

Evaluation of the First Minister's Reading Challenge

Final Report

Scottish Book Trust
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Executive Summary

About this report

This is an impact focused evaluation of the First Minister's Reading Challenge (the Reading Challenge), commissioned by Scottish Book Trust. This report explores the extent to which the Reading Challenge has delivered its intended outcomes in secondary schools and libraries. It draws on the views and experiences of pupils, parents, carers, school staff, public library staff and community partners involved in the Reading Challenge.

About the First Minister's Reading Challenge

The First Minister's Reading Challenge was launched in August 2016. In its first year, 2016/17, the Reading Challenge was open to pupils in P4 to P7. In 2017/18 this was expanded to include P1 to P3 and a pilot programme with six secondary schools. In 2018/19 the programme expanded further to include primary schools, secondary schools, libraries and community groups.

The Reading Challenge aims to positively impact attainment by building reading cultures in schools, families and communities to support and nurture reading for pleasure. The Reading Challenge is intended to be inclusive and flexible, working alongside other reading programmes taking place in schools, libraries, communities and at home. Participating schools and organisations are invited to submit an entry to one of nine 'challenges'.

In 2018/19, 61% of secondary schools and 10% of libraries registered to take part in the Reading Challenge. The Reading Challenge received 39 challenge submissions from secondary schools and four submissions from libraries.

The intended outcomes of the Reading Challenge were:

Project design supports and promotes reading for pleasure by:

- being flexible and inclusive;
- providing the necessary support and resources for teachers to embed reading for pleasure into school life;
- creating opportunities for libraries, parents and other community partners to support reading for pleasure within and beyond the school environment; and
- being sustainable.

Reading for pleasure is valued and encouraged.

Pupils read for pleasure more frequently and/or more widely.

Pupils are active readers, making reading choices and developing areas of interest which they pursue, as far as possible, independently.

Pupil voice and leadership is developed.

Senior management recognises the impact of reading for pleasure.

Reading for pleasure is embedded across the curriculum.

Schools and libraries make effective local partnerships to support reading for pleasure in the school and the wider community.

Family usage of public libraries increases.

Libraries showcase their work around reading for pleasure with children and young people.

Reading for pleasure supports attainment in relation to literacy and English, as well as the wider curriculum.

Reading for pleasure supports closing of the attainment gap.

Evaluation method

This evaluation involved research with schools, research with public libraries, and a desktop review of data collected by Scottish Book Trust. The fieldwork involved a survey of secondary schools, a survey of libraries, and ten case studies. Of the case studies, six focused on innovative practice in secondary schools and four focused on long term engagement in primary schools.

To better understand engagement in primary schools we contacted primary schools that were no longer registered to take part in the Reading Challenge, to better understand why some schools continued to take part and others did not.

Outcomes achieved

Reading for pleasure

The evaluation found that the Reading Challenge has made good progress towards its outcomes, particularly those relating to reading for pleasure. Staff and pupils indicated that Reading Challenge activities encouraged them to read for pleasure. They felt that reading was becoming a valued and enjoyable activity amongst pupils who had previously not shown an interest in reading. Sixty-six per cent of school and library staff felt that more pupils understood the value of reading for pleasure. And most also felt that the Reading Challenge facilitated pupils reading more widely than before.

Recognition of reading for pleasure in school

Where the Reading Challenge worked well, there was a high level of awareness that reading for pleasure was important, from senior management and across staff teams. Most school staff (60%) felt that other staff in their school, including senior management, understood the value of reading for pleasure. Some staff also felt that working as part of a national initiative empowered them to encourage reading for pleasure at school, and facilitated engagement from the wider staff team.

Some schools adopted creative methods to embed reading for pleasure into the curriculum and used reading for pleasure to enhance learning. Over 60% of school staff said that they felt the Reading Challenge helped them to embed reading for pleasure into the school day and across the curriculum. In schools, the Reading Challenge provided pupils with opportunities to lead their learning, and take on leadership roles. In some places, it provided pupils who were already leaders to lead on something new, and in others, it facilitated the development of new leadership roles.

Outcomes around school, family and library partnerships

The Reading Challenge facilitated positive partnership work between schools and libraries. Some schools indicated that the Reading Challenge was delivered in close partnership with libraries and some libraries indicated that they had supported schools to deliver Reading Challenge activities. Around half (52%) of school staff felt that the Reading Challenge had supported them to make better links with parents, and just under half (48%) felt that they had made better links with libraries. However, school and library staff also said that engagement with parents and families proved more difficult, and was reported by many as an area for development.

Outcomes around attainment

Many respondents felt that the Reading Challenge worked well as part of the range of initiatives focused on raising attainment and reducing the poverty related attainment gap. Within schools where there were targeted, monitored initiatives, staff and pupils indicated strongly that they felt the Reading Challenge helped to improve engagement and attainment in literacy, health and wellbeing. Pupils reported tangible outcomes for themselves, such as improvements in vocabulary, reading ability, mental wellbeing and confidence. As well having a direct impact on literacy, health and wellbeing, some felt that Reading Challenge activities had a positive impact across the curriculum. In a small number of schools, staff reported that through targeted activities, the Reading Challenge was helping to reduce the poverty related attainment gap.

Outcomes for libraries

The library Reading Challenge was introduced this year and so far, only a small proportion of libraries (10%) in Scotland registered to be part of the Reading Challenge. Predominantly, libraries have engaged in the Reading Challenge by supporting participating schools. There was some indication a small number of libraries have used Reading Challenge initiatives to increase use of the library by families. In some areas, libraries have also supported schools to deliver activities and have been able to increase use of the library through the Reading Challenge.

Key successes

Overall, people spoke highly of Scottish Book Trust, the Reading Challenge and the resources. Those who had actively taken part in the Reading Challenge enjoyed its flexibility and broad scope. Schools particularly liked that the Reading Challenge was adaptable to their needs and that it aligned well with wider priorities around attainment in literacy, health and wellbeing.

Areas for development

The main areas for development were the website, the resources and the timing of the Reading Challenge. Taking into account feedback from people involved in this research, there may be scope for Scottish Book Trust to consider the timing of the training and challenge submissions. The resources were broadly appreciated, and it may be useful to develop the resources further in line with user feedback. It may also be useful to address the issues raised around access to the website.

1. Introduction

About this report

- 1.1 This is an impact focused evaluation of the First Minister's Reading Challenge (the Reading Challenge), commissioned by Scottish Book Trust. This report explores the extent to which the Reading Challenge has delivered its intended outcomes. It draws on the views and experiences of pupils, parents, carers, school staff and community partners involved in the Reading Challenge.
- 1.2 This report focuses on the impact of the Reading Challenge in secondary schools and libraries. An evaluation focusing on the impact of the Reading Challenge in primary schools is available [here](#).

About the First Minister's Reading Challenge

- 1.3 The First Minister's Reading Challenge was launched in August 2016. In its first year, 2016/17, the Reading Challenge was open to pupils in P4 to P7. In 2017/18 this was expanded to include P1 to P3 and a pilot programme with six secondary schools. In 2018/19 the programme expanded further to include primary schools, secondary schools, libraries and community groups.
- 1.4 The Reading Challenge aims to positively impact attainment by building reading cultures in schools, families and communities to support and nurture reading for pleasure. The Reading Challenge is intended to be inclusive and flexible, working alongside other reading programmes taking place in schools, libraries, communities and at home.
- 1.5 The programme is built around a series of young person-centred reading challenges, alongside training for teachers, print and online resources, a website, outreach support and opportunities for sharing best practice.
- 1.6 Funding is available through Inspiring Classrooms and Creative Workshops grants. These allow schools to host authors/creative practitioners and purchase supporting resources.
- 1.7 At the end of the academic year, participating schools and organisations are encouraged to submit an entry for one of the 'challenges'. The challenges demonstrate the progress that a class, group, whole school or individual has made over the course of the year. The nine categories are:

Primary schools	School Reading Journey Gaelic Medium Education Reading Journey School-Community Partnership Reading Journey School Reading the Most Books Pupil Reading Journey Pupil Reading Most Books
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Secondary schools	Reading Inspiration
Libraries	Library Reading Culture
Community groups	Community Reading Culture

- 1.8 In June 2019 a Celebration Event was held in Glasgow at which prizes were awarded to pupils, schools a library and a community group for the 2018/19 year. This event was also an opportunity to share practice, with 11 schools and organisations showcasing their work through stalls and displays. The event also included activities for young people, including a scavenger hunt, book tasting, a photo booth and the opportunity to try out and provide feedback on a new app for secondary school pupils.

Intended outcomes

- 1.9 Overall, the Reading Challenge aims to support reading for pleasure.
- 1.10 The intended outcomes of the Reading Challenge for secondary schools were:

Project design supports and promotes reading for pleasure by:

- being flexible and inclusive;
- providing the necessary support and resources for teachers to embed reading for pleasure into school life;
- creating opportunities for libraries, parents and other community partners to support reading for pleasure within and beyond the school environment; and
- being sustainable.

Reading for pleasure is valued and encouraged.

Pupils read for pleasure more frequently and/or more widely.

Pupils are active readers, making reading choices and developing areas of interest which they pursue, as far as possible, independently.

Pupil voice and leadership is developed.

Senior management recognises the impact of reading for pleasure.

Reading for pleasure is embedded across the curriculum.

Schools and libraries make effective local partnerships to support reading for pleasure in the school and the wider community.

- 1.11 The intended outcomes for libraries also include:

Family usage of public libraries increases.

Libraries showcase their work around reading for pleasure with children and young people.

- 1.12 The Reading Challenge also aims to contribute more widely to broader outcomes, including:

Reading for pleasure supports attainment in relation to literacy and English, as well as the wider curriculum.

Reading for pleasure supports closing of the attainment gap.

Delivery of the Reading Challenge

- 1.13 The First Minister's Reading Challenge is funded by the Scottish Government and delivered by Scottish Book Trust.
- 1.14 Scottish Book Trust is a national charity that believes books, reading and writing have the power to change lives. Scottish Book Trust works with people of all ages across Scotland, from antenatal support to projects in care homes, offering both universal and targeted programmes. Scottish Book Trust is committed to using reading and writing to help work towards a Scotland where everyone, no matter what their background, has the same opportunities to thrive.
- 1.15 Scottish Book Trust undertakes a considerable amount of work with school children. For example, it is working to reduce the attainment gap between children living in the most and least deprived parts of Scotland through gifting books, games and activity bags to every family with children up to seven years old. It helps parents to support their child's education through the Read Write Count programme, and works with teachers to inspire children to develop a love of reading.
- 1.16 Delivery of the Reading Challenge is supported by an Advisory Group which includes representatives of teachers, writers, publishers, literary agencies, booksellers, Education Scotland, the Association of Directors of Education, Scottish Library and Information Council, Gaelic Books Council, Scottish Government and the National Parent Forum of Scotland.

Evaluating the Reading Challenge

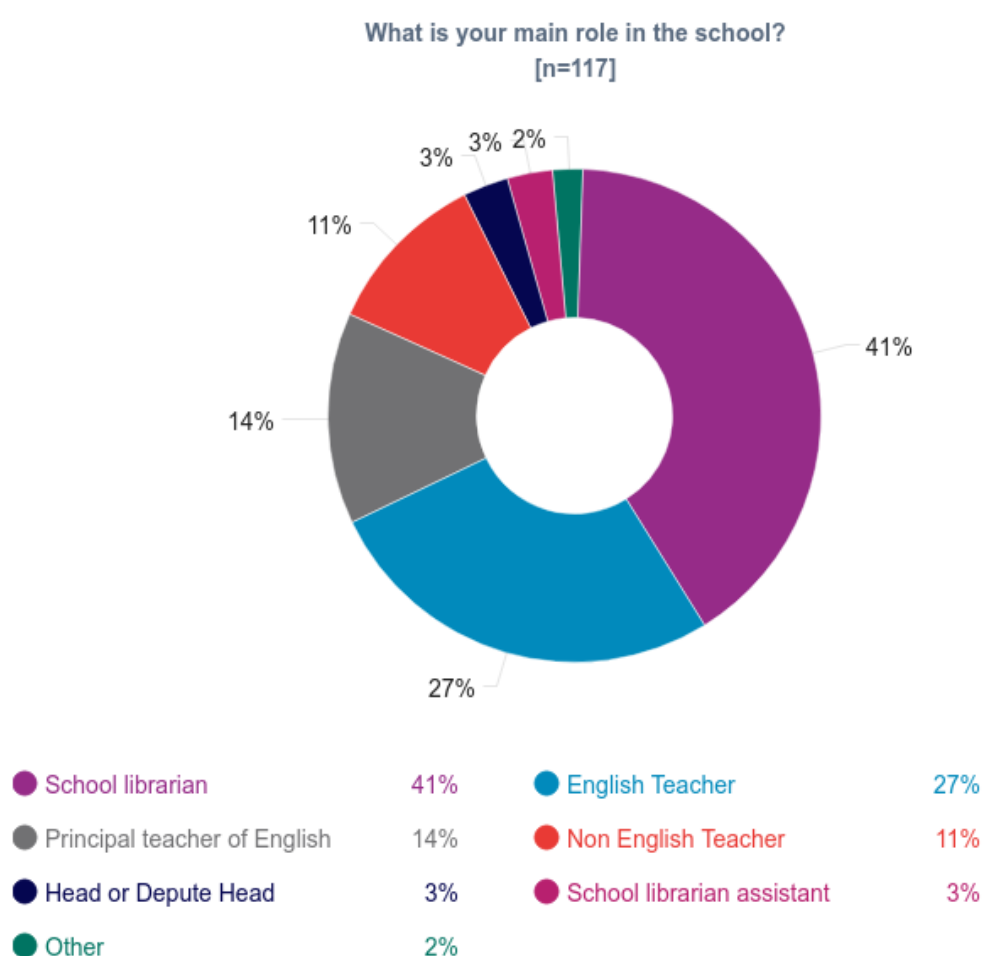
- 1.17 This evaluation involved research with schools, research with public libraries, and a desktop review of data collected by Scottish Book Trust. This evaluation focuses on the impact of the Reading Challenge in secondary

schools. The evaluation took place during the first year that the Reading Challenge was delivered in secondary schools.

- 1.18 Previous evaluations of the Reading Challenge focused on primary schools, and took place after the first year of delivery.

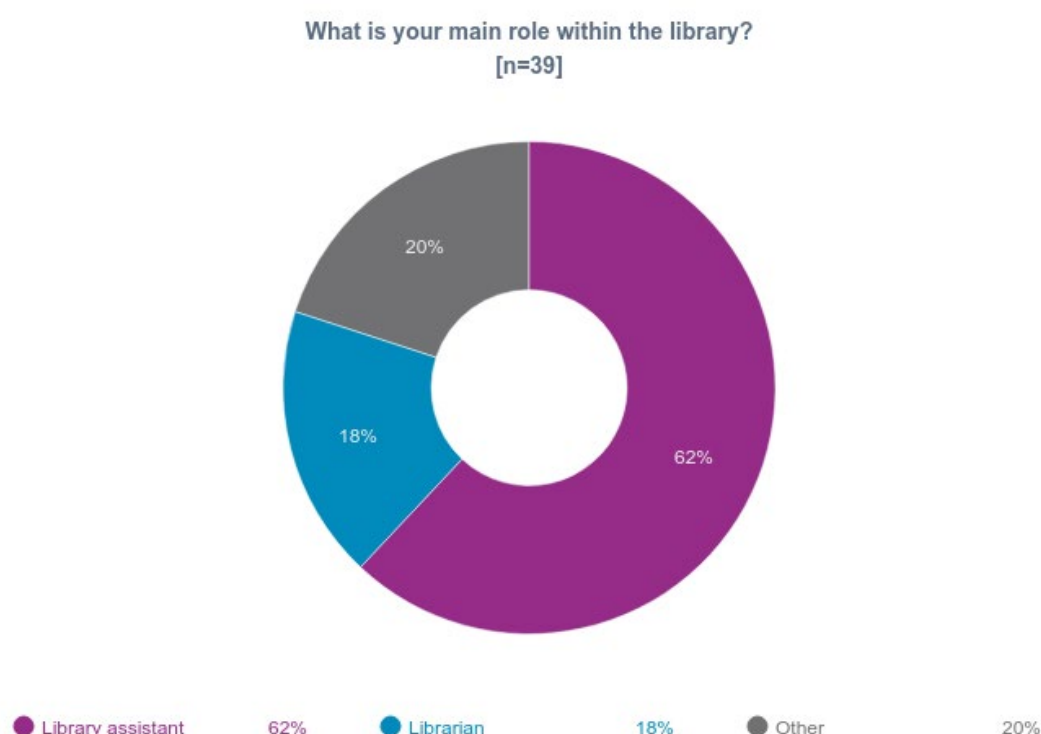
Survey of secondary schools

- 1.19 The online survey was issued to all secondary schools in Scotland (over 350), including special schools, through their office email accounts. The survey was also issued directly to approximately 200 key contacts from schools that had registered with the Reading Challenge. A total of 161 responses were received. The survey was designed to capture views from both schools that had registered and participated in the Reading Challenge, and those that had not.
- 1.20 Survey responses were received from a range of school staff. Most respondents were school librarians or English teachers. The full range of respondents is outlined in the table below. Most of those selecting 'Other' described their role as support staff.



Survey of libraries

- 1.21 The survey was issued to all public libraries (almost 500) through the public email accounts and to 46 library key contacts that had registered with the Reading Challenge. A total of 62 responses were received. As with the school survey, it was designed to capture views from both libraries that had registered and participated in the Reading Challenge, and those that had not.
- 1.22 Most of the respondents to the library survey were library assistants. The chart below outlines the mix of respondents. Of those selecting 'Other', most were senior staff or people in management positions relating to library services.



- 1.23 Additional feedback from staff at six libraries was gathered through telephone interviews or written feedback via email.

School case studies

- 1.24 We visited ten schools that had been involved in the Reading Challenge. Schools were selected by Scottish Book Trust to provide examples of innovative, successful and sustainable engagement in the Reading Challenge.
- 1.25 At each school we spoke with pupils and school staff in focus groups or interviews. We were also given opportunities to see how each school had promoted reading, through dedicated spaces or displays. Where possible, we also engaged with parents and community members who had been involved in the Reading Challenge. Sometimes these interviews took place after the school visit.

- 1.26 The ten case studies involved 49 school staff members, 45 primary school pupils, 78 secondary school pupils and 9 parents/community partners.
- 1.27 Although schools were keen to engage with the evaluation and share their experiences, three schools that we approached in the first instance were unable to take part due to limited capacity. Scottish Book Trust was able to identify alternative schools to take part. The visits included:
- six secondary schools that had been involved in the Reading Challenge, one of which had been involved in the pilot programme; and
 - four primary schools that have maintained engagement in the Reading Challenge over the past three years. One of these schools had been involved in a small pilot programme, preceding the launch of the Reading Challenge in 2016/17.
- 1.28 The ten case studies are available as Annex A and Annex B to this report.

Non-participating primary schools

- 1.29 We contacted primary schools that were no longer registered to take part in the Reading Challenge, to better understand why some schools continued to take part and others did not.
- 1.30 We contacted over 600 schools that were no longer registered to take part in the Reading Challenge. We gathered responses informally over the telephone and by email from over 100 (114) schools. We also conducted 15 telephone interviews to gather more in depth information.

Previous evaluations

- 1.31 The Reading Challenge was evaluated in 2016/17¹ and 2017/18². These evaluations focused on the outcomes achieved for pupils taking part in primary schools.

¹ https://www.readingchallenge.scot/sites/default/files/2018-09/sbt_first_ministers_reading_challenge_final_report_210817.pdf

² <https://www.readingchallenge.scot/sites/default/files/2019-02/First%20Minister%27s%20Reading%20Challenge%20Evaluation%202017-18.pdf>

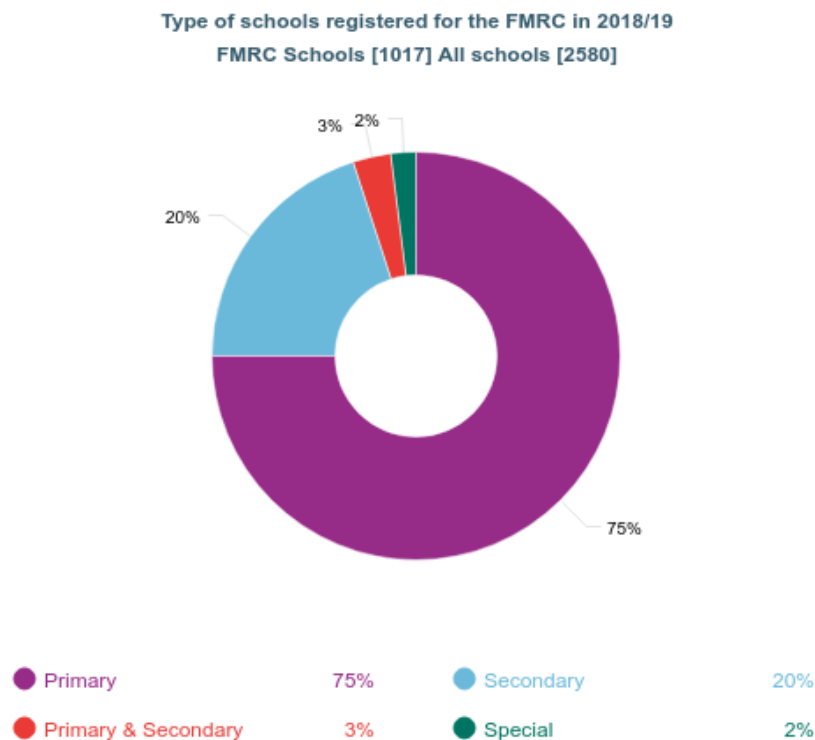
2. Participation in the Reading Challenge

Introduction

2.1 This chapter explores participation in the Reading Challenge in 2018/19.

Schools registered

2.2 In 2018/19, 1,017 schools registered to take part in the Reading Challenge, across all 32 local authority areas. This is around 40% of all schools in Scotland³.



- 2.3 Over half of secondary schools in Scotland registered to take part in the Reading Challenge. Some schools were registered as both primary and secondary schools. These were mostly independent schools.
- 2.4 The proportion of primary schools registered for the Reading Challenge decreased from 75% in 2016/17, to 47% in 2017/18 to 38% in 2018/19.
- 2.5 The table below outlines the number of schools registered and the proportion of each type of school that registered to take part in the Reading Challenge. Further information on our understanding of why registration at primary school level has decreased is available in Chapter 5.

Type of organisation	Number registered	Total number of this type of school	Proportion of this type of organisation
Primary	758	1997	38%
Secondary	207	339	61%
Primary and Secondary	32	72	43%
Special/Grant-aided	20	172	12%
Libraries	52	541	10%

2.6 The table below shows the number of secondary schools registered in each local authority. The proportion of schools registered ranged from 18% in East Ayrshire to 78% in Angus.

Local Authority	Number of secondary & special schools that registered in 2018/19	Total secondary & special schools in the LA 2018/19	% of schools in the local authority registered
Aberdeen City	10	23	43%
Aberdeenshire	12	24	50%
Angus	7	9	78%
Argyll & Bute	6	12	50%
Clackmannanshire	2	8	25%
Dumfries & Galloway	6	22	27%
Dundee City	6	11	55%
East Ayrshire	3	17	18%
East Dunbartonshire	9	13	69%
East Lothian	3	9	33%
East Renfrewshire	3	9	33%
Edinburgh City	23	52	44%
Eilean Siar	2	4	50%
Falkirk	7	13	54%
Fife	13	32	41%
Glasgow City	24	67	36%
Highland	10	33	30%
Inverclyde	6	10	60%
Midlothian	2	9	22%
Moray	7	10	70%
North Ayrshire	6	15	40%
North Lanarkshire	22	39	56%
Orkney Islands	3	5	60%
Perth & Kinross	11	21	52%
Renfrewshire	8	19	42%
Scottish Borders	4	13	31%
Shetland Islands	4	7	57%
South Ayrshire	7	11	64%
South Lanarkshire	15	27	56%
Stirling	5	12	42%
West Dunbartonshire	2	8	25%
West Lothian	11	19	58%
Total	259	583	44%

³ Based on Scottish government data recording 2,580 schools, including primary, secondary, special, grant-aided and independent schools.

Participation in challenges

- 2.7 There are nine challenge categories which participants can submit entries for, within the Reading Challenge. These are:

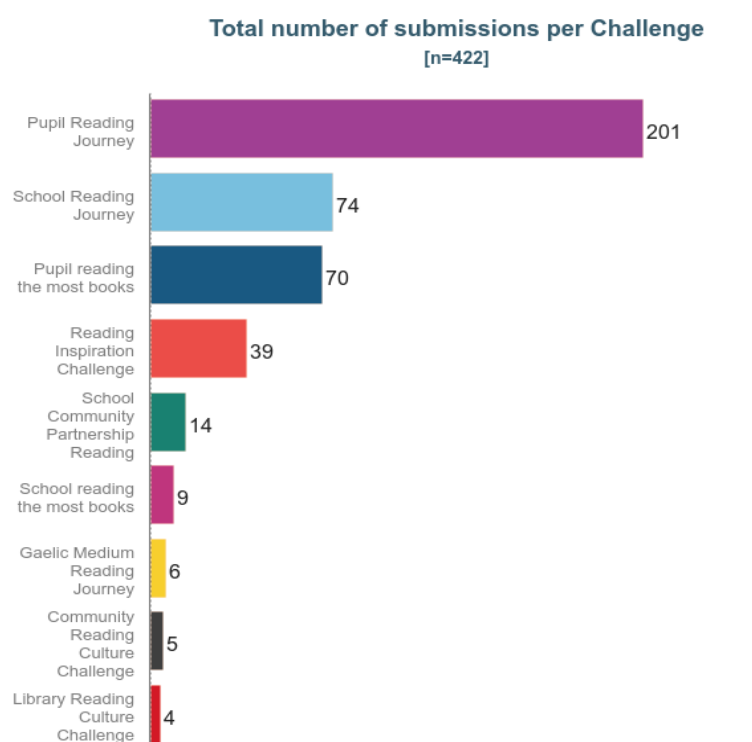
Primary schools	School Reading Journey This challenge recognises the progress of primary schools that have taken steps to develop a reading culture, and get pupils reading for pleasure more.
	Gaelic Medium Education Reading Journey This challenge recognises the progress of Gaelic Medium primary schools to encourage reading for pleasure and to develop a reading culture.
	School-Community Partnership Reading Journey This challenge recognises how primary schools have worked in partnership with libraries and community organisations to develop a reading culture in the wider community.
	School Reading the Most Books This challenge recognises whole-school efforts to encourage reading for pleasure and reading widely. Schools send a total amount of books, which is used to calculate the average number of books read, per pupil.
	Pupil Reading Journey This challenge recognises the progress made by individual pupils around reading for pleasure and becoming more active readers.
	Pupil Reading Most Books This challenge recognises individual efforts to read more and to read more widely.
Secondary schools	Reading Inspirations This challenge celebrates the progress secondary schools have made towards building a reading culture.
Libraries	Library Reading Culture This challenge celebrates the way in which libraries have inspired children to read for pleasure through the Reading Challenge.
Community Groups	Community Reading Culture This challenge celebrates the way in which community groups have inspired children to read for pleasure through the Reading Challenge.

- 2.8 Participants are also able to develop their own personalised challenges, outwith the categories listed above. These do not need to be submitted to the Reading Challenge, although they may fall within one of the broad challenge categories. Personalised challenges can also be used as examples, and featured on the Reading Challenge website.

- 2.9 In 2018/19 the Reading Challenge received 422 entries to one or more of the challenges from schools, libraries and community groups. Of these, 39 were from secondary schools and four were from libraries. The highest proportion of submissions to the challenges were for the Pupil Reading Journey.

Bookzilla – the Reading Challenge app

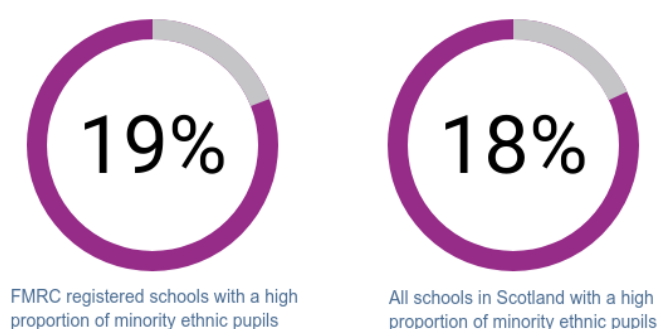
- 2.10 During 2018/19, Scottish Book Trust consulted with over 750 pupils across 16 secondary schools in Scotland, to develop an app. The app was designed to meet the needs of young people by being engaging and accessible to secondary school pupils.
- 2.11 Scottish Book Trust undertook initial consultation with Young Scot, Dubit (app developer) and the FMRC Young Advisory Group before co-creating the app with pupils. Pupils were consulted through surveys, design summits and practical app testing sessions.
- 2.12 The app encourages pupils to read for pleasure by offering challenges and tailored suggestions. It allows pupils to record what they are reading, and to share their reading journeys with other app users. It was launched on 18 August 2019.



- 2.13 Over a third (36%) of organisations that registered with the Reading Challenge submitted a challenge entry. This is double the proportion of entries to submissions received in 2017/18, which was 18%, demonstrating that although fewer schools registered, more of those who registered submitted a challenge entry.

Deprivation and demographic analysis

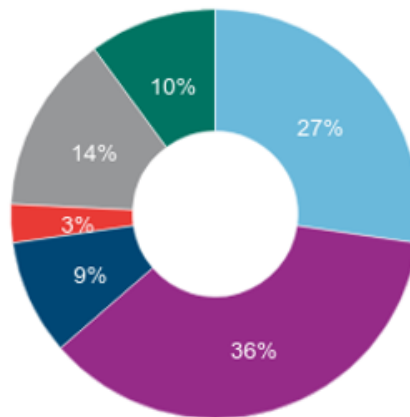
- 2.14 Of the 1,060 known postcodes for registered schools and libraries, 19% were in the 20% most deprived areas of Scotland.
- 2.15 Of the secondary schools⁴ that registered to take part in the Reading Challenge, 16% were located in 20% most deprived datazones in Scotland. And 20% of primary schools registered with the Challenge were in the 20% most deprived datazones.
- 2.16 This year, the proportion of schools with (at least 20%) of minority ethnic pupils was 19%. This is slightly higher than the national picture, at 18%.



- 2.17 Most schools registering for the Reading Challenge were in urban areas. The proportions of schools in in different areas was broadly similar to the national picture.

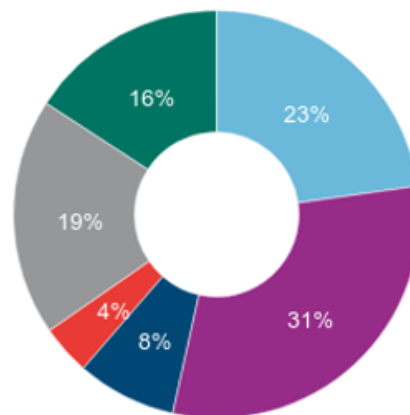
⁴ Includes schools registered as Secondary, Primary and Secondary, Grant-aided and Special schools.

FMRC Registered School - Urban Rural 6 Fold Classification
[n=1017]



Large urban areas	27%	Other urban areas	36%
Accessible small towns	9%	Remote small towns	3%
Accessible rural areas	14%	Remote rural area	10%

All schools in Scotland - Urban Rural 6 Fold Classification
[n=2580]



Large urban areas	23%	Other urban areas	31%
Accessible small towns	8%	Remote small towns	4%
Accessible rural areas	19%	Remote rural area	16%

Awareness

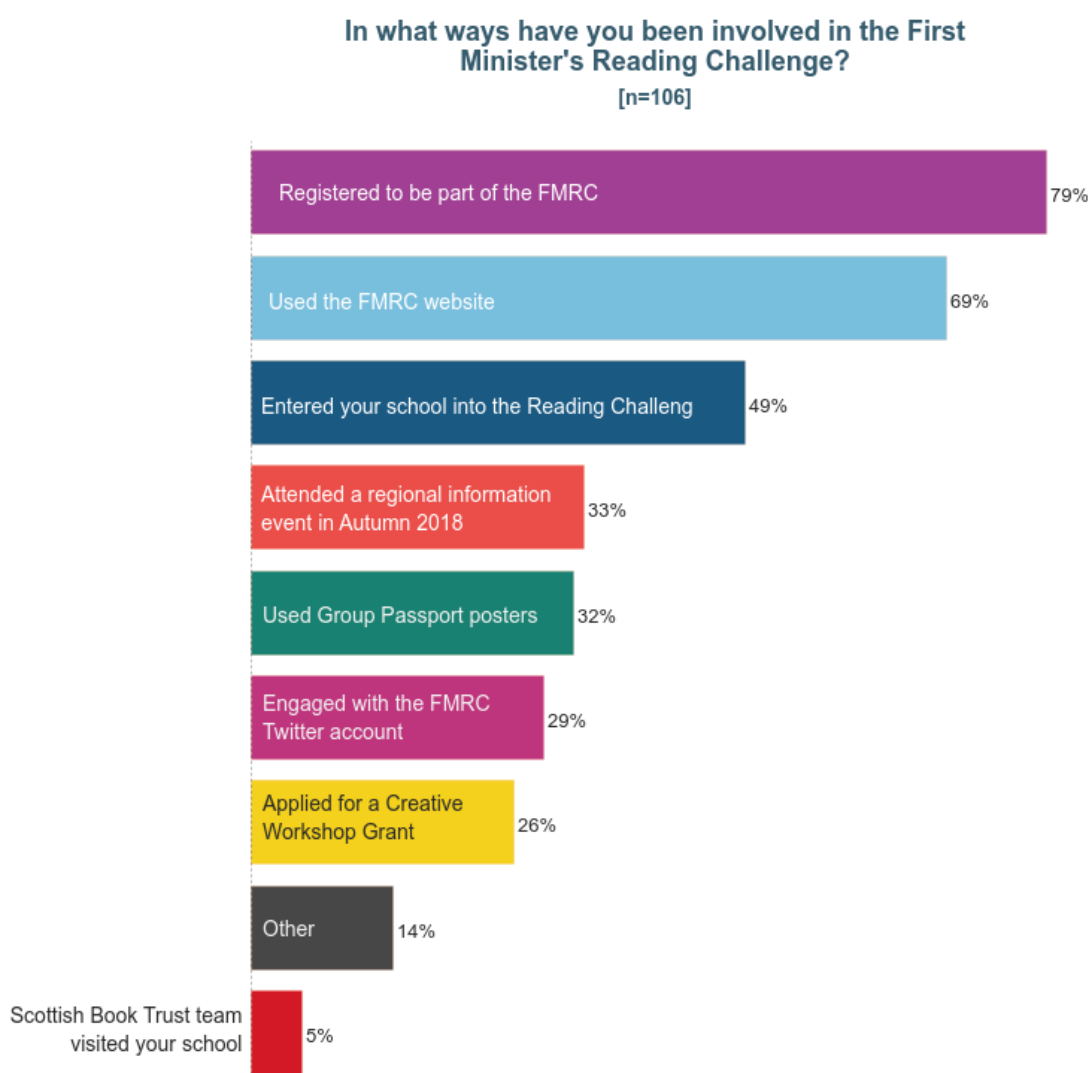
- 2.18 Our survey of secondary schools and libraries explored how they had first found out about the Reading Challenge. Most had found out about the Reading Challenge through direct mail or email from Scottish Book Trust, or from a colleague.
- 2.19 Those choosing 'other' said that they found out about the Reading Challenge after hearing about it at conferences or events, through wider colleagues in the local authority, from the school library association or when they were searching for literacy resources.
- 2.20 One respondent said that through the Reading Challenge, they had found out more about Scottish Book Trust and were now using many of the wider resources available on the Scottish Book Trust website.

Involvement

- 2.21 In order to take part in the Reading Challenge, Secondary schools and libraries were required to register online. Registration opened in September 2017. Registration gave organisations access to a range of online resources, guides, tools and ideas on how to get started. Secondary schools and libraries can be involved in the Reading Challenge in a variety of different ways:
- **Using Group Reading Passports** – These posters were designed to help a group or a class keep track of their reading journey. The Passports provide a visible display of what people have been reading.
 - **Using resources and guides** from the Reading Challenge website – The Reading Challenge website provided a range of resources. The resources were categorised by theme and age group, and included a range of activity ideas, case studies, quizzes, guides and templates.
 - **Engaging through social media** – The Reading Challenge has a dedicated Twitter account (@FMReadChallenge) and used the #FMReadChallenge to allow schools and libraries to share their progress online.
 - **Attending training and information events** – Scottish Book Trust delivered training sessions for practitioners across Scotland. The sessions provided ideas on how to build a reading culture within the school, and what resources practitioners could use to get started.
 - **Applying for and using a Creative Workshops grant** – This grant provided up to £1,000 for secondary schools, to help them deliver an activity involving an author or a creative practitioner. Schools could use the grant for any type of project that helped them build and sustain reading culture, including reading materials, resources and author visits.
 - **Entering challenges** – All schools and libraries were encouraged to enter one or more of the Reading Challenges, selecting the category that was most applicable to their experiences. Schools were allowed to

submit in any format, including written/illustrated submissions, power point presentations and videos.

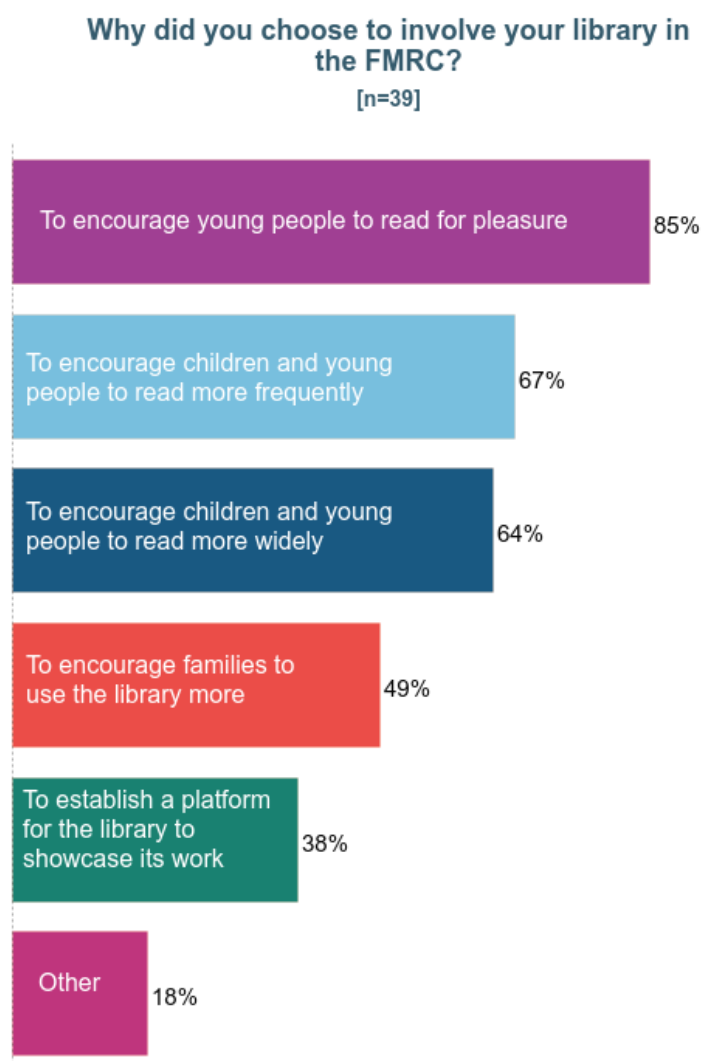
- 2.22 The Reading Challenge was designed to be flexible, and organisations were encouraged to find new and innovative ways to involve pupils and communities in their own local challenges, as well as the formal Reading Challenges.
- 2.23 Secondary schools responding to the survey were asked how they were involved in the Reading Challenge in 2018/19. Over two thirds (69%) of respondents said that they had used the Reading Challenge website and a third had attended an information event.
- 2.24 Almost half of our respondents (49%) had submitted a Challenge entry and over a quarter (26%) had applied for a Creative Workshops grant.
- 2.25 A few respondents noted that they had used the 'What I am reading' posters, and a few noted that they had used Pupil Equity Funding or Live Literature funding to deliver Reading Challenge activities.



- 2.26 Of the respondents that had used the Reading Challenge website (82%, 88), almost all had used the online resources available on the site (90%, 78), and most had also used the booklists (59%, 51). A third of respondents (33%, 29) using the website said that they had accessed the blog. Respondents said that they found the 'What I am reading' door posters, case study examples and subject specific book lists particularly useful.
- 2.27 School staff also indicated that their schools had participated through a range of school and community activities, including:
- author visits
 - book clubs
 - engagement with the local library
 - paired or 'buddy' reading
 - parent-child reading sessions
 - regular school-based reading challenges
 - school-based celebration events
 - attending the First Minister's Reading Challenge Celebration event.
- 2.28 Other examples of activities that respondents mentioned included:
- Celebration events
 - Dedicated assemblies
 - Book fairs/book swaps
 - Book festivals
 - Book speed dating
 - Quizzes and competitions
 - Treasure hunts
 - Online books.
- 2.29 Survey respondents and school staff we spoke with mentioned a range of activities and events that celebrated and encouraged reading for pleasure. These included:
- Dedicated daily/weekly reading time
 - Pupil-led reading clubs/groups
 - Creative response challenges
 - Competitions
 - Spontaneous reading time (using ERIC/DEAR/'Stop, Drop and Read')
 - Book fairs/book swaps
 - Whole school events.
- 2.30 Many schools made use of national campaigns, such as World Book Day and Book Week Scotland to engage pupils or to celebrate their successes. These events often involved school-wide activities, such as decorating rooms and corridors.

Library participation

- 2.31 Respondents to the library survey were asked why they had become involved in the Reading Challenge. Most responded that they wanted to encourage children and young people to read for pleasure. Of those selecting 'Other', half said that they wanted to develop links with schools, or to tie in with school-based reading activities. The chart below shows the reasons that libraries said they chose to join the Reading Challenge.



- 2.32 The most common way that libraries had been involved in the Reading Challenge was through using the resources available on the website. Respondents said that they had used the resources when they hosted school visits or supported local schools with their Reading Challenge activities. And some said they had created a Reading Challenge display.

*"We invite classes from local schools to attend book borrowing sessions. We encourage pupils to bring their reading passports."
Development officer*

“A Scottish illustrator was visiting the school, so I mounted a display of her work and produced an information sheet about her to coincide with her visit.” Library Assistant

- 2.33 Library staff said that they had used the printable resources (quizzes, posters, certificates) to engage pupils coming to the library through their school visits and had tried to encourage dialogue around reading.
- 2.34 A few respondents noted that they had not delivered many Reading Challenge activities due to limited staff capacity. A few said that although they had tried to engage young people, there was very little uptake.
- 2.35 Overall, although some respondents had not engaged with the Reading Challenge or delivered as much as they hoped to, many were keen and hopeful to do more.

Reasons for not being involved – Secondary schools

- 2.36 Forty-five (28%) respondents to the survey of secondary schools indicated that they were not involved in the Reading Challenge in 2018/19. The main reasons given were that:
- there were already other initiatives in the school that aimed to encourage reading for pleasure (44%);
 - they did not have enough time (31%);
 - they were not aware of Reading Challenge (27%); and
 - they did not have enough resources (24%).
- 2.37 A fifth of respondents who had not taken part indicated that there was already a strong reading culture in their school or that they were already doing a lot of activities around reading. A few of these respondents felt that the Reading Challenge would duplicate work they were already doing, or that they would not be able to manage another initiative in addition to existing activities.
- 2.38 Some respondents to the school survey said that they were interested in taking part but had not been able to due to extenuating circumstances such as a high level of staff turnover, staff illness or staff shortages. Similarly, a few respondents said that they did not feel they had enough capacity or support from across the school to initiate Reading Challenge activities. They felt that more collaboration between staff was required to allow the school to participate in the Reading Challenge. Similarly, a few respondents noted that without leadership or backing from colleagues and senior management, it was not possible to engage with this type of initiative.
- 2.39 A few respondents did not feel positive about the Reading Challenge. They were unsure of the benefits it would bring compared to the work they were already doing. And a few said that they did not feel the support and resources were easy to access.

“I think it's a great initiative and a great opportunity to bring everything we're doing to promote reading for pleasure under one umbrella but I found the information on how to run the Challenge vague and the website not very well laid out - I got the sense there were loads of useful resources, it just felt that I had to dig really deep to get to them.” School survey respondent

Reasons for not being involved – Libraries

2.40 For libraries, just over a third (35%) of our survey respondents said that they had not been involved in the Reading Challenge. The main reasons given were similar to schools:

- there were already other initiatives in the library that aimed to encourage reading for pleasure (30%);
- they did not have enough time (30%) or resources (25%); and
- they were not aware of Reading Challenge (20%).

2.41 Some library staff also noted that the Reading Challenge seemed focused on schools, and they were not sure how to get involved. And some said that while they had not delivered Reading Challenge activities in the library, they had worked with local schools to support the activities at school.

2.42 Some library staff said that they felt unsupported, either by the wider library network or by parents. For example, one respondent said that as there were no children's librarians in their local authority, there was nobody to coordinate the Reading Challenge in the area.

“Not sure what to do with FMRC when it seems much more focused on school involvement rather than libraries.” Library staff

“The local primary school was taking part and I supported them instead.” Library staff

Factors for consideration

2.43 When asked what would help them to engage in the Reading Challenge, the main areas for review from secondary schools and libraries were:

- information and guidelines;
- staff training and resources; and
- more provision for pupils with additional support needs.

2.44 In terms of information and guidelines, some respondents wanted clearer and more succinct information on how they could get involved in the Reading Challenge. One respondent suggested that schools were issued with a single page document outlining everything they needed to know.

“I realise part of the appeal of the FMRC is that it's flexible and can be adapted for different schools. However, the lack of clear instruction around it meant I didn't push to adopt it in our school, even though I signed up early and was looking forward to the FMRC being rolled out to secondaries.”

School survey respondent

- 2.45 Some respondents said that they would like more examples of how others were delivering the Reading Challenge. And a few respondents suggested that a resource pack or staff training for libraries would be useful.
- 2.46 Respondents noted that information and training regarding the Reading Challenge needed to come at the right time of the year. Some felt that October was too late for the staff training session they had received. And a few suggested that in order to begin delivery at the beginning of term, information and training needed to be available before the summer holidays. Many respondents said that additional resources, in the form of books/reading materials, or additional funding would be beneficial.

“Access to funding, perhaps in a similar means tested manner as PEF allocations. Right now budgets restrict our access to new reading materials.” School survey respondent

- 2.47 A few respondents felt that the resources and challenges were aimed more at primary pupils than secondary pupils, or more at schools than at libraries. One staff member we spoke with suggested that more secondary focused challenges would be useful. Library staff said that they would benefit from more library specific resources and more promotional display items.
- 2.48 Many respondents, while feeling positive about the concept of literacy based programmes, commented on the general challenges faced by schools, such as staff shortages, limited budgets and reduction in hours for school library staff. They felt that these challenges, particularly the lack of full time school librarians, was a key barrier to their involvement in the Reading Challenge. Some respondents were still keen to engage and planned to do so in the future.

“The issue is also not helped with cuts to school librarians - the recent national strategy on school libraries made no mention of staffing.”

“We are already keen it is just a matter of planning on our part.”

“We will get involved in this in session 2019-2020 as there seems to be a lot of really good ideas and we wish to try some of them out.”

School survey respondents

- 2.49 Similarly, both respondents to the school survey and library survey commented on the wider challenges of reduced public funding for libraries, and the subsequent effect of limited opening hours and staff capacity. They felt that these were key factors in staff being unable to engage in initiatives like the Reading Challenge. Some library staff noted that they were already doing as much they could with the limited resources available to them. However, wider policy changes resulting in reduced hours or closures of libraries had left them feeling despondent.

“Hardly anyone has engaged because we have no time...and we all do double the work we used to... Much of my time last year was spent closing libraries and placing books into boxes. I have never been so completely scunnered.”

Library staff

3. Outcomes for young people, schools and communities

Introduction

3.1 This chapter explores the extent to which the Reading Challenge has achieved its outcomes in relation to work delivered in secondary schools for young people, families, and communities.

3.2 The intended outcomes were:

Reading for pleasure is valued and encouraged.

Pupils read for pleasure more frequently and/or more widely.

Pupils are active readers, making reading choices and developing areas of interest which they pursue, as far as possible, independently.

Senior management recognises the impact of reading for pleasure.

Reading for pleasure is embedded across the curriculum.

Reading for pleasure supports attainment in relation to literacy and English, as well as the wider curriculum.

Reading for pleasure supports closing of the attainment gap.

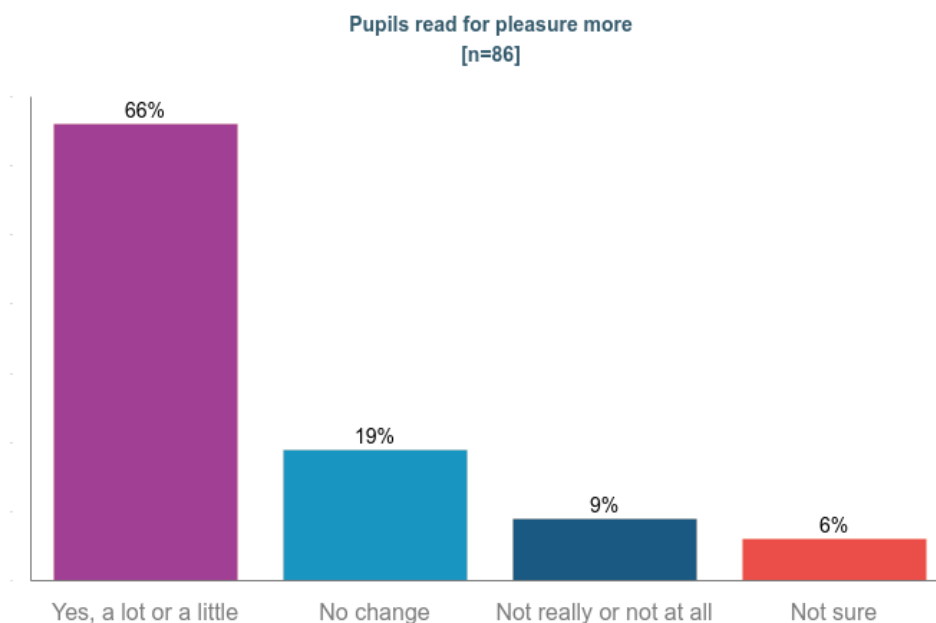
Pupil voice and leadership is developed.

Schools and libraries make effective local partnerships to support reading for pleasure in the school and the wider community.

Outcome: Reading for pleasure is valued and encouraged

3.3 The Reading Challenge aims to encourage pupils to read for pleasure, and to help develop a culture of reading in schools and communities across Scotland.

3.4 Two thirds of school staff (66%) responding to the survey said that the Reading Challenge had helped pupils to understand the value of reading for pleasure more than before.



3.5 Schools responding to the survey mentioned a range of ways in which they used the Reading Challenge to raise the status of reading within their school. These included:

- Visual displays – in classrooms and throughout the school
- Allocating time specifically for reading for pleasure
- Role modelling
- Whole class/whole school challenges and activities – implementing reward and recognition programmes using tangible rewards e.g. prizes or house points
- Targeted activities – to engage the most reluctant pupils
- Events and excursions – incorporating reading for pleasure into existing calendar events, or holding dedicated events focused on reading or stories
- Using social media – to promote reading, to provide recommendations, to deliver challenges
- Pupil leadership – through literacy leaders' groups and pupil-led activities.

3.6 Several schools responding to the survey and that we visited had implemented a dedicated time for reading within the school day or the school week. This was usually between 10 and 20 minutes at the beginning of a class or during registration/key adult time. Some pupils also benefited from a dedicated library period, usually once a fortnight.

“We dedicate one 20-minute Key Adult session (registration) to reading for pleasure every week.” Geography Teacher

“As part of the S1 and S2 curriculum, Friday afternoon was allocated time for pupils to take part in the Reading Challenge...This

formalised approach allowed the pupils more access to, and engagement with, reading for pleasure.” English Teacher

- 3.7 Many staff and pupils enjoyed this approach. They felt that it was a good way to settle into class and prepare for learning. However, some staff and pupils felt that this was too short a time for reading and that pupils did not always engage well during registration periods.

“My role is to encourage them to read. I have provided additional materials myself to facilitate this. The pupils are not interested in reading for pleasure. They view it as a chore.” Mathematics / Registration Teacher

“Not everyone engages in Reading at Registration. They think it’s boring.” Pupil

- 3.8 One of the key ways in which reading for pleasure was encouraged and valued was through school staff modelling reading behaviour. The ‘What I am reading’ posters were widely used, not just by English departments or teaching staff, but by all adults working in the school. Teachers said that they encouraged pupils to act as role models for their peers.

“If you’ve got a door, it’s getting a poster.” English teacher

- 3.9 Other approaches included staff engaging pupils through a classroom lending library, offering personalised support or encouraging pupils to be ‘reading champions’ in the classroom.

“I try to engage pupils in discussion whenever I notice one of them with a book I know. I have offered to lend books from my classroom library to any pupil who would like borrow one.” Biology and Key Adult Teacher

“I have targeted pupils on a one to one basis to try and get them to try and find the perfect book for them. This has been partially successful - about 50/50 - but with some pupils, that has meant reading a book to the end for the first time.” School Librarian

“We have begun a ‘reading champions’ initiative which aims to empower readers to become role models for their peers. By targeting children with positive reading attitudes, we hope that others will see the value of reading for enjoyment.” English Teacher

3.10 Schools provided many examples of the activities and events they delivered throughout the year. These included:

- Global or national celebration events (World Book Day, Roald Dahl Day, Book Week Scotland, World Poetry Day, National Libraries Week, Burns Night...etc...)
- Regular reading groups/clubs
- Book swaps/sales
- Games, quizzes and challenges
- Book breakfast/bistro/café
- Author/storyteller visits
- Whole school reading activities
- Reading with Therapet dogs
- Shared reading programmes between upper and lower school.

“We have collated house points for reading at different stages through the year. Points have been displayed in the school library so Pupils can get involved in helping their house to do their best. Pupils have been given extra points and prizes for reaching milestones and for reading challenging books. This has all been announced and covered in bulletins at School assemblies.” School Librarian

“We celebrate National Poetry Day, Hallowe'en, Book Week Scotland, Harry Potter Book night, Burns Night with events such as parties, poetry readings and book bistros.” School Librarian

“We take part in events the library are running: World Book Day events, Readaxation etc. I dressed up for World Book day.” Principal
Teacher of English

“Having visiting authors through Live Literature is one my most favourite ways of embedding reading for pleasure. Author events really do bring books to life and generate so much interest.” School
librarian

3.11 Many of the activities and initiatives were aimed at making reading material more accessible to pupils and to make reading a fun activity that pupils would choose to do. In particular, some staff felt that illustration and visual art was a useful adjunct to reading activities.

“I have noticed that it has become 'cooler to read' in the class.”
English Teacher

- 3.12 One of the popular challenges in schools was for pupils to provide a creative response to a text they had read as a class. The aim of the activity was not to directly engage in more reading or literacy, but to give pupils a chance to reflect on the text and express their reaction to it. Pupils responded creatively, making video responses, visual art, cakes and written responses.

“Adding a creative task rather than expecting a written response to reading has helped - pupils instantly think of reading as a chore in English. This has been eliminated by personal choice reading materials and group challenges in addition to the hook of creating a scene in a box from their chosen text.” English Teacher

- 3.13 Some schools were able to create dedicated reading spaces, or improve existing spaces (e.g. school libraries, classrooms) to make them more accessible and welcoming. In some schools this was done using additional funds, which helped transform the space and improve the range of reading materials available to pupils.

“Creating an additional space for reading outside of the library and the classroom - the Reading Room can be accessed at lunchtimes or can be booked by subject departments as a reward for individuals or classes.” School Librarian

- 3.14 A few respondents said that they had developed spaces within the school to integrate reading into the environment. This involved a range of interventions. In some case this involved re-organising existing space and resources, using little or no additional funding. For others, the aim was to ensure that reading for pleasure was possible throughout the school, so mini-libraries were created in lots of different spaces. And some schools were able to invest in more substantial improvements to classrooms, the library and the stock of reading materials.

“I also developed the library space this year to include sofa seating. This has made the library even more welcoming. Environment plays a big role so I'm delighted when I see pupils looking so comfortable with a book in their hands.” School librarian

- 3.15 Some respondents noted that these kinds of improvements were important and valuable, but not always possible without additional resource and capacity.

- 3.16 Some staff noted that using a wide range of reading materials (i.e. not limiting pupils to books) helped encourage pupils to read. And some staff said that they encouraged reading in any form, including on mobile devices.

“We’re embracing technologies to provide a wider range of choice in accessing reading e.g. apps that read aloud, provide coloured overlays, translate etc.” School Librarian

- 3.17 Pupils we spoke with said that reading was an important activity at their school. Pupils who already enjoyed reading valued that reading for pleasure had been given a high status at school. A few pupils we spoke with said that they had felt stigmatised for their reading habits until the Reading Challenge. They now felt that their reading habits were recognised and valued by teachers and pupils.

“Now it’s cool to read.” Pupil

Outcome: Pupils read for pleasure more frequently and/or more widely

- 3.18 Most pupils said that they were reading for pleasure more since their school had started doing the Reading Challenge.
- 3.19 Some pupils said they were encouraged to read through the element of challenge, certificates, prizes and competitions within the Reading Challenge. However others said that they liked “just reading” without having to do any wider activities.
- 3.20 Some of the young people we spoke with said that they were reading a lot more than they used to, as they previously had not read for pleasure. These pupils spoke enthusiastically about their new found love of reading, usually initiated by finding reading materials which interested them.

“I’m not really a strong reader, but then I got reading more and the teachers really encouraged me. You just have to find the books you like.” Pupil

- 3.21 Some pupils said that they were accessing different types of reading materials or different genres than they previously would have. Often this increase in range happened through recommendations from teachers or peers.

“Before I used to just read adventure books, but now I’m reading sci-fi.” Pupil

- 3.22 A small number of pupils said that they were not reading more because they were already avid readers. Although they enjoyed the Reading Challenge, it had not increased the amount of time they spent reading for pleasure. And a small number of pupils we spoke with said that they did not read for pleasure and did not really enjoy reading. They felt that it was boring or hard work, and said that they preferred to watch television or spend time socialising than reading.

- 3.23 Most of the pupils we spoke with said that they enjoyed reading for pleasure. For most, this was because they found reading was a good way to relax, and to take their mind off other things as they “got lost” in a book. When we asked pupils how reading made them feel they said: calm, relaxed, de-stressed, enlightened, less anxious, absorbed, happy.

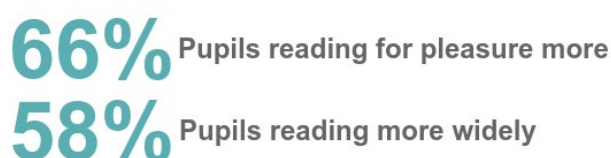
“A good book sucks you in and you feel how the characters feel.”

“For me, it’s quite a thrill, I feel like I’m in another world.”

“[I feel] Like a whole new person. I’m in that world, I’m connected to that character.”

Pupils

- 3.24 Of our survey respondents, 66% felt that pupils were reading for pleasure more and 58% felt that pupils were reading more widely than before.



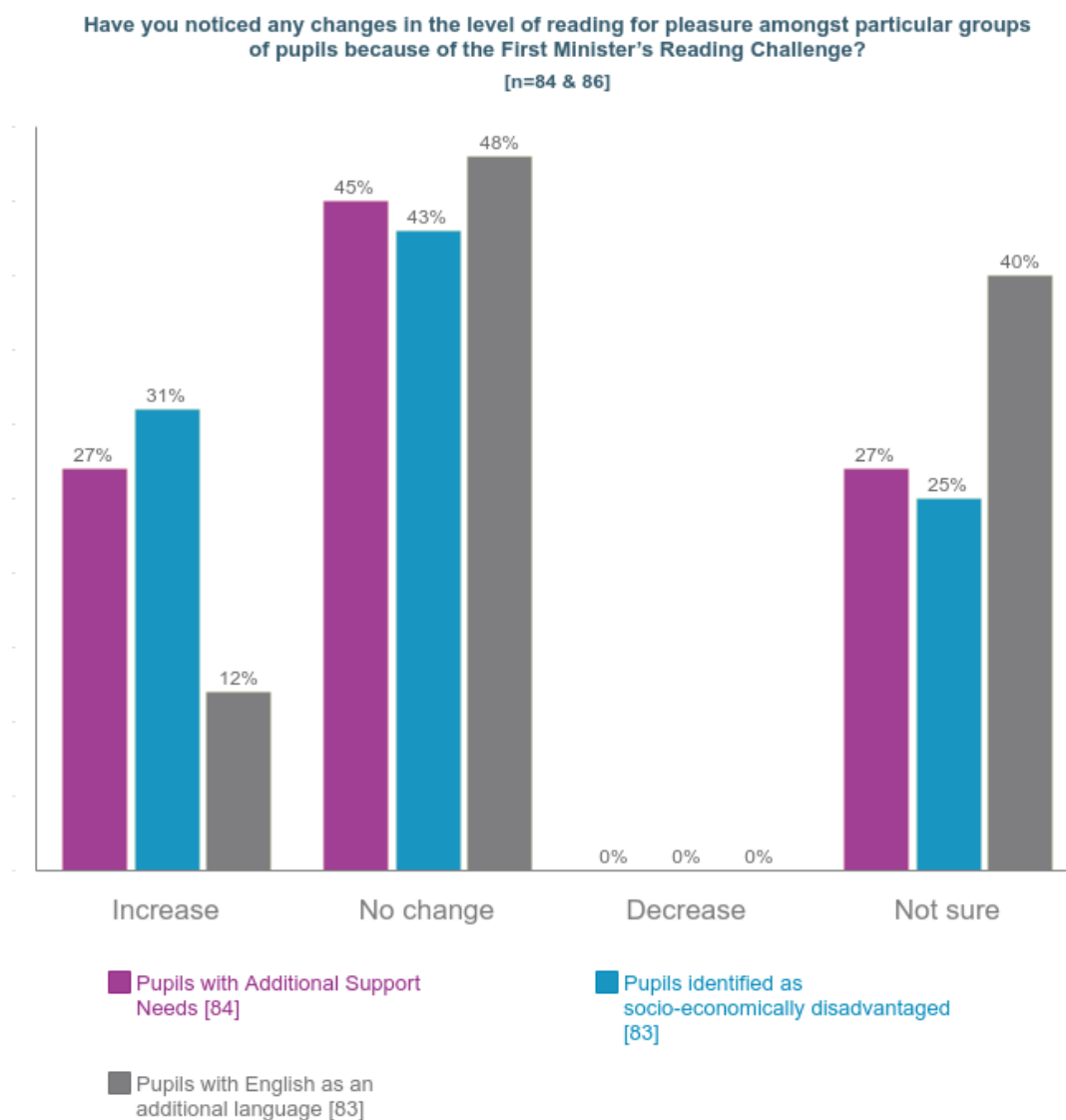
- 3.25 Of our survey respondents, 81% felt that the Reading Challenge had helped them to encourage pupils to read for pleasure and had helped them develop new techniques to support reading for pleasure. School staff we spoke with said that the Reading Challenge had helped them to make reading for pleasure a priority. Using different approaches and activities from the Reading Challenge resources had helped them to engage pupils who previously would not have engaged in reading

“The younger children are incredibly eager to read for pleasure (alone and with their peers) which is just lovely to see.” Class teacher

“There’s a huge increase in the number of pupils who have their own books on them, and it’s becoming the norm.” Teacher

- 3.26 School staff responding to our survey commented on how the Reading Challenge had helped encourage reading for pleasure amongst specific groups of pupils, such as those with additional support needs, socioeconomically disadvantaged pupils and those with English as an additional language.

- 3.27 The chart below shows the perceived changes in reading amongst groups of pupils. Overall, school staff felt that pupils from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds had increased their reading more than pupils with additional support needs, and significantly more than pupils who have English as an additional language.



- 3.28 Some staff felt strongly that the Reading Challenge had helped increase levels of reading amongst reluctant readers and male pupils. However a few staff felt that it only supported and encouraged pupils that were already interested in reading.

“Gender specific reading material has helped to engage reluctant boys.” English teacher

“Pupils who are already keen readers have loved it.” English teacher

- 3.29 A few teachers mentioned specific examples of pupils who were reluctant readers, but who had started reading for pleasure after the teacher had sourced reading material directly related to their specific interests, such as dancing, mental health or sports.

“Reluctant readers - a number of pupils have been very reluctant to try books so I have been encouraging newspaper articles (especially via their phones as these are glued to their hands!) and blogs etc. Others have been encouraged to read a quick read to read a book cover to cover (often for the first time ever). This has been the greatest battle with some success.” School librarian

- 3.30 Across the schools that we visited, pupils spoke a range of languages including French, Spanish, Italian, Polish and Urdu. Some of these pupils said that they also read books in another language, or were read-to at home in another language. One school had purchased bilingual books to encourage reading amongst bilingual pupils, and to make reading in English more accessible. This approach had worked well, and the books were popular amongst all pupils, including those who did not have English as an additional language.
- 3.31 A few survey respondents also noted that some of their male pupils were motivated by the competitive nature of the Reading Challenge. This was reiterated by some of the pupils we met who enjoyed competing for prizes and certificates.

“I have noticed an improvement in the engagement of boys in my class in particular (perhaps the element of competition has encouraged this somewhat!).” English teacher

Outcome: Pupils are active readers

- 3.32 The Reading Challenge aimed to support children to be active readers, making reading choices and developing areas of interest which they pursue, as far as possible, independently.
- 3.33 Pupils we spoke with said that they read a wide range of materials. These included books (fiction and non-fiction), magazines, autobiographies, graphic novels, comics and newspapers. Pupils also said that they accessed stories through audio books and by “reading” films.
- 3.34 Pupils told us that they enjoyed sharing books and “discovering” new books or reading materials with each other.

“I like that the Challenge made me read things that I wouldn’t normally read.” Pupil

“I’ve never been into reading action or sci-fi, but I read *The Hunger Games* and now I love it, it’s one of my favourite books.” Pupil

- 3.35 In all of the schools we visited, pupils were encouraged to recommend reading materials to each other. In some schools there were dedicated ‘Literacy Leaders’ who had a role in encouraging pupils to read and making recommendations.

“We have a ‘book sale’ where pupils have to try to ‘sell’ their book to others in class. This gets the pupils thinking about the content as well as their likes/dislikes. It’s encouraging pupils to think about what they find enjoyable in a text.” School Librarian

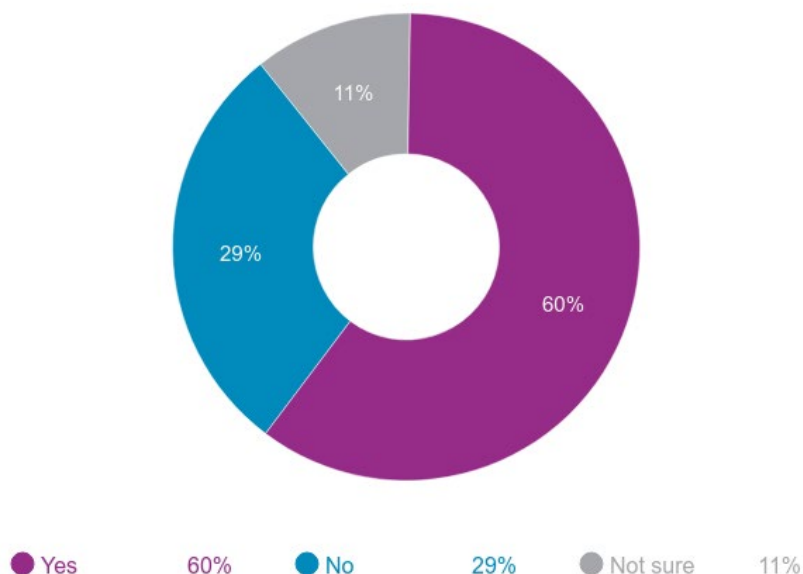
- 3.36 Teachers we spoke with said that they had seen pupils becoming more active and engaged readers. The Reading Challenge activities had provided pupils with opportunities to try new and different types of reading materials. In particular, a few teachers said that pupils who used to read a lot, but only one type of book, or one genre, were now seeking out different genres.
- 3.37 A few teachers we spoke with mentioned that the scope of the Reading Challenge was useful for supporting pupils to become active readers. They felt it was beneficial to promote all types of reading materials as valid options, ranging from newspapers and magazines, to graphic novels, sports programmes and novels.

Outcome: Senior management recognises the impact of reading for pleasure

- 3.38 The Reading Challenge aimed to raise awareness of the importance of reading for pleasure at all levels, including at senior management level.
- 3.39 Most school staff (60%) responding to the survey felt that staff at all levels, including senior management recognised the value of reading for pleasure.
- 3.40 Where the Reading Challenge had worked well, staff felt it was because there had been buy-in from all levels, especially from senior management.

Do you feel that staff at all levels, including senior management, recognise the value of reading for pleasure?

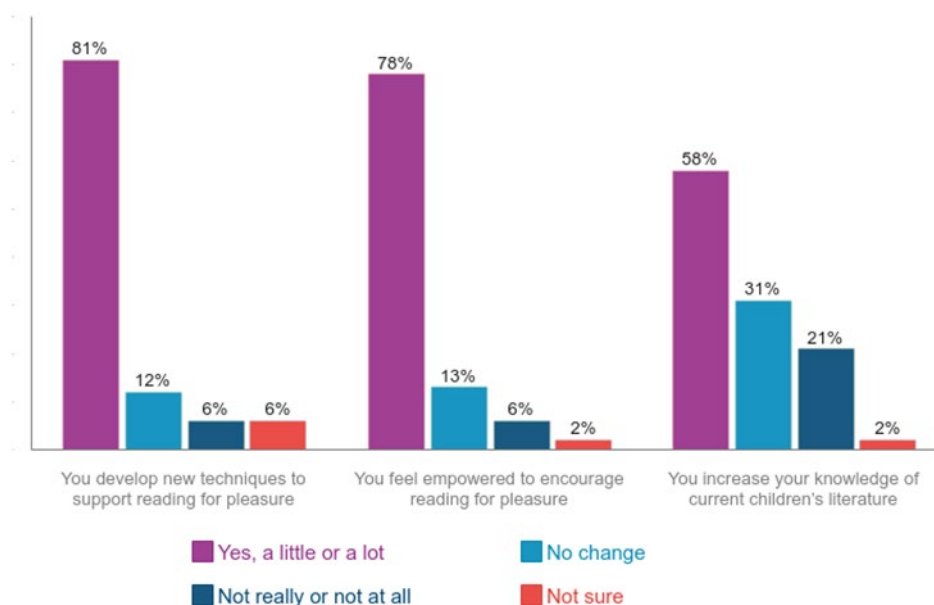
[n=77]



3.41 The Reading Challenge also aimed to support people delivering the Challenge to develop their skills and to feel empowered to deliver reading based activities. The charts below show the extent to which staff felt the Reading Challenge helped them to develop new techniques, feel empowered to deliver Reading Challenge activities and increase their knowledge.

To what extent has the FMRC helped staff to develop new techniques, feel empowered to encourage reading for pleasure and increase knowledge

[n=84,83,85]



- 3.42 Some staff noted that the Reading Challenge had been able to take off because senior management (particularly Head Teachers) had an interest in literacy and reading and had chosen to invest in reading for pleasure. A few people felt that the best way to obtain support from senior management was to ensure that the Reading Challenge articulated clearly with the wider school agenda, or with specific school priorities, for example literacy or health and wellbeing.

“There was a significant amount of PEF [Pupil Equity Fund] money for class books because the Head Teacher could see that there was a vision underpinning it.” English Teacher

- 3.43 Some staff we spoke with noted that delivering activities through the Reading Challenge gave them credibility, and made senior management and other staff more inclined to engage.

- 3.44 Staff also noted that engaging in the Reading Challenge helped to focus attention on reading and reading for pleasure, increasing the awareness of it amongst other staff and senior management.

“It shines a spotlight and brings it to the attention of the SMT [Senior Management Team] and makes it a priority.” English teacher

- 3.45 Similarly, a few staff noted that having the Reading Challenge recognised and encouraged by senior management helped encourage participation from staff across the school.

“When staff see that it’s coming from senior management, they’re more inclined to buy in.” Teacher

- 3.46 Staff we spoke with felt that engaging in the Reading Challenge had been particularly useful in helping to increase their awareness of the range reading materials and support materials available for young people. They enjoyed learning about and reading new young adult literature and discovering new reading materials alongside their pupils.

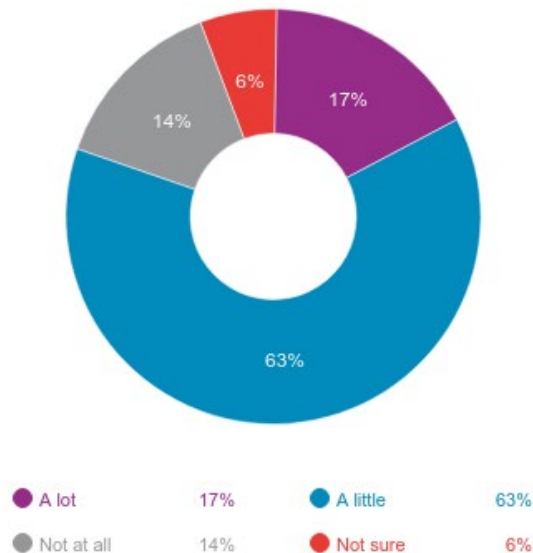
Outcome: Reading for pleasure is embedded across the curriculum

- 3.47 The Reading Challenge aimed to help teachers and schools to integrate reading for pleasure into the curriculum.

- 3.48 Overall, more than half of respondents (63%) felt that reading for pleasure had been embedded into the curriculum at their school ‘a little’, with 17% feeling that it had been embedded ‘a lot’.

To what extent do you feel that reading has been embedded across the school curriculum?

[n=83]



- 3.49 From our survey, 43% of respondents said that reading had been incorporated into the school curriculum, in some way. Over half (53%) of respondents said that they did this by providing new reading materials for pupils. Over a third (36%) said that they had changed the school approach to reading for pleasure. And only a small proportion (9%) said that they had changed the format of the school day or school week to incorporate more reading for pleasure.
- 3.50 Respondents mentioned a variety of factors that helped them embed reading for pleasure in the school curriculum. These included allocated reading time, interdepartmental engagement, strong resources and use of the school library.
- 3.51 Many school staff responding to the survey discussed incorporating reading for pleasure into the school day, but did not necessarily define this as 'changing' the format of the school day or school week. This approach involved dedicating reading time at the beginning of a class or registration period, scheduling regular library visits or dedicating a specific day in the year to reading for pleasure.

"We have integrated the Reading Challenge into the school week with one afternoon a week focused on reading for pleasure."
English teacher

"Pupils at this school have 20 minutes each day in registration groups...One morning a week, this time is set aside for personal reading." Biology teacher

- 3.52 Several respondents mentioned that although they had not specifically changed their curriculum the Reading Challenge had reinforced what they had already been doing to integrate reading for pleasure.

“The School already had time put aside for S1 and 2 to read in class as part of an all School reading challenge. The 1st Ministers reading challenge allowed us raise the profile of this challenge throughout the school, using the reading passports and by offering points for books read.” School librarian

“We already had reading at the centre of our whole school literacy strategy - FMRC has given our approach even greater credibility.”- Principal teacher of English

“It was already integrated into the curriculum - this has given it a stronger focus.” School librarian

- 3.53 Those who had integrated dedicated reading time for pupils felt that this approach worked well, particularly when it involved different departments and required staff to be actively involved. It was delivered as a whole school activity, rather than an English department initiative. This approach helped reinforce that reading for pleasure was for everyone.

“Having staff display what they are currently reading is taking away the idea that reading only happens in the library and/or English. Signs and badges lead to conversations about reading.” School librarian

- 3.54 Where respondents did not feel that the Reading Challenge had helped this was because:

- there was already an embedded reading culture;
- they did not feel they had enough time, resource or support;
- there was a lack of support from senior management; or
- a lack of reading culture meant there was a long way to go.

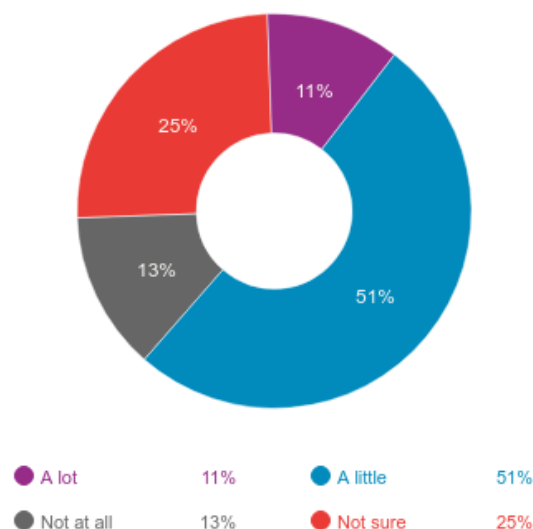
- 3.55 Throughout the survey, respondents commented on the overall lack of time, resource and capacity in schools. In particular, many commented that they did not have a full-time librarian, with some only having access to the school librarian for two days per week. They felt that this limited how much they could achieve.

Outcome: Pupil voice / leadership is developed through the programme

- 3.56 The Reading Challenge aimed to support the development of leadership opportunities for pupils, and provide opportunities for pupils to have their voice heard.
- 3.57 Survey respondents felt that the Reading Challenge did support this, with 62% feeling that the Reading Challenge gave pupils opportunities to have their voice heard or to take on leadership opportunities.

To what extent did the FMRC activities provide opportunities for pupils to have their voice heard, or to take on leadership roles?

[n=84]



- 3.58 Pupils we spoke with were often part of Literacy Leaders, Ambassadors or Pupil Voice groups within their school. They felt that the Reading Challenge had given them good opportunities to have their say and to be involved in planning and delivering activities.
- 3.59 Most commonly, pupils were given opportunities to choose books to read, share recommendations with each other and to help decide which new books the school would purchase.
- 3.60 For example, pupils:

- took charge of a school Instagram account to share recommendations and promote competitions;
- planned and delivered a full day of literacy activities;
- helped create a reading room in the school; and
- set up and ran their own book group.

3.61 A few respondents said that the leadership opportunities for pupils had existed prior to the introduction of the Reading Challenge. Where the opportunities already existed, the Reading Challenge allowed the school to focus pupils on reading, and provide specific reading and literacy based leadership opportunities.

“FMRC coincidentally overlapped with the introduction of literacy ambassadors and we used this to engage young people with literacy and reading.” English teacher

“We recruited a team of library prefects; however it was difficult to find the time & resources to put all of their ideas into practice.”
School Library Assistant

3.62 Some of those who said they had not been able to offer leadership opportunities were keen to do so, and had plans in place for the future.

3.63 A few library staff also noted that pupils were using the Reading Challenge as an opportunity to lead on activities that interested them. For example, actively recommending books to each other, or setting up book clubs.

“[I have seen] Children setting up their own reading groups without asking for adult support in at least two schools.” Librarian

Outcome: Schools, families and libraries make effective local partnerships to support reading for pleasure in the school and the wider community

3.64 The Reading Challenge aimed to support schools and libraries to make effective local partnerships to support reading for pleasure in the school and wider community.

3.65 Around a quarter of staff responding to the survey (24%) said that the Reading Challenge had helped them to develop new or better links with partners, however most respondents were not able to comment on this.

3.66 Over half of these respondents (52%) felt that the Reading Challenge had helped them to develop new or better links with parents, around half (48%) felt that they developed new or better links with local libraries and a small amount (23%) felt that they had developed new or better links with community groups.

- 3.67 Working with the local library had helped a number of schools to increase the volume and range of reading resources for pupils. Some local libraries were instrumental in helping schools develop classroom libraries, or sourcing books for whole class reading projects. Staff noted that the library helped ensure that pupils who could not afford to buy books still had access to reading materials, and that pupils could access multiple copies of popular books and read them at the same time.
- 3.68 Libraries also helped schools by sharing knowledge, particularly knowledge of current young adult fiction as well as ideas for engaging pupils and celebrating their achievements.
- 3.69 For the most part, staff felt that parents were a challenging group to engage, and most of the schools we spoke with said that this was an area for development in the future. However in some schools, staff felt that they had been able to raise awareness of the importance of reading for pleasure amongst parents, often using social media. They felt that parents were more aware of the initiatives that were taking place and ways in which they could support their child.
- 3.70 In some schools, parents were invited to actively participate in Reading Challenge activities alongside their child. These activities usually took place during parents' evenings, access evenings or in conjunction with whole school events, such as World Book Day.

“Our World Book Day pop-up shop was made available during
Parents' Night with titles for a range of ages so that younger siblings
didn't miss out.” School librarian

- 3.71 Staff said that events were a good opportunity to encourage parents to read at home and to give them ideas on how to support their children.
- 3.72 A few schools had worked closely with community groups, individuals in the community, authors bookshops or publishers. This was usually to deliver joint events for pupils.
- 3.73 A few schools mentioned that they had worked closely with the feeder primary schools to develop good links, particularly during P7–S1 transition. In some cases, this had involved the senior pupils. For example, in one school senior pupils delivered a transition day event in the library, which included maintaining and setting up the library space.
- 3.74 One English teacher said that the school had introduced a shared novel programme, where all P7 pupils transitioning to the secondary school were given a copy of the same book. This allowed them to have at least one shared interest when they started in S1.

- 3.75 And a few respondents mentioned that they had developed important links within their school, with staff from other departments.

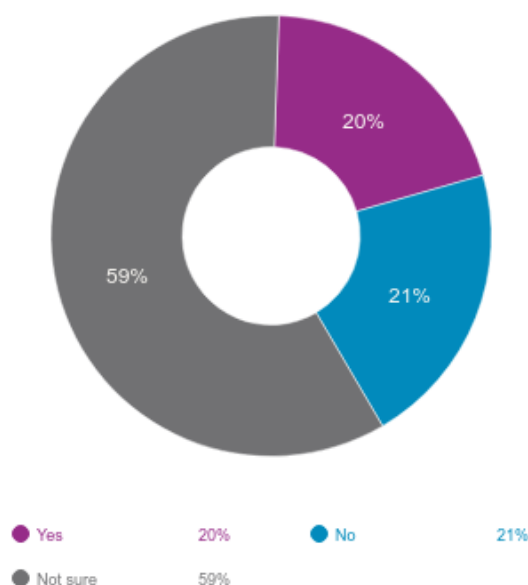
“I actually think I have created the most robust links with departments who are on board with the initiative as well as the school librarian who I work very closely with on a range of book / reading based activities.” English Teacher

Outcome: Reading for pleasure supports attainment in relation to literacy and English, as well as the wider curriculum

- 3.76 This is a secondary intended outcome for the First Minister’s Reading Challenge, aiming to support attainment – alongside the wide range of other initiatives taking place within schools across Scotland.
- 3.77 Most respondents to the school survey (59%) were unsure if the Reading Challenge had contributed to attainment in their school. A fifth of respondents felt that it had contributed to improved attainment, and just over a fifth (22%) felt that it had not.

Do you feel that the First Minister’s Reading Challenge has contributed to improved attainment, in relation to literacy or the wider curriculum at your school?

[n=85]



- 3.78 For the most part, staff said that it was too early to measure the impact that the Reading Challenge had on attainment. A few mentioned that they would be gathering feedback at the end of term and hoped that this would provide an indication of whether or not there had been any impact on attainment.

“We used the FM's Reading Challenge as one of a range of strategies to encourage reading. It would not be possible to say to what extent it contributed to overall attainment or whether it had a similar effect on all pupils.” Principal Teacher English

“We believe that a commitment to reading for pleasure in the long term gives rise to raised attainment. We look forward to seeing the results.” Principal English Teacher

- 3.79 Some of the respondents and some schools we visited had conducted evaluations of their work, both formally and informally, and were able to demonstrate that there had been a positive impact on attainment. They felt that there had been improvements in overall engagement from pupils and literacy skills.

“They have a wonderful range of vocabulary surrounding books and literacy which has helped them to grow as learners and readers.”

Class teacher

- 3.80 The changes seen were often in relation to pupils' attitudes towards reading and literacy, which led to improved engagement, and then to improved attainment.

- 3.81 A few staff mentioned that the Reading Challenge had an impact on pupil's engagement or attainment in different subject areas, as improved literacy supported their learning across the curriculum. Teachers noted that the skills of understanding, analysis and evaluation that pupils developed through reading were applicable in most subjects. And pupils also commented that they enjoyed coming to school when there were fun activities revolving around reading for pleasure.

“You look forward to lessons more when you have stuff like that going on.” Pupil

- 3.82 Pupils themselves reported improved attainment in literacy, and health and wellbeing. They reported more specific areas of improvement around vocabulary (learning more words and learning more difficult words), spelling, sentence structure, imagination for creative writing and handwriting.

“It's expanded my range of vocabulary.”

“It makes it easier to do creative writing.”

“It helps me write imaginatively.”

“If you don't read for fun, you won't enjoy it but if you do, you have a better experience...so when you *have* to read something it won't feel like a burden.”

“I also feel like I just get smarter every time I read a book.”

“I think it would help with your overall learning at school because it makes you calmer and more focused.”

“It’s given us an extra push to read more.”

Pupils

- 3.83 Health and wellbeing were frequently mentioned in schools that we visited. Both staff and pupils felt that reading for pleasure had a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing.

“The impact on their wellbeing is just as important as their attainment.” Teacher

“It’s a kind of escape, I don’t have to focus on myself.” Pupil

- 3.84 For example, in one school, the Reading Challenge was specifically focused to work on Health and Wellbeing, with a ‘Shelf Care’ reading list produced for pupils. The reading list was organised by categories relating to mental health, such as anxiety, depression and bereavement.
- 3.85 Pupils also said that the reading activities in their school had helped them feel more confident about reading, more confident about reading out aloud (public speaking) and also in terms of their general communication skills. Teachers agreed that pupils seemed more confident, both in reading and in themselves.

“The older children have grown in maturity and confidence from working with the younger children. They also have a renewed sense of a love for reading which has been inspiring to watch develop.”

Class teacher

- 3.86 A few respondents were not sure that there had been much impact, and were unsure if it could have any significant impact. However, a few respondents also noted that while the Reading Challenge may not have been the driver for change, it supported continued development of literacy skills. And a few noted that the Reading Challenge activity suggestions were already implemented in the school in different ways, but that the funding opportunities were valuable.

“We already had a deeply embedded reading culture...However, resources such as the award of funding for a creative workshop and training sessions has helped us encourage reading and supported our ongoing work which will lead to improved attainment.” School

Librarian

- 3.87 Most respondents to the library survey felt unable to comment on attainment, as this is not something they measure. Some respondents felt that the Reading Challenge had contributed to improved attainment for young people. Mostly this was in relation to reading, although a few also felt that there were improvements in writing and engaging with school. Library staff also commented that young people demonstrated good skills in communication and teamwork during the activities they participated in at the library.
- 3.88 A small number commented that they felt there was increased attainment, as they been in contact with the school where attainment was measured.

Outcome: Reading for pleasure supports closing of the attainment gap

- 3.89 The Reading Challenge also aimed to support closing of the attainment gap between pupils who are the most and least deprived.
- 3.90 More than half of respondents (54%) were unsure if the Reading Challenge had contributed to reducing the poverty related attainment gap in their school. Some felt it definitely had not, and a small proportion (16%) felt that it had.
- 3.91 Some schools had used Pupil Equity Funding or Creative Workshop funding to deliver targeted Reading Challenge activities, and some had targeted disadvantaged pupils within their wider Reading Challenge work.
- 3.92 Staff said that they had seen a range of improvements for targeted pupils, including increased engagement and enthusiasm in reading activities, increased confidence in reading, increased confidence overall and improved attainment in literacy.
- 3.93 In one school, the school librarian implemented a football book group, specifically for pupils in SIMD 1 and 2. The pupils have changed their attitudes towards reading and almost all said that they would continue reading for pleasure.

“These pupils are gaining in confidence as a result of their reading.”
School Librarian

- 3.94 Another school targeted S3 pupils to receive an author visit, as this age group had been identified for low levels of reading for pleasure. The school had a high proportion of S3 pupils in SIMD 1 and 2. Staff hoped that an author visit would inspire the more reluctant readers to try reading for pleasure.

- 3.95 Another school ran the Reading Challenge in parallel with an existing reading group for low level reading ability pupils. These pupils received an additional 15 minutes of reading with a staff member each day, which has had a positive impact on their engagement in class.

“Now, more of the disadvantaged pupils will be able to tell you what they’re reading.” English Teacher

- 3.96 One of the key issues staff mentioned was that some pupils did not have their own books at home. Interventions and resources that helped alleviate this disadvantage were welcomed – such as World Book Day tokens, or donations of books from libraries that improved the school stock and encouraged borrowing.

“Through purchasing both challenging and easily accessible books, we have something for everyone and those who may not get books at home have been permitted to borrow books they are enjoying.” English Teacher

- 3.97 For the most part, library staff responding to the survey did not feel able to comment on this. Most were either unsure (66%) or did not feel that the Reading Challenge had contributed to closing the attainment gap (31%).
- 3.98 A small number of library staff felt that the Reading Challenge was likely to have contributed to closing the attainment gap, but were not clear exactly how.
- 3.99 Where respondents were unsure or did not feel that the Reading Challenge helped to close the poverty related attainment gap, they said this was because it was still too early to measure this change, or that the initiatives had not been running for long enough to have had an impact. However, as with the impact of the Reading Challenge on attainment, a few respondents were keen to measure this through research and evaluation of their activities.

4. Outcomes for libraries

Introduction

- 4.1 This chapter explores the extent to which the Reading Challenge has achieved its outcomes in relation to work delivered in libraries.
- 4.2 Overall, libraries we engaged in this research felt that they had little involvement in the Reading Challenge. Most still had a perception that it was a school-based and school-led programme that libraries could support, if schools reached out to them. This section is based on our survey of libraries, and interviews we conducted with staff members at six public libraries.
- 4.3 The intended outcomes for libraries were:

Reading for pleasure is valued and encouraged.

Pupils read for pleasure more frequently and/or more widely.

Pupils are active readers, making reading choices and developing areas of interest which they pursue, as far as possible, independently.

Schools and libraries make effective local partnerships to support reading for pleasure in the school and the wider community.

Family usage of public libraries increases

Libraries showcase their work around reading for pleasure with children and young people

Outcome: Reading for pleasure is valued and encouraged

Outcome: Pupils read for pleasure more frequently and/or more widely

Outcome: Pupils are active readers

- 4.4 Where libraries had engaged in the Reading Challenge, staff felt that it was fun and engaging. Over half of the library staff responding to the survey also felt that the Reading Challenge had helped encourage pupils to read for pleasure more, and to read more widely. Of the respondents, 66% felt that young people were reading for pleasure more than before, and 57% felt that they were reading more widely than before.

- 4.5 Library survey respondents also noted that children were becoming more active readers, and were more confident about recommending books to others.

“Children involved in the activities share their reading choices with others more often.” Library Assistant

Outcome: Schools and libraries make effective local partnerships to support reading for pleasure in the school and the wider community

- 4.6 Library survey respondents gave us examples of creative approaches they had taken to engage pupils in the library setting. These included:

- Storytelling
- Playing games or using the narratives from computer games to stimulate imagination
- Discussing characters and encouraging pupils to create their own
- Activities based around illustration
- Interdisciplinary activities alongside geography, personal and social education, religious studies, graphic design and technology.

- 4.7 Some library respondents, and library staff we interviewed felt that the Reading Challenge had helped them to develop better links with schools, parents and other community groups. This was most evident in terms of relationships with schools.

- 4.8 Library staff responding to the survey said that either new links had been established, or existing partnerships with schools had been improved through the Reading Challenge.

“Teachers have been making more contact with regards to availability of books and encouraging pupils to use their library more through class visits.” Senior Library Assistant

“Children and schools are using the library in new ways and as part of their curriculum.” Senior Library Assistant

- 4.9 Library staff also said that working with schools through the Reading Challenge had helped others better understand the role of libraries and how they could support education for young people.

“Schools see the value of the library can offer and fed back to us that the children were more enthusiastic about reading in class as a result of the visits.” Library Programmes Officer

- 4.10 Some libraries said that the Reading Challenge had helped them develop better links with parents, either through children attending on school visits, or families coming to the library. One library assistant noted that pupils visiting the library were telling their families about it. Some families had previously never been in a library and had been unaware of the free opportunities and resources they could access.
- 4.11 Some respondents said that they already had good links with schools. And a few said that relationships had been developed, but only with families that were already regular library users.

Outcome: Family usage of public libraries increases

- 4.12 Of the respondents to the library survey, around half (52%) felt that more families were using the library and nearly three quarters (73%) felt that more young people were using the library, due to the Reading Challenge.
- 4.13 Library staff said that they had noticed more people using the library, and more people entering the Summer Reading Challenge. Some had seen:
- more class visits;
 - more pupils' memberships;
 - increased book issues; and
 - increased use of wider library services.
- 4.14 A small number of library staff we interviewed commented that the Reading Challenge had helped to increase levels of borrowing amongst young people that were taking part in the Reading Challenge. In one library, participation in the Reading Challenge has led to over 90% of pupils in the local primary school becoming registered with their mobile library service.
- 4.15 In some cases children who had been Bookbug attendees but had stopped using the library, returned to become active library users.

Outcome: Libraries showcase their work around reading for pleasure with children and young people

- 4.16 Most respondents (81%) felt that the Reading Challenge had provided libraries with a platform to showcase work around reading for pleasure. Many respondents commented that they had used displays to highlight opportunities or ideas for young people, or to present work that young people had produced.

“We have had regular visits from local schools where the children have come in with their passports to discuss their books. We have displayed their achievements within the library.” Librarian

- 4.17 However some library staff said that they already had displays to encourage reading, and the Reading Challenge was only in addition to this. And similar to feedback from schools, some library staff members noted that where the Reading Challenge had worked well, it had been part of a range of contributing interventions.

5. Delivery and process outcomes

Introduction

5.1 This chapter will explore the extent to which the First Minister's Reading Challenge has achieved its outcomes around the process of delivering the Reading Challenge. The intended outcome was that the design of the Reading Challenge supports reading for pleasure by:

- being broad and flexible;
- providing the necessary support and resources; and
- being sustainable.

A broad and flexible approach

5.2 Most survey respondents and people we spoke with felt that the Reading Challenge had a broad and flexible approach. Many of the people we spoke with commented specifically on the flexibility of the initiative and how it could be used and adapted to suit their needs.

5.3 Most staff responding to the school survey felt that the Reading Challenge was flexible enough to suit their needs, and was accessible to all of the pupils in their school. Almost all school survey respondents (76%), felt that the Reading Challenge was somewhat or very accessible and most (84%) felt that it was flexible enough to meet the needs of their school.

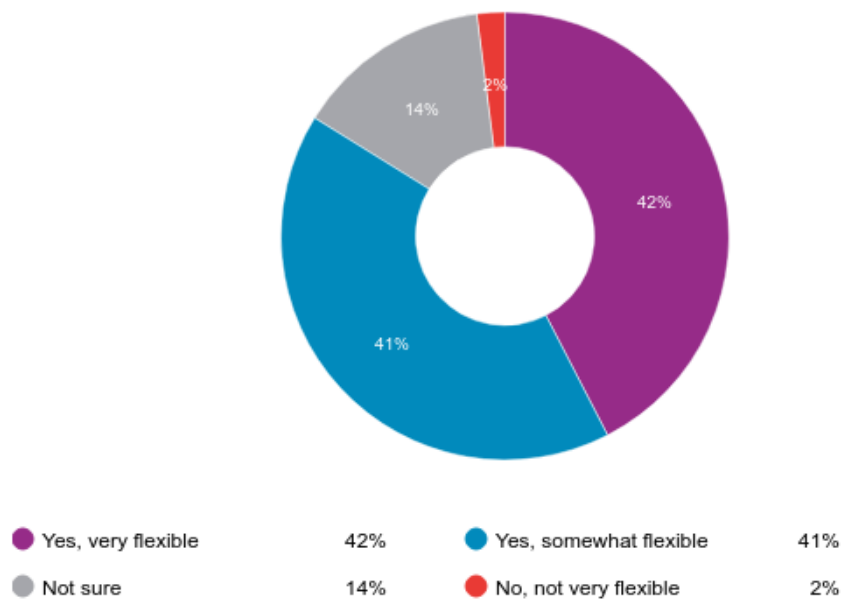
5.4 The primary schools we visited that were still engaging in the Reading Challenge said that they had done so because the Reading Challenge was flexible, and they could do different things with it each year, depending on pupils' interests and staff capacity.

5.5 In secondary schools, the flexibility allowed the Reading Challenge to be woven into different subjects and curricular areas. It also allowed staff to engage pupils at different stages of learning in shared activities. Although a few staff felt that the wide remit of the Reading Challenge was too broad, others appreciated the freedom it gave them.

“At first I thought the challenge was too vague but now I appreciate the flexibility it gives school.” Principal Teacher of English

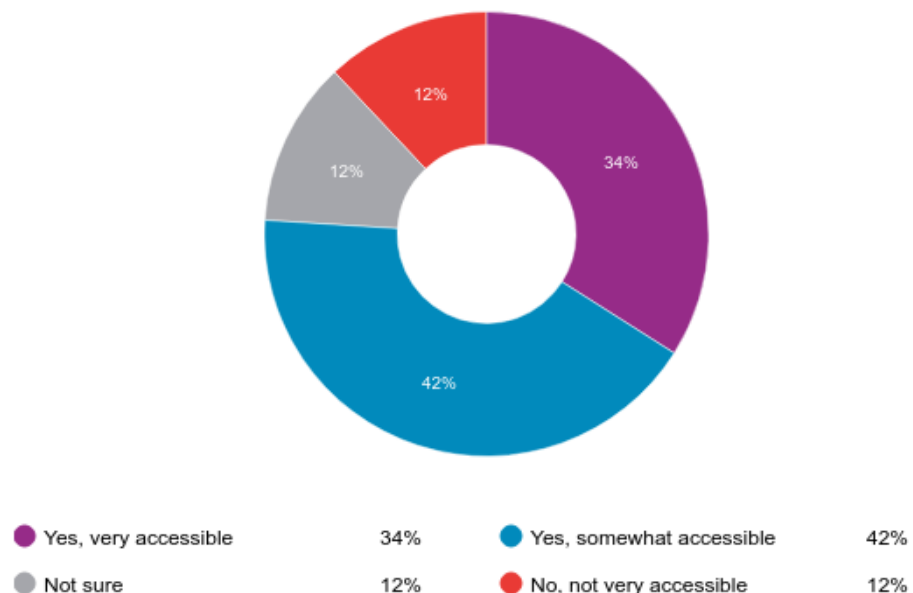
Do you feel that the First Minister's Reading Challenge is flexible enough to suit the needs of your school?

[n=99]



Do you feel that the FMRC is accessible to all pupils in your school?

[n=98]



Support and resources

- 5.6 Overall, most respondents to the school survey were happy with the quality and accessibility of support and the resources provided. 69% of respondents felt that the quality of support they received was good or very good and 66% felt that availability of support and resources was good or very good.

- 5.7 School staff reported that the resources were easy to use and easy to differentiate for pupils, making them very flexible.
- 5.8 Staff we spoke to in schools were broadly happy with the support and resources they had used. Most felt that the Reading Challenge website was easy to use and had useful ideas. They also appreciated the support and communication they had with staff at Scottish Book Trust.
- 5.9 Some respondents mentioned the continuous professional development sessions and information events they had attended. They felt that these were very helpful, inspirational and informative.

“The information evening was excellent - hearing from classroom teachers and looking at simple sustainable ways to promote reading for pleasure.” English Teacher

“Support is on hand if you have any questions and I contacted Scottish Book Trust who instantly answered my query.” English teacher

- 5.10 The resources that staff found most useful were:

- Subject specific reading lists
- ‘What I am reading’ posters
- Case studies
- Blog posts
- Group Reading Passports
- Promotional items (bookmarks, pens, pins).

“I found the case studies from other schools really useful. We are trying to build our reading culture - from a difficult start - and the case studies included lots of great ideas that we are trying to introduce slowly.” English teacher

“Blogs with information of case studies from other schools have been helpful to spark inspiration! We also liked the lists of books for different subjects and topics”. English teacher

“The door signs are an easy resource to use widely.” Principal Teacher of English

- 5.11 The subject specific reading lists were mentioned by many survey respondents as a good source of inspiration for purchasing new reading materials and for helping to expand the Reading Challenge into different departments of the school.

“We have distributed the book lists for the different subjects and Music have a pop up library with some of the suggested titles.”
School librarian

- 5.12 A few staff members we spoke with said that the branded items they received from Scottish Book Trust, such as pens, badges, bookmarks and stickers, were useful. They felt that these items served well as token rewards for pupils, and increased visibility of the Reading Challenge.
- 5.13 Survey respondents also mentioned a range of specific printable resources that they had used such as the quizzes, treasure hunts, recommendation cards and certificates. They felt these were useful as they could use them directly or use them as the basis for other activities.
- 5.14 The Group Passports received a mixed response. Some staff said that they were a useful tool to encourage participation and monitor progress. However others said that they would have preferred individual reading passports, and felt that the Group Passport was less effective.
- 5.15 Those who had received Creative Workshop funding spoke highly of the experience. They appreciated the opportunity to receive additional funds for reading activities focusing on creativity and fun.

“We were delighted to have been awarded the Creative Workshop funding and are looking forward to seeing the results of this workshop.” School librarian

- 5.16 Some staff at schools we visited had direct support from Scottish Book Trust, or had attended the launch event for secondary schools. They found this event helpful as it gave them ideas and inspiration.

“Attending that event was key. It gave you the vision, and we saw case studies on the pilot schools and learned from them. It made taking part much easier.” English teacher

“It definitely gave us inspiration.”
School staff

- 5.17 Several schools mentioned that they had struggled to use the Reading Challenge website, either to access resources or to submit their challenge entry. This was an issue that was recognised by Scottish Book Trust during the submission period, which was subsequently extended to allow schools more time to submit. Similar to some schools that had chosen not to be involved in the Reading Challenge, some felt that the website was not easy to use or that the resources were more appropriate for primary pupils.

“More ready to use resources for secondary level are necessary.”
English teacher

- 5.18 One staff member we spoke with noted that the Celebration events were only for a small number of pupils. They suggested that there could be more regional or local events, to allow more people to be involved in celebrating their success.
- 5.19 Another staff member questioned the value of having awards, particularly for the pupil reading the most books. They felt this detracted from the main aim of the Reading Challenge, which was to encourage pupils to enjoy reading. And a few noted that this type of competition did not engage pupils that were very reluctant or who struggled with reading in class.

“I don’t like that there is a prize awarded to pupils reading the largest number of books. Is that what the Reading Challenge is about?”
Teacher

“It did work very well for certain classes and not well at all for others where kids have a hard time being engaged with reading in general.”
School librarian

- 5.20 And a few survey respondents felt that the concept of the Reading Challenge was not clear. They were not sure of the aims of the Reading Challenge or how it could be implemented.

“Some of the challenges and lists were useful, however we found the FMRC to be too vague.” School librarian

Being sustainable

- 5.21 Staff we spoke with were hopeful that the initiatives they had implemented through the Reading Challenge would be sustained. Many mentioned that they felt sustained activity was the key to achieving successful outcomes, and this was their long term goal.

“We want to embed it within the fabric of the school.” Teacher

- 5.22 A few schools felt they had already come quite far in terms of embedding an attitude or approach to reading for pleasure, and felt positive that this would be sustained. In these cases, the Reading Challenge had been adopted as a whole school approach, involving teaching and non-teaching staff from every department. They also felt that sustainability was more likely to be achieved when schools could take the time to train staff on the value of reading for pleasure – and continue to do so whenever new staff joined the school.

“Our school has fully embraced reading for pleasure - the key to ensuring sustainability of this is that every member of staff is on

board so the antiquated idea that you only read in English to write essays has gone!" English Teacher

- 5.23 Where schools were positive about sustainability, there was a high level of support between colleagues, and from senior management in the school. This support gave teaching staff the confidence, and sometimes additional capacity, to invest time in reading for pleasure.
- 5.24 Some staff we spoke with said that the flexibility of the Reading Challenge supported long term sustainability as the programme of activity could be modified depending on the changing needs of pupils. However a few schools noted that it might be difficult for them to sustain activity without additional resource or funding. For example, some schools had been able to engage heavily with the Reading Challenge because the school had additional funding or staff capacity through the local authority. Without this, they did not feel they would have the capacity to continue delivering Reading Challenge activities.

Libraries

- 5.25 Most respondents to the library survey were happy with the availability and quality of support available. Of the respondents, 66% felt that availability of support and resources was good or very good, and 62% felt that the quality of support was good or very good.
- 5.26 Similarly, most (77%) felt that the Reading Challenge was flexible enough to accommodate the needs and priorities of their library.
- 5.27 Library staff found the website and online resources useful, particularly the challenge ideas, certificates, posters and passports. Some said that they had used the resources as part of their library displays, and some had also used the book lists. A few said that they had attended dedicated events or learning sessions where they learned about the Reading Challenge, and they found these useful.

"The online resources were good and helped give ideas to tailor make class visits." Library Supervisor

"The booklet which provided titles organised into genres was very useful when encouraging children to choose something new if they enjoyed a particular title." Senior Library Assistant

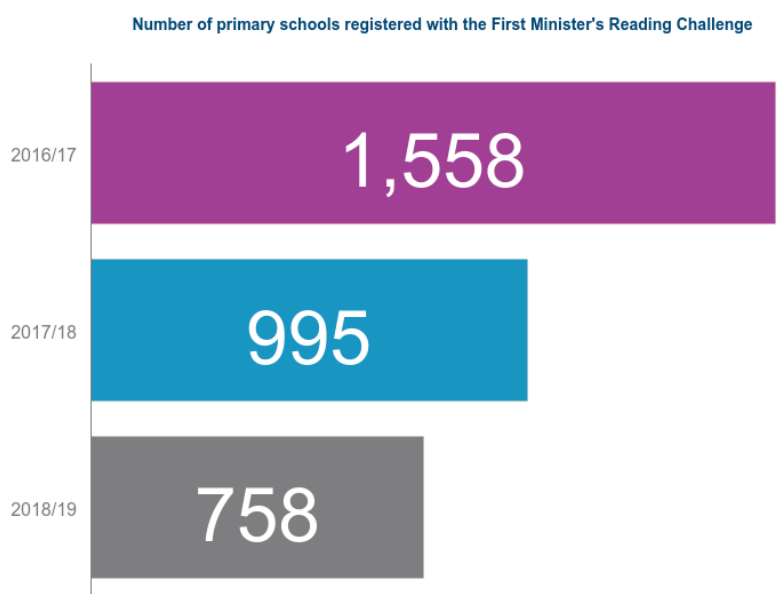
- 5.28 In parallel with comments from staff working in schools, staff in libraries said that the biggest challenge they faced was not having enough time or capacity to fully engage in the Reading Challenge. Some felt that there was a limited role for libraries in the Reading Challenge, particularly if local schools were not participating. Others noted that they were not sure how libraries would lead such a challenge. A few libraries commented that there was some overlap with the existing Summer Reading Challenge, however one library staff member felt that the Reading Challenge was a good alternative.

- 5.29 Going forward, the library staff members we spoke with felt that the Reading Challenge should be kept simple. A few noted that they would appreciate more support, direct engagement and training for library staff to help them engage library users in the Reading Challenge.

6. Long term engagement in primary schools

Introduction

- 6.1 This chapter explores the change in primary schools' engagement with the Reading Challenge over the past three years, since it was launched in 2016.
- 6.2 Evaluation during 2018 and 2019 found that the number of primary schools registering and engaging in the Reading Challenge has decreased, falling to half of the number that originally registered.



- 6.3 We contacted schools that had previously registered to take part in the Reading Challenge, but had not re-registered in 2018/19, to find out why.
- 6.4 The main reasons that schools gave were:
- staff turnover
 - other priorities within the school
 - staff capacity
 - communication error
 - no longer interested.
- 6.5 Many of the schools we contacted said that the staff member who had been the key contact for the Reading Challenge had moved on to another school, retired, were away on maternity leave or had other priorities to focus on. In these schools, other staff had not been able to pick up the initiative, or had started their role late in the year and did not have enough time to develop Reading Challenge activities within this academic year. Where this was the case, some staff told us that they were keen to register and participate next year.

- 6.6 Some teachers also said that although they had not registered this year, they were still using some of the resources or initiatives that were established through the Reading Challenge in previous years.

“Yes, we still use the majority of the activities introduced during the previous session.” Primary school staff

“Reading still has a very big focus in our school and although we did not officially register this year the pupils are very much encouraged to read for pleasure.” Primary school staff

“I am highly committed to this, so when the email arrives, we will be back on board.” Primary school staff

- 6.7 Some staff in schools felt that they had limited time and capacity overall. For some, this meant that they felt unable to focus on reading for pleasure, as they were focusing on other areas of literacy. For example, in one school, the focus on literacy had previously been reading, and was now more about writing. And in another school, Pupil Equity Funding had enabled staff to organise Reading Challenge related activities, but they no longer had this additional capacity due to staff shortages.

- 6.8 Staff who were no longer involved said that they were not supported to deliver the Reading Challenge, so it became an additional burden that they did not feel able to manage.

“As there wasn't much input for teachers/staff from SLT, we weren't sure how to lead it.” Primary school staff

“I co-ordinated the challenge in 2017/18 as I was funded via PEF to be out of class for an allotted amount of time. That allowed me to co-ordinate across the school and arrange initiatives with partner organisations, parents etc. This was not feasible this year as I was fully class committed.” Primary school staff

“We were left to it, on top of our normal jobs.” Primary school staff

- 6.9 Some staff said that they did not feel part of a wider, national competition and that they were delivering activities on their own. In one area, two schools within the same campus were involved in the Reading Challenge but were unaware of each other's involvement. They felt that if there was a method for communication across the network of schools participating in the Reading Challenge, they would be able to share resources and deliver a better programme for pupils.

- 6.10 A small number of people we reached said that they had intended to register for the Reading Challenge but had not due to an oversight or error in communication. And a few said that the school had been under pressure due

to unusual circumstances, such as moving to a new building. Again, these schools were keen to take part and hoped to do so in the future.

“Genuinely hope to continue to participate formally or informally in the future.” Primary school staff

- 6.11 A small number of people said that they were no longer interested in taking part in the Reading Challenge. The main reasons were that:
- pupils had not shown interest or enthusiasm for it;
 - it required a lot of effort;
 - it only engaged pupils that already enjoyed reading for pleasure;
 - they did not like the competitive aspect of it; and
 - the school already delivers these types of activities.
- 6.12 Some staff said that it had been difficult to keep pupils interested in the Reading Challenge and that pupils were not keen on completing the Reading Passports.

“It was hard to sustain interest.” Primary school staff

- 6.13 Some staff did not like the competitive aspect of the Reading Challenge, particularly the idea that pupils would count the number of books they had read. They felt that this was counterintuitive to the aim of the Reading Challenge, and to what they themselves were trying to achieve.

“Having children record the number of books they read was not challenging, but also not a valuable exercise either. Quantity of books does not encourage meaningful reading, developing skills and comprehension.” Primary school staff

- 6.14 Some teachers noted that not all pupils were able to engage fully in the Reading Challenge, particularly if they did not have support at home. And some felt that instead of addressing this issue, the Reading Challenge highlighted the gap between those who had access to books and support at home, and those who did not.

“The FMRC does not answer this challenge but highlights the pupils who are supported at home in reading and those who are not.”
Primary school staff

- 6.15 Some teachers said that their schools already did a lot of work around reading and reading for pleasure. They did not feel that being involved in the Reading Challenge would add to the work they already delivered, or make a difference for their pupils.

“Didn’t add anything to what we were/are already doing. Perhaps for schools where pupils and families don’t see reading as advantageous it might have made a difference, but almost all of our

pupils already engage in reading during the school day and at home already.” Primary school staff

- 6.16 A few people commented on the programme itself. They felt that there was nothing new in the Reading Challenge this year, or that information regarding the Reading Challenge was too vague. And a few felt that overall, the Reading Challenge itself did not offer anything new or different.

“It lacked spark, it was nothing exciting or new.” Primary school staff

- 6.17 We asked schools if there was anything that would encourage them to register again, or that would help them to engage in the Reading Challenge. The main suggestions were to:

- more closely align with school priorities e.g. parental engagement;
- more closely align with other, better known initiatives, such as Bookbug;
- develop a better online presence, with which pupils could engage;
- have more direct engagement from the First Minister; and
- facilitate opportunities to engage with other schools through the Reading Challenge.

“The school has many priorities to address in a year and if the FMRC helps address the priorities in the school improvement plan-including parental engagement-we would be more likely to sign up.”
Primary school staff

“Greater opportunities to share good practice and find out how other establishments promote the FMRC would be very useful.” Primary school staff

- 6.18 In terms of specific support that Scottish Book Trust could provide, there were few suggestions. Schools in more remote areas noted that it was difficult for them to attend training in the central belt, or on the mainland. They said that they would welcome additional funding to help with this, and to help facilitate author visits.
- 6.19 Most staff we spoke with broadly positive about the Reading Challenge and Scottish Book Trust. Some noted that the support and resources available through Scottish Book Trust were useful, but that they did not have capacity to engage.

“The resources and support they provide are excellent and it is simply down to school capacity to drive the initiative forward.”
Primary school staff

7. Challenges and success factors

Introduction

- 7.1 This chapter explores the key challenges and success factors of the Reading Challenge. This chapter draws on the experiences and perceptions of the people that we engaged in this research.

What worked well

Resources and flexibility

- 7.2 Schools and libraries spoke positively about the support and flexibility provided by Scottish Book Trust. Most of the people felt that the Reading Challenge was a flexible programme that they could engage with at any level. The flexibility of the programme is reflected in the ways in which schools and libraries have engaged, using different techniques and approaches.
- 7.3 Many survey respondents and people we spoke with said that the online resources were useful. Some people used the resources as they were, and others used them as inspiration for their activities, or used them to develop their own, bespoke resources.

“Getting onto the Website and using the wealth of resources online has been very useful.” Librarian

“CPD for teaching staff was excellent. Online resources useful too especially challenges and certificate.” Librarian

Opportunity to focus on and include reading for pleasure in the school day

- 7.4 Staff in schools said that the Reading Challenge gave them the opportunity to focus on reading for pleasure in a way that was credible and legitimate. Some said that they inherently felt reading to be a positive activity, but without the Reading Challenge, they would not have had the confidence to spend time in class reading for pleasure.
- 7.5 Staff also noted that they liked the focus solely on reading for pleasure, without any further obligations for staff or pupils. Although some schools said that reading for pleasure was on their radar, the Reading Challenge gave them a format to deliver it, and ideas of how it could work with the curriculum.

“FMRC is the first time the school has had a structured way to record reading for pleasure and although it hasn't been a success for 100% of the pupils, there have been enough pupils reading to the end of a book for the first time to make it seem worth it.” School Librarian

“It has structured the events and activities which were already running through the Library so that the benefits of reading can be seen.” School Librarian

Alignment with wider priorities

- 7.6 Many respondents commented that the Reading Challenge helped pupils develop skills in a wide range of areas. Some schools used the Reading Challenge as a way to explore challenging issues, or to encourage pupils to think about health and wellbeing, or to access subject topics in a new way.
- 7.7 Generally, the Reading Challenge worked well when it aligned with existing priorities and initiatives, both in schools and in libraries.

Challenges and areas for improvement

Time and capacity

- 7.8 The main challenge for schools and libraries was a lack of time and staff capacity. Many of the people involved in this research said that they did not have enough time to engage with the Reading Challenge. Even those who had taken part and submitted an entry to the Reading Challenge said that they did not have enough time to deliver all the activities they hoped to.
- 7.9 And some were concerned about the closures, cuts and staff shortages in libraries and schools.
- 7.10 Pupils also noted that they did not always feel they had time to engage in reading for pleasure as they had other learning priorities, including homework and exams.

“Sometimes I put my homework or revising for a test above reading.”
Pupil

Timing

- 7.11 Some respondents commented on the timing of the Reading Challenge. They felt it started too late in the school year, and that for senior pupils, it clashed with exams. Some mentioned that they would like the training and resources to be delivered by the end of the school year, so that they could be ready to start delivery in August.

Engagement

- 7.12 Library staff said that engagement with young people was challenging. Either schools did not take up the Reading Challenge, and therefore did not engage with the library, or young people themselves were not keen to engage.
- 7.13 For libraries, there was some confusion around how library users could be involved in the Reading Challenge, as some felt that young people had to be involved through a school or teacher. For example, one librarian said that their library was used by young people that were home-schooled. They felt that

most of the Reading Challenge materials were only available through schools and required input from a teacher. This posed a particular challenge for families that home-school their children.

“We have some families who home school their children and they commented that much of the material was only available through schools and teacher input was required. It took some time to clarify this and I believe at least one family didn't take part as a consequence.” Librarian

Lack of buy-in from wider staff team or senior management

7.14 One of the key reasons that school and library staff did not engage with the Reading Challenge was because they did not have support from their colleagues or senior management. Some felt that without this support, or impetus from management, they were not able to spend time on activities involving reading for pleasure.

“We have not had the resources or enough interest from teaching staff to implement a wider reading for pleasure culture.” School Librarian

Range of resources

7.15 A few respondents said that they would appreciate more dedicated resources for their schools' specific needs. These included more resources aimed at pupils with additional support needs, and for schools where pupils are already reading for pleasure.

7.16 Some library staff felt that the Reading Challenge was still focused on schools. They felt that the resources and activities were not designed for use in libraries and this made it harder to engage young people. For example, one respondent said that they would like specific resources for librarians to use on when pupils came to visit.

7.17 A few respondents to the school and library survey noted that they have faced difficulties using the Reading Challenge website, or registering for the Reading Challenge. A few said that they had struggled to submit their entry to the Reading Challenge.

8. Conclusions

Introduction

- 8.1 Overall, the Reading Challenge was well received by the people we engaged in this research. Pupils enjoyed taking part, and developed a love for reading. Schools that had taken part felt that it was a useful initiative that helped engage pupils and provided a range of benefits.
- 8.2 The Reading Challenge has shown good progress towards all of its intended outcomes, particularly around the primary outcomes focused on reading for pleasure and outcomes around integrating reading into school activity.
- 8.3 The context for delivery of the Reading Challenge varied significantly across primary schools, secondary schools and libraries. The extent of the outcomes achieved reflects the different challenges and environments.
- 8.4 There were a number of challenges reported by the people we engaged in this research that had an impact on their ability to engage in the Reading Challenge, such as library closures and staff capacity. Although these are recognised as significant challenges, they fall outwith the scope of Scottish Book Trust to address.

Outcomes around reading for pleasure

- 8.5 Feedback from schools and libraries indicates that reading for pleasure was valued and encouraged in schools and in libraries. Pupils said that they enjoyed the reading activities they had participated in and that the Reading Challenge had allowed them to read more widely and more often than before.

Outcomes around recognition of reading for pleasure in school

- 8.6 Where the Reading Challenge had worked well, there was a high level of awareness that reading for pleasure was important, from senior management and across staff teams. There is evidence to show that schools have found creative methods of embedding reading for pleasure into the curriculum and using reading for pleasure to enhance learning.
- 8.7 In schools, the Reading Challenge provided pupils with opportunities to lead their learning, and take on leadership roles. In some places, it provided pupils who were already leaders to lead on something new, and in others, it facilitated the development of new leadership roles.

Outcomes around school, family and library partnerships

- 8.8 Some schools indicated that the Reading Challenge was delivered in close partnership with libraries. And some libraries indicated that they had supported schools to deliver Reading Challenge activities. Engagement with parents and families proved more difficult, and was reported by many as an area for development.

Outcomes around attainment

- 8.9 School staff and pupils indicated strongly that they felt the Reading Challenge helped to improve engagement and attainment in literacy, health and wellbeing. They felt that improvement in these areas had a positive impact across all areas of the curriculum.
- 8.10 In a small number of schools, staff reported that through targeted activities, the Reading Challenge was helping to reduce the poverty related attainment gap.

Outcomes for libraries

- 8.11 The library Reading Challenge was only introduced this year and so far only a small proportion of libraries in Scotland registered to be part of the Reading Challenge. There was some indication that in a small number of libraries, the Reading Challenge has supported library initiatives to increase use of the library by families. In some areas, libraries have also supported schools to deliver activities and have been able to increase use of the library through the Reading Challenge.

Delivery: What works well

- 8.12 Overall, people spoke highly of Scottish Book Trust, the Reading Challenge and the resources. The flexibility and broad scope of the Reading Challenge was often cited as a strength, as it allowed schools to adapt the Reading Challenge to their needs and preferences.
- 8.13 Staff felt that the Reading Challenge provided a beneficial opportunity to include dedicating reading time within the school day. And more broadly, staff, particularly senior management staff appreciated that the Reading Challenge aligned well with their wider priorities around attainment in literacy, health and wellbeing.

Delivery: Areas for development

- 8.14 The main areas for development were the website, the resources and the timing of the Reading Challenge. People involved in this research felt that the website was not always easy to use and this was a barrier to their engagement. Some felt that there was room to develop more resources for

specific groups. And some people said that they would like the Reading Challenge introduced at a different time of year, so it did not coincide with other priorities.

- 8.15 For libraries in particular, engagement with young people was perceived to linked directly to engagement with schools. Where libraries had good links to schools participating in the Reading Challenge, the programme worked well. However, where there were not strong links between the library and local schools, or if the school was not participating in the Reading Challenge, libraries struggled to engage pupils in the Reading Challenge.
- 8.16 The Reading Challenge was opened to libraries this year, and uptake has been limited. We would recommend proactive outreach, training and support to raise awareness of and engagement with the Reading Challenge in libraries.
- 8.17 We would note that while, on balance, the broad and flexible nature of the Reading Challenge was a success factor, some participants felt that that it was vague. There may be scope for Scottish Book Trust to offer more clarity and direction to people hoping to get involved in the Reading Challenge.
- 8.18 Some schools commented on the timing of the Reading Challenge training and the deadline for submissions. Scottish Book Trust may wish to consider engaging with schools to agree a more suitable time to deliver training. It may also consider delivering ongoing training throughout the academic year and having an open submissions approach, whereby schools could submit challenges at any point in the year.
- 8.19 Staff commented positively on case studies and examples of how others had delivered the Reading Challenge. We would recommend that Scottish Book Trust continues to develop case study examples and share them as widely as possible, to further inspire Reading Challenge activity.