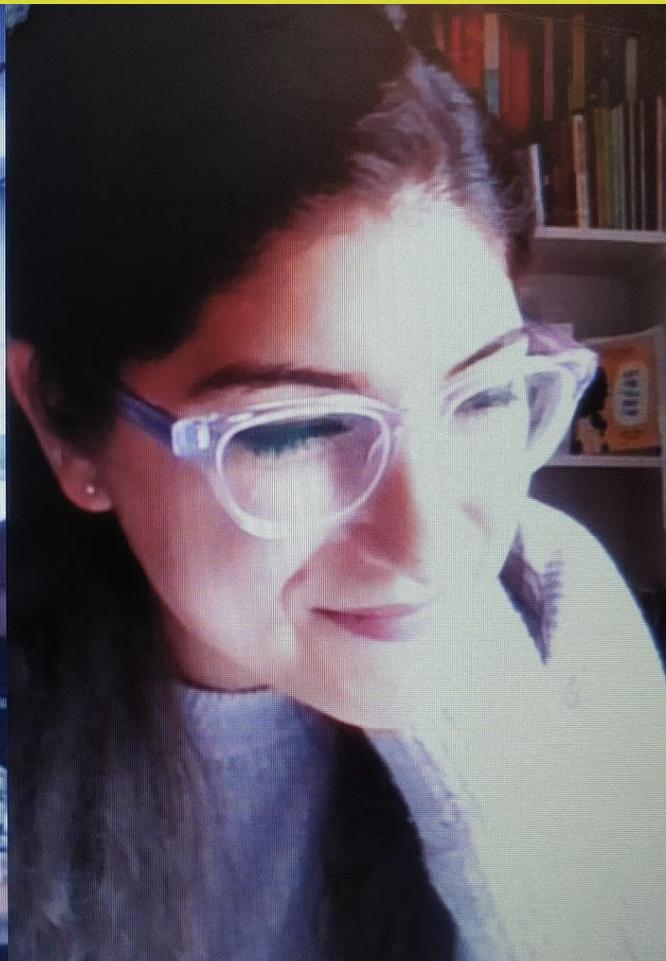


PERTH GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Reading Schools Case Study



Research Scotland

September 2021



BACKGROUND

This case study features Perth Grammar school. It is based on a discussion with a two library staff and a survey completed by 37 pupils.

Perth Grammar School is a large secondary school with over 800 pupils. The school is in the early stages of its Reading Schools journey, and is working towards Core accreditation.

The library staff lead the Reading Schools activity. They began working towards Reading Schools accreditation to promote the library as a space to support literacy and reading for pleasure.

READING INITIATIVES

The school has promoted reading through:

- Library displays
- Author visits – delivered remotely during lockdown
- Running a Scholastic book fair
- Engaging pupils in the Scottish Teen Book Prize – SBT sent book tokens, pupils kept their copies of the books and voted for their favourites
- Delivering a P7-S1 transition project – gifted a book to every P7 joining the school.



It's allowed us to look at our resources and fill the gaps."

Library staff

After consulting with staff and pupils, the library stock has been replenished, making sure that there is a wider range of books at different levels.

The school conducted a Reading Schools survey with pupils, which received 66 responses. The feedback from pupils allowed the library staff to better understand what kinds of books and reading materials pupils would like in the school.

ENGAGING IN READING DURING THE PANDEMIC

During lockdown library staff maintained an online presence through social media and Teams. They posted regularly to the online pupil bulletin and to the staff Teams channel.



The pandemic has been the caveat to everything... it's also an opportunity to refresh lots of things."

Library staff

THE DIFFERENCE IT MAKES FOR PUPILS

Increased engagement in reading for pleasure

One of the library staff members conducts regular reading groups with pupils who were reluctant to engage with books, and who needed literacy support to access the curriculum. Through a series of creative reading-based games and activities they work to change their perspective from being 'non-readers' to 'readers'. The activities include using Story Dice to stimulate ideas and Little Gem books, which are both age and stage appropriate for these pupils. So far, the initiative is working well, and staff are already noticing an improvement in engagement and enjoyment.



They're engaging in reading more and beginning to associate it with a positive activity."

Library staff



It's creating a conversation around reading and books."

Library staff

Most pupils completing the survey said that they loved reading for fun. Over half of pupils completing the survey said they were talking about books more, and almost three quarters of pupils said they were reading more at home.

“My most favourite reading activities would be when we are allowed time for personal reading in class so I can choose what I would like to read.”

Pupil

Health and wellbeing

The main reasons pupils gave for engaging in reading for pleasure were that it provided an escape from reality or gave them a space where they couldn't be disturbed.

“You get to escape from reality for a while.”

Pupil

“I really like the way a book can sort of transport you to another place and let you experience something indirectly.”

Pupil

Pupils said that reading made them feel 'happy', 'excited' and 'calm'. A few pupils also mentioned that reading was a better option for them than spending more time at a screen.

“It helps calm me down when I feel anxious and makes me feel better when I'm sad because it's like returning home.”

Pupil



Developing a reading culture

Library staff felt that the library has more visibility in the school, and is seen as a supportive and encouraging space for pupils.

The library is now used more often and in different ways. Pupils are regularly brought into the library as part of English lessons. And the school used the library for a series of transition sessions for P7 pupils.

In particular, pupils are using the library as a safe space, where they come if they are feeling anxious, or need some quiet time.

 *We took the approach that reading can help you with anything. If you're feeling anxious or stressed, books can help."*

Library staff

 *Pupils and staff know that we're aiming for a reading culture."*

Library staff

Improving skills

Pupils also commented on how reading helped them improve their literacy and wider skills. They felt that it helped them to:

- enhance knowledge, imagination, creativity and study skills;
- learn facts about topics outwith school; and
- develop a hobby.

 *It opens up a part of our creative minds."*

 *I also like that I can learn new words to add to my vocabulary and usually get a good laugh from what I read."*

 *It allows me a form of escape and helps me improve my writing, sight reading and imagination skills."*

Pupils

Most pupils completing the survey (87%) felt that reading helped them with their school work. They felt that reading activities had helped with improving their vocabulary, spelling and grammar, gave them a greater understanding of text and improved their ability to read.

 *It makes me feel relaxed and puts me in a good mindset for learning."*

 *While reading *To Kill a Mockingbird*, I found some of the language quite difficult to understand, but I became better at understanding words in their context, and learning this skill has helped me with lots of other areas of my school work."*

Pupils

THE DIFFERENCE IT MAKES FOR LIBRARY STAFF

For the library staff, Reading Schools has provided a framework around which they can structure activities. Having a clearly defined set of outcomes to work towards has helped to direct the work, and provide a focus for the initiatives.

Being part of Reading Schools has also helped the library staff to collaborate with other schools, through the local learning resource team. Reading Schools is often discussed in this team and the library staff have taken the opportunity to share ideas and best practice. They have also benefitted from accessing support through Scottish Book Trust.

 *The role can be a bit isolating, so something like Reading Schools encourages a professional conversation with other school staff."*

Library staff

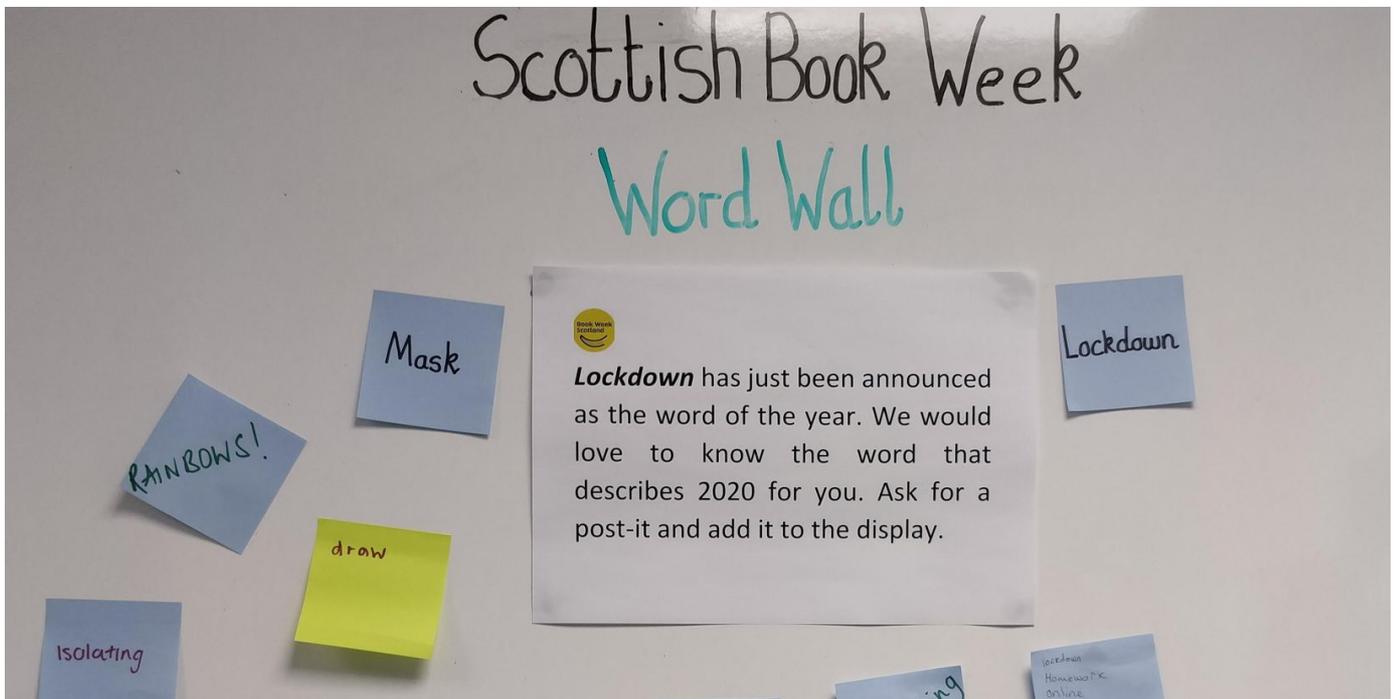
 *It's freshened up my outlook. It makes you think outside the box."*

Library staff

WHAT WORKED WELL

Taking part in the Reading Schools programme has been straightforward so far. The library staff appreciated that it did not always require additional work, but helped to structure and acknowledge existing initiatives.

- “A lot of it you realise you’re already doing, so it’s not onerous.”
- “Any time we have gone to senior Management with a gap, it has been funded and we have been given resources.”
- “It’s good to have a set of goals.”
- Library staff



WHAT WAS CHALLENGING

Due to the Covid 19 pandemic, some elements of the activity have not been developed as planned. For example, the school is still working on building a pupil committee for reading, to ensure the pupil voice is present.

It has also been challenging to engage subject teachers and the senior leadership team, as the pandemic placed additional demands on their time.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The library has taken a closer look at its management system. This system allows pupils to post book reviews through their online accounts, and via a mobile app. The library staff hope to encourage pupils to use this system by offering prizes.

Going forward the library staff hope to engage more of the school in reading for pleasure through cross-curricular activities.

In the longer term, they would love to develop a teenage book bag, similar to Bookbug or Read Write Count, but for secondary pupils.



Reading Schools is an opportunity for us to spread beyond the English department."

Library staff

