"** The programme has kept us on track and given us many ideas of ways to keep the classes interested.**"**
> Class teacher

Respondents commented that Reading Schools helped them to focus on reading for pleasure and to raise the profile of reading in the school. Respondents felt that being part of the programme helped them to direct their work, and to ensure that there were a variety of activities, all focused on reading for pleasure.

> " The framework is clear and very helpful in providing both a breadth of ideas and a structure to follow."
> School librarian

> " Simply having something to hang all our (library) efforts on is great as it gives us something tangible we can hold up to our colleagues and students."
> School librarian

Whilst few schools were able to comment on the outcomes they had achieved in terms of engaging families and communities, they felt that the programme helped them to consider how this could be done.

> " It pushes you to think about how to involve other schools and the community."
> Class teacher

For schools that were already working on developing a reading culture, Reading Schools helped to further concentrate the work, or provide ideas for new initiatives.

> " It's helped focus on how we can add to the numerous Reading activities and events we already do in the school, such as more staff involvement and giving pupils more input through the Reading leaders group."
> Class teacher

> " As reading has been a key focus in our local authority for 2 years now the reading schools accreditation fits nicely into what we have been working towards. The programme allows us to showcase what we have been working on in a clear way and gives support when necessary."
> Class teacher

Flexibility

Respondents also appreciated that the programme was flexible, offering schools the freedom to take the journey at their own pace, in their own way. One respondent noted that there were clear categories throughout the framework, across different areas. They felt that assessing across all the areas, and then focusing on where there were gaps helped them to build a more balanced reading culture.

> " It was a very structured programme but also allowed you to approach and achieve each area in a way that was relevant and personal to your school."
> Acting Principal Teacher (Primary)

Most respondents were enthusiastic about lack of a fixed submission deadline. They felt that this helped to relieve some of the pressure on schools. The appreciated being able to gather evidence at their own pace, and working around staffing schedules to complete the submission.

> **"**All schools are different, so I like that I can set my own deadlines.**"**
> Class teacher

Some respondents noted that the flexibility in submission was especially valuable during the Covid-19 pandemic.

> **"**I really like the fact that there are no fixed deadlines especially because lots of things are delayed due to Covid.**"**
> Class teacher

> **"**Relieved! If there had been a fixed deadline, I think I would not have signed up. There are simply too many pressures elsewhere.**"**
> School librarian

However a few respondents noted that it might be useful to have some guidance or set times for submission to maintain momentum and ensure that the work was completed.

> **"**In the beginning it's hard to know when to submit as there is no fixed deadline and you could continue to gather evidence for months/years but we agreed as a leadership group to give ourselves the full year to gather the evidence before submitting.**"**
> Acting Principal Teacher (Primary)

Example: Benefits of Reading Schools	**"**It was good to reflect on what we were doing, be pushed to do some more work - and raise the profile of reading even during the chaos of the last year. It's also been useful for raising the profile within the staff and senior management. There has always been support for the library and reading, but this programme has helped to add an external guide to help convince people of what we want to do being what's expected. It's let them see where we are and what we do in a context.**"** **School librarian**

Training and support

Respondents appreciated the support from Scottish Book Trust, with 85% of respondents saying that they found this very useful. They appreciated how approachable Scottish Book Trust staff were, and valued their patience and understanding.

> " The support from the programme is evident and much appreciated."
> Head/deputy head teacher

> " Friendly emails and stress-free online tutorials have been perfect, especially over the past year of pandemic."
> School librarian

> " The virtual sessions have been helpful at starting the journey and the website is a great resource."
> Class teacher

> " Supportive and helpful team, always on hand to offer help and answer any questions."
> Principal teacher of English

> " Very clear and flexible guidelines from SBT. Staff are very responsive and supportive."
> School librarian

Digital submissions

Most respondents felt that the online system was easy to use, and that the process was manageable. In particular, some respondents commented that the methods for uploading, and the fact that it was not restricted to one user, made it particularly user friendly.

> " The Action Plan is easy to use and follow as well as the submission process. Allowing more than one member of staff to upload evidence is beneficial."
> Class teacher

> " The new online accreditation is proving to be so much easier to use."
> Literacy Leader

> " What we're asked to do for Reading Schools is manageable, without too much report writing - being able to use screen captures as evidence, etc, has been a boon."
> School librarian

Links to existing policies

Respondents also appreciated that the programme linked into 'How Good is Our School?', and could be incorporated into School Improvement Plans. They felt that it helped to demonstrate how existing work contributed to the school's wider intended outcomes.

> **"** It's the linking to the school's requirements that make this so invaluable. Being able to show how the work the library and wider school was already doing fitted with HGIOS 4.**"**
> School librarian

> **"** Focused action plan relating to HYGIOS and school needs.**"**
> Literacy teacher

Accreditation

Respondents valued the accreditation they could achieve through the programme, as validation for their work, and as a tangible output. One respondent noted that the programme provided an **"industry standard"** to help schools benchmark, and showcase their achievements. In their school the award helped them to gain support from the senior management team.

Ongoing participation

Almost all respondents felt that the programme was worthwhile and that they would continue to participate. Most felt that it was a valuable area of work, and that whilst literacy and health and wellbeing were priorities in the school, the programme was relevant. Others felt that they would keep engaging in order to ensure that reading for pleasure remained high on the school agenda.

> **"** …I will continue to engage because it has to remain a priority in the school.**"**
> Class teacher

> **"** Yes. We think it is vital and are looking forward to getting ours fully off the ground in the coming year.**"**
> School librarian

> **"** I do think it is worthwhile as it has provided context for some of the things we already do, which is helping us to plan for improvement. And even though engaging with the rest of the school is a challenge, this at least gives us a platform for continuing to highlight the importance of RfP.**"**
> School librarian

> **"** I think the programme, the resources and the support provided are perfect for helping schools to complete their reading schools journey.**"**
> Class teacher

A few noted that they wished to continue participating until they reached 'gold' accreditation. And one respondent said that they had achieved 'gold' accreditation, and were now unsure how to continue engaging.

Challenges

Respondents also commented on the obstacles they faced when engaging with the programme. Some of these challenges were outwith the control of schools or Scottish Book Trust. And some relate to challenges the schools had internally, rather than shortcomings in the programme. They identified the following key challenges:

- disruption and limitations to school activity due to the Covid-19 pandemic;
- administrative load of monitoring and evaluating the work; and
- understanding how much evidence to submit.

Covid-19 pandemic

Several respondents noted that the Covid-19 pandemic presented a significant barrier to developing their Reading Schools plans. Schools experienced periods of closure, or limited access to pupils. And engagement at school varied between different age groups, and between primary and secondary schools. This made it challenging for schools to consistently and effectively engage pupils in reading activity, as they had planned to. However most were optimistic that this would improve as restrictions eased.

> " Has been challenging to do much during lockdown, but this has allowed us to clarify our plans for 2021-2022."
> School librarian

Administrative load

A few respondents commented on the administrative load of the programme. Whilst they felt the action plan was useful, they also felt that it was time consuming and difficult to connect together with the work they had done. However, this did not deter them from participating, and planning to participate in the future.

> " Labour intensive for staff in busy working high schools especially completing the return – takes a very long time."
> Principal teacher of English

> " I found it clunky and frustrating. Otherwise, we are looking forward to going for Silver."
> Head/deputy head teacher

One respondent noted that they found it challenging to attribute their Reading Schools activity to wider outcomes, such as closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

Submitting evidence

Some respondents commented that they were unsure about the volume and level of evidence required, particularly at silver and gold levels of accreditation. One respondent felt that the training was targeted towards those aiming for 'core' level, and they would appreciate more guidance on silver and gold levels.

> ❝ It would have been helpful to know more about what evidence was going to be required and how much evidence earlier in the accreditation. ❞
> Class teacher

> ❝ Our biggest issue has been the constant question of how much evidence is actually needed for each section. ❞
> Class teacher

Intra-school challenges

A few respondents commented on the challenges they faced within their schools, which limited their ability to develop a reading culture in the school.

A few respondents said that whilst they had engaged pupils well, it had been challenging to engage families and the wider community. Similarly, a few respondents noted that whilst they were able to engage pupils in their class or department, they were not always able to achieve whole-school participation.

> ❝ Achieving whole school involvement is very difficult. ❞
> School librarian

One respondent noted that they had difficulties obtaining buy-in from the senior leadership team. This respondent felt that it was still viewed as a 'pet project' run by the library and a few staff, rather than a whole-school initiative.

And one respondent noted that whilst it was frustrating not to have met these objectives, they appreciated that the programme encouraged them to continue trying, and to find innovative ways to engage more people in reading for pleasure.

> ❝ But equally, I understand why they are included, and it's a much needed push to think creatively and make in-roads into those areas, rather than give up on them. ❞
> School librarian

Areas for development

Respondents identified a few areas for further development of the programme.

Respondents said that they appreciated not having a fixed deadline for submission this year, and welcomed the idea of a rolling scheme, where they could submit evidence for accreditation at any time in the year.

Several respondents said that they would benefit from more examples and resources. In particular, they said more case studies and examples of how other schools had delivered activity would be beneficial.

A few respondents felt that they would benefit from more tailored support. They felt it would be useful to have specific support for schools at different levels, and for primary and secondary schools.

04 STAKEHOLDER VIEWS

Introduction

This section explores the views of partners from the Regional Improvement Collaboratives. It is based on interviews with seven partners. It covers their views on:

- the concept of the programme;
- expectations of the programme;
- engagement from schools;
- programme management;
- partnership working;
- impact of the programme on schools;
- impact of the programme on RICs;
- success factors; and
- areas for development.

All the partners we spoke with had a role in the Regional Improvement Collaborative (RIC). Four also had a teaching or senior leadership team role in a school, and spoke about their experience both from the RICs perspective, and from the school perspective. Broadly, partners were extremely positive about the Reading Schools programme, in terms of the overall concept, their expectations, the delivery method, programme management and intended outcomes.

Views on the concept

All the partners we spoke with were positive about the programme from the outset. Most were very keen for something like this be developed in their area.

> " To be honest, genuinely, it was music to my ears, because I've always, always felt very passionate about the link between literacy and improved life choices."
> Partner

RICs partners appreciated that rather than being a specified programme of activity, Reading Schools was designed to acknowledge and accredit schools for activities that they were already doing, or that could be assimilated into the curriculum.

A few partners mentioned that the shift in approach from other initiatives to this programme, was positive. They noted that whilst the programme had an accreditation scheme, it was about more than achieving the 'core', 'silver' or 'gold' levels.

> **"** It's not just an audit of what you're doing, it's encouraging people to be involved, adding research data, providing professional learning opportunities and exciting ideas.**"**
> Partner

Two partners felt that the programme offered a way to improve ongoing practice, and so was more beneficial than other programmes which offer one-off awards or certification.

> **"** I like the move from the FMRC to Reading Schools. It feels like a natural progression.**"**
> Partner

> **"** This is a more sustainable programme.**"**
> Partner

Partners also commented that Reading Schools felt more robust, as it was closely aligned to existing school monitoring frameworks such as 'How Good Is Our School?' and could be tied into School Improvement Plans.

Expectations of the programme

Partners said that they hoped taking part in the programme would help schools to reflect on their current activities and support them to develop a reading culture. They also hoped that the programme would highlight the existing good work taking place in schools and demonstrate that this work was valued.

> **"** I was hoping it would help schools as a self-evaluation tool, to allow schools to reflect on where they are, improve attainment and build a reading culture.**"**
> Partner

> **"** A lot of schools are very modest, they don't think of themselves as innovators…I want schools to realise the value of that they do.**"**
> Partner

Partners also noted that they hoped the programme would help more people to see the benefits of reading, and to give reading for pleasure a higher status in schools – particularly in secondary schools, where they felt that reading was confined to the English department.

Engagement from schools

A few partners noted that they initially had concerns about the level of buy-in from schools, given the high demands of teaching, and the added challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. However most said that they were pleased with the uptake and level engagement from schools.

Where local authorities were engaging in the programme for the first time, partners nominated schools to take part. Once an area had engaged in the initial pilot, the offering was opened up and all schools were invited to take part.

One partner, who approached individual schools directly, felt that this personal approach worked well.

> If you ask for volunteers, people say they don't have enough time to look into it. We've become so much better at that personal touch, saying, 'I saw this and thought of you'."
> Partner

Another partner felt that now the pilot had been successfully delivered with highly engaged and interested volunteer schools, they wanted to start targeting schools that might be reluctant to come forward, but would most benefit from the programme.

A few partners noted that the way the programme was designed, and the fact that schools could go at their own pace, helped encourage engagement.

> We really got the message out there that it's not just for primary schools."
> Partner

Example: Engaging schools	In one area the RIC partner worked closely with an early pilot cluster of schools, delivering training and offering support. Several of these schools achieved core accreditation within one year. Using case studies and videos, these schools were then used as examples of what achieving the core level would look like. This approach helped other schools better understand the different levels of accreditation, and the requirements for each. The area now has around 60 schools involved through Reading Schools, with one high school achieving gold accreditation.

Delivery method and programme management

Partners were not usually directly involved in delivering Reading Schools. However they spoke positively about their perceptions of how the programme was delivered, and the requirements from schools that engaged. Broadly, they felt that the programme was not too demanding of schools in terms of time and resources.

> **Despite the pandemic and school closure, it did not affect our ability to engage."**
> Partner

Partners also valued the incremental approach to developing the programme. They liked that the programme started with a small pilot, and then a larger pilot, without overwhelming local authorities.

All partners we spoke with were positive about the way the programme was managed by Scottish Book Trust. Partners appreciated the flexible, positive and proactive approach of both the organisation and individual staff members.

> **I think that Scottish Book trust is totally amazing…I think I had no idea how utterly marvelous they are."**
> Partner

In particular, partners noted how engaging and enthusiastic staff were. They felt that this approach was especially helpful in schools as it set the tone for work that would be interesting and not stressful. They also appreciated that staff understood the challenges in education, and could articulate these insightfully when engaging with schools.

> **…the impression that they carry is that they are unerringly positive and are willing and able to do what schools need."**
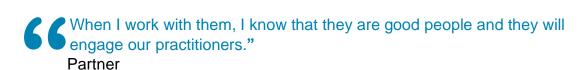> Partner

> **They talk with a genuineness and enthusiasm, and it's infectious!"**
> Partner

> **They left me feeling enthusiastic about it."**
> Partner

Partners also appreciated that the programme did not require too much time or administrative effort from school staff. A few partners who had been involved in the early pilot noted that the process for accreditation had changed. They appreciated that Scottish Book Trust had acted on feedback about this process and made it more streamlined and easier to use.

> "It's not officious or overly reliant on documentation or bureaucracy."
> Partner

> "When I work with them, I know that they are good people and they will engage our practitioners."
> Partner

For example, partners said that schools appreciated the additional flexibility afforded during the pandemic, and the fact that schools could submit at any point for accreditation. They felt that this demonstrated a high level or responsiveness and sensitivity.

> "They really listened to what schools were saying."
> Partner

Partnership working

Partners spoke about the strong partnerships they had with Scottish Book Trust. They felt that Scottish Book Trust demonstrated a high level of professionalism and formed valuable relationships with RICs staff and school staff.

> "I think the relationships are absolutely brilliant."
> Partner

Partners felt that Scottish Book Trust provided a high level of support and useful resources and connections for schools to utilise, particularly at the beginning of their reading journey. Partners noted that Reading Schools helped to strengthen existing networks and relationships that schools had with Scottish Book Trust through Read, Write, Count, the First Minister's Reading Challenge and Bookbug.

> "There's a really good partnership…it's a good reciprocal network."
> Partner

They also felt that Scottish Book Trust staff were available and supportive. One partner noted that a Scottish Book Trust staff member drove to their area to deliver certificates to pupils, so that the pupils could have them in time for their school's celebration day.

Outcomes achieved

Broadly, RICs partners were not able to comment in depth about the outcomes achieved through the Reading Schools activity. Most noted that there were various initiatives contributing to literacy, wellbeing and attainment in schools. However, all partners we spoke with felt that Reading Schools would be contributing to improved outcomes for pupils and schools. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, partners said that

they did not have the same amount or level of data on these outcomes to be able to comment in more detail.

However a few partners said that they had anecdotal evidence of improved outcomes around reading for pleasure and raising the profile of reading more generally. A few partners commented that there was a sense of pupils identifying as readers now. And one partner felt it was an achievement to have a high level of recognition of the concept of a 'reading culture'.

" It's just creating a vibrancy around reading.**"**
Partner

" Outcomes for individual schools have been great.**"**
Partner

Similarly, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, few schools were able to engage in meaningful engagement in the community, and RICs partners were unable to comment on this outcome.

Example: Positive outcomes	One partner had engaged with Reading Schools from the outset, and had supported schools involved in the early piloting stage. Having had schools engaged for longer, they felt that there were tangible outcomes for young people. In particular, they felt that Reading Schools was benefiting the most socio-economically disadvantaged pupils, and developing a very positive ethos around reading.

" It's made them realise that they're a 'reader'…that language never happened before.**"**
Partner

In this area, the RIC partner felt there were more conversations taking place around reading and across a wider range of people, including non-teaching staff at schools. This partner felt that parents were also more engaged, and beginning to model positive reading behaviours with their children.

" I think it's built in such a way that builds these strong partnerships with parents.**"**
Partner

Impact on schools

For schools, partners felt that Reading Schools helped to both validate their existing activity, and encourage them to be even more ambitious. Partners said that it was good to have a tiered accreditation system, which encouraged ongoing activity and progression.

> " In some schools, the culture has really been embedded and maintained, that has been really nice to see."
> Partner

They noted that Reading Schools helped to provide a robust framework for planning work around reading and literacy, with clear and achievable goals for schools at different stages.

> " It provides a wonderful structure for reading culture, it's a framework."
> Partner

They also felt that the programme helped people to better understand all the different benefits of reading, beyond literacy. One partner noted that by better understanding the benefits, schools were in a better position to leverage for the necessary resources.

They noted that completing the action plan and accreditation forms was a meaningful, reflective process, rather than a box-ticking exercise. And they felt that this facilitated genuine, longer-term improvements in practice.

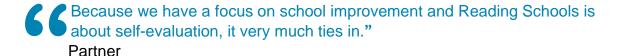> " This is the type of practice we want school leaders to engage in."
> Partner

One partner said that schools had responded positively to the programme, particularly the feedback from Scottish Book Trust.

> " They've really appreciated the individualised feedback they get after submitting action plans."
> Partner

Impact on the RICs

Most partners felt that Reading Schools aligned with their RIC plans, either through their work on literacy or wider goals such as school improvement and reducing the poverty-related attainment gap.

> **Because we have a focus on school improvement and Reading Schools is about self-evaluation, it very much ties in."**
> Partner

Many partners noted that Reading Schools helped to focus the work and provide direction, or objectives to work towards. They appreciated that the accreditation model helped to monitor and assess improvements, helping schools and local authorities to be accountable for their progress.

> **I think it gave us direction. It was the perfect model to start closing the gap by building the culture."**
> Partner

> **It has had a huge impact. We've been able to be accountable and celebrate together."**
> Partner

Three partners said that the Reading Schools programme facilitated good partnership working between the local authorities in their RIC. They said that it was interesting and enjoyable to hear how the programme was being implemented across schools in other areas. This had led to more collaboration and shared practice.

> **It provides another forum for discussing literacy."**
> Partner

> **It's been a really good networking opportunity."**
> Partner

Example: Embedding the programme	In one area, Reading Schools is being embedded into the local authority literacy strategy and schools are strongly encouraged to include Reading Schools in their School Improvement Plans.

> **It's really high up on the agenda. Before we talk about anything else, we talk about the accreditation. That's the message we're sending out across the authority."**
> Partner

At a recent school inspection conducted by Education Scotland, the inspectors commented positively on the development of reading culture. This acknowledgement helped to demonstrate the value of engaging with Reading Schools.
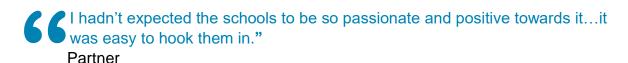
> **"** Head teachers then understand that this is something that we expect.**"**
> Partner

Unexpected outcomes

One partner said that through the RIC they had developed new relationships with the librarians in their local authority. The librarians attend the RICs meetings on Reading Schools and have provided valuable information on additional resources and supporting schools to access texts remotely. This was particularly helpful during the Covid-19 pandemic when most pupils were educated from home.

A few partners said that they were surprised at the level of buy-in from schools in the first year of the programme. They said that schools were requesting to join the programme, having heard from colleagues in other schools who were involved in the pilot. And also colleagues from other local authority areas, who were not involved in the pilot had enquired about how they join. Partners felt that this was positive, and very promising for the forthcoming national rollout of the programme.

> **"** I hadn't expected the schools to be so passionate and positive towards it…it was easy to hook them in.**"**
> Partner

> **"** It's created an appetite…people want to attach themselves to a good thing.**"**
> Partner

Success factors

Partners identified the following as key success factors for the programme:

- Flexibility – allowing schools to submit evidence for accreditation at any time, rather than setting a fixed deadline.
- Tiered accreditation structure – allowing schools to join at the level most appropriate for them, and progress at their own pace.
- Robustness and rigour of the accreditation process – including tailored feedback and a framework that encourages reflective practice.
- Programme helps schools embed reading across the curriculum – in all subject areas and beyond the classroom.
- Aligning with 'How Good is Our School?' framework – allowing all parties to 'speak the same language' and for the programme to be easily integrated into the curriculum.

- Validation for schools – recognising the effort and impact of existing practice, and encouraging further development.
- Resources, support and motivation from Scottish Book Trust.

> **"** I've really enjoyed watching it develop – the passion behind it!**"**
> Partner

> **"** Reading is the magic ingredient across all curricular areas.**"**
> Partner

> **"** It's what the teachers want – simple guidance and ideas on how to develop reading for pleasure.**"**
> Partner

Areas for development

RICs partners were broadly positive, but noted a few challenges in the current model of the programme.

Partners felt that the website was a good resource, but wanted to see it further developed as a bank of ideas. They suggested that schools would benefit from templates, book recommendations and examples of what other schools had achieved. They also suggested that it would be helpful to see examples of what a core, silver and gold accredited school looks like. Scottish Book Trust offers resources that demonstrate the different levels of accreditation. These comments indicate that school staff may not be aware of all the resources available.

Two partners suggested that it would be helpful for RICs to be able to access a database showing which schools in their area were engaged in Reading Schools, and the levels of accreditation. They felt this would help to further streamline work, so that schools could report on their progress once through Reading Schools, but the information would be shared with RICs.

A few partners were concerned that the tiered accreditation structure might promote competition between schools, in a way that was not conducive to positive outcomes. One partner suggested an alternative model allowing all schools to aim for core accreditation initially, and then to focus on achieving 'distinction' in specific areas e.g. family learning, whole-school engagement.

One partner noted that a key success of the programme was the tailored support schools received from Scottish Book Trust. They queried how this support would be offered as the programme grows, and if Scottish Book Trust would have the resources to continue offering bespoke support.

Partners also commented on the alignment of Reading Schools with 'How Good is Our School?'. They wanted to see a stronger link with Education Scotland. They felt

that this would help to ensure that everyone was 'speaking the same language' and demonstrate that reading for pleasure is integral to the priorities of the school curriculum.

All the partners we spoke with said that they planned to continue delivering the Reading Schools programme in their area, and offering it to more schools. One partner noted that whilst they felt it was a valuable programme, they also recognised that not all schools would be ready to take it on in the coming year, and that it would take time to get all schools on board.

05 CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

Reading Schools has successfully expanded its pilot programme to reach more schools. The programme has broadly been very well received by staff in schools and partners in the Regional Improvement Collaboratives.

Although at an early stage in development, there are strong indicators that the programme is valuable to schools, and supporting positive outcomes around engagement, literacy and health and wellbeing. This evaluation also found that the programme has had a wider impact on staff, in terms of professional practice.

Outputs

Number of schools submitting Action Plans — **79**

Number of schools submitting evidence for accreditation — **24**

Number of schools receiving accreditation — **19**

Outcomes achieved

This evaluation found that engaging in Reading Schools helped pupils to engage in more reading-based activities. This helped them to develop a love for reading, and to identify as 'readers', as well as providing opportunities for leadership.

There were good examples of pupils engaging in reading for pleasure, and some evidence the activities were helping to engage those who might not normally engage, such as pupils with English as an additional a language. There was also evidence that the programme supported pupils to lead their own learning and lead others, through reading groups.

There was good evidence that the programme contributed to improved health and wellbeing for both pupils and staff. For pupils, having time and space to simply read for pleasure was valuable. And for staff, reading for pleasure facilitated positive interactions between staff and pupils, particularly during periods of remote learning.

Some staff responding to the survey reported that engagement in Reading Schools helped to improve attainment and reduce the poverty-related attainment gap. This was predominantly reported through individual cases, rather than widespread improvement.

School staff reported that the programme helped them develop their knowledge of children's literature. The reading leadership groups also helped to develop a community of practice and to share ideas around developing a reading culture.

There was some indication of increase in family and community engagement through the programme. However this was limited, and likely to have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, which restricted schools' ability to engage widely.

Success factors

Staff and partners spoke positively about the programme. They identified a range factors which contributed to the programme's success.

Both school staff and partners from the RIC appreciated the flexibility of the programme, allowing schools to take part in a way that suited them and at a level that suited them. They also valued that the programme came with accreditation, and was clearly aligned to the 'How Good is Our School?' framework.

Ongoing support from Scottish Book Trust was highly valued by staff and partners. They felt that Scottish Book Trust provided useful training and resources, which helped school to get started.

Staff appreciated that whilst there was a framework to focus the activity, there was not a prescribed programme of work. They also welcomed the tiered structure which supported ongoing development and engagement with the programme.

Partners commented on the rigour and quality of the accreditation process, which helped validate the good work already taking place in schools. They also felt that the programme worked well to embed reading for pleasure across the curriculum.

Areas for development

Staff and partners also shared their ideas for development of the programme. They felt that schools would benefit from even more resources, particularly resources tailored to each level of accreditation, and in primary and secondary settings.

School staff said they would welcome more clarity on the evidence required for different accreditation levels.

Schools also said they would welcome any way in which the administrative load of the programme could be reduced. A few respondents felt that the work required to submit evidence was time consuming, and that this was challenging in a busy school environment.

RICs partners suggested that it would be useful to have a database of schools involved in the programme, to help share information more easily. They also hoped to see further development of the alignment with HGIOS, to ensure that Reading Schools was recognised at all levels.

What's next?

Going forward, Reading Schools will be rolled out progressively across Scotland. For the year 2021/22, it will be extended to include the West Partnership, which comprises eight local authorities: East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Glasgow City, Inverclyde, North Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, South Lanarkshire, and West Dunbartonshire.