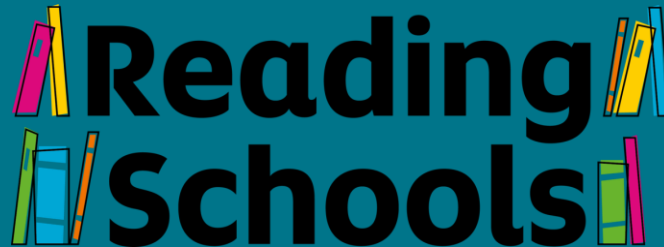




School Improvement Planning with Reading Schools

Wednesday 12 March 2025

Thank you for joining us. The webinar will begin shortly.



Today's session



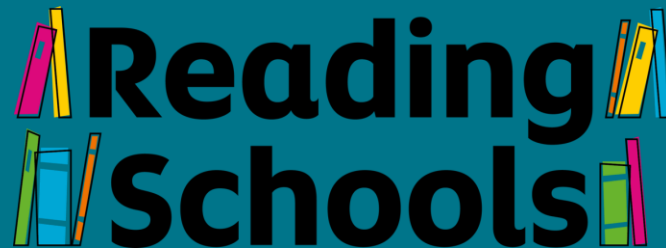
- Joining us today:
 - **Clara Owen**, Reading Schools Co-ordinator
 - **Sarah McGeown**, Professor of Literacy (Psychology & Education) in Moray House School of Education and Sport
 - ~~**Sally Law**, South Ayrshire Reads~~
 - **Renee Mason**, Western Isles Literacy Symposium
- Session outline:
 - Introduction to Reading Schools
 - Research and evidence base
 - Why include Reading Schools in your SIP?
 - Interviews
 - Reflection





Reading Schools

A very brief introduction



What is Reading Schools?

An accreditation framework to recognise and reward schools for building and sustaining a whole-school reading culture in their setting.



scottishbooktrust.com

Total accredited Reading Schools:

550



Early Years
7



Core
252



Silver
165



Gold
126

📍 662 schools are currently working towards their first accreditation.

- Pupil-led
- Staff development opportunities
- Strategic links to HGIOS?4 quality indicators





Research and Evidence Base



School Improvement Planning

Reading for Pleasure: Exploring the evidence base

Professor Sarah McGeown
Moray House School of Education and Sport
University of Edinburgh



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Overview



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Context

The benefits of reading for pleasure

- Intellectual
- Social
- Emotional

Summary

UK declines in volitional reading

- Children's reading enjoyment and engagement is at an all time low (Clark et al., 2024).
- Increased policy and practice commitment towards 'reading for pleasure'

Clark et al. (2024). Children and young people's reading in 2024.
https://nlt.cdn.ngo/media/documents/Children_and_young_people_reading_in_2024_Report.pdf

Report finds 'shocking and dispiriting' fall in children reading for pleasure

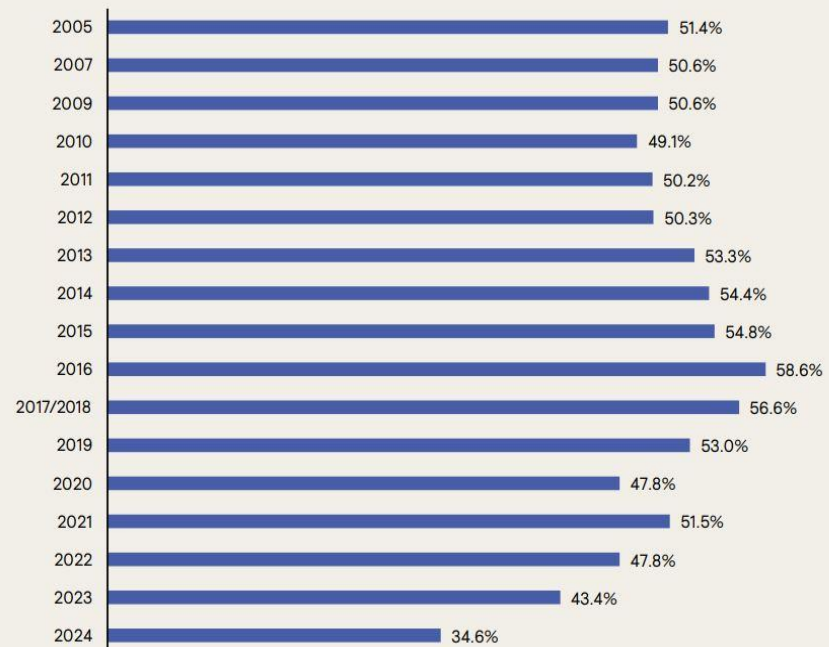
National Literacy Trust finds only 35% of eight to 18-year-olds enjoy reading in their spare time, a sharp drop on last year to the lowest figure yet recorded



UK declines in volitional reading

- Children's reading enjoyment and engagement is at an all time low (Clark et al., 2024).
- Increased policy and practice commitment towards 'reading for pleasure'

Figure 1: Percentage of children and young people aged 8 to 18 who enjoyed reading in their free time either very much or quite a lot from 2005 to 2024



Clark et al. (2024). Children and young people's reading in 2024.
https://nlt.cdn.ngo/media/documents/Children_and_young_people_reading_in_2024_Report.pdf

Clark et al., 2024: based on n >76,000 aged 5-18



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Reading for pleasure: Challenging socioeconomic inequalities

- Fifteen-year-olds whose parents have the lowest occupational status but who are highly engaged in reading achieve better reading scores than students whose parents have high or medium occupational status but who are poorly engaged in reading.

OECD (2002)

OECD (2022). Reading for Change: Performance and Engagement across Countries. https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/reading-for-change-performance-and-engagement-across-countries_9789264099289-en.html



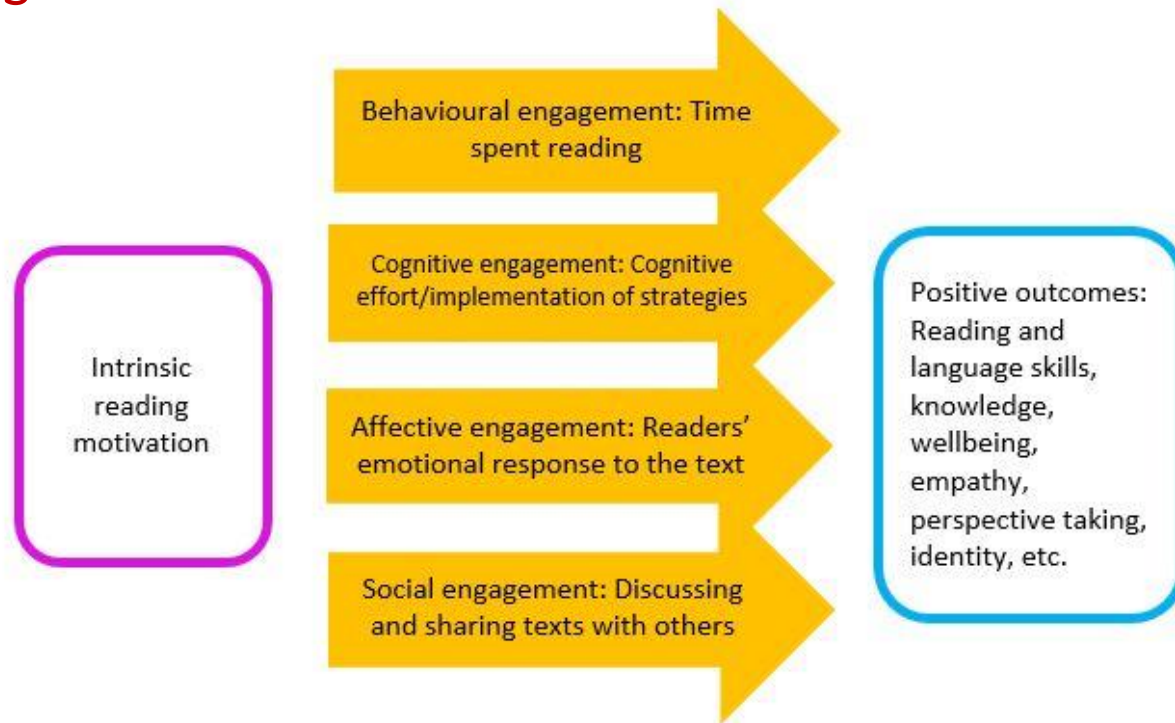
Reading for pleasure: Challenging socioeconomic inequalities

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OECD (2002)

*‘engagement in reading, as measured by attitude, motivation and practice, has the potential to reduce the gaps between the reading proficiency scores of students from differing backgrounds. **The challenge is to find effective ways of increasing engagement**’ (OECD, 2002)*

Reading motivation, engagement and positive outcomes



McGeown, S., Oxley, E., and the Love to Read team (2023). Love to Read: A programme to inspire and sustain a love of reading. University of Edinburgh. Access here: <https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/lovetoread/>

Reading for pleasure



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Explore the evidence base (quantitative) and broaden and deepen understanding (qualitative) of the benefits of reading for pleasure/volitional reading

- Intellectual
- Social
- Emotional



Intellectual: Quantitative

Educational

Better academic outcomes (Clark & Rumbold, 2006; OECD, 2002; Sullivan and Brown, 2015).

Literacy

Book reading is associated with better reading skills (Jerrim & Moss, 2018; McGeown et al, 2015) and growth in reading comprehension and spelling skills (e.g. Mol & Bus, 2011; Torppa et al., 2019).

Language

Book reading is associated with better vocabulary and language abilities (Mol & Bus, 2011; Nation et al., 2022; Sullivan & Brown, 2015).

Jerrim & Moss (2018). The link between fiction and teenagers' reading skills: International evidence from the OECD PISA study. British Educational Research Journal, <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3498>

Nation et al (2022). Book Language and Its Implications for Children's Language, Literacy, and Development. Current Directions in Psychological Science, 31. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/09637214221103264>



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Intellectual: Qualitative

Broad range of academic/educational skills

General knowledge

Consolidate and inspire learning

'I think it's improved my writing, especially like my descriptive writing and describing like a character'

'I felt like after going-, like moving into high school, I really found my love for reading and it's really helped with my literacy and my, like, analysis and interpretation skills'

'in some books, it's fiction, but they put facts into it and you can read the story while also being interested by the facts and things'

Currie et al., (forthcoming) Exploring the relationship between reading and wellbeing: Qualitative insights from children.

Currie et al., (under review). How does reading fiction support adolescents' wellbeing? A qualitative study examining positive affect, connection and personal growth.

Both available on request.

Social: Quantitative

Perspective taking and empathy

Books offer opportunities to see things from other people's perspectives and develop empathy (Eekhof et al, 2022; Gasser et al, 2022; Van der Kleij et al., 2022).

Prosocial behaviour

Reading for pleasure is associated, albeit weakly, with prosocial behaviour (Mak & Fancourt, 2020)

Reduced prejudice

Books can reduce improve attitudes towards stigmatised groups (Vezzali et al., 2014).

Mak & Fancourt. (2020). Reading for pleasure in childhood and adolescent healthy behaviours: *Preventive Medicine*.: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2019.105889>

Vezzali et al., (2014). The greatest magic of Harry Potter: Reducing prejudice. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jasp.12279>

Social: Qualitative



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Enhanced knowledge and understanding of others (both known and unknown)

Internal insights

Empathy (cognitive, affective and behavioural)

'It makes me understand that people are fighting battles that you have no idea about.'

'but I don't know about what it's like to have other neurodivergences, so I think I benefit from that by learning about others that have similar things to me, but not the same as what I have'

'...sometimes I already knew what they were going through and I feel sorry for them'

Currie et al., (forthcoming) Exploring the relationship between reading and wellbeing: Qualitative insights from children.

Currie et al., (under review). How does reading fiction support adolescents' wellbeing? A qualitative study examining positive affect, connection and personal growth.

Both available on request.



Emotional: Quantitative

Emotional symptoms

Reading for pleasure is associated, albeit weakly, with lower emotional problems (Mak & Fancourt, 2020).

Wellbeing

A positive, albeit weak, relationship between book reading and positive mental health/wellbeing (Clark & Teravainen-Goff, 2018; Kennewell et al., 2022; Sun et al., 2023).

Clark, & Teravainen-Goff (2018). Mental wellbeing, reading and writing.

[https://nlt.cdn.ngo/media/documents/Mental_wellbeing_reading_and_writing_2017-18 - FINAL2 qTxyxvg.pdf](https://nlt.cdn.ngo/media/documents/Mental_wellbeing_reading_and_writing_2017-18_-_FINAL2_qTxyxvg.pdf)

Sun et al. (2024). Early-initiated childhood reading for pleasure: associations with better cognitive performance, mental well-being and brain structure in young adolescence. *Psychol Med.* <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0033291723001381>



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Emotional: Qualitative

Understanding of self

Sense of belonging

Self kindness

Ambitions and future aspirations

Connection with others (friends, family)

Wellbeing

'It makes me feel, like, a bit good, because, like, tells me about, like, even if it's not a real person, like, shows that someone else at least went through the same things that I went through.'

'I remember my friend gave me a book because she mentioned it and it had kind of like, issues I was dealing with at the time and she was like, you should read this book.'

'I think it helps to really relax, like, if you're stressed you can start reading and it just, like, relaxes you and helps you, like, go into, like, a different mood.'

Currie et al., (forthcoming) Exploring the relationship between reading and wellbeing: Qualitative insights from children.

Currie et al., (under review). How does reading fiction support adolescents' wellbeing? A qualitative study examining positive affect, connection and personal growth.

Both available on request.

Summary



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Reading for pleasure should be a priority for schools:

- Potential for positive intellectual, educational, social and emotional outcomes, and can challenge socioeconomic inequalities – but only when children and young people are choosing to read, and engaging deeply with what they read.
- Reading Schools offers a framework to embed reading for pleasure in a coherent and systematic way.

Further reading and resources

McGeown, S., & Wilkinson, K. (2021). Inspiring and sustaining reading for pleasure in children and young people: A guide for teachers and school leaders. UKLA Minibook

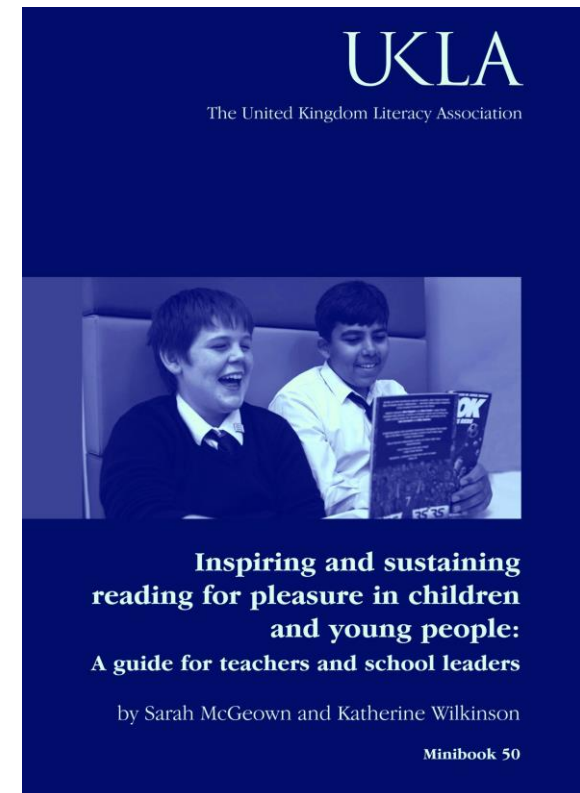
Websites:



<https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/literacylab/>



<https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/lovetoread/>





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Thank you for listening



University of Edinburgh Literacy Lab:
<https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/literacylab/>





Email: s.mcgeown@ed.ac.uk



Why include Reading Schools

in your School Improvement Plan?



 **Reading** 
 **Schools** 

Links to what you already do

8 HGIOS4 Quality Indicators

1.2 Leadership of Learning

1.3 Leadership of change

1.5 Management of resources to promote equity

2.2 Curriculum

2.3 Learning, Teaching and Assessment

2.5 Family Learning

2.7 Partnerships

3.2 Raising Attainment and Achievement

“Links to HGIOS make it much easier to gain buy-in from other staff and Senior Leadership Team.”
Secondary class teacher, 2023/24 Eval.

Research and evidence on reading for pleasure

- **Attainment and equity**
- **Health and wellbeing**
- **Critical thinking**
- **Empathy**
- **Resilience**



"We have seen big increases in our attainment data. We believe this is a result of our Reading Schools journey" **Primary principal teacher, 2023/24 Eval.**

"It's a totally flexible experience where you can decide your Action Plan around the school community within which you work." **Secondary pupil support teacher, 2023/24 Eval.**

Reading Schools evidence



- **Attainment and equity**
 - Bridging the vocabulary gap
- **Health and wellbeing**
 - Support for ASN and EAL learners
- **Critical thinking**
 - Managing behaviour and identifying fake news
- **Empathy**
 - Building connections and reducing prejudice
- **Resilience**
 - Soft starts, safe spaces, self-regulation

To find out more:

[Webinar: School improvement planning with Reading Schools - Reading Schools](#)
[2024 recording, 58 minutes]

Reading Schools as the vehicle



“Reading Schools” sits under many SIP priorities, and can spark meaningful change once it is included:

- Impacts beyond literacy attainment, supporting **health and wellbeing, parent and pupil engagement, equity and inclusion**, and positive interactions with **leadership and learner transitions**.
- Joins the dots for **whole-school involvement**, and **Reading Schools action planning and monitoring** provides focused structure for achieving both medium- and short-term aims.
 - Primary and secondary schools observe noticeable **increase in buy-in (from both learners and staff)** once ‘Reading Schools’ is included on the SIP and strategically prioritised by the school.
 - Reading Schools fosters **a connectedness between different departments** within a school, such as **Early Years, ASN and GME provision**, united by **a common goal**.
- Reading Schools **reflects learner voice** in the delivery of your SIP.

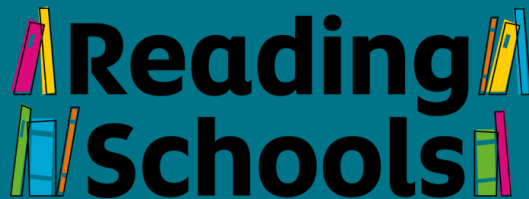


Interview Section (1)

Special Guest

Sally Law

South Ayrshire Reads



Experience (Primary)



Balmalloch Primary School

With a focus on literacy attainment, there was recognition of the broader implications and potential impacts of reading for pleasure, linking it to **health and wellbeing, IDL opportunities, DYW** and increasing positive attitudes/interest in **STEM subjects**.

SIP inclusion joined the dots, with regular checkpoints factored in to monitor progress.

A separate detailed Reading Schools action plan, particularly focussed on reading attainment, looked at both short and long-term outcomes. Links across to HGIOS4, tied everything back to the wider SIP.

St John Ogilvie Primary School

Used **authority-wide target setting** to enable a Literacy SIP Group, using Reading Schools to help meet reading targets and to assist with benchmarking.

RS framework and resources created opportunities to capture learner interest and engagement, feeding pupil voice into the SIP and allowing meaningful monitoring, placing value on learners' attitudes, as well as learning professional observations and tracked data.

Experience (Secondary)



Elgin Academy

Particular focus on Reading Schools in the school SIP, **under Relationships, Rights and Participation (Wellbeing, equality and inclusion)**. Led by the school library provision, this ensured a whole-school buy-in, enabling participation across subject areas and linking opportunities with other priorities, such as pupil voice and family engagement.

Brechin High School

Observed a noticeable change following the inclusion of reading for pleasure in their SIP, **under Attainment in literacy and numeracy**, including S1 and S2 participation in Brechin's own reading scheme (Pret a Lire), increase in staff reading for pleasure, development of cross-curricular literacy projects and a visible increase in readership across the school.

Experience (ASN and GME)



Newtown Primary School

With a focus on **literacy attainment**, Reading Schools was used as a vehicle to support positive readership. The school found opportunities to provide **targeted interventions for ASN learners** to ensure their engagement and enjoyed not only an increase in reading (ability and enjoyment) but also an increase in wellbeing.

Goodlyburn Primary School

Recognised that with reading featured in their SIP, Reading Schools could be used to support this and further **cement a whole-school approach**. This has included featuring Bookbug Gaelic resources in the nursery, to support **emerging GME learners**. There is a connectedness between GME and the wider school, **united by a common goal**.

Impact



- ★ 99% found the process of self-evaluation and action plan useful
- ★ 94% found the framework mapped to How Good Is Our School 4? useful

Antonine Primary School have seen ***a whopping 12% increase in reading attainment*** during their journey, despite COVID-19 restrictions and impacts

'It really did tie in with what we were doing in the school already not only in literacy but across the whole curriculum.' – Depute headteacher, primary

'It has been a positive in our school, an opportunity to reflect and celebrate a lot of the good work we already do, and has been a driver for change and improvement too.' – Librarian, secondary

Knightsridge Primary School in Livingston reported that ***'in 2018, 31% of pupils from Knightsridge PS West Lothian, went on to be presented for Nat 5. In 2022 63% were presented for Nat 5. Amazing impact of building a sustained reading culture and fostering the love of books with our young people.'***



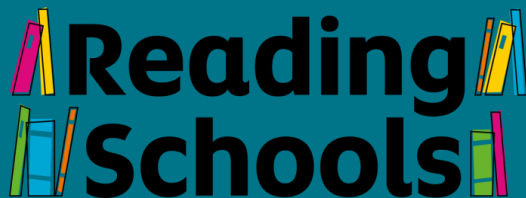
Interview Section (2)

Special Guest

Renee Mason

Libraries Manager, Department of
Education and Children's Services

Western Isles



Reflection questions:



- Where does Reading Schools fit in your School Improvement Planning?
- Which strategic educational priorities would Reading Schools most support in your setting?
- What key takeaway from our speakers are you going to share with your wider colleagues?
- Are you ready to start your Action Plan?

We appreciate your feedback

Please take a second to complete our quick survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/QPDF8QM>



You can find details of [the recent changes we've made based on your feedback](#) on our website!



National Literacy Trust's Annual Literacy Survey

This UK-wide survey has been running since 2010 and provides a range of evidence about the links between reading enjoyment and attainment and wellbeing.

We are working with NLT to engage more Scottish schools.

Participating in this survey will help build a picture of literacy and reading engagement in Scotland's schools.



Change your story

All schools taking part receive a personalised findings report – a great way for those taking part in Reading Schools to fulfil the 'monitoring progress' criteria.

2026 registration will open soon on the National Literacy Trust's website here:

<https://literacytrust.org.uk/research-services/annual-literacy-survey/>
scottishbooktrust.com

Thank you

readingschools@scottishbooktrust.com

Resources and shared practice

www.readingschools.scot/resources

- Reading Schools **On-demand Shared Practice showcases** with speakers from schools across the country [*Filter **Resources** by type: Training videos*]
- **Reading Schools Community** space – **editions for primary and secondary schools**
- Reading Schools **case studies and articles**, such as -
 - ★ **Perth secondary schools' authority-wide book festival**
 - ★ **Building cluster connections through RWC and Reading Schools**
 - ★ **Showing Reading Schools with East Lothian Library Service**
- Resources to better **understand reading identities** and to introduce **quick and easy activities**
- **Attitude surveys** to use with staff, learners and families

Support through Scottish Book Trust: events and funding



- **Authors Live**
 - Access and [watch Authors Live](#) in class
 - Access the [on-demand library](#) for previous broadcasts together with our [accompanying resources](#)
- **Live Literature funded events [[applications open now!](#)]**
 - [Part funded](#) – next deadline **23 May deadline** for 2 June panel
 - [Article to support planning your Live Literature event](#)
- **Reading Schools Fund**
 - [2025/26 fund will open for applications in September](#)

Support through Scottish Book Trust: programmes and resources

- [Storydeck](#)
 - **Secondary schools**, request your three free decks and access accompanying classroom resources
- [Creative writing with Brian Conaghan](#)
 - Four lesson plans and accompanying resources
- [Bookzilla app](#) and [book lists](#) for appropriate age-and-stage
- [Book discussion guides](#)
 - Run your own secondary school book club
- [Scottish Book Trust website](#) articles and resources to support and encourage positive reader confidence and engagement



Upcoming Reading Schools support and other opportunities

- **14th March** - application deadline for the [Developing and Sustaining Reading for Pleasure \(Primary\) course](#)
- **29th April, 4.15-5.30pm** – Creating a book trailer with IntoFilm
- **7th May, 4.30-5.30pm** – Start and Spark: Collaboration
- **14th May, 4-5pm** – Book Discovery: Climate Action (Secondary)
- **28 May, 4-5.30pm** – Achieved Gold? What next, and how to stay shiny!

Check our [School events and opportunities page](#) for our full April-June 2025 schedule

[Follow Scottish Book Trust on Eventbrite for further details](#)

Feedback: 2023/24 evaluation



- ★ 98% found the process of self-evaluation and action plan useful
- ★ 95% found the framework mapped to How Good Is Our School 4? useful

- 421 survey responses
- 8 school case studies
- Partner and stakeholder interviews

"It allowed us to be recognised for all the good practice that was already happening and also inspired new ideas, the whole staff got excited about reading and having a clear focus on reading for pleasure." - Primary school lead contact

"It's good to be able to really collaborate meaningfully with different departments to build a culture of reading for pleasure." - Secondary school librarian

Impact: 2023/24 evaluation



Example: Supporting School Improvement Plan priorities

One school found that **Reading Schools as a focus contributed to the parental engagement priority** of their School Improvement Plan. Through Reading Schools, they invited parents to read along sessions, held sharing sessions on reading and writing, asked for parent volunteers to share stories about their work and their culture, and shared bedtime stories for parents to read with their children.

“It encouraged staff to take **reading out of the classroom into the playground, community and local authority**. This **encouraged more families to engage** and allowed us to make relationships within the community.” - **Primary class teacher**

scottishbooktrust.com

“Our Family Engagement has increased this session from 7% to 28%.” - **Head/depute head teacher, primary**