

EVALUATION

The title 'Reading Schools' is written in a large, bold, black sans-serif font. The word 'Reading' is on the top line and 'Schools' is on the bottom line. The text is surrounded by colorful illustrations of books and pencils. On the left side, there are three books (pink, yellow, and green) and one pencil (orange). On the right side, there are three books (yellow, blue, and green) and one pencil (pink).

Reading Schools

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CONTENTS

- [1 Introduction](#)
- [2 Outcomes achieved](#)
- [3 Views on engaging in Reading Schools](#)
- [4 Stakeholder reflections](#)
- [5 Conclusions](#)

APPENDICES

Coatbridge High School
James Young High School
Netherburn Primary School
Rosebank Primary School



01 INTRODUCTION

About this report

This is an evaluation report of Scottish Book Trust's Reading Schools programme during 2021/22. 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.

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; all schools in Forth Valley and West Lothian were invited to take part and 30 schools across the Tayside RIC, which includes Angus, Dundee City and Perth and Kinross local authorities, were selected by local authority partners to participate. In 2021/22, Reading Schools was extended to include the West Partnership, which includes eight local authorities: East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Glasgow City, Inverclyde, North Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, South Lanarkshire, and West Dunbartonshire. In 2022/23 the programme will be rolled out nationally.

Reading Schools is delivered in partnership with the RICs. 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.

Following Scottish Book Trust's approval of the action plan, schools set about carrying out their planned activities and collected evidence. Schools can then submit their completed evidence plan to Scottish Book Trust for accreditation in due course. 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.

Reading Schools participation

As at August 2022, there are now 197 schools which hold Reading Schools accreditation:



Many of these schools achieved their accreditation during 2021/22. During this year:



There were also 370 schools working towards their accreditation in 2021/22:

- 304 working towards Core – of which 253 began their application during 2021/22
- 51 working towards Silver – of which 38 began their application during 2021/22
- 15 working towards Gold – of which 11 began their application during 2021/22.

Many of the schools which achieve a Core or Silver award then go on to apply for the next level up. Over a third (38%) of schools achieving a Silver award had registered for the Gold award and a similar proportion of schools achieving a Silver award also registered for a further level (36%). Many schools registered to begin their application for their next award very soon after achieving their first award. For example, most schools achieving Silver and going on to apply for Gold began their application within one month (60%).

Evaluation method

Surveys

We conducted two online surveys of schools involved in the 2021/22 Reading Schools programme.

The first survey focused on the process of participating in Reading Schools, and received 105 responses. Most (97) provided details about their school. Of these, most (74%) were from primary schools, some (20%) were from secondary schools, and a small number (6%) were from schools with both primary and secondary provision. The largest proportion of responses were from class teachers (45%). Others responding to the survey included principal teachers (18%), heads and deputy heads (17%), school librarians (10%) and others such as classroom assistants.

The second survey focused on the difference that Reading Schools had made, and received 87 responses. Again most responses were from primary schools (74%) and a quarter (26%) were from secondary schools. Respondents followed a similar profile to the process survey.

Stakeholder interviews

We conducted interviews with five individuals who were involved in Reading Schools. These interviews explored their views on the programme, their expectations, their experiences, their perceptions on the impact of the programme and suggestions for development. We also interviewed four staff members at Scottish Book Trust involved in planning, managing and delivering the Reading Schools programme.

Case studies

We developed four case studies. 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. Each case study involved a face to face visit to the school, speaking with teachers, head teachers, librarians, pupils and parents.

The case studies are included as an Appendix to this report, and learning from the case studies is referenced throughout.

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 April to June 2022.

Impact on reading

Most respondents stated that Reading Schools activities had impacted positively on pupils. Respondents reported that as a result of Reading Schools, there was a significant impact on pupils in relation to their reading¹:



Increased engagement with reading activities

Almost all school staff felt that because of Reading Schools, reading for pleasure had become a routine activity at their school (97%).

Respondents stated that Reading Schools activities have promoted engagement in reading across different age groups and increased the number of pupils actively enjoying reading. Activities include paired reading within and across year groups, reading circles, live literature and author visit sessions, reading buddies, reading clubs, pupil librarians, pupil book reviews and recommendations, story sacks, readathons, 'masked reader' storytime, and the use of Therapet animals.

¹ Respondents stating that there had been 'quite a lot' or 'a lot' of impact as a result of Reading Schools activity

Impact on reading spaces and access to literature

Most survey respondents felt that because of Reading Schools, pupils now have comfortable spaces to read at school (93%).

Respondents reported that they had observed positive impacts from the creation of new library spaces and reading nooks, in both communal school areas and classrooms. Staff felt that these spaces provide welcoming and calming environments, stating that this has positively impacted on pupils' behaviours and promoted wider learning. Staff reported increases in the use of these spaces throughout the school day, during class time, during breaks and before and after school. Some respondents felt that the availability of these calm, safe spaces has been particularly impactful for pupils with additional support needs.

Example: Libraries as safe spaces

One particular child really struggled with being in school and understanding the demands of everyday school life. When our library spaces were fully developed, this child absolutely loved the safe, calm and relaxing environment and used it every day. He spent hours reading books and playing with den building materials. The support assistants loved using this space to. I would say that as a result of Reading Schools this child was much happier, safer and willing to engage in his learning.

Head/Deputy head teacher

Staff highlighted the positive impact of having a wider range of contemporary literature, including fiction and non-fiction books, graphic novels, specialist and accessible literature, and foreign language books. Respondents indicated that this has promoted inclusion, improved engagement and increased enthusiasm for reading. School staff provided numerous examples of pupils who have found a genre of books that reflects their interests and who are now actively sourcing their own literature.

“One S2 pupil would not engage in any reading activity but since the increase of new, inclusive books in the library they regularly come to class and are able to sustain reading books that they see themselves in. The ability to have LGBT books has given this pupil confidence.”

English teacher

“One pupil said the motto 'it doesn't matter what you're reading, as long as you're reading' really helped her and it took away the stigma of reading picture books in the library when her friends were reading long chapter books.”

Head/Deputy head teacher

Example: Use of non-fiction literature

Prior to beginning our Reading Schools journey there was a child in the Primary 7 class who would not engage with reading. He would complain if asked to choose a book or listen to texts read by the teacher. With the introduction of Reading Schools, and in particular looking at children's interests, the school bought in contemporary books which he became more interested in. He loved sport and science, so the new non-fiction books sparked an enthusiasm and interest not seen before. He began to choose books and even did a talk to the class about a science experiment he had read about.

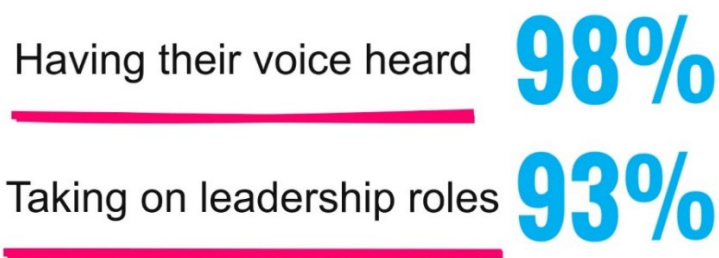
Class teacher

Case Study: Coatbridge High School

In Coatbridge High School pupils now have access to a wider range of contemporary and accessible literature. They are supported to make their own choices about what to read through the use of reading lists, genre colour-coding, and 'book match' lists, where pupils can identify books that they might like based on other books that they have read. Pupils reported that the range of books available to them has enabled them to experience worlds that are different to their own and helps to develop their imaginations.

Impact on leadership and pupil voice

Survey respondents reported that Reading Schools had a significant impact on pupil voice and leadership opportunities. Almost all felt that the programme helped pupils to have their voice heard, and to take on leadership roles.



Respondents reported a range of leadership activities developed as part of their Reading Schools programmes. Leadership activities include roles on Library Leadership Teams, pupil librarians, reading buddies and reading volunteers. Respondents reported that these activities have supported pupils to build relationships across year groups, promoted more positive relationships between staff and pupils, increased levels of engagement with reading, and positively impacted on pupil behaviours.

Example: Reading Volunteers

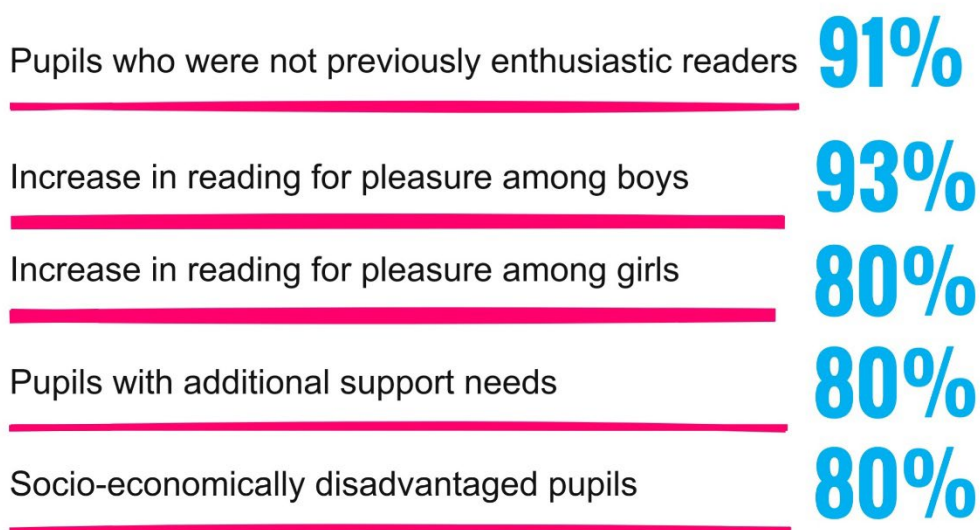
One of our learners in P5 has ADHD and although she has well-developed reading skills she does not choose to read in school. During our 'Softstart' she would often have disagreements with others and would not always make good choices with regards to behaviour. This often meant she did not have a positive start to the day. Through our 'Reading Volunteer' project she now loves to read to younger pupils in the morning. She puts on her lanyard and goes off to classes to find others who would like to hear a story. She enjoys talking to the younger pupils, talking to them about book choices and organising them so they are ready to listen to the story. She has a purpose to this time now and has a sense of responsibility. Her class teacher noted she is more willing to read in class and is really ready to begin her learning each day. When she read to a primary one class the teacher observed the class was calmer too.

[Literacy lead](#)

Impact on a range of pupils

Most survey respondents felt that there had been an increase in reading for pleasure across all the target groups. However, the activities had been particularly impactful for boys, for pupils with additional support needs and for pupils from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Survey respondents reported that they had noticed an increase in the level of reading for pleasure because of Reading Schools:



Impact on boys

Respondents felt that the availability of a wider range of more contemporary literature has been particularly impactful for boys. Respondents provided examples of staff taking time to understand and find books that reflect pupils' interests, stating that they felt this has increased engagement, enthusiasm and motivation for reading. School staff provided examples of boys engaging more enthusiastically with non-fiction literature, comics and graphic novels.

“One boy in P5 was very disinterested in books and reading. He found it a challenge and he didn't enjoy reading time. He now looks forward to going to the library and choosing books all about football and WWII. He is even taking books home to finish!”

Class teacher

Impact on pupils with additional support needs

School staff reported particularly positive impacts of Reading Schools activities on pupils with additional support needs. Activities highlighted include the availability of a wider range of fiction, non-fiction and dyslexia-friendly literature, including graphic novels and comics, the use of audio books, and the introduction of leadership roles. Respondents highlighted how improvements to school libraries had created 'safe', calming spaces, noting how this has been particularly impactful for this group of pupils. Respondents provided examples of increased levels of engagement, increased enthusiasm for reading, improved reading levels, and fewer incidents of disruptive behaviours.

“Pupils in ASN particularly have responded well to Reading Schools and are much more confident in choosing books appropriate for their reading level by using the library more regularly.”

School librarian

“One particular individual in upper primary has a diagnosis and struggles with his behaviour. He now uses reading as a regulation strategy to calm himself down, taking himself into the library for some personal time.”

Class teacher

Example: Keep the Heid and Read

A group of reluctant readers from the HIVE (unit for pupils with additional support needs) visited the library as part of Keep the Heid and Read. They read books for pleasure for six minutes and enjoyed it so much they have asked the teacher if they can make the six-minute read a regular activity in the unit.

School librarian

**Case Study:
Netherburn Primary
School**

Netherburn Primary School has introduced a system of QR codes to increase accessibility of audio and video books to all pupils. A pupil with a visual impairment has benefitted from this, accessing books via the QR codes. The school reports that this approach has enabled all pupils to access audio and video books, promoting inclusion and ensuring that any pupil with additional needs is able to read alongside their peers.

Impact on socio-economically disadvantaged pupils

Respondents provided examples of the impact of reading for pleasure for pupils from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Activities to increase access to books included book giveaways and gifting, book swaps and exchanges, drives to increase library membership and use of digital books. In some cases, respondents highlighted how these activities have not only increased access to literature but also improved the school's awareness of pupils who may not have access to books at home.

“Getting all of our children library cards was beneficial to everyone but particularly for a group of children who did not have as much access to books. The online library opened up a whole new world to them at no financial cost.”

Head/Deputy head teacher

“Two boys who previously had no books at home have gained access to reading material through our book swaps. This has given them ownership of reading and also motivation to continue to involve themselves in the book swaps.”

Class teacher

Impact on pupils with English as an additional language

A few respondents provided examples of activities for pupils with English as an additional language. Activities included use of native language literature and ensuring availability of graphic novels and age-appropriate picture books. Respondents stated that these targeted activities have increased confidence levels among this group of children and improved engagement with parents and carers.

Example: Native language literature

Polish children within our school are now given opportunities to come together to speak in their first language using books to support discussions and to structure sessions. This is led by a Support for Learning Assistant and a P7 child. The families of the children are delighted that the children's cultural language is being recognised and valued. Prior to Reading Schools, there were no opportunities for these children to come together. One P7 boy who has autistic tendencies is usually found on his own in the playground and limits his social interactions with others. As lead of this group, we have seen him much more expressive and *smile* when he is in the group!

Principal teacher

Example: Valuing life experiences

We have a boy who moved from overseas last year. Due to having EAL he can struggle with literacy tasks, and this can negatively impact on his behaviour. We have introduced lots of graphic novels and picture books to the class. Recently we were reading and discussing 'The Arrival' by Shaun Tan. When I asked if anyone had chosen to read it this boy raised his hand. When we went on to discuss the book, the insight this child had and the inferences he had deduced were astute. Through discussion, it was clear he was able to analyse the images and interpret the meanings on a relatively deep level. His lived experience of moving to a strange land made him the expert. It was wonderful to see him so engaged and animated in this lesson.

Principal teacher

Impact on health and wellbeing

Respondents reported a positive impact of reading for pleasure on health and wellbeing for both pupils and staff. Respondents from across primary and secondary schools suggested that reading helps to settle classes, builds empathy and supports the development of new friendships. Staff reported that they believe regular reading helps to facilitate learning through supporting pupils to focus on the lesson, irrespective of the subject being taught. Some respondents indicated that the wider range of contemporary literature has enabled pupils to find books that reflect their lived experiences which has improved self-esteem and confidence.

“The children are more empathetic and are able to talk about their feelings and the feelings of others.”
Class teacher

“Children are calm and more ready to learn after reading for pleasure. They are settled and more able to focus.”
Principal teacher

Example: Reading at start of lessons

I think the Reading Schools scheme literally gave both pupils and staff "permission to read". Life in a secondary school is very much geared towards tasks, timetables, homework, assessment etc. We needed the opportunity to recognise that simply sitting with a good book can and does contribute to attainment, as well as having a multitude of other benefits. We now recognise reading - just reading - is enough. The 10-15 minutes reading at the start of every lesson has been transformative. It calms and focuses pupils, setting the tone for the remainder of the period so the whole lesson benefits, even when it is not related to books.

School librarian

Case Study: James Young High School

James Young High School has focused on building a library of representative literature through delivering a 'Read Woke' project. Developed in partnership with the local authority, the project originates from the US and focuses on social injustice and human rights. The 'Read Woke' titles are marked with a gold star so that pupils can identify them. When pupils read four titles they earn a silver badge, and when they read eight, they achieve a gold badge. Pupils write reviews of the books they have read and discuss them with their peers and teachers. They are encouraged to develop projects and posters about the books focusing on race, class, culture, inequalities and wider social justice issues.

Some respondents also highlighted an increase in reading amongst staff, noting the positive impact that this has had on health and wellbeing. Respondents reported that staff are discussing books more, sharing recommendations for both adult and children's literature, and protecting time for daily reading. Alongside the positive impact on staff wellbeing, respondents further suggest that this has promoted dialogue between staff and pupils.

“I had lots of staff tell me how nice it was to be able to read and to have a platform outwith their subject that allowed them to interact with pupils.”
Principal teacher of English

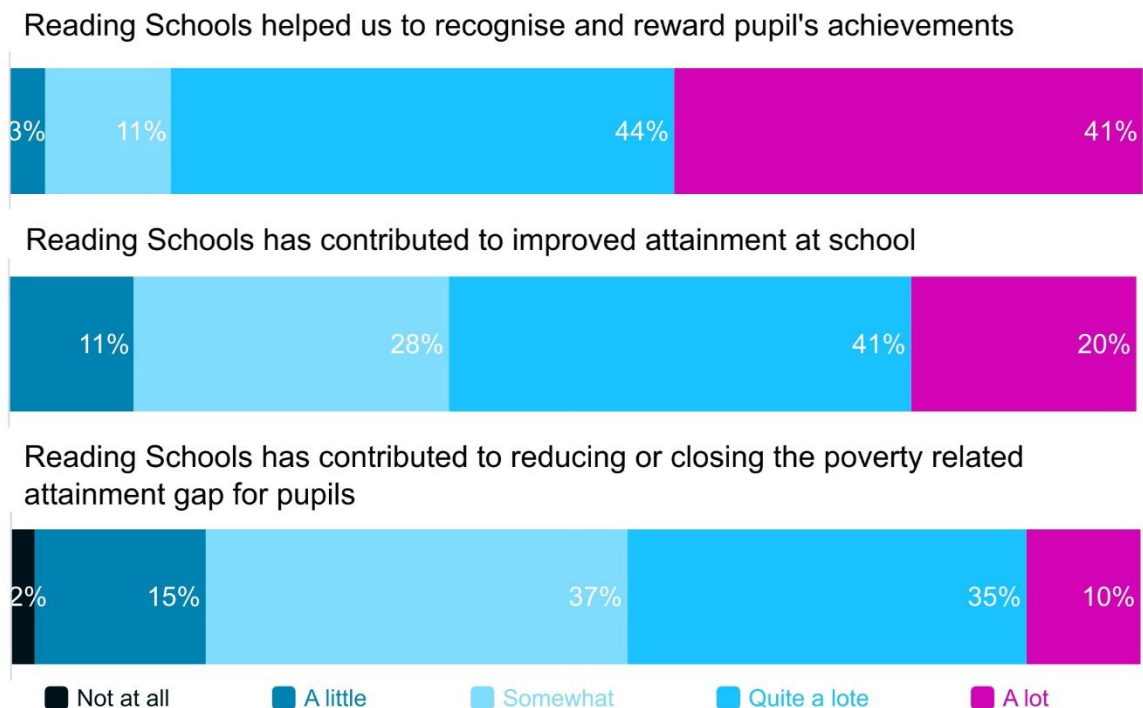
Example: Daily reading time

The children have described reading time as relaxing, time to be calm, quiet time, switch off, a time to escape. The classes also choose the time that suits them best to stop and read. This has allowed the staff and their children to take ownership of this time. The staff have reported this as a time they didn't know they needed. A time to stop and enjoy their own book for 15 minutes each day was beneficial.

Acting principal teacher

Impact on attainment

Most respondents reported that Reading Schools has helped them to recognise and reward pupil's achievements, support attainment and reduce the poverty related attainment gap to some extent.



Respondents provided examples of positive impacts on attainment, including rapid improvements in reading levels once pupils have identified a genre of books that reflects their interests. One respondent reported that in a recent assessment, they had identified significant improvements in reading levels and reduction in the attainment gap in literacy for their P6 class. This respondent indicated that this is directly related to the prioritisation of reading for pleasure within the curriculum.

Example: Reduced attainment gap

A P7 boy, who lives in one of the more socially deprived areas of the village, had very little interest in reading. We have struggled throughout his primary years to engage him, and this has impacted his attainment and opportunities for success. The drive to increase library membership is what has impacted him. He lives near the library, so he now gets off the bus a stop early and visits the library regularly on his way home from school. He loves to show his latest new book and the increase in the amount he reads has been significant. He is 'hooked'! This in turn has increased his attainment and he is now reading at expected levels and is in a strong position for moving on to find success in high school.

Head/Deputy head teacher

Case Study: Netherburn Primary School

Pupils from Netherburn Primary School were able to clearly articulate the ways that they feel that Reading Schools activities have improved their reading skills. Pupils said that they are reading more and that this has helped them to learn new words and develop their writing skills, drawing skills, creativity and imagination. Parents agreed that their children's reading skills have improved, stating that they talk in more depth about books and are now able to analyse the stories they read. Parents also reported improvements in their children's handwriting.

Impact on families and communities

School staff reported an overall increase in the number of families engaged in reading for pleasure (98%) and the frequency of engagement activities (98%). All respondents indicated that they felt that reading for pleasure brings their school community together, however some felt that engagement with families and the wider community was still developing, primarily due to Covid restrictions.

Case Study: Netherburn Primary School

Due to their rural location, staff at Netherburn Primary School realised that high public transport costs were creating a barrier to accessing public libraries. The school decided to address this through opening a community library. The library has been very well received by the local community, with pupils providing tours for families, and parents and carers being invited into the school every four weeks to take part in a Book Blether. The school buys books for families, including magazines and cookbooks and has trained parents and carers on how to use QR codes to access books in different formats to reflect abilities and preferences. The school has also facilitated literacy workshops for families,

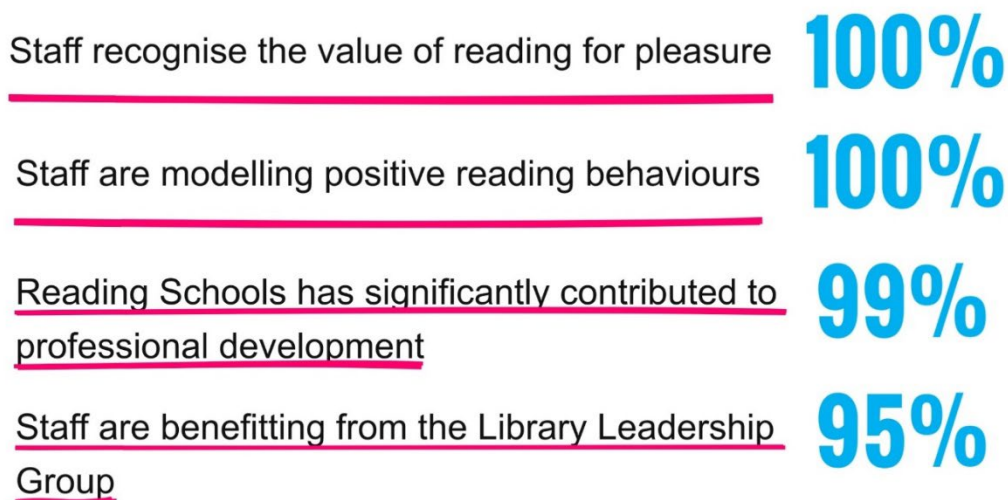
providing leadership experiences for the pupils through enabling them to teach their families what they have learned about reading and writing.

“We've never had a school do that before.” **Parent**

“Our mission was to get our village reading.” **Head Teacher**

Impact on professional practice

Survey respondents felt that Reading School contributed significantly to professional development.



Respondents state that Reading Schools has contributed to professional development through encouraging new collaborations across staff teams. Some respondents felt that it had reduced the workload on school librarians through highlighting how literacy can be integrated across the curriculum.

“It has allowed Library staff to learn so much more about how other areas in the school were already supporting reading for pleasure in their own ways. This in turn has forged new collaborations and opportunities for mutual support.”
School librarian

Respondents reported the positive impact of staff and pupils working together within the Reading Leadership Group, noting how this has raised the profile of reading and facilitated pupil voices within the school. Some respondents suggest that this has developed pupils' leadership skills and created positive role models for reading, as well as increasing pupils' enthusiasm, confidence and sense of pride.

“Staff unity, working together rather than doing a role on your own has been invaluable. The engagement from the children and their enthusiasm for the project has maintained the momentum.”
Acting principal teacher

**Case Study:
Rosebank Primary
School**

Rosebank Primary School has invested time and energy into designing a welcoming, comfortable library for the pupils. As the building does not have a dedicated library space, staff worked with their Library Leadership Team, made up of a small group of P3-P7 pupils, to transform a space along one of the upper corridors into a beautifully welcoming open access area. After writing to a local theatre for advice on how to create scenery, the Leadership Team designed a forest-themed library area full of bean bags and calming imagery. The Leadership Team runs the library with the support of one member of staff.

School staff felt that the Reading Schools programme has raised the profile of reading for pleasure and helped them to create a culture for reading. Respondents reported that they have seen more excitement about reading within their schools and teachers reported feeling more able to make space for reading within their daily timetables. School staff felt that Reading Schools has also raised the profile of libraries within schools and enabled new discussions and conversations to happen.

“The love of reading has been restored in our school.”
Class teacher

“There is a focus on reading across the school so it is more acceptable to make extra room for it in your daily timetable.”
Class teacher

03

VIEWS ON ENGAGING IN READING SCHOOLS

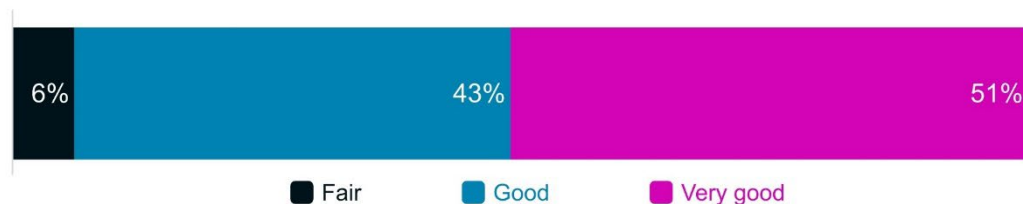
Introduction

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.

Overall experience of the Reading Schools programme

School staff felt positive about their experience of the Reading Schools programme. In particular, respondents commented that they found the website easy to navigate, the guides clear and suggested activities useful for sparking new ideas. Respondents noted that they felt supported with additional advice being available when needed.

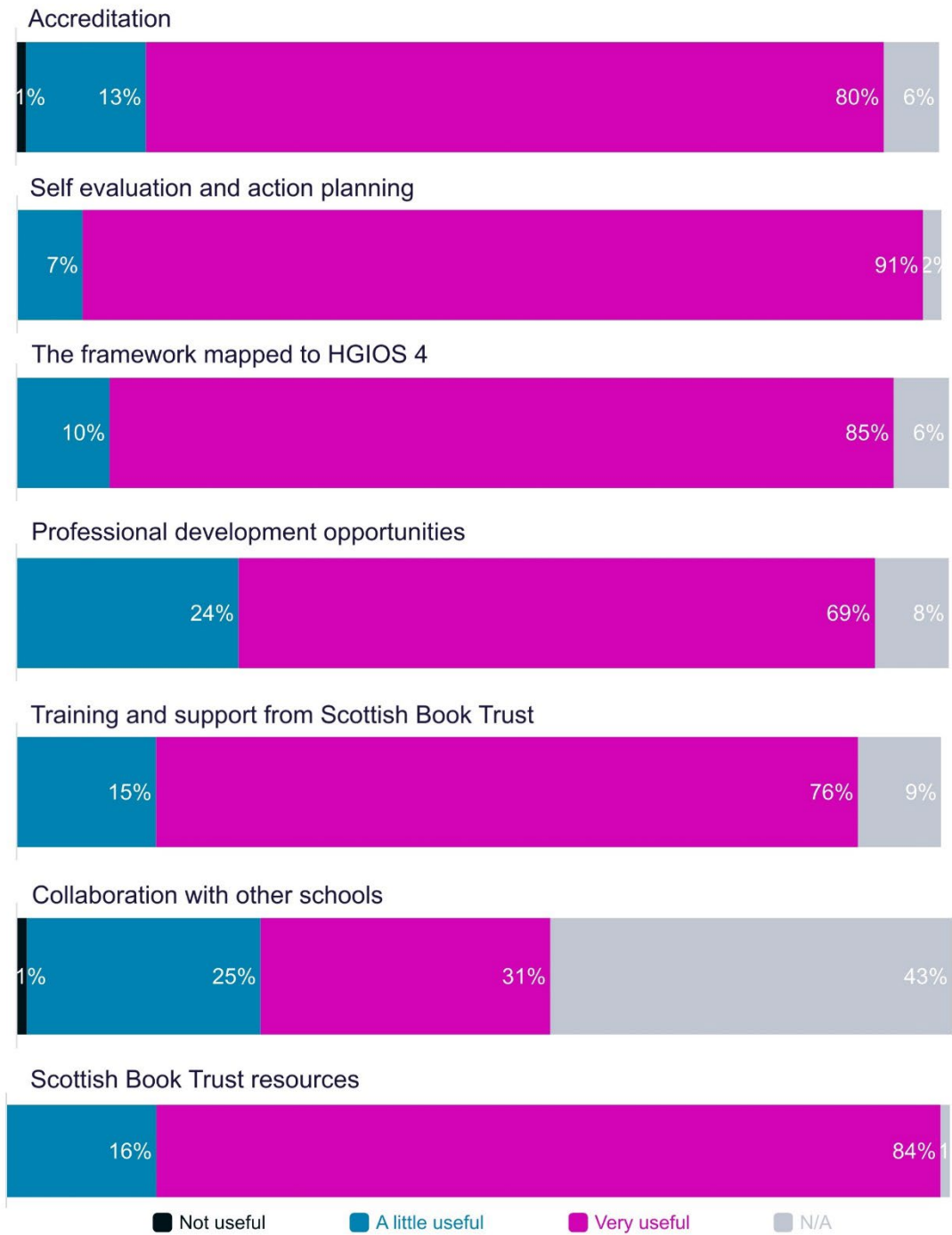
How would you rate your experience of the Reading Schools Programme?
[n=105]



Views on programme structure

School staff were very positive about the programme structure. Specifically, almost all respondents liked the provision of Scottish Book Trust resources, the tools for self-evaluation and action planning, and the professional development opportunities. Respondents also noted that it was useful to map the framework to How Good Is Our School (HGIOS) and were supportive of the potential for accreditation.

Views on programme management [n=103/105]



What works well

School staff identified the following success factors:

- provision of a self-evaluation framework
- provision of a clear, flexible and inclusive action plan
- accessible and informative training and resources
- provision of case studies and practice exchange events
- programme flexibility to adapt to specific school contexts
- potential for accreditation
- mapping to existing education policies
- digital platform for submission
- supportive and responsive staff team
- focus on inclusion and pupil voice.

Flexible self-evaluation and planning framework

Most respondents were positive about the Reading Schools structure, highlighting that it provides a focused but flexible framework that supports schools to develop individualised plans. Staff noted that the programme has encouraged them to plan more activities and events alongside supporting them to showcase literacy across the whole school curriculum.

“It was great to have a framework and a clear set of guidelines to work towards as a whole school.”
Class teacher

“The Self-Evaluation Tool and Action Plan have been very helpful in supporting us in beginning and developing our Reading Schools journey.”
Principal teacher

Accreditation and evidence requirements

Respondents stated that evidence requirements for each stage of the action plan are clear and indicated that they found the mapping to HGIOS useful for both evaluation and planning. Some respondents stated that they found the online platform user-friendly and the process for uploading evidence easy.

“The framework linked to HGIOS has allowed us to take a closer look at what we are doing already and given us targets to improve reading.”
School librarian

Accessible, informative training and resources

Most respondents were positive about the quality and range of training and resources. Specifically, respondents highlighted the quality and frequency of the webinars along with the usefulness of case studies and practice exchange events.

Some respondents also reported a positive impact of the Bookzilla app to widen staff and pupil knowledge of books.

“Fantastic and frequent webinars full of information.”
Class teacher

“The ideas and resources are a great help. I enjoyed watching the webinars and learning about the different ways of engaging pupils.”
English teacher

Inclusion and pupil voice

Respondents were positive about the focus on pupil voice within the Reading Schools programme. Staff reported that the resources and training has supported them to identify new ways to involve students, particularly through the Library Leadership Teams. Staff noted that this had been particularly impactful for quieter, more reserved pupils and for pupils with additional support needs.

“We like that pupils' voices are at the centre of all of the Reading Schools targets.”
Principal teacher of English

“I think the most important point about Reading Schools is that it is fully inclusive through awarding and valuing reading simply for enjoyment.”
Literacy lead

Challenges

Time and restrictions

Some respondents highlighted the impact of Covid restrictions, noting that these limited their ability to work across year groups and with the wider community. Some respondents pointed to the difficulties of finding time for this work due to the demands of delivering an already crowded curriculum.

“With COVID restrictions, we feel we didn't do as much as we would have liked with our families and the wider community.”
Principal teacher (Primary)

Evidence requirements

A few respondents suggested that there was lack of clarity about the quantity and type of evidence required for the different criteria. Some noted that collating evidence could be challenging and the uploading of individual photos and videos onto the platform time-consuming. Some respondents suggest that an overview of the different sections of the plan, with hyperlinks to the relevant sections, along with

the ability to upload 'bundles' rather than individual images might be useful. Some respondents pointed to the usefulness of the evidence for school inspections.

Views on no fixed deadlines

Most respondents expressed support for the flexible deadlines, with some noting that this was a key factor in their decision to sign up for the Reading Schools programme. Respondents suggested that the flexible deadlines reduce pressure on staff and supports the embedding of a reading ethos within the school. Some respondents felt that the flexibility makes the awards more achievable through enabling coordination with school development plans. A few respondents felt that having no deadline reduces the priority level for the work, suggesting that a time-limit of 6 months may be a useful approach.

“ I liked this aspect of the programme as at no point did we feel under pressure. It ensured we were building solid foundations of our reading culture before we felt ready to submit.”
Recovery teacher

“ A deadline would keep you focused, but in terms of stress having no deadline is more attractive - it means you can do it at your own pace.”
Principal teacher (Primary)

Areas for development

Respondents made the following suggestions for areas for development:

More resources

A few respondents suggested the introduction of branded resources such as bookmarks and certificates, along with the development of child-friendly book lists and leaflets, particularly in relation to equalities issues. Other suggestions included: the development of editable digital reading resources to enable personalisation; an online book borrowing system; a platform for schools to upload and share resources; audio books for pupils with English as an additional language; the availability of iPad software to listen to stories; and more suggestions for S1-S3 book projects.

More events

A few respondents suggested that they would like to see more 'meet the author/illustrator' and storytelling events, suggesting that these could be offered as prizes for accreditation. A few suggested more local events specific to their local authority areas and a few suggested more competitions and quizzes, with the possibility of winning funding or books for schools.

Case studies and exemplars

Some respondents suggested that more case studies and exemplars of good practice may be useful, particularly from schools which have been awarded Gold level accreditation. Other suggestions include provision of exemplar action plans and evidence logs for each level, with examples of evidence for each criterion.

Professional development

Some respondents suggested that they would like to see more professional development and practice sharing opportunities. Suggestions include supporting knowledge of the pedagogy on reading for pleasure and of the breadth of children's literature.

Evidence requirements

A few respondents highlighted that they found gathering evidence challenging due to their school size. Small schools reported difficulties in gathering the range of evidence required, while larger schools reported difficulties in collating and submitting evidence due to the volume required.

Systems/Processes

A few respondents made specific suggestions regarding processes, including:

- uploading batches of photos as evidence
- including the option to type an explanation for a photo to improve evidence quality
- use of hyperlinks in the plan that link directly to the various sections
- ability to preview and download a submission, including the photographs and text, to enable schools to keep this on file
- more direct contact between Reading Schools staff and children, either through school visits or Teams calls with pupils
- use of editable resources to enable schools to adapt and individualise, for example through including their school logo
- more opportunities for discussion, feedback and sharing of ideas
- a mentoring system to support staff at the start of their Reading Schools journey.

04 Stakeholder reflections

Introduction

This chapter explores the views of staff and wider stakeholders on the Reading Schools programme. It is based on discussions with five stakeholders involved in education or libraries, and four Scottish Book Trust staff involved in planning, managing or supporting the programme.

Programme design

All stakeholders were enthusiastic about the Reading Schools programme and positive about the programme aims, delivery methods, programme management and the intended outcomes.

All stakeholders expressed strong support for the design of the Reading Schools programme. Stakeholders particularly welcomed the clear framework for action planning, noting that this facilitates an honest initial assessment while proactively encouraging the development of new ideas.

“It gives ideas. It opens up their eyes about what they can be doing to promote reading for pleasure.”
Education Officer

Stakeholders appreciated the clear alignment with the curriculum and HGIOS, noting that this ensures that Reading Schools activities can be clearly linked to school development plans. Partners indicated that this in turn encourages engagement with the programme as schools can easily identify how Reading Schools supports them to achieve other targets.

Staff emphasised that the alignment of Reading Schools with How Good is Our School was fundamental, and necessary for the programme to be valuable, useful and beneficial to schools. Having the programme embedded with wider self-evaluation and planning helps to give weight to the programme, and be useful to schools.

All stakeholders supported the programme’s approach to accreditation, particularly welcoming the way Reading Schools identifies current good practice alongside encouraging the development of a new programme of activities. The removal of deadlines was appreciated, with some partners identifying this as a key factor in schools’ decisions to engage with the programme.

“It’s allowed schools to put this back on the agenda and include it in improvement plans again.”
Education Officer

All partners expressed confidence in the Reading Schools resources, stating that they often signpost school staff to these resources.

“We promote the programme really heavily. My colleague and I will be working in a school and right at the beginning of the planning meeting we say ‘why don’t you sign up for Reading Schools?’”

Public Librarian

Staff were pleased with the uptake of Reading Schools during 2021/22 and felt that recovery from the pandemic had played a key role in opening up participation. Both staff and wider stakeholders highlighted that Reading Schools could support recovery and build positivity and sense of achievement within schools. Some felt that many schools had made reading and literacy a priority, to address gaps in learning, which has supported engagement with the programme.

“It provides motivation and inspiration and a sense of achievement. The psychological impact of the achievement is a real benefit.”

Education Officer

Staff felt that the quality of evidence submitted was high, with schools using beautiful, creative and imaginative approaches to demonstrating their impact. This does result in a lot of evidence, and requires a focus in on some aspects to celebrate one or two achievements, because there is so much that schools have done.

Partnership working

Staff felt that the roll out of the programme through Regional Improvement Collaboratives had been vital, and worked well. It allowed the programme to start small, adapt based on learning, and grow organically over time. This has involved working with the RICs on their journey around reading, and working in a way that suits each region. RICs played a key role in showcasing the benefits of Reading Schools and encouraging uptake and staff believed that the programme would not be where it was without the support and engagement of the RICs.

Some staff reflected that the smaller scale enabled personal relationships to be developed with RICs and with schools, and it was important to think about how to maintain that personable relationship as the programme expands and grows.

Wider stakeholders were broadly positive about their experience of working with Scottish Book Trust, noting that staff were helpful and available. Local authority partners were particularly positive about programme management, noting that they always knew who to contact about an issue. They reported that Scottish Book Trust staff were always proactive with providing relevant information and that this meant they were better able to support schools in their authority area.

“All the staff I’ve worked with at the Scottish Book Trust and Reading Schools have been beyond helpful.”

Education Officer

“ I don't think I could do my job in the way I do without their support. They're really genuinely asking how can we make things better? They're very accessible. It's a lovely symbiotic relationship.”
Public Librarian

“ My remit is quite big, so having that connection is not just helping but it's actually making my job doable.”
Education Officer

Some partners were positive about the level of engagement with public partners, noting that this has strengthened partnerships between schools and public libraries. Partners reported that Reading Schools has increased the profile of school librarians, highlighting their knowledge and how this contributes to the wider curriculum. A few felt that there should be a clearer path for how public libraries can participate in Reading Schools and use the framework and expressed a desire to extend partnership working opportunities between public libraries and schools.

Outcomes achieved

All partners stated that they believed the programme to be increasing engagement with and enthusiasm for reading. Partners within local authorities stated that they have received positive feedback from schools. Public library partners reported seeing an increase in the numbers of children coming into the library and talking to library staff about both the books that they are reading now and the books they would like to read in the future.

“ Reading is an essential part of our curriculum and Reading Schools is the most viable path to continue to promote it across our schools.”
Education Officer


All partners felt that the programme was impacting positively on pupils. They reported that the programme is making reading more accessible and relevant to children's lived experiences which in turn is enabling children to make more informed choices about the books that they read. This is then enabling libraries to have conversations about different genres of books with children which is then influencing the types of books they buy.

Partners reported an increased enthusiasm for reading, stating that they have seen a marked increase in the number of children wanting to read books. Partners welcomed activities like the author and illustrator visits, noting that these demystified writing and enabled children to see authors as real people.

“ It's a joy to see how much they are enjoying reading and how engaged they are.”
Public Librarian

Some partners highlighted that schools have actively targeted children who would not normally engage with reading and reported that they have emerging data indicating a significant reduction in the numbers of children reporting that they dislike

reading. While most partners did not have direct data to demonstrate impact, they all stated that they believed interest and enthusiasm for reading to be key to reducing the attainment gap.

 **For attainment, we know that if kids want to read, you're halfway there.”**
Education Officer

All partners stated that they believed the programme to be having a positive impact on schools. They felt that Reading Schools has given staff permission to prioritise reading for pleasure. They noted increased awareness of the range of available literature and felt that the programme is encouraging schools to review their libraries and think about whether the books reflect the life experiences of the children.

Partners further reported an increased awareness among school staff of the different ways to promote reading for pleasure. They welcomed the increased awareness of different platforms to engage children, highlighting how the use of audio books can encourage interest among children with lower reading levels.

Success factors

Staff and wider stakeholders identified the following success factors:

- Relevance and language – framework alignment with educational policy and practice, including clear links to How Good is Our School helps to ensure the programme is robust, relevant to schools and closely linked to existing self-evaluation processes which are fundamental to schools.
- Robust accreditation – provides quality assurance, validation of existing good practice and tailored constructive feedback.
- Flexibility – allowing schools to submit evidence at any time with no fixed deadlines.
- Focus on learning journey – recognition of individual circumstances and focus on improvement rather than outcomes.
- Training and development – provision of online training and networking opportunities.
- Resources – availability of high-quality resources and examples of best practice on the website.
- Joint work with RICs and local authorities – bringing teachers and librarians together and helping raise awareness of the programme and increase engagement.
- Organisational culture – approachable and friendly staff who are easily contactable.

Areas for development

Staff were pleased with Reading School uptake, and keen to see this increasing year on year. Staff wished to ultimately see all schools in Scotland having a level of Reading Schools accreditation. Staff felt that Covid-19 continued to impact on school capacity and priorities during 2021/22, and that there was ongoing work to have conversations with schools about how to prioritise and build capacity for literacy and reading. New approaches being developed included online drop in sessions and face to face visits to areas that have low to no uptake.

Wider stakeholders suggested organising more showcase events within local authorities to encourage uptake. Partners working in public libraries expressed a desire to work more closely with Reading Schools to encourage more children to use their local library and suggested the use of more promotional material to increase visibility of the programme.

Staff were very aware that rolling out the programme resulted in more applications and assessments for accreditation, which needed careful planning. There is no upper limit for evidence submitted, so it does take time to work through the evidence and then issue the relevant trophies and certificates. Staff were considering providing guidance deadlines so that schools could understand when to submit evidence if they had a target in mind for when they wanted to be accredited. This would be particularly important as the team works to accommodate larger numbers of schools being involved, which may impact on times for processing evidence and moving schools through their Reading Schools journey. A few staff and stakeholders suggested more guidance for schools on volume and type of evidence to submit may also be useful.

One stakeholder suggested that it would be useful to consider a route for Gold schools to move on to – such as Gold Plus or Platinum - or to re-accredit to focus their ongoing work around reading. Schools at Gold level are required to re-register after three years. Staff also indicated that they were interested in ensuring that Gold level schools were connected with one another, to share ideas, support one another and act as ambassadors for the programme. Staff were keen to avoid 'initiative fatigue' where schools focus on one initiative for a while, and then move on to the next thing the following year, by ensuring that schools saw the value in Reading Schools beyond achieving the award.

Staff were also keen to help schools to do more in-depth work, beyond simply ticking off that they had achieved an award, and use their award as an opportunity to build their evidence on an ongoing basis. Staff also work closely with schools to make sure they go in at the right level, and achieve core and silver before going for the gold award, to make sure they are meeting the core foundational requirements.

Finally, one interviewee suggested it would be valuable to see recognition of individual people within the programme – pupils, teachers or librarians who have really championed reading in amazing ways or overcome certain challenges.

05 CONCLUSIONS

Reading Schools participation

Reading Schools was piloted with the Forth Valley and West Lothian Regional Improvement Collaborative in 2019/20 and has expanded to include the Tayside RIC and West Partnership over time. During 2021/22, participation in Reading Schools continued to grow. 152 schools achieved accreditation during 2021/22, and the total number of schools accredited within Reading Schools increased to 197. There were also 370 schools working towards their accreditation in 2021/22.


Outcomes achieved

Schools, partners and staff felt that Reading Schools had impacted positively on pupils, schools and libraries. Almost all school staff felt that because of Reading Schools, reading for pleasure had become a routine activity at their school (97%). Most felt that because of Reading Schools, pupils now have comfortable spaces to read at school (93%).

School staff said that as a result of Reading Schools, there was a significant impact on pupils in terms of their reading. Pupils had become more interested in reading (91%), modelled positive reading behaviours (90%) and were enjoying reading more (84%). School staff found that they had observed an increase in the level of reading for pleasure because of Reading Schools, particularly for boys, for pupils with additional support needs and for pupils from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Survey respondents reported that Reading Schools had a significant impact on pupil voice and leadership opportunities. Almost all felt that the programme helped pupils to have their voice heard (98%) and to take on leadership roles (93%). Respondents from across primary and secondary schools also said that reading helps to settle classes, builds empathy and supports the development of new friendships.

Most respondents reported that Reading Schools has helped them to recognise and reward pupil's achievements, support attainment and reduce the poverty related attainment gap to some extent. Reading Schools has also contributed to development of a reading culture in schools, and supported professional development. All school staff taking part in the evaluation felt that Reading Schools helped staff to recognise the value of reading for pleasure (100%) and model positive reading behaviours (100%).

 **The love of reading has been restored in our school.”**
Class teacher

Success factors

School staff and wider stakeholders were positive about their experience of the Reading Schools programme. Key positives included:

- Mapping the framework to How Good is Our School
- The tools for self-evaluation and action planning
- The quality of resources
- The professional development opportunities
- The accreditation opportunities
- The flexibility of the programme.

Wider stakeholders and staff managing Reading Schools also emphasised that promoting the programme through Regional Improvement Collaboratives worked well, and involved a flexible approach to working with each RIC on their journey around reading. Stakeholders were positive about Reading Schools programme management and found working with Scottish Book Trust a positive experience.

Staff involved in managing the programme identified similar success factors, and also stressed that the quality of evidence submitted by schools is high, with schools using beautiful, creative and imaginative approaches to demonstrating their impact.

Areas for development

- **Programme roll out** – Staff, stakeholders and schools were keen to see the programme continue to expand and grow across Scotland. Staff involved in managing the programme were keen to ensure that they were able to support RICs, local authorities and schools in a flexible and tailored way while growing, requiring careful planning and consideration of capacity within the team.
- **Guidance on evidence** – Schools were keen to see more guidance on evidence requirements, and a streamlined process for uploading and reviewing evidence (being able to upload bundles and print evidence submitted). Staff managing the programme valued the depth and quality of evidence provided by schools, but highlighted that reviewing this would need to be manageable as the programme grows. This may require the introduction of some guidance on how long it takes to assess evidence and distribute trophies and certificates, and possibly some guide deadlines for schools wishing to be accredited by certain times of the year.
- **Opportunities for Gold schools** – Stakeholders, schools and staff felt there were opportunities to connect Gold schools to share their experience, to encourage Gold schools to act as champions or ambassadors, and to develop case studies on Gold schools (and evidence submitted) to support schools on their Reading Schools journey.
- **Resources and events** – Some schools were keen to see more branded resources such as bookmarks, certificates and book lists. Some schools would like to see more events such as meet the author or illustrator opportunities, competitions or quizzes. And some school staff would like more professional development opportunities around reading, through the programme.
- **Libraries** – A few stakeholders would like to see clearer routes for how public libraries can participate in and support the Reading Schools programme.



Reading Schools Case Study

Coatbridge High School North Lanarkshire



BACKGROUND

This case study is about Coatbridge High School, a large secondary school in North Lanarkshire with over 1,000 pupils. It is informed by a discussion with two teachers, two parents, seven pupils and one local project partner.


The school began its Reading School journey during the second national lockdown in early 2021. The programme is led by an English teacher who believes that reading has the power to build empathy and improve pupils' life experiences. The school is working towards accreditation.

READING INITIATIVES

There has been a shift in the way the school thinks and talks about reading. Buy-in across all departments is encouraging different conversations and creating a culture of reading across the whole school.

The school has created a Library Leadership Group with volunteer librarians drawn from across the year groups. Staff reported that the S6 librarians in particular have been fantastic and are working with younger pupils to encourage reading. The library has become a hub of activity through the Reading Schools journey. Some of the ways the volunteer librarians have been involved include:

- curating titles for classes to use on different projects, such as science or art projects
- advising on and recommending books to other pupils
- visiting a local bookstore to choose books
- encouraging access with less confident readers
- giving out certificates to younger pupils using the library
- checking books in and out of the library.

 **With being the young librarian, he's been asked to review books, so he's talking to the teachers about what books they recommend."**

- Parent

EXAMPLES OF READING INITIATIVES

There have been a range of activities developed throughout the school's Reading School journey, including:.

Reading periods: protected opportunities for free reading where pupils can read whatever they want.

Future Fridays: a book club where pupils meet every Friday to read and share book recommendations.

Read to Succeed: all first-year pupils receive a book that they can keep.

Pupils Picks: pupils write book reviews which are then shared in the library.

Book recommendations: pupils can request that the library buys specific books.

Book vending machine: pupils receive tokens as a reward for achievement which they can use to buy a book from the school's vending machine.

'What am I reading?' posters: all teachers display what they are reading in or outside their room to encourage dialogue about books and reading.

Class activities: introduction of new activities such as 'speed dating', when pupils get three minutes to pitch a book, and quizzes using opening lines to different books.

Graffiti project: pupils create a graffiti wall with quotes from books.

Special events: taster sessions and quizzes for Book Week Scotland and World Book Day.

Regular activities: 'Future Fridays Book Club', 'Chill out Tuesdays', Creative Writing Club, library treasure hunt and coffee and hot chocolate mornings.



He's been in the library seeing more books coming in and speaking to the teachers and hearing what they're reading. There's been a lot more social conversation with teachers about books. He's been going around and asking them what they're reading and getting their recommendations."

- Parent

THE DIFFERENCE IT MAKES FOR PUPILS

Staff reported a particularly strong impact on a core group of pupils who regularly visit the library but also an observed increase in the number of pupils coming into the library just for chat.

Library as a safe, calm space: Pupils said that the library feels like a safe, calm space that provides an alternative to the noise of the school playground. They appreciated that it provides an opportunity to socialise with pupils from across the various year groups and allows time just to be quiet, even if they don't want to read.

Staff hope that as pupils begin to spend more time in the library, even the more reluctant pupils will develop an interest in reading and start to engage with books more.

 **If the library wasn't there, there'd be more arguments.”**
- Pupil

 **Some people don't want to read – but they want the quiet space.”**
- Pupil


Increased reading for pleasure: Staff and parents reported an increase in pupils engaging in reading for pleasure, with pupils exchanging book recommendations and talking to both staff and parents about the books they are reading. Pupils spoke about how they have access to a wider range of books at high school and they feel that they now have a peer group to talk to about books.

 **He just talks about reading now! That's the biggest difference. Now he's saying he's really enjoying reading.”**
- Parent

Increased access to a range of literature: Staff and parents stated that pupils have access to a wider range of literature and are supported to make their own choices about what to read. The school has introduced reading lists, genre colour-coding, and 'book match' lists, where pupils can identify books that they might like based on other books that they have read. Pupils said books help them to experience worlds that are different to their own and helps to develop their imaginations.

 **It started off with him looking at Manga¹ but there's been that small introduction, that dropping of the small seed, about what other books he could look at.”**
- Parent

¹Manga is an umbrella term for a wide variety of comic books and graphic novels originally produced and published in Japan.




Increased confidence and self-esteem: Parents reported that they have seen improvements in their children's confidence. They felt that reading and access to literature has supported their children through the transition from primary to secondary school. Pupils reported that through their involvement in the library, they felt that they have more confidence to try new things.

 **I have really seen her confidence grow.”**
- Parent

 **Having the library has been fundamental to him coping with high school. I'm just grateful that there were the reading opportunities through the library and Future Fridays.”**
- Parent

Promoted relationship development: Parents reported that they felt reading had helped their child to build new friendships and identify people with similar interests to them.

 **She has found her place in high school and met new friends with similar interests.”**
- Parent


 **He was struggling with friends, but this has given him something to talk about. It's helped him be able to develop relationships. And it's given him something to help others with.”**
- Parent

Improved health and wellbeing: Staff reported that they see the library being used as a safe and welcoming space in which pupils are able to relax and connect with other children. Pupils were very aware of the positive impact of reading on their mental health and said they find reading relaxing and it helps them to escape their worries.

 **You don't need to worry about what else is happening at home.”**
- Pupil

 **If it has been a stressful school day it helps you unwind.”**
- Pupil

Impact on wider learning: Pupils felt that reading has helped them to improve their vocabulary and spelling but also helped in other areas of the curriculum, including drama, history, through reading Manga and art.

 **If you are reading a book with interesting characters, you can use that [in drama] as you think about how they walk and how they act.”**
- Pupil

THE DIFFERENCE IT MAKES FOR STAFF

Staff reported a general increase in dialogues about reading and literature both among staff and between staff and pupils. Staff noted that they felt that this has had a positive impact on pupils who have at times been surprised by what their teachers are reading.

 **There have been so many more conversations around books. I've had so many amazing conversations in here about books with staff I'd just not have talked with before.”**
- Lead Teacher

 **We get to talk with more teachers, and build relationships with teachers.”**
- Pupil

In a recent survey, staff reported that knowledge of children's and young adult literature focused mainly on the classics, so they plan to introduce a dedicated space in the staff room to promote contemporary authors and books on topics such as mental health and young carers. Other plans include promoting reading for pleasure in staff training and encouraging the nurture classes to make better use of the library to support engagement of reluctant readers.

THE DIFFERENCE IT MAKES FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

Parents reported improvements in their relationships with their child, particularly in terms of the topics that come up in conversation through the range of literature their child is reading. Parents also felt that reading has helped their relationship with their child to mature, with books becoming a mechanism by which to spend time together.

“He’s recommending books to me now and I never thought that would happen with him. It’s really nice to have that part of the relationship. It’s not just a parent-child relationship now. You can now sit in a room together and be reading. There’s not that need to entertain now in the same way. Just being comfortable in the silence.”

- Parent

WHAT'S NEXT

Staff plan to introduce a dedicated space in the staff room to promote contemporary authors and books on topics such as mental health and young carers. There are also plans to promote reading for pleasure during staff training and encouraging the nurture classes to make better use of the library to support engagement of reluctant readers.

Engagement with the wider community has been limited due to the pandemic and restrictions that were placed on schools. The school hopes to develop reading events with senior citizens in the local area as restrictions continue to ease.

The Reading Schools programme is becoming embedded, so the school will continue to be proactive on the programme and stay focused on reading for pleasure, and its benefits. The school is looking forward to continuing its Reading Schools journey to accreditation.

“It is becoming embedded, so the school will continue to be proactive on the programme and stay focused on reading for pleasure, and its benefits.”

- Lead Teacher



James Young High School

West Lothian



Other reading activities in the school have included:

- Library clubs including an LGBT club, Manga club and Dungeons and Dragons club.
- Library events and displays such as National Poetry Day, World Book Day and Book Week Scotland.
- Sponsored reading events including readathons and Reading for Ukraine.
- Book quizzes, promotions and themed events including Comic Cons.
- Scottish Storyteller visits working with pupils to write their own stories.
- Literacy tasks undertaken in tutor groups.

“Pupils enjoyed the reading tasks in tutor groups.”
- Class teacher

“The readathon in the school library is amazing.”
- Pupil

THE DIFFERENCE IT MAKES FOR PUPILS

Leadership opportunities

The Reading Schools programme creates involvement and leadership opportunities for pupils. The school had around 45 pupil volunteers who led and supported reading activities pre pandemic and has about 20 volunteers still engaged post pandemic. These pupils help to organise and run events and clubs, and the library.

“It gives them ownership. It is getting pupils more involved.”
- School librarian

Some pupils have been active reading role models for their peers, leading reading activities in the school. While some of these opportunities fell away during the Covid-19 pandemic, they are starting to gain momentum again. Pupils who want to be, are included in all decision making about reading activities and library developments. Pupils can apply to be library monitors, who work in the library, and a head monitor is nominated by the school librarian.



“We are constantly consulting pupils about ideas and changes in the library. There is collaborative decision making. I include young people wherever I can, both formally and informally.”
- School librarian

Confidence and self-esteem

The school librarian said that the Reading Schools activities have helped pupils to develop their confidence, given them the ability to be themselves, and have been a good tool for tackling anxiety, particularly since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. Reading activities have created social opportunities for pupils which have further improved their confidence and self-esteem. The school librarian noted that some pupils lost some social skills during the pandemic therefore meeting others through reading activities who they would not normally interact with has been beneficial.



Reading activities have created social spaces and opportunities and pupils have made new friends through the library.”
- School librarian



Reading is having a positive effect on pupils.”
- Class teacher

Health and wellbeing

Reading activities have created a sense of community in the library which has been beneficial for those who can be naturally quieter and more reserved. Reading activities have promoted inclusion in the school through a wide range of reading materials and clubs, and has led to increased pupil involvement. Teachers said that the library offers pupils a “safe and welcoming space”. Teachers and staff felt that a positive impact of increased reading for pleasure was that pupils spent less time on social media, which was beneficial for health and wellbeing. The programme has also encouraged staff and pupils to develop reading relationships which is beneficial for the health and wellbeing of young people. Some pupils said that reading can be a distraction from mental health problems.



Reading more makes pupils seem more settled, calmer and more able to engage. They have increased focus.”
- Class teacher



Reading does help wellbeing. Reading can be a positive distraction for young people.”
- Pupil support worker



Creativity and reading are an escape.”
- Pupil

Additional support

James Young High School offers a facility for pupils who require additional support to engage in school through iLearn. Pupils involved in iLearn are encouraged to get involved in reading activities because these activities help start conversations about books with pupils who may not engage well in mainstream learning and are less likely to read at home. The pupil support worker said that the Reading Schools programme works well for pupils with lower literacy levels, non-verbal pupils and those with English as a second language as there are reading materials for all stages including graphic novels. Where iLearn pupils are reluctant to read for pleasure, the school librarian orders two copies of the same book so that the pupil support worker can read with pupils.

Reading Schools activities are adapted for pupils with additional support needs to ensure they are inclusive. iLearn pupils can find it challenging to use the library however, supported reading activities in small groups are good tools to build their confidence and encourage them to think about using the school library and begin to choose their own books.



It is building their confidence. I have seen some children read for the first time and ask for more books because of the reading activities.”

- Pupil support worker



The school librarian is really supportive. We get all the books we need.”

- Pupil support worker

Reading for pleasure

The school librarian said that reading for pleasure has made books more accessible for pupils, as they are not pressured to read, and programme reading activities are not formally measured or tracked. Although not all pupils have engaged, some have become more active readers because of the programme, reading different formats and genres. Some teachers promoted reading for pleasure prior to becoming involved in the programme, as a more informal way to engage pupils in reading and raise literacy levels. One teacher encouraged reading for pleasure by delivering a ‘free’ weekly reading session in his class, where pupils designed posters and wrote book reviews for reading materials of their choice. Pupils said that they enjoyed reading for pleasure because it allows them to read a wider variety of materials and genres than normal, such as mythology, fantasy, murder mystery, classics and graphic novels. Their favourite reading activities included conventions, readathons, book quizzes and reading clubs.



I spend a lot of time reading and enjoy spending time in the library.”

- Pupil

Literacy levels

The Reading Schools programme has been important for encouraging whole school literacy and improving reading and writing skills. Teachers incorporated literacy tasks in their morning tutor registration groups, including quizzes and reading short stories. Some pupils were reluctant to get involved in reading activities to begin with, but the programme has gathered momentum. Giving pupils the choice to read a wider range of reading materials in different formats worked well. One teacher said that the Reading Schools programme has contributed to the school having more advanced higher English classes than before it started, and more pupils are planning to study English at university.

Pupils agreed that reading activities helped to broaden their knowledge which in turn improved their literacy skills. They said that the programme helped with their general knowledge, vocabulary and languages, and learning interdisciplinary concepts such as science and religion.

 **The more reading the better. It gives pupils better literacy skills in all subjects and builds their confidence.”**
- Pupil support worker

 **We gain knowledge, learn to interpret and analyse structure.”**
- Pupil

Raising attainment

The Reading Schools programme has been valuable because it is another tool to raise literacy levels. The programme exposes pupils further to new reading materials and vocabulary, and expands their knowledge, which was viewed by teachers as positive for attainment. The school library has expanded its collection of books to include Scottish authors which some pupils said they enjoyed because they could identify with and relate to the characters. Teachers generally agreed that Reading Schools is likely to contribute to raising attainment in literacy.

 **[Pupils] are seeing themselves represented. Some don't engage with books where they can't identify with characters.”**
- Class Teacher

 **Embedding literacy takes time and planning, to do it right.”**
- Class Teacher

 **It helps with development and raising attainment. We are moving in the right direction.”**
- Class Teacher

THE DIFFERENCE IT MAKES FOR STAFF

Reading awareness

The school librarian highlighted that staff across the school have developed an increased awareness of different reading materials to engage pupils, and books for different age groups and abilities. Since the programme started staff have a wider awareness of the reading activities that are happening in the school and are more likely to get involved.

The programme has encouraged cross-departmental reading projects and a supportive community of practice. Some class teachers have developed their own classroom libraries for pupils and whole school reading.

It's given staff a wider purpose, and it is another way for them to talk to pupils...it has got staff reading."
- School librarian

The teaching staff are involved...Senior management has bought in and has been really supportive."
- School librarian

Reading for pleasure

Teachers said that the programme has resulted in more staff reading for pleasure, sharing books and recommendations with each other. The staff-parent book club has been a positive development for the school. A pupil support worker talked about the secret staff book club that involves surprise books being delivered monthly to staff members.

Staff are having conversations and swapping books."
- Class teacher

Reading role models

School staff are also encouraged to be reading role models – for pupils and their colleagues. All staff support the wide range of reading events delivered in the school, demonstrate what they are reading and encourage conversations about books. The 'What am I reading' initiative allows staff to role model reading to pupils and talk about books. Photos are taken of staff with books and shared on school social media to show what they are reading.

It is all the little things that build a reading culture."
- Class teacher



WHAT WORKED WELL?

Having a dedicated school librarian has been crucial to the success of the programme. Without a proactive librarian teachers felt that reading activities would not have been as impactful. Pupils felt that the school library has improved because of the efforts of the school librarian and seems to be used more because of the range of reading activities.

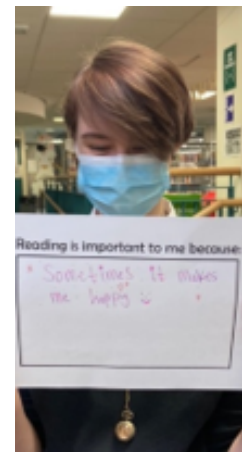
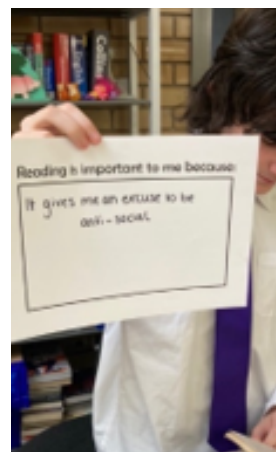
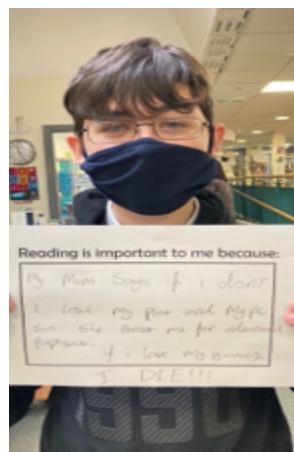
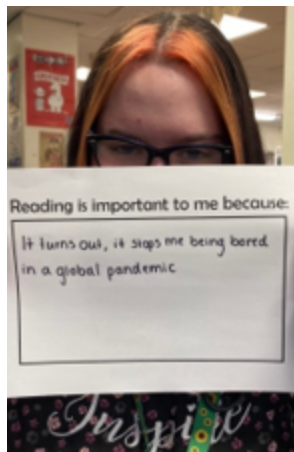
I don't think it would have happened without such a proactive school librarian, which is a resource under threat. She has coordinated and driven it.”
- Class Teacher

There are more communal spaces in which to read now, and the library is a better use of space. It is a social space.”
- Pupil



The Read Woke project worked well, with high levels of pupil engagement. The school librarian hopes that more pupils will engage in the project as it continues. The school leadership team are happy to continue funding the project because it meets a lot of the school's literacy criteria.

The staff-parent book club that started during the pandemic has continued online after lockdown. This is an indication that staff and parents are engaged in reading for pleasure, which is a beneficial role modelling approach to engage pupils in reading.



CHALLENGES

Engagement

Some pupils and staff highlighted that there could be wider participation in the programme. Unless young people already use the school library, they are unlikely to know about all of the reading activities. Pupils added that the same pupils – mostly senior pupils – take part in reading activities and use the library regularly. Staff agreed that pupil participation in the programme could be stronger from pupils in the lower school. Participation in the programme was heavily impacted by the pandemic, which affected engagement in reading activities.

Unless you use the library you don't know things are on.”
- Pupil

Lots of clubs stopped after the pandemic and haven't quite built back up again.”
- School librarian

Staff capacity

School staff said that a barrier to getting more pupils engaged in the Reading Schools programme and expanding reading activities was lack of staff time and capacity and increased use of social media. Some teachers commented that while they know it is important, reading for pleasure cannot always take priority given the curriculum requirements and finding time to bring staff together outwith these.

The main issues are demands on staff time and social media usage of pupils. Social media is always a challenge.”
- Class teacher

WHAT'S NEXT

The school librarian wants to start an after school book club for pupils with a focus on social injustice and activism, which will link to the Read Woke project. Planning is also underway for a social club for pupils called Equalitea, that will link with the after school book club.

A teacher wants to introduce whole school reading weekly in classes, on a subject rotation basis, so that all pupils read for pleasure in class regularly without too much pressure on teachers' time and capacity.

Whole school literacy is the best tool we have. We will get a wider variety of role models.”
- Class teacher



Reading Schools Case Study

Netherburn Primary School

South Lanarkshire



BACKGROUND

This case study is about Netherburn Primary School. It is informed by a discussion with one teacher, five pupils, two parents and a Home Link Worker.

Netherburn was the first school in South Lanarkshire to achieve a Reading Schools Gold Award, in February 2022. Four of its classes (97 pupils) took part in the Reading Schools programme. The nursery accommodates 27 children who have also been involved in reading initiatives.

The Reading Schools programme is led by a teacher (the Literacy Coordinator). Research undertaken by this teacher found that over 90% of families in the community didn't use libraries due to the cost of travel. The school is located in an area of high deprivation. After attending a Scottish Book Trust training event about the Reading Schools pilot, the Literacy Coordinator decided that Netherburn should get involved. The school was already involved in work around literacy before becoming a Reading School and the Head Teacher, Literacy Coordinator and colleagues wanted the opportunity for accreditation through the programme.

READING INITIATIVES

The school has delivered a variety of activities to encourage reading for pleasure, including:

- Designing the school library and interviewing pupils for librarian posts.
- Logo competition to design logos for the school library.
- Remote reading activities during the Covid-19 pandemic such as online reading and an outdoor book hunt.
- 'Read and relax' time before and after school.
- Book Buddies and school Literacy Champions who support their peers to find and choose books to read.
- After school and breakfast reading clubs.

 **Our mission was to get our village reading."**
- Head Teacher

 **Reading for pleasure is central to the programme, which aligns with the school's aims."**
- Literacy Coordinator

 **The kids run a lot of the activities."**
- Literacy Coordinator

Before the school and its pupils established the library, the library space was not the inviting, relaxing and welcoming space it wanted for its pupils. Now it is, and the school provides a wide range of reading materials including fiction and non-fiction books, graphic novels and magazines to offer pupils and their families choice to read what they are interested in.

Once the library was created, pupils underwent formal interviews to secure jobs as librarians, and the library staff were tasked with leading Reading Schools activities. Library classes were scheduled into the timetable. Classroom libraries were developed so that reading for pleasure could take place in all classes, and teachers were encouraged to have reading time in all classes. All school staff, including non-teaching staff, were included in reading activities such as discussions and sharing book recommendations during in-service days, to create a reading culture across the school.

The Literacy Coordinator said that getting involved in the programme was straightforward, the resources were high quality and communications were good.

**Reading Schools has been a great support for me.”
- Literacy Coordinator**

The Literacy Coordinator emphasised that creating a reading culture is not an overnight change and cannot be achieved through one-off events. It requires a longer term, embedded programme of activities to become sustainable.

**It is a journey”
- Literacy Coordinator**



**The school library is used regularly throughout the school day, before school, during the school day by all of the classes and after 3pm by after school clubs.”
- Head Teacher**

THE DIFFERENCE IT MAKES FOR PUPILS

Pupils now enjoy reading for pleasure where they might not have done so previously. Staff, pupils and parents highlighted the importance of having a choice of reading materials for pupils and their families. Some pupils said that they like to read fiction books, and others preferred graphic novels and non-fiction. Their interest in reading was encouraged by the range of literature available in different formats. Pupils like sharing books and learning about new books, and listening to others' recommendations.

 **Reading for pleasure is at the heart of everything that we do.”**
- Literacy Coordinator

 **It's about having a choice. Choice is important.”**
- P7 pupil

 **It opens up their imagination.”**
- Parent


Pupils are more active readers since becoming part of the Reading Schools programme. The Literacy Coordinator reported that they ask for books that they want to read and make recommendations to help other pupils decide what to read. Pupils affirmed they choose what they want to read by browsing the school library, sharing books with others and seeking out books by authors that they like.

Pupils said that they choose to read more at home since being involved in Reading Schools. Some reported that they read to their younger siblings, and a few told us they didn't read out of school before the programme, which they do now, because it made them more interested.

 **I read every day at school.”**
- P7 pupil

 **It's a good start to the day.”**
- P7 pupil

 **She went from not reading at all to reading at home every night.”**
- Parent

 **Regularly, pupils are given the opportunity to request books to be purchased that they would like to read.”**
- Head Teacher

Pupils have opportunities to become reading role models in the school, including becoming library staff, Literacy Champions, Book Buddies, and leading activities including the after school and breakfast book clubs. Pupils explained how they enjoy being reading role models for other children, and older pupils reported a strong sense of demonstrating the benefits of reading to their younger peers. Some pupils said that they read to their younger siblings.

They are reading role models across the school at all levels. Everyone is a reading model.”
- Literacy Coordinator

I like showing others that reading can be relaxing.”
- P7 pupil

The Literacy Coordinator said that becoming a Reading School has benefited the pupils' health and wellbeing. Pupils reported feeling safe in the library because they feel it is a relaxing and welcoming space, that they can enjoy. Reading can be a positive distraction for some pupils who might live in challenging circumstances outside of school and gives them something to focus on. A pupil with a visual impairment benefits from reading QR codes created by the school. This enables all pupils to access audio and video books which makes them “...*feel like everyone else*”.

A parent said that by working in the school library, their children meet more people and interact with others who they wouldn't normally speak to. Parents felt that being involved in more reading activities gives them increased responsibility and “...*takes them away from screen time*.” Parents described the school library as a comfort zone for pupils, giving them a safe space to wind down which helps their health and wellbeing.

It lets my thoughts escape my head.”
- P7 pupil

It's calming when you are anxious.”
- P7 pupil

It is very inclusive.”
- Literacy Coordinator

I like to come to the library because it helps me if I feel angry.”
- P7 pupil

Our library is a welcoming space that can be accessed by all pupils throughout the school day, some pupils choose to use the library at interval time.”
- Head Teacher

Pupils and staff reported how the Reading Schools programme empowered them by giving them opportunities to take on leadership roles and lead reading activities. Pupils designed the library, choose books and reading materials, deliver reading activities and promote the library in and out of school. Pupils talked about the leadership responsibilities they have taken on, and described how they have improved their confidence, self-esteem and belief in themselves. They like being in a position where they can help other pupils and that there are many opportunities to get involved.

“ I believe in myself more.”

“ It has changed me for the better.”

“ I felt so honoured to be trusted.”
- P7 pupils

“ It has been pupil-led from the outset. They shape the activities and designed the library. This has given them ownership over their reading activities – it is theirs.”
- Literacy Coordinator

“ They have responsibilities. They are more organised at home now.”
- Parent

“ The roles that our pupils have taken on in the library have developed their skills for life, learning and work.”
- Head Teacher



THE DIFFERENCE IT MAKES FOR STAFF

The Literacy Coordinator reported that staff have also been keen to become reading role models for pupils and for each other, delivering reading activities and participating in CPD through the Teacher Reading Group and also in in-house training including classroom delivery techniques. This has resulted in a supportive community of practice within which teachers can develop new literacy skills and approaches. The Literacy Coordinator sends staff updates about literature, and they share books and make recommendations to each other.

The teacher said that one of the main benefits of the Reading Schools programme is that it has provided a comprehensive framework for all of the school's reading activities. They have used the framework developed by the Scottish Book Trust to coordinate literacy activities and embed reading for pleasure throughout the school.

**It's all about taking the fear away, not about testing."
- Literacy Coordinator**

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ATTAINMENT

Changes for pupils are measured through Learner Conversations, a Reading for Pleasure questionnaire and Family Reading survey, alongside observation, videos and photos, quotes and comments. Pupils do not receive awards for reading activities based on the number of books that they have read; rather they are given awards for attendance and participation.

The Literacy Coordinator has noticed an improvement in attainment levels in reading and writing, with pupils more engaged in reading in the classroom, and teachers more enthusiastic about reading activities in class. They have observed that attainment in literacy is increasing, and that the attainment gap is reducing slowly.

“Netherburn always had a commitment to improving literacy. It is quite passionate about it.”
- Youth Family Community Learning Coordinator

Pupils described how Reading Schools improves their reading skills. They talked about their literary interests such as ‘visualisers’ where they predict what happens next in a story, drawing characters from a book and writing about a story they have read. Some pupils said that they take ideas from books that they read to make their own creative stories and characters. Pupils said that reading more has helped them to learn new words and develop their writing skills, drawing skills, creativity and imagination. Parents agreed that their children’s reading skills have improved, because they talk in more depth about books, analyse the stories they read and their handwriting has got better.

“It helps my imagination.”
- P3 pupil

“Before the library I didn’t really like reading. Everyone likes reading now.”
- P3 pupil

“I read longer books now and I can finish a book.”
- P7 pupil

“She has better reading and writing skills.”
- Parent

ENGAGEMENT IN THE WIDER COMMUNITY

The community library opened by the school was very well received by the community. Parents and carers of pupils are invited into the school every four weeks to take part in a Book Bletcher. The school buys books for families, including magazines and cookbooks and trained parents and carers how to use the QR codes so that they can access books in different formats depending on their abilities and preferences. Literacy workshops have been facilitated for families enabling pupils to teach them what they have learned about reading and writing. Pupils also give families tours of the school library.

The school's Youth Family Community Learning Coordinator said that the school is equipping parents and carers with the tools and resources they need to support their children. They said that "*reading and health and wellbeing go hand in hand*". While it can be challenging to engage parents and carers in their children's learning, Netherburn primary school "*has a unique place in the community*".

"We've never had a school do that before."
- Parent

"It's a good thing in a small community."
- Parent

Parents talked about being involved in reading initiatives, including the opening of the school library, and said the QR codes were "*brilliant*". They enjoyed participating in reading activities and seeing what their children were doing as part of Reading Schools.

Parents described the reading activities that the school ran during the pandemic which helped children and their families to keep reading. They felt that they have good connections with the school, staff and pupils and parents themselves have developed the self-confidence to build relationships because of the programme.

"There is a community connectedness."
- Youth Family Learning Coordinator



WHAT WORKED WELL

Embedding reading activities

Embedding reading activities in the school in a sustainable way has been achieved by making reading for pleasure part of everyday school life.

 **The library is at the heart of our school."**
- P7 pupil

Reading materials

Providing a range of reading materials requested by pupils and making books available in more accessible formats have increased young people's enjoyment and frequency of reading.

Reading during the pandemic

The pandemic made the delivery of reading activities more difficult, but the school staff found socially distant ways of ensuring that pupils kept reading at home and with their teachers online.

Creating leadership opportunities

Creating leadership opportunities for pupils has improved their confidence, self-esteem and sense of responsibility towards the school and other pupils.

 **Our children are developing leadership skills."**
- Parent

Parental involvement

Parents feel valued and involved and supported by the school. Reading is encouraged as an inter-generational activity.

 **It is about going to where the parents are."**
- Youth Family Community Learning Coordinator

Sharing learning

The Literacy Coordinator has presented the work of the school to South Lanarkshire Literacy Leads to share learning across the local authority.

WHAT'S NEXT

Reading initiatives will continue to be embedded into learning across the school, as momentum builds after activities were impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

It is important that reading is embedded into school, and not treated as an add on.”
- Youth Family Learning Coordinator

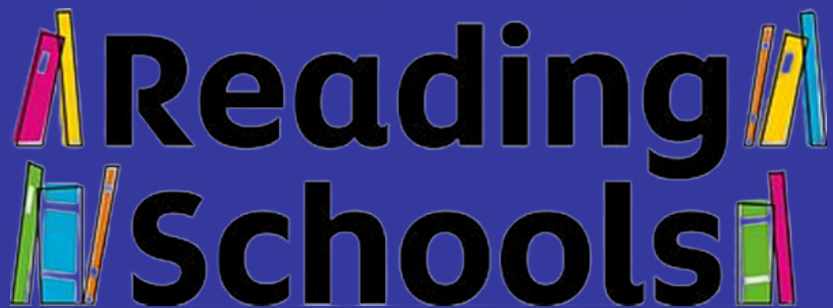
The school has received recognition for its achievements in literacy, winning an award at the Scottish Education Awards in June 2022. The school also won a Pearson's Silver Award and will present to a Pearson Judging panel for the Gold Making a Difference in a Primary School UK award. They will find out if they are successful at an awards ceremony in London later in the year.





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 for ebooks and audio 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.

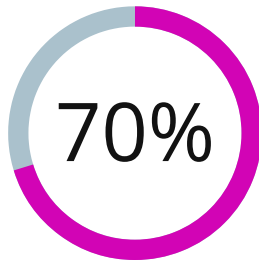
Bilingual storytime

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.

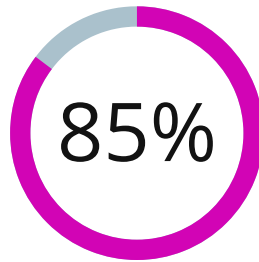
THE DIFFERENCE IT MAKES FOR PUPILS

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.

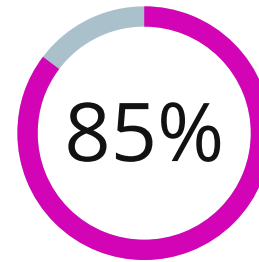
Increased enjoyment of books



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.

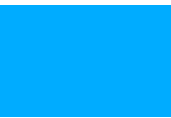
Access to diverse reading materials

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.