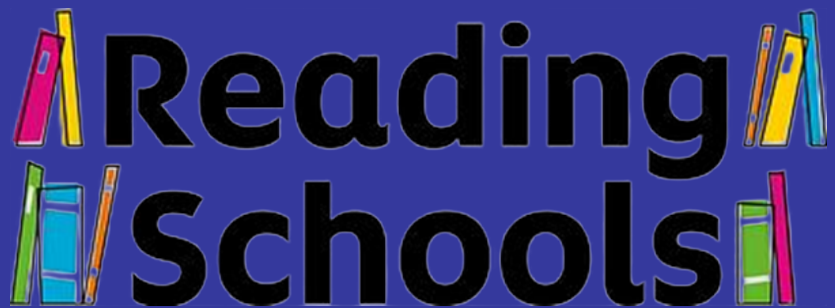




# Reading Schools Case Study

## Rosebank Primary School, Dundee



## BACKGROUND

This case study is about Rosebank Primary School which is in the Hilltown area of Dundee and has around 290 pupils. The school supports a high proportion of children from multilingual households and draws pupils from some of the most disadvantaged areas of the city. This case study was developed through discussions with six pupils, three teachers, five parents and one local project partner.

There was already a strong reading culture in the school before it began its Reading School journey in January 2021 – right in the middle of lockdown! After attending a Reading Schools training workshop, staff realised they could be doing more to encourage children to read for pleasure. They liked the structure and resources provided within the Reading Schools programme and this enabled them to develop a clear reading plan that made good use of the resources available.

The programme is led by one teacher who is the Raising Attainment and Literacy Lead. The school is currently working towards Silver accreditation within the Reading Schools programme.



**We've always tried to maintain a strong reading culture at Rosebank, but Reading Schools has helped us take this to the next level."  
- Literacy Lead**

## READING INITIATIVES

Prior to involvement in the Reading Schools programme, although the school had a dedicated library, it needed updating. The Library Leadership team, which consists of staff and a small group of pupils from P3 to P7, transformed an empty space into a welcoming, comfortable, open access library. They wrote to a local theatre for advice on how to create scenery and they designed a forest-themed area, full of bean bags and calming imagery.

The Library Leadership Team developed initiatives including:

- a recommendations shelf, where members of the team recommend books to pupils:
- a behind-the-scenes visit to the local public library to learn how to run a library; and
- and a trip to a local bookshop to choose new books.



**She's part of the library leadership team. She has a badge saying 'Librarian' which she's very proud of."  
- Parent**

# EXAMPLES OF READING SCHOOLS INITIATIVES

New initiatives developed during the Reading Schools programme include:


## Reading buddies

P6 and P7 pupils have a P1 reading buddy and they spend time each week during "Buddy Time" reading stories aloud.. Some children were reluctant at first but now enjoy it.

 **Normally I don't read picture books but it's so exciting!"**  
- P7 pupil


## Book characters

In order to get children talking about books, children are paired randomly at library time using pictures of famous book character duos. They each take a card and when they find their partner, they will sit and talk about the books they have been reading that week.

 **Kids who wouldn't normally speak to each other about books, do."**  
- Class teacher

## Class novel

Each class reads and studies a book together during literacy time, encouraging reflective reading and deeper understanding. Books are purposely linked to other curricular areas, including social studies, health and wellbeing and global citizenship.

 **The book they read on the refugee journey opened up such a range of conversations. It was fantastic! The diversity of their books is so important."**  
- Parent

## The Big 5

P1 and P2 classes focus on five picture books each term. Special "sparkle words" are chosen from these books to encourage vocabulary development. Upper school classes often use picture books to cover a range of health and wellbeing topics.

 **They are a good hook for interdisciplinary learning."**  
- Class teacher

## Book Week Scotland

The Library Leadership group read the P1 Book bug books and developed activities relating to the stories to be used with the P1 classes.

## Parents' group

Meetings in the outside library and a visit to the local library. Targeted P2 parents as teachers felt that this was the year group worst affected by the pandemic.

## Transition project

Teachers said this helps with transition between classes and teachers through discussions and use of related activities.

## World Book Day

The school always make a big deal out of World Book Day. During the pandemic, a Masked Reader activity and online book quiz were used . Activities this year included a book campout, a Book Tasting Café and a chance to make a book related t-shirt.


 **World Book Day is one of the best days!"**  
- P7 pupil

## Reader of the week

Each week the Library Leadership Team award 'Reader of the Week' to a pupil who has engaged positively with their reading that week. The reward is to be able to use the library's 'Tree House' for their library time.


## Meet the author

A local author visited the school to meet pupils and talk about what it's like to write a book. Pupils, teachers and parents all mentioned the visit as being particularly memorable.

 **Meeting the author excited them. It made them want to read all her books."**  
- Parent

## Reading in assemblies

This was an activity started online during the pandemic, but the school has recently started doing it again. Pupils are set the challenge to remember three new words from the story and to use the words in their interactions with teachers during the rest of the week. Teachers and parents both reported a noticeable improvement in pupils' vocabulary.

 **They use a school language. Like 'wow' words. From what I can glean it's when they use new vocabulary. It makes it exciting for them."**  
- Parent

## QR codes

Some teachers have put QR codes to new books on classroom walls so the pupils can immediately access new books.

## Outside library

During the pandemic, the school created a playground library to create a quiet, comfortable space that children could access during breaktimes.

# ENGAGING IN READING DURING THE PANDEMIC

The school used a variety of approaches to encourage reading during the pandemic. These included:

## Daily storytime

Every class teacher recorded and uploaded a daily story on See Saw, the school's parent app. Teachers and parents described how engaged the children were with the stories, noting that they helped maintain and deepen relationships.

**My children loved their teachers reading chapters or picture books to the class. That was the highlight of their day. And it really helped with their relationship too. If they were going to do anything, they'd do that."**  
- Parent

## Social media

The school engaged with social media to celebrate pupils' achievements and identify popular books through following channels that children follow on social media, like 'Book-Tok'.

**I read all the Wimpy Kid books during lockdown, and I brought them all into school. Mrs Burke took a photo and tweeted it and the author retweeted it saying 'cool!'"**  
- P7 pupil

## E-books

The school used EPIC and BorrowBox, encouraging pupils to read specific e-books through quizzes and questions.

## Book bags

Some children and parents described how the children read more during lockdown and the school encouraged this by providing book bags that followed a pupil's particular interest.

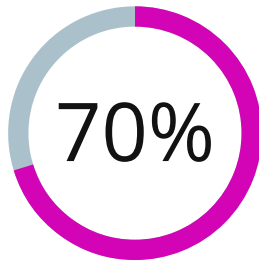
## Bilingual storytime

During lockdown pupils from bilingual families read stories in their own languages to their classmates. Teachers reported that this was really popular and helped to celebrate the diversity of the school population.

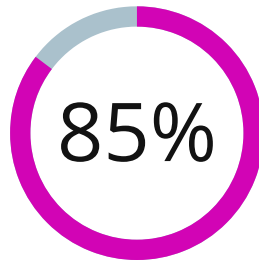
# THE DIFFERENCE IT MAKES FOR PUPILS

The school conducted a survey with all pupils during the summer of 2021 and results indicated an increase in reading for pleasure from the previous year.

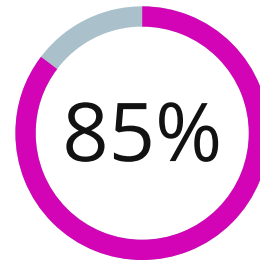
## Increased enjoyment of books



Said they enjoy reading a lot



Said they enjoy coming to the library a lot



Said they have enjoyed reading much more this year

## Increased access to books

Some of the school's pupils are actively encouraged to read at home, while others have limited or no access to books outside of school. The focus on reading for pleasure has provided access to books for all pupils and increased enthusiasm for reading among all pupils. Teachers reported that P1 pupils have now started their own book swap.

## Encouraging interests

Teachers said it was important to identify books that are not just at the right stage, but that also follow a child's interests. One teacher described a boy in her class who was a very reluctant reader who said that books weren't for him. She researched books that she thought he might like and found a spiderman book that she knew he would be able to read, and he is now actively reading.

## Access to diverse reading materials

The school's pupils are from a range of cultural and lingual backgrounds and teachers described the importance of providing a range of reading that reflects the interests and experiences of the school's diverse population.



**We have to make sure that there's something for everyone."**

**- Class teacher**



**“You need to make sure that the books in your classroom are the right books for your kids.”**  
- Class teacher

## Increased vocabulary

Teachers saw a noticeable change in pupil’s use of language, with words like ‘recommendation’ now being used in daily interactions as pupils discuss and recommend books to each other. Pupils recognised how reading has helped them to learn new words and encouraged them to think about new things, while parents reported noticing their children using increasingly complex language.

**“They use complicated language, but they understand it.”**  
- Parent

**“It helps me learn new words.”**  
- P7 pupil

## Increased confidence

Teachers and parents described how pupils’ confidence has increased, both in terms of identifying and choosing books that they think they will enjoy and in reading aloud to other people.

**“They’re much keener to read aloud to me as a result of the school’s input and practise in class.”**  
- Parent

## Improved health and wellbeing

Pupils said reading helps them to relax, including that it helps them to sleep better at night. Parents reported that their children are choosing to spend less time on their mobile phones and tablets.

**“It takes me somewhere else.”**  
- P7 pupil

**“It gets me to sleep quicker.”**  
- P7 pupil

## Global citizenship

Pupils described how they value the way that reading helps them develop a better understanding of people and situations that they haven't directly experienced. A group of P7 pupils talked about the importance of representation in books and how they enjoy reading about people with different experiences.

**“I’m reading a book with a character who uses a wheelchair and not a lot of characters are in wheelchairs, so that’s inspiring.”**  
- P7 pupil

**“Representation is about including people from different cultures, or people with disabilities, or people who wear hijabs.”**  
- P7 pupil

## Literacy and attainment

Pupils, teachers and parents described the positive impact that reading for pleasure has had on learning. Pupils all said they read for pleasure and encourage other pupils to keep reading, even if they are finding it difficult. They all talked about how reading helps them to learn new things and stay interested different topics.

**“Reading can get hard, but you should keep going.”**  
- P7 pupil

**“...they wouldn’t have half the knowledge that they do if the school hadn’t encouraged their reading.”**  
- Parent

## Emotional literacy

Parents and carers commented that they noticed improvements in their children’s ability to explain why they like certain books and characters, and that they can use this language to explain their own emotions.

**“They’re consuming more than just the words. They’re able to really understand the underlying message and they’re learning that emotional language. They’re able to explain what they’re feeling and why they’re feeling it much more.”**  
- Parent



# THE DIFFERENCE IT MAKES FOR STAFF

## Enthusiasm for reading

Teachers felt that Reading Schools has renewed enthusiasm for reading among the staff team, even on a personal level.

## Global citizenship

Teachers described developing a Global Goals curriculum where every part was linked directly to a book, noting how books are central to delivering this aspect of the curriculum.

## Encouraging dialogue

Teachers reported that the Reading Schools programme has helped them to understand the importance of dialogue and conversation about books, not only within the class but between pupils themselves.

## Motivation

Teachers reported that Reading Schools helped to keep them motivated to maintain a focus on reading throughout the pandemic, noting that without the programme it would have been easy to not see this as a priority.

## Interdisciplinary learning

Teachers felt Reading Schools provided the reason to link books to other areas of the curriculum, often using picture books to convey messaging about other topics.

## Tool for dealing with emotions

Teachers said reading helps to calm their classes when needed. One parent described how the library and reading has been crucial to help her children cope with a significant bereavement.

**It's the talk that goes on all around the books. I didn't realise that would be so important."**  
- Class teacher

**It would have been easy to put reading on the back burner during Covid but because we had a focus, we had to keep it going."**  
- Literacy lead

# THE DIFFERENCE IT MADE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

## Culture of reading

Parents described how their children's reading has changed the types of conversations they have as a family, noting that it has started conversations that they might not have had otherwise. Parents also reported that their children are asking for books and trips to the library now.



**My kids have been telling me that we need to go to the library to get books now!"**  
- Parent

## Alternative to electronic devices

Parents and carers felt that the emphasis on reading in school has encouraged their children to stay interested in reading, providing an alternative to electronic devices. They also felt that it has motivated them to keep actively encouraging reading at home.



**He's at that age where if you didn't constantly promote it, it might drop off as books don't draw his attention. It's given me the push to keep going with it."**  
- Parent

## Sibling relationships

A teacher described how one pupil has gained enough confidence in reading aloud to begin to read to their younger brother to support him in overcoming language delays. Parents also described how reading is supporting sibling relationships through helping younger siblings choose and read books.

## Identifying reading levels

A few parents described how children coming home with books from school helps them to understand their child's current reading level and ensure they are choosing books that are the right level for their child.

## ENGAGEMENT IN THE WIDER COMMUNITY

The school has worked closely with the children's library at Dundee's central library throughout the Reading Schools programme. This has included visits to the library by the Library Leadership Team to learn how libraries are run, and class visits to choose books.

The Library and Information Worker described one memorable visit was when the P7 and P1 Reading Buddies came to visit the library together, recalling how lovely it was to see the buddies choosing and reading books together. She also reported a significant increase in the number of children visiting the library after school hours and an increase in the amount of books that she is sending to the school.

**It was wonderful! So wonderful to see them taking the younger ones round and helping them choose books.”**  
- Library and information worker

## WHAT WORKED WELL

### Budget

Teachers described a collective enthusiasm and support for reading across the staff team, including from senior management. The school prioritises reading within the budget, directing some of the Pupil Equity Funding to the purchase of books. This enables teachers and the Library Leadership Team to identify and purchase books that are relevant to pupils' experiences and interests.

**There's real buy-in from the teachers here. There's a lot of love in it.”**  
- Literacy lead



## Staff time

Importantly, staff noted that a crucial aspect to the success of their Reading Schools programme is that they have one staff member whose role is specifically to develop literacy, noting the time it takes to manage the library.

**“My role is literacy, so I have the time. You really do need someone to look after the library.”**  
- Literacy lead

## School app

During lockdown the school started using the See Saw app to communicate with parents and carers. Parents spoke positively about this, noting that seeing photos of what their children have done that day helps to kick-start conversations with their children.

**“Kids often forget what they’ve been doing during the day but if you see photos on the app then you can ask specific questions and it makes conversation easier.”**  
- Parent

## Pupil choice

Teachers, parents and stakeholders described the importance of children having choice over what they read while also having adults with the knowledge needed to encourage and guide them in their reading journey.

**“It’s encouraged them to explore their reading and to make decisions about their reading. It’s given the kids the chance to realise the vast amount of books that are there for them to choose from.”**  
- Library and information worker

## Reading culture

The school has created a positive reading culture, where pupils actively talk about books they are reading and recommending books to each other.

**“There’s a general enthusiasm for reading which is infectious from the teachers.”**  
- Parent

**“It’s uncool not to read here.”**  
- Class teacher

## Recognising effort

Teachers described the importance of recognising both progress and effort, noting that they decided against adopting a school reading challenge as this may discourage pupils who are more reluctant readers. Instead, teachers described building an ethos of recognising achievement through wall displays and daily conversations that acknowledge every child's individual journey.

## Transparency

A few parents reported feeling reassured by seeing the books that their children are reading at school, noting that this helps them understand what their children are learning in school.



**It's really reassuring to see regular reading material coming home and how accomplished they're becoming. It's fantastic. You can't tell much from a school report, it's written in jargon, but actually seeing in front of you what your child's able to read is much more concrete and reassuring."**  
- Parent



## WHAT WAS CHALLENGING

### Staff confidence

Teachers felt that staff confidence had been a barrier and that encouraging an enthusiasm and love of reading among the staff team had been important. One teacher said she didn't like reading as a child, but she has a renewed enthusiasm for reading now due to the culture of reading and recommending books within that staff team.

### Multilingual households

Teachers noted the extra challenge of encouraging a culture of reading at home when children are living in multilingual households due to the difficulty in assessing the right level of a book which is not in your first language, and in ensuring a range of available reading material. They hope to overcome this through purchasing a 'Magic pen' that translates books into other languages.

## WHAT NEXT?

Parents and carers said they missed being able to go into the school building. The majority hope that this restriction will ease soon to enable them to meet their child's teacher in person and see the school building.

The Library and Information Worker at Dundee Central Library reported that she would like to build stronger relationships between the various libraries across the city and their local schools. She hoped to increase awareness of how libraries can support schools.

She would also like to have more information about the Reading Schools programme so she could be more active in promoting the scheme with local schools.

The school would like to restart weekly library sessions with parents and children in school.

There will be a continued focus on building a multilingual library and increasing the selection of graphic novels.