



# Developing and Sustaining Reading for Pleasure (Primary) programme

## Evaluation report 2024/25

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# Contents

Background .....	3
Context.....	3
Aims .....	4
Methodology .....	6
Outcomes .....	7
Increased participant knowledge.....	7
Increased participant confidence.....	10
Development of participants' own practice .....	11
Early evidence of reading for pleasure being embedded in participants' settings .....	12
Early evidence of improved outcomes for pupils .....	13
Enabling factors .....	14
Time .....	14
Programme focus on collaboration.....	14
Programme focus on pupil voice .....	15
Programme focus on reflection and enquiry.....	16
Design and delivery of programme .....	16
Conclusion .....	17

# Background

## Context

Reading for pleasure (RfP) is widely recognised as one of the strongest predictors of children's future success and may be one of the most effective ways to leverage social change (OECD, 2002; 2010). Despite this, rates of RfP in the UK continue to decline, with recent PISA data showing over 70% of girls and 80% of boys in Scotland report either not reading or reading for less than 30 minutes a day.

This decline raises concerns about how effectively schools are nurturing readers' identities, engagement and intrinsic motivation. When assessment practices foreground a narrow set of reading competencies, professional learning for teachers often prioritises enhancing reading skill over the wider pedagogical approaches that support reading for pleasure (Cremin, 2020). It is vital that teachers also have opportunity to engage with professional learning which centres on the theories, pedagogies and environments associated with fostering positive readership (Lynch, 2023).

In response to this challenge, Scottish Book Trust positions teachers as key agents of change in developing and sustaining RfP. To support this work, the charity provides a research-informed professional learning programme for primary teachers, endorsed by Education Scotland. Grounded in principles of enquiry and criticality, the programme enables participants to deepen their understanding of pedagogies associated with reading for pleasure and to design and undertake a focused practitioner enquiry.

The programme consists of:

- A pre-programme survey and pre-reading
- An online launch session
- A series of online professional learning activities, with participants progressing through five units on an online platform between October and January; the platform provides an opportunity to post reflections and engage in professional dialogue with co-participants
- A live online session in January on undertaking a practitioner enquiry

- A final live online 'sharing the learning' session in June to share the resulting practitioner enquiries with the Scottish Book Trust team, partners, and a selection of their co-participants

There are drop-in sessions scheduled throughout the programme as well as ad hoc support available from the course tutor as needed.

In 2024/25, 30 participants took part in the programme, with 24 completing it successfully from 17 local authorities. This is a popular professional learning programme receiving many more applications than there are places available and, as such, the application and selection process is rigorous.

## Aims

The aim of the programme is to enhance participants' professional knowledge and practice of reading for pleasure pedagogies to support children to become frequent regular readers thus providing a mechanism for social-justice that offers the potential to improve children's life chances.

Participants will learn the essential pedagogical practices associated with developing and sustaining a reading for pleasure culture in the primary setting. They will gain the skills, knowledge and expertise to lead on the enactment of this, tailored to the needs of the pupils in their own unique context.

They will learn the key principles of:

- Reader motivation and engagement
- Principles to support pupils to read for enjoyment
- Principles for embedding reading for enjoyment

They will also simultaneously deepen and enrich their own knowledge of contemporary texts for children.

Anticipated benefits of the programme include:

- Thorough understanding of reading for pleasure pedagogy
- Collaborative working with other primary teachers interested in developing and sustaining reading for pleasure in their settings

- Opportunities to lead learning for, and with, all learners and work with and support the development of colleagues and other partners
- Improved outcomes in children and young people over time

In the baseline survey, participants detailed their own aims for taking part in the programme. These broadly fell into four themes, which map well onto Scottish Book Trust's aims as detailed above. The four themes are:

Increasing their knowledge, for example:

'I read a lot and do encourage it in my learners and love talking about what they've read. However, I feel my own taste means the books I buy have my bias in them and I'm not catering for all my learners needs. When I'm asked by parents how they can support reading at home, particularly boys, I feel my suggestions are limited. I'd like greater understanding and knowledge of alternative texts for learners.'

Sharing knowledge and supporting colleagues, for example:

'As reading lead in my setting, I want to be able to build upon the knowledge I already have, to better support my colleagues in becoming more confident in creating a Reading for Pleasure ethos in their classrooms and as a whole school. So that in turn, we as professionals can help our young people engage with reading in a way that they love and actively want to participate in.'

Embedding reading for pleasure in their setting, for example:

'Develop a sustainable reading culture in school. Developing staff understanding and pedagogies. Creating a buzz/excitement around books and reading for all pupils, staff, families, community.'

Improving outcomes for pupils, for example:

'Hoping to improve attainment in literacy throughout the school. Also by improving reading for enjoyment, hopefully long term the children will benefit from improved health and well-being.'

## Methodology

In making an assessment of the impact of taking part in the programme, this evaluation draws on data from the following sources:

- A baseline survey of participants
- An end-of-programme survey of participants
- A feedback survey of participants
- A survey completed by participants' colleagues around library development
- Reflections completed by participants as part of the programme
- Discussion boards used by participants as part of the programme
- Enquiry posters and presentations completed by participants as part of the programme

## Outcomes

General feedback on the programme was very positive, with participants rating their enjoyment 9.6/10 on average and 100% agreeing they would recommend the course to a colleague.

Detailed analysis of the data sources listed above indicates that there have been five main impacts, all of which are in line with Scottish Book Trust and participants' aims for the programme as detailed above.

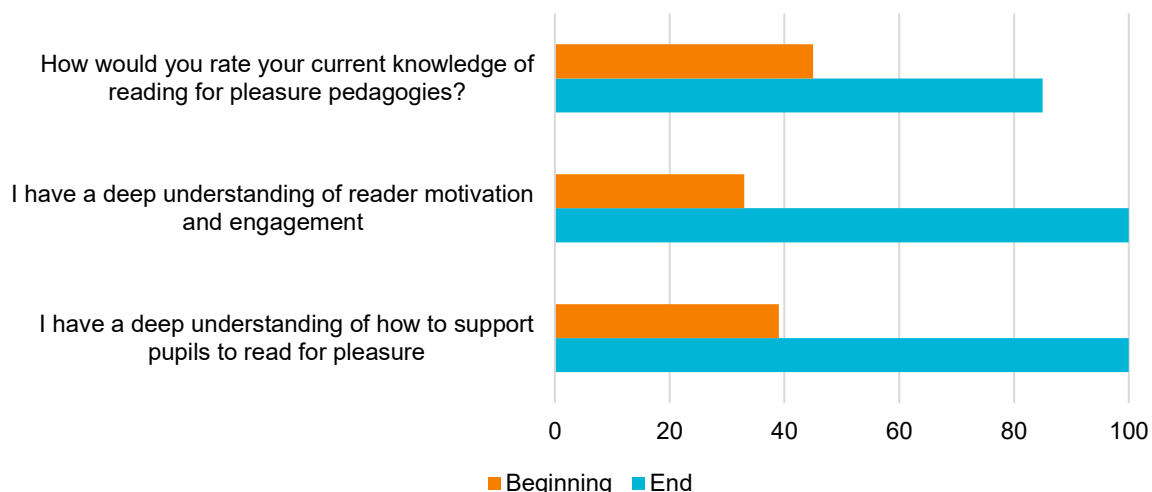
1. Increased participant knowledge
  - Reading for pleasure pedagogy
  - Inclusive and accessible contemporary texts for children
2. Increased participant confidence
3. Development of participants' own practice
4. Early evidence of reading for pleasure being embedded in participants' settings
5. Early evidence of improved outcomes for pupils

### Increased participant knowledge

#### **Reading for pleasure pedagogy**

The quantitative evidence to support this outcome is strong. In response to the question 'how would you rate your current knowledge of reading for pleasure pedagogies?' participants rated themselves 4.5/10 on average before taking part. By the end of the programme, the average rating had nearly doubled to 8.5/10 on average.

In response to the statement 'I have a deep understanding of reader motivation and engagement' agreement rose from 33% of participants to 100% of participants between the baseline and end-of-programme surveys. Similarly, agreement to the statement 'I have a deep understanding of how to support pupils to read for pleasure' rose from 39% to 100%.



There was a wealth of qualitative data describing the different ways in which the programme supported participants to improve their knowledge of reading for pleasure pedagogy, for example:

'This course has been absolutely inspirational. From the very start when we looked at reading motivations, right through to the professional enquiry I have been learning non-stop. I have found the modules on reader role modelling and reading environments particularly interesting and have so many ideas for how I would like to implement change, both in my own classroom and across the school.'

This was also the case for some who started with a good level of knowledge, demonstrating how this structured and reflective programme can support participants at varying levels of prior knowledge:

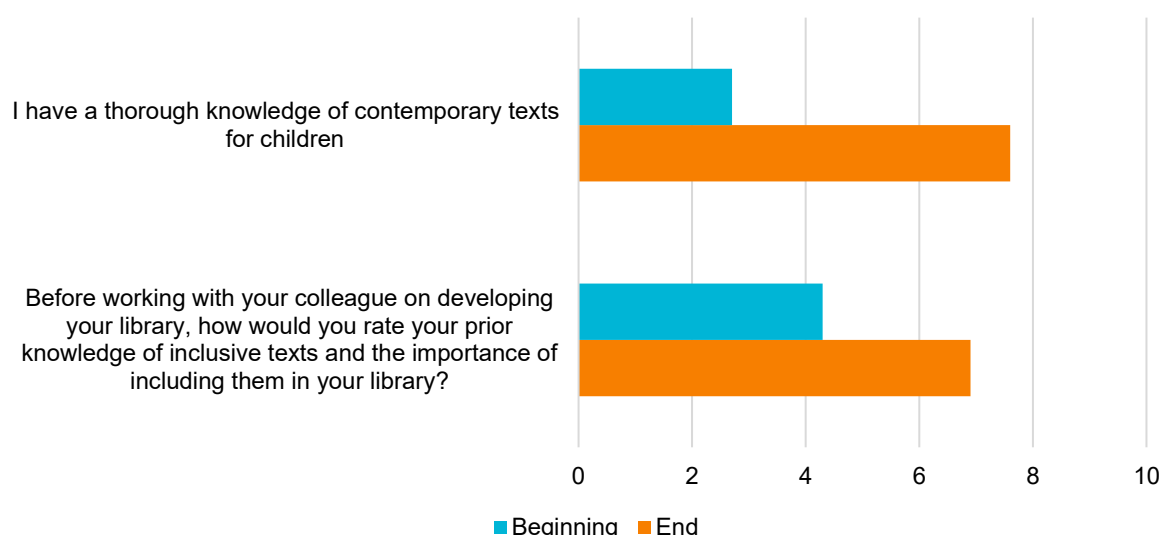
'I considered myself quite aware of reading for pleasure pedagogy. The course really encouraged me to think about how it looks in practice. It enhanced my learning environment, my awareness of picture books and my attitude towards whole school change.'

### **Inclusive and accessible contemporary texts for children**

In terms of quantitative evidence, responses to the statement 'I have a thorough knowledge of contemporary texts for children' rose from 27% to 76% agreement over the course of the programme.



Similarly, in the survey of participants' colleagues average ratings in response to the statement 'before working with your colleague on developing your library, how would you rate your prior knowledge of inclusive texts and the importance of including them in your library?' rose from 4.3/10 to 6.9/10.



Although these are impressive increases, these final figures (as opposed to the 100% agreement across the reading for pleasure pedagogy statements above) demonstrates the need for ongoing professional learning in this crucial area.

Participants were clear on the impact of the programme's focus on inclusive and accessible contemporary texts for children, for example:

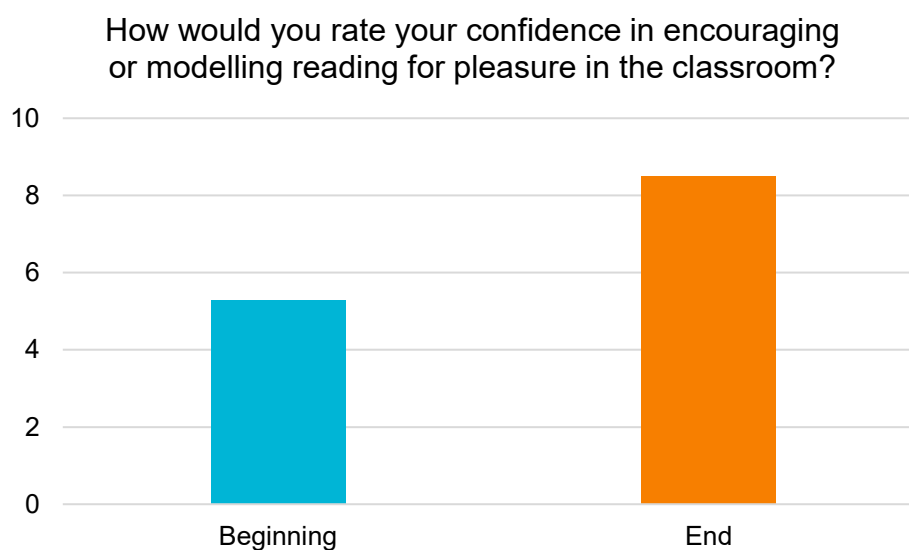
'At the start of the course, some of my goals were to gain a deeper understanding of current children's literature, discover inclusive texts that would broaden my pupils' experiences, and explore how reading can deepen empathy. The course has fully supported these aims, introducing me to a wide range of contemporary, diverse, and high-quality texts. It also highlighted the power of inclusive literature in developing emotional literacy and understanding others' perspectives. I now feel more confident in selecting and using texts that reflect a range of voices and experiences to enrich my pupils' reading journeys, amongst other benefits.'

In the survey of participants' colleagues it was clear that the task set within the programme of working with colleagues to share knowledge in this area had been successful in improving their knowledge and practice as well. For example:

'The discussion I had with my colleague definitely made me consider how I had previously chosen the books for my class library. I had chosen books which I knew of and books which I liked with little consideration for the age or the book or the inclusivity or diversity of the text. We discussed a TED talk my colleague had recommended to me called "The Danger of a Single Story" which made me consider the negative impact my ignorance could have on children in my class.'

### Increased participant confidence

In response to the question 'how would you rate your confidence in encouraging or modelling reading for pleasure in the classroom?' average ratings rose from 5.3/10 to 8.5/10 over the course of the programme.



Qualitative evidence also supports the achievement of this outcome, in particular confidence around developing their practice to better support their learners, and confidence to advocate for reading for pleasure in their setting with the backing of the evidence-based knowledge they have developed through the programme. For example:

'It has given me the confidence to start my own book club, empower others with my knowledge and increase the number of readers in my class.'

'I am now much more confident in selecting texts and creating spaces which are conducive to reading for pleasure.'

'I have more confidence in sharing my knowledge and am now able to back it up with data. I have been able to research an area I think our school specifically could benefit from and it allowed me to reconnect with my own love of reading which helps me to support my pupils.'

### Development of participants' own practice

Following the programme, participants rated themselves 8.5/10 on average in response to the question 'how often do you plan to reflect on your pedagogy / teaching practice as a result of this course?', demonstrating a commitment to both developing their practice in response to their learning and embedding reflective enquiry in their practice more broadly.

In the qualitative data, participants gave lots of examples of how they had already developed or changed their practice as a result of taking part. For example:

'I recognise the importance of intrinsic motivation and reader agency, and I've begun to change my practice to reflect this. I am more intentional about modelling reading for pleasure with learners and ensuring it is embedded as a social activity in the classroom through book talk, reading communities, and shared reading experiences to help foster a lifelong love of reading in my pupils.'

'I have already ensured that I have a timetabled slot every day for RfP, that is not interrupted or taken away if work hasn't been completed. The children look forward to it and so do I. It's led to lots of interesting conversations about what we are all reading in class and I love that learners will ask me what I'm reading too. I recognise the importance of modelling reading for pleasure and I intend to share this learning with my colleagues to encourage them to both timetable it and participate in it regularly.'

'I managed to implement whole school change with a revamp of the school library. I also enacted change in my class with more informal book talk and continue to model reading for pleasure.'

### Early evidence of reading for pleasure being embedded in participants' settings

There is early evidence that taking part in the programme has resulted in reading for pleasure starting to be embedded in participants' settings. For example:

'I have already changed some of my own practice based on the course, and have shared my professional enquiry in my own setting. Next session, as a school we are running working parties, one of which I am leading on reading for pleasure to highlight the importance of it and how the literature can massively inform practice.'

'This course has given me the opportunity to dig deep into my practice and how I plan for Reading for Pleasure. Importantly, I believe our school are making some really important assessments of the diversity of the books available. This work is just beginning, but I feel that I am really empowered and motivated to ensure we maintain this strong start.'

Evidence of this outcome can also be seen clearly in the survey of participants' colleagues around inclusive texts, for example:

'I enjoyed the addition of recommended texts or ideas to bring new authors and stories to my classroom. The questions gave opportunity to think about my learners as individuals and what each of them gets from the books I choose.'

'My colleague has enabled a range of collegiate discussions to promote diversity in our curriculum through inclusive texts. This has facilitated a wider discussion regarding the purpose and aims of both our school library and our offering to wider stakeholders.'

## Early evidence of improved outcomes for pupils

Similarly, there is strong early evidence of improved outcomes for pupils amongst the qualitative data across engagement, enjoyment, and attainment, for example:

'The course helped me significantly to further develop my own practice. My learners now show a real enjoyment for reading and have made great progress in their attainment.'

'I have observed several lovely conversations between children, as they share books unprompted and offering insights into their thoughts and feelings on their book. I've seen several books passed from one person to another, including to some of the more reluctant readers, who after hearing how much a friend enjoyed something, asked if they could borrow it. I see children comfortably talking about the books they are reading during quiet reading time and my insistence on silence has stopped. Quiet still, but I am heartened to hear them share their book with someone else.'

'The enquiry has had a significant impact on both pupils' attitudes towards reading and their literacy development. Using a Likert scale to measure attitudes at regular intervals, I observed a gradual shift towards more positive perceptions of reading, with pupils reporting increased enjoyment and confidence. Initially, responses indicated low motivation and engagement, but over time, pupils began to show greater enthusiasm, particularly when reading materials aligned with their interests. Their responses evidenced to me that they were starting to see themselves as a 'reader' for the first time.'

## Enabling factors

Analysis of the data reveals five enabling factors that have supported participants to achieve the outcomes detailed above. These factors are:

1. Time
2. Programme focus on collaboration
3. Programme focus on pupil voice
4. Programme focus on reflection and enquiry
5. Design and delivery of programme

### Time

A number of participants noted that taking part in the programme had supported them to dedicate time to their professional learning that they likely would have not been able to had they not participated. For example:

'This course has given me lots to think about as I lead the school to take Reading and Reading for pleasure forward. It's made me think creatively and allowed me to access research that I probably wouldn't have had time to do otherwise.'

### Programme focus on collaboration

The programme's focus on collaboration, both within the participant group, and across participants' settings, seems to have had a significant impact on the efficacy of the programme. For example:

'This course fulfilled my expectations and more. The inspiration I have gained from participating in the modules, the course reading and the chance to share ideas and best practice with other participants has been amazing. My head is buzzing with how I want to move this forward and develop this area across our school.'

In particular, it is clear that including a task which explicitly required participants to work with colleagues in their setting within the programme had an impact on those colleagues, contributing to reading for pleasure beginning to be embedded in participants' settings. For example:

'Building on the work done by my colleague, I am now planning to audit my library to ensure that all children can see themselves represented in the books they read. This step is crucial for fostering a sense of belonging and inclusivity among our young readers.'

It should also be noted that although the text of their discussions cannot be included in this report, the discussion boards included as part of the online learning environment were very active and supportive, with participants sharing professional knowledge and experience, critically examining the research and resources highlighted as part of the programme in conversation with one another, and sharing aspects of their own reading journeys and identities.

### Programme focus on pupil voice

Throughout the programme content there was a focus on pupil voice. It is clear that participants have embraced this and included pupils in developing resources and practice in their settings. For example:

'I have also made more of an effort to read books recommended to me by the children especially books outside my typical genre. I am learning to be more open to their choices, gaining a better understanding of why some books have a big following in the process. Manga and the conversations around it has had a significant impact on one child. A dyslexic learner, who felt they would never be able to read, began bringing his Manga into school before realising that some others shared his love of the genre. Being able to talk about it with them has helped their confidence and encouraged their reading. During a recent 'buddy read' with the P2/3 class, this learner shared a picture book with a younger pupil, while a similar session earlier in the year had them almost refusing to participate. The commonality of Manga has enabled children to see each other in a different light almost.'

### Programme focus on reflection and enquiry

The programme explicitly foregrounds the importance of reflection and enquiry as part of ongoing practice. The evidence suggests that participants appreciated the opportunity to engage in reflection and enquiry (when, as above, they may not have time to do so as often as they'd like), which in turn supported the achievement of the outcomes detailed above. For example:

'It allowed me time and opportunities to reflect on what I was already doing to promote reading for pleasure within my class and school and then what my next steps could be. Working on the practitioner enquiry allowed me to co-ordinate and learn from colleagues and other pupils.'

In addition, for each unit participants completed a reflection as part of their assessment. Although the text of these cannot be included in this report, they were rich and detailed, reflecting critically on the research materials and resources highlighted in the programme, on how these related to their own experiences, and the implications for developing their practice and setting to better support their learners.

### Design and delivery of programme

Finally, the evidence suggests that the programme was well designed and delivered, taking the needs of participants into account whilst retaining a strong, evidence-based approach. For example:

'It more than fulfilled my goals. I feel empowered and more knowledgeable in how to encourage reading for pleasure.'



## Conclusion

'It offered valuable insights into the importance of reader identity, learner agency, and informal reading cultures. It also gave me space to reflect on my own habits and how small changes can have a big impact. I feel more confident to support reading for pleasure in a way that feels authentic and sustainable.'

In conclusion, there is good evidence that the Developing and Sustaining Reading for Pleasure (Primary) programme supported participants to achieve outcomes across five broad areas:

1. Increased participant knowledge
  - Reading for pleasure pedagogy
  - Inclusive and accessible contemporary texts for children
2. Increased participant confidence
3. Development of participants' own practice
4. Early evidence of reading for pleasure being embedded in participants' settings
5. Early evidence of improved outcomes for pupils

The data suggests that there were five enabling factors in supporting these outcomes to be achieved:

1. Time
2. Programme focus on collaboration
3. Programme focus on pupil voice
4. Programme focus on reflection and enquiry
5. Design and delivery of programme

The programme is currently running for a second time across 2025/26 and applications for a 2026/27 cohort will open in early 2026. Foundational to the programme is the belief that an active practitioner enquiry community needs to be led by practitioner enquirers. For the Developing and Sustaining Reading for Pleasure (Primary) programme, this means the course tutor asks questions, critically reflects and makes changes to the programme in response. Enquiry communities vary across contexts and time and need monitoring and exploration to allow for

continuous improvement. Therefore, the programme enacts an enquiring approach to practice and is adapted as appropriate to best support the needs of each cohort, allowing them to further their aims and achieve outcomes for themselves, their settings and their learners as evidenced throughout this report.