

HALLGLEN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Reading Schools Case Study



Research Scotland

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BACKGROUND

This case study features Hallglen primary school. It is based on a discussion with a principal teacher and six pupils.

Hallglen primary school in Falkirk has around 330 pupils. The school is at the beginning of its Reading Schools journey and during session 2020/21 the school achieved the core accreditation and is now officially a reading school.

The school began focusing on reading for pleasure in the summer of 2020. The principal teacher felt that the school valued and understood the benefits of reading for pleasure, and wanted to focus on developing this further.

After being involved in the RIC literacy group, the school decided to take part in the accreditation scheme. The school had previously taken part in the First Minister's Reading Challenge, and hoped that Reading Schools would help ensure that that the school covered the most important areas for development, through a dedicated action plan.

The school continued to engage with the First Minister's Reading Challenge, whilst also working towards Reading Schools accreditation.

“It feel like it fits well, it doesn't feel like an additional piece of work.”

Principal teacher



READING INITIATIVES

For the 2020/21 school year, Falkirk schools developed recovery plans, rather than the usual school improvement plans. The recovery plan identified key priority areas for support and development. The school has used Reading Schools as a way to develop a range of different school priorities around:

- improving confidence
- improving creativity
- developing outdoor learning.

The school delivered a range of activities and initiatives in the school, and online, to encourage reading for pleasure. These included:

- Role modelling from staff and between pupils
- More frequent discussions about books and reading
- 'Drop Everything and Read' (DEAR) and 'Everyone Reading in Class' (ERIC) sessions
- 'Share a Story' sessions with families
- 'Snack and Read' and 'Book club' online sessions
- Reading representatives for each class.

“ So many people don't know how to choose what to read, so I help them.”

Pupil, P5

“ I enjoy it , I feel like I am helping out.”

Pupil, P7

EXAMPLES

ACTIVE READING

Pupils were encouraged to model positive reading behaviours with each other by leaving post-it notes in their books for the next reader to discover, or writing book reviews for every book they completed. These actions helped them to think about what they had read and to share their views with their peers.

ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

The school arranged regular 'snack and read' sessions for younger pupils who were learning from home. The teacher would read a chapter of their class book via Microsoft Teams whilst pupils listened and enjoyed a snack. The class would then discuss the chapter in detail.

OUTDOOR READING

As part of the reading activities, pupils engaged in outdoor learning in the woods next to the school. They did a range of reading and other activities based around the story of The Gruffalo. Teachers found that getting outside and taking in fresh air was a good way to engage the pupils and help them feel more relaxed about reading.

READING REPRESENTATIVES

The school has Reading Representatives 'Reps' for each class from P2 to P7. These pupils gather opinions from their classmates to share with staff and feedback information about reading events and activities to their class. The Reading Reps lead a lot of their own work. This year they held a competition for pupils to design a new character for the classroom doors called 'ERIC', which would indicate if the class was having ERIC time. The pupils designed the competition, advertised it to pupils, gathered entries and selected the winners themselves.

Pupils said they became reading reps because they love reading and wanted to help other pupils choose books that would make them love reading, too. One pupil said she enjoyed recommending books to other people and helping them find something that's just right for them.

ENGAGING IN READING DURING THE PANDEMIC

During the period where pupils were educated from home, the school developed a Microsoft Teams channel on Reading culture. They also allocated a pupil Reading Representative for each class. The Reading Reps shared information on what they were reading and their favourite types of books with their class.

During World Book Day, P1-P3 pupils were in school and P4-P7 pupils were still learning from home. The school delivered a virtual 'Drop Everything and Read' session for all pupils and encouraged pupils to read anywhere in their homes.

One pupil noted that he read more when he was learning from home as he had more time to read.

THE DIFFERENCE IT MAKES FOR PUPILS

Access to reading

Some pupils did not have access to reading materials out with school, for example, some did not have books at home, some had never been to the local library, and some of the youngest pupils had never held a book before.

The focus on reading for pleasure at school gave these pupils the opportunity to become more familiar with books and placed emphasis on the value of reading.



I read a lot of books and magazines."

Pupil, P5

INCREASED ENGAGEMENT IN READING

The principal teacher reported that pupils are reading more, and wanting to read more. Pupils also felt that they were encouraged to read, both in school, online and at home. They said that they liked reading alone, and as a class.

The school has enhanced provision classes for pupils with additional support needs. The reading activities have been delivered across the whole school, and pupils with additional support needs have also engaged more in reading through activities such as 'Everyone Reading in Class'.

Surveys conducted with pupils found that more pupils were reading for pleasure, more often. For example, across P6 there was a 30% increase in pupils stating that they read for fun.



Every single night, I choose a book."

Pupil, P4



Sometimes when you start reading you can't stop."

Pupil, P3



I used to only read for about 20 minutes. But now I might read for a few hours."

Pupil, P5



I like reading with other people and doing a 'post-match analysis' of the book."

Pupil, P7

CONFIDENCE

Teachers reported that they have seen pupils becoming increasingly confident around handling books, talking about books, and reading books. Even where pupils do not yet have the literacy skills to read and understand a book on their own, they are encouraged to engage and explore. For example, teachers noticed that younger pupils in P1 and P2 often said “*I can’t read*”.

Teachers responded by reminding pupils of the different ways that they can engage with books such as looking at words, looking at pictures, taking part in paired reading and identifying common words. This has helped pupils to move away from the “*I can’t read*” mentality.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Teachers felt that one of the most tangible benefits to reading for pleasure was the impact it had on pupils behaviour. The school does ‘Everyone Reading In Class’ first thing in the morning and when pupils come in from lunch. Teachers felt that having the time to read helped pupils to settle and become focused for work after the excitement of being in the playground. And pupils commented similarly, that reading helped them feel happier, calmer and more focused.

 *The very visible benefit is the calmness it can bring to children."*

Principal teacher

 *They are so settled and they are listening...we see high levels of concentration."*

Principal teacher

 *It takes my mind off all the things that are worrying and takes the stress away."*

Pupil, P6

 *I think it helps my concentration and stops me from feeling distracted. I can focus on my work better."*

Pupil, P7

 *When I'm grumpy, it makes me feel happy and calm again."*

Pupil, P3

 *When I read, I get a bit of alone time."*

Pupil, P4

ATTAINMENT

Staff felt that it was too early to attribute any improvements in literacy skills to the reading activities. However, pupils readily commented on the benefits of reading for pleasure, and the impact it had on their literacy skills. They felt that it improved their reading skills, vocabulary, spelling and writing.

 *A lot of the books I've been reading have helped me with my school work...I didn't know the word 'philosopher' existed!"*

Pupil, P5

 *When I didn't read as much, I didn't have the best writing."*

Pupil, P5

 *I think reading helps with your memory."*

 *It just helps with your brain."*

Pupil, P5

Pupil, P4

A few pupils commented on how reading for pleasure fuelled their imaginations and helped them to be more creative.

And one pupil commented that reading helped him with pronunciation, as he sounded the words out as he read.

 *I feel like my writing is getting better, because it gives me ideas for writing."*

Pupil, P7

 *It's like I'm not in the real world anymore, I'm completely in this new world."*

Pupil, P7

THE DIFFERENCE IT MAKES FOR STAFF

For staff, the Reading Schools programme provides a structured framework to help guide their work and ensure that they cover all the key focus areas. Staff felt that taking part was good for their professional development, and that it has helped develop their knowledge of children's fiction.



I just really like that it is going to give us that structure we were looking for."

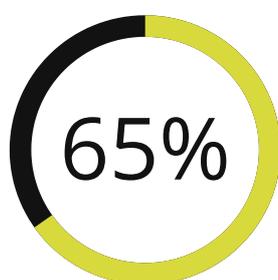
Principal teacher

ENGAGEMENT IN THE WIDER COMMUNITY

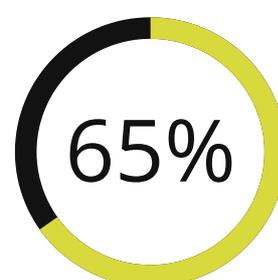
The school hopes that over time, their work will raise the profile of reading across the whole community. To encourage families to read together, the school ran a 'share a story' event. This involved parents and grandparents coming into school to read to the class. The event helped parents and grandparents to appreciate the value of reading for pleasure and the benefits it can bring in terms of improving vocabulary, reading and writing skills. In a recent feedback survey parents said that:



they regularly read to their child at home.



their children enjoy reading.



they know about the school's reading priorities.

WHAT WORKED WELL

All of the staff in the school have engaged well in the reading activities. The staff were keen to sign up to the Reading Schools programme, and the school allocated time towards it so that each class could participate. This helped ensure a high level of buy-in and engagement throughout the year.

The principal teacher also benefitted from professional development learning sessions run by Scottish Book Trust, and this information was cascaded down to staff.

The principal teacher felt that the model of the accreditation system has worked well. The activities are not prescriptive and the school has been able to acknowledge the work that was already being done, while integrating new initiatives that complement the curriculum.



Our staff see the benefit of reading for pleasure and always have done."

Principal teacher



A lot of it has just become part and parcel of what we do. Some things were just very, very easy to implement and integrate, and some things we're already doing."

Principal teacher

EXAMPLE: ACKNOWLEDGING ACHIEVEMENTS

Pupils were encouraged to model positive reading behaviours with each other by leaving post-it notes in their books for the next reader to discover, or writing book reviews for every book they completed. These actions helped them to think about what they had read and to share their views with their peers.



WHAT'S NEXT

Going forward the school would like to do more work in the wider community. It is now working towards the silver accreditation and developing a new school library.

In the past, the school had engaged with local authors to host activities for pupils. The school hopes that as restrictions ease, they will be able to work more closely with the community to develop a reading culture in creative ways.

