# Reading Schools Case Studies 2022

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## 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 Manga[[1]](#footnote-1) but there’s been that small introduction, that dropping of the small seed, about what other books he could look at.” – Parent

**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 it's 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

### Background

This case study is about James Young High School. It is informed by a discussion with three teachers, one pupil support worker, seven S5 and S6 pupils, and the school librarian. The school achieved Gold accreditation in November 2021.

The school roll is 1,200 and all pupils have been involved in some reading activities since the programme began. Around 600 pupils have participated in multiple Reading Schools sessions during the course of the programme, and all senior pupils have had the opportunity to discuss reading for pleasure in English classes and take part in events promoted in Pupil Support Time.

The school librarian wanted James Young High School to be involved in Reading Schools, so she coordinated and led the programme. The motivation was to gain literacy accreditation, to demonstrate the value of the school and its library. Some schools in West Lothian have experienced the loss of dedicated library staff and libraries due to funding, therefore, the school wanted to show the positive impact its library resources.

Additionally, there was a big focus on raising literacy levels in the school before the programme, therefore participating in Reading Schools seemed like a logical practical step for the school. There was also a sense of healthy competition with other schools in the area.

### Reading activities

Class-specific reading activities are made available to every pupil and whole school opportunities are available to all in their free time through reading events, clubs, and leadership roles. The school library offers 30 weekly literacy lessons and extra reading lessons for pupils who require additional support. The school librarian has run some large projects with staff and pupil-led reading initiatives as part of the Reading Schools programme.

The school librarian worked with West Lothian Council libraries to deliver a Read Woke project which focused on social injustice and human rights. They linked with South Ayrshire Council libraries who set up #Read Woke Scotland based on an idea from the US librarian, Cicely Lewis. James Young High School provided funding for core Read Woke books and reward badges, which have been developed into a wider collection by the school librarian. 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 injustice issues.

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

## 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

### 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 Blether. 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.

## 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
* a trip to a local bookshop to choose new books.

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

### Examples of reading schools initiatives

New initiatives developed during the Reading Schools programme include:

#### Reading buddies

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

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

#### Book characters

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

“Kids who wouldn’t normally speak to each other about books, do.” - Class teacher

#### Class novel

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

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

#### The Big 5

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

“They are a good hook for interdisciplinary learning.” - Class teacher

#### Book Week Scotland

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

#### Parents' group

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

#### Transition project

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

#### World Book Day

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

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

#### Reader of the week

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

#### Meet the author

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

“Meeting the author excited them. It made them want to read all her books.” – Parent

#### Reading in assemblies

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

“They use a school language. Like ‘wow’ words. From what I can glean it’s when they use new vocabulary. It makes it exciting for them.” - Parent

#### QR codes

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

#### Outside library

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

### Engaging in reading during the pandemic

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

#### Daily storytime

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

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

#### Social media

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

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

#### E-books

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

#### 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.

#### 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.

### 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

70% said they enjoy reading a lot. 85% said they enjoy coming to the library a lot. 85% 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.

#### 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.

#### 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.

#### 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.

#### 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.

“It’s the talk that goes on all around the books. I didn’t realise that would be so important.” - Class teacher

#### 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.

“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.

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

and published in Japan. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)