

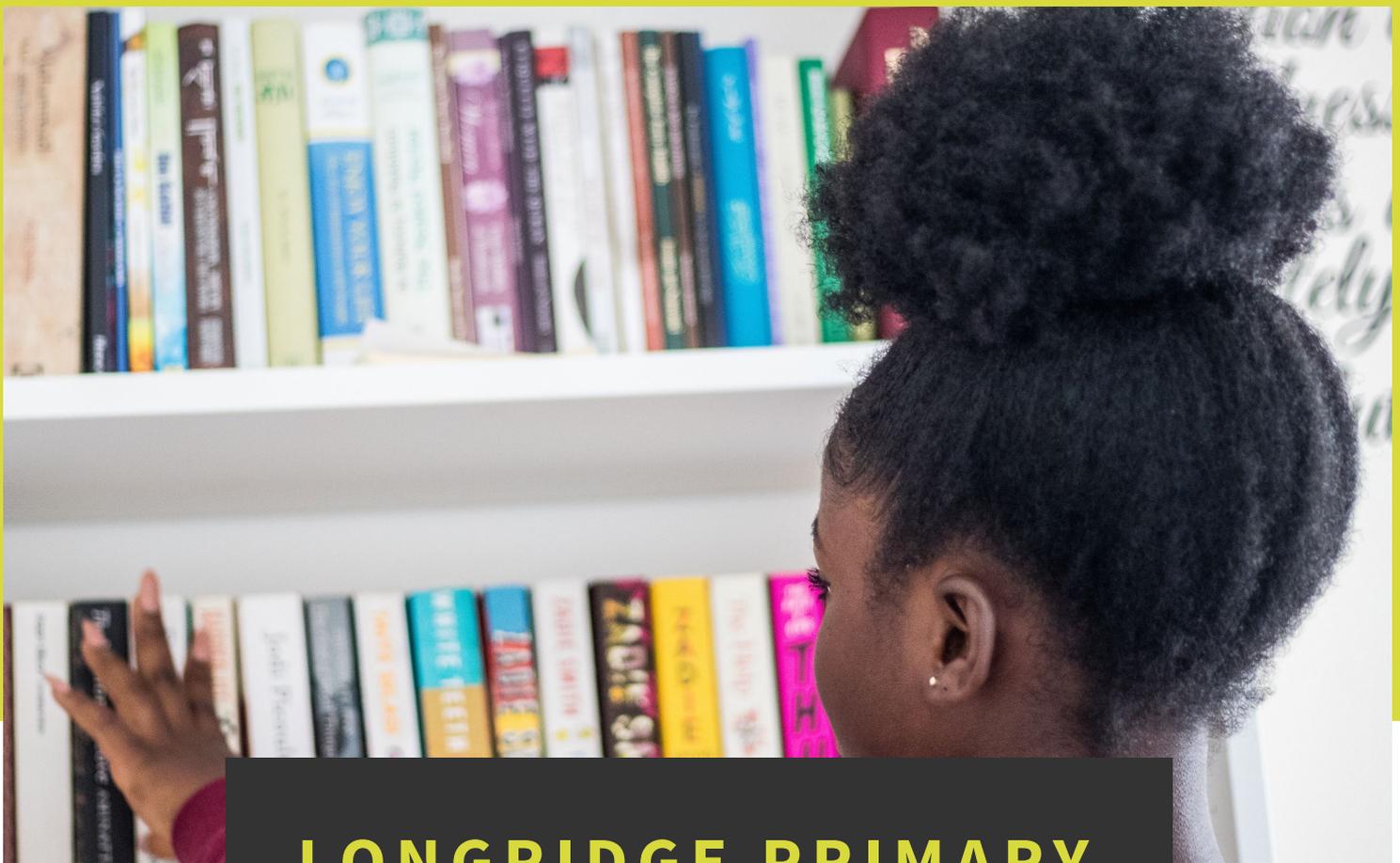
LONGRIDGE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Reading Schools Case Study



Research Scotland

November 2021



LONGRIDGE PRIMARY

BACKGROUND

This case study features Longridge primary school. It is based on a discussion with a principal teacher, 8 pupils and 2 parents.

Longridge primary school is a silver accredited Reading School in West Lothian, with around 100 pupils across 5 classes. It was part of the Reading Schools pilot programme in 2019.

Prior to becoming involved in Reading Schools, the school had conducted research into reading engagement in the school, and had started doing a few reading-based initiatives. Teachers in the school were keen to build on this to embed reading for pleasure throughout the school, and as a life long habit.

READING INITIATIVES

The school has delivered a range of activities designed to encourage and promote reading for pleasure including:

- Whole-school book projects
- Book themed rewards – e.g. certificates, a 'Story Suitcase' filled with treats to enjoy whilst reading
- Engaging with local authors to deliver reading sessions with pupils and parents
- Developing a partnership with a local care home – the school Book Ambassadors read a range of reading materials (including books they had written themselves) to the residents
- Home/Community link initiatives such as 'Look for a Book' and 'Catch me Reading'
- The Big Bedtime Read and lending libraries – for all pupils
- P1-P7 reading buddy project
- Readathons – to raise money to update the school library to include a wide range of non-fiction books
- A Reading Ambassadors programme.



CREATING READING ENVIRONMENTS

In order to encourage pupils to engage with reading, the school was proactive in creating a fun and engaging environment for pupils where reading was seen as a positive activity that was part of the school culture.

- Developing the classroom libraries – the school provided each class with a budget to improve its classroom library. Pupils selected the reading materials they wanted for their classroom, which included books, newspapers, magazines and ebooks.
- Developing the school library by updating the selection of books with new non-fiction texts.
- Developing stronger links with the nearest local library – by taking pupils to the library regularly (by bus), encouraging parents to meet pupils during the library sessions and advertising the local library within the school.
- Developing a community library in the school foyer.
- Book themed displays in the school and on windows – e.g. 'Bookflix' displaying pupils book recommendations.
- Being creative in daily lessons – for example, reading outside in or in the local woods.

 *I read a good amount at home, but I prefer to read at school...at school I can focus."*

Pupil, P7

ENGAGING IN READING DURING THE PANDEMIC

The school continued to promote reading for pleasure during the Covid-19 pandemic, when pupils were educated from home. The focus was on making sure pupils had access to reading materials. This was achieved through various free, online resources, such as EPIC and Oxford Owls, as well as a paid for subscription to Scholastic. The Scholastic subscription was purchased by the school to allow teachers to assign appropriate books for pupils.

The school also continued to engage pupils by:

- Arranging online Q+A sessions with authors.
- Delivering an online assembly based on reading – the assembly involved a gameshow based on Family Fortunes.
- Updating the BookFlix board with pupils recommendations, and sharing the image online.
- Creating a SWAY document with embedded videos of books being read aloud.
- Creating a community larder for families in need which included access to books for both adults and children.

Since returning to the classroom, these digital reading programmes are still popular with pupils.

THE DIFFERENCE IT MAKES FOR PUPILS

Reading for pleasure

The Principal teacher leading the initiative at Longridge Primary feels that the school now has a well establish and embedded reading culture. Pupils understand the value of reading and are actively engaged in reading across the school.

Pupils said that they enjoyed reading. They found it easy and comfortable to read at school, as there was a large and varied selection of things to read, and displays to help you choose what to read next.



I love books, and I love all kinds of books."

Pupil, P3



Reading's a big, big part of life. You need it for any type of job."

Pupil, P6

Staff and parents commented on improvements across the school and for individuals. Overall, pupils are reading for pleasure more often, and are able to talk about reading confidently and enthusiastically.

 *They're reading more, and have the confidence to choose books."*  *Our children now have a voice to express their opinions on books."*

Principal teacher

 *She talks more openly about things relating to reading, and for a kid that's not very confident, that's a big thing for her."*

Parent

For example, one pupil had been a very reluctant reader. His challenges with reading affected his behaviour at school. Through the Reading Schools activities he has discovered ebooks and now enjoys reading.

 *When I was younger, I didn't really like reading, because I thought it was just chapter books. But now I really like reading."*

Pupil, P6

 *In P1 I used to think reading was boring, but now I think it's fun. The activities make it less boring."*

Pupil, P7

 *The biggest thing for me is that all of our pupils now have access to high quality literature both at school and at home through our lending libraries."*

Principal teacher

Parents commented that their children were now reading more often and more widely than before. A few parents commented that their children were showing more interest in books and reading. For example, one parent said that their child was using his pocket money to buy books. And one parent said that their child, who was previously reluctant to read, was now choosing to read ebooks online.

CONFIDENCE

Staff and parents felt that pupils had developed confidence through the reading activities, particularly around reading aloud. In addition, the pupils involved in the Reading Ambassadors group demonstrated increased confidence, creativity and leadership skills.

Pupils commented that they felt more confident talking about reading, reading aloud and helping others with reading or literacy-based activities.

She was always a big reader but was quite shy. Now she's happy to stand up in class and give her opinions."

Parent

I'm so proud of them."

Principal teacher

Sometimes we do a short read and it makes you feel more confident reading out loud."

Pupil, P6

Because I know hard words, I would help someone if they didn't know a word."

Pupil, P6



HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Pupils commented that reading helped them feel calm, happy, excited, and relaxed, and improved their wellbeing.

It's quite relaxing. You can sit and read and forget about everything else."

Pupil, P7

It can help if you're feeling sad, and it can make you feel better."

Pupil, P6

It's like it lets you into another world. It takes you away from things."

Pupil, P7

It can help you with feeling better about yourself."

Pupil, P6



ATTAINMENT

The principal teacher leading the Reading Schools activities felt that there has been an increase in reading attainment across the school. She saw an improvement in vocabulary, reading fluency and reading comprehension.

Some pupils made significant improvements in literacy skills, with an increase in reading age of one year, over a period of four months.

Pupils commented that taking part in reading and reading-based activities helped them engage with school work and develop literacy skills. Some pupils spoke specifically about developing their spelling, vocabulary and writing skills.

 *It keeps me full of knowledge.*
Pupil, P2

 *Reading helps you learn.*
Pupil, P6

 *It's important to read because it helps you with your spelling.*
Pupil, P3

 *Looking back over your work, you can see the words getting longer and harder.*
Pupil, P3

Parents also commented that their children were becoming more confident, active readers. For one parent, there was a noticeable improvement from her child being shy and concerned about reading, to enjoying it.

 *Reading didn't come easily to her initially, it's really helped bring her reading on.*
Parent

Through activities such as the whole school book study, pupils are also engaging in interdisciplinary reading activities. Pupils said that reading helped them in all their subjects, particularly with numeracy.

THE DIFFERENCE IT MAKES FOR STAFF

Staff across the school, from early years through to P7 have been involved in reading activities with pupils. Pupil support workers received training on the benefits of reading for pleasure. They have worked in small groups to deliver paired reading interventions for supporting reluctant readers to make their own choices and develop reading skills.

The principal teacher felt that staff were now more able to talk about their reading and were more engaged in reading alongside pupils, acting as positive reading role models. This helped to build and strengthen relationships between teachers and pupils.

Pupils commented that they felt they knew their teachers better, by seeing what they chose to read during ERIC time.

Staff are also more confident recommending books, and they know that they can look to Scottish Book Trust for advice on children's literature.



It's like, you can see they're more than a teacher... it's a way to connect."

Pupil

ENGAGEMENT IN THE WIDER COMMUNITY

The school is at the heart of small village community. It has engaged with the community through a range of reading-based activities including:

- creating a community library in the school foyer;
- pupils reading to infants at a local toddler group; and
- pupils reading to elderly residents in a local care home.

WHAT WORKED WELL

Programme approach

The school has enjoyed engaging in Reading Schools. Staff felt that programme was flexible, and that there was good support from Scottish Book Trust throughout. They also noted that the planning document was very clear, so they knew what was required for accreditation.



The planning document was very, very clear. You knew where you were going, what you were doing and how you would meet those targets."

Principal teacher

Whole school investment

Part of the success of Reading Schools in Longridge was due to a high level of buy in from staff and senior management. When the school joined the programme, the Principal teacher leading the Reading Schools initiative held a collegiate session where all the teachers planned their reading journey. They developed the reading plan collaboratively, so all staff were invested in the ideas and the changes they wanted to make.



When you're taking on a big project like this in a small school, you need everyone on board and involved."

Principal teacher

Parental engagement

In addition, staff felt that engaging parents in social activities in school had helped to involve them in reading activities. The school aims to have at least one home-link activity each term.



We wouldn't have thought of this without Reading Schools and it has worked really well."

Principal teacher

The school ran workshops for parents, explaining the benefits of reading for pleasure, and parents made pledges to read more with their children. The school then reinforced the messages from the workshops with leaflets and other engagements throughout the year.

Parents felt positive about the reading activities. One parent felt that she had a better understanding of what was happening in the school, through the parental engagement activities.

Parents also commented on how the activity had benefitted them. They felt that they were reading more, on their own and with their children.

Ebooks

Some pupils, such as more vulnerable or reluctant readers, benefited from using ebooks. This was a more inclusive way for them to engage in reading material that was suitable for their reading level yet still high interest.

Flexibility and choice

Parents felt that the school's approach worked well because pupils had a high level of choice in what they read, and because reading was framed as a voluntary, fun activity, rather than schoolwork.

 It's definitely sparked a keenness in her, that you didn't have to read because you're told to."

Parent

 Inviting them in sends the message that reading for pleasure takes place at school and also at home."

Principal teacher

 It's interesting to see how they're using a story to engage pupils in Maths and English."

Parent

 It was good for me, too, to incorporate ERIC time into the day."

Parent

 It's really helped establish a routine, especially during lockdown. Now we definitely find more time for reading."

Parent

 The school encouragement has definitely helped her confidence...I think she felt like she had a choice, so it didn't feel like a chore."

Parent

EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES THAT WORKED WELL

READING AMBASSADORS

This initiative worked well for pupils who were motivated and enthusiastic about reading. Pupils designed and led their own reading clubs. These included reading groups, illustrating groups and reading clubs for pupils in P1 and P2.

Pupils who were Reading Ambassadors said they enjoyed being part of the group and working together to create a club for younger pupils.



It was fun to create our own club and do whatever we want, and have some responsibility."

Pupil, P7 (Reading Ambassador)

LOOK FOR A BOOK

A treasure hunt initiative where books were wrapped up and hidden around the school and surrounding village.

Families were encouraged to find the books, read them and then hide them again for someone else to find.

Through this game, one book travelled from West Lothian to Aberdeen over the course of three weeks. The game was then adopted by a primary school in Aberdeen.

THE BIG BEDTIME READ

This project originally targeted the most vulnerable pupils in the early years however due to its success it was rolled out throughout the school.

The school delivered workshops to parents, providing information on the value of reading for pleasure. The school provided families with a range of fiction and non-fiction books based around themes that would generate discussion and enthusiasm. Through this project, the school ensured that every child in the school had high quality books at home.

WHAT WAS CHALLENGING

Other than the nationally shared challenge of educating pupils remotely during the pandemic, the school has had few challenges delivering Reading Schools activities.

The main challenge they faced was collecting evidence for the accreditation process, having delivered many new initiatives, collating the evidence was time consuming, however, once collected, the evidence served as a valuable piece of self-evaluation.

WHAT'S NEXT

The school is currently working towards gold accreditation and continues developing a whole community spirit around reading.

