

Read, Write, Count 2019–20

Introduction

Read, Write, Count (RWC) is a national campaign to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of Scotland's children. The campaign is delivered by Scottish Government, Scottish Book Trust (SBT) and Education Scotland. It is a key part of the Scottish Government's commitment to raise attainment for all.

As part of the campaign, every child in primary 2 and 3 receives a free bag with books and activities to support their learning. In addition, the campaign provides advice and support for learning professionals and families from SBT and Parent Club through training events, online resources and targeted programmes of activity in areas of high deprivation.

Programme outcomes

The gifting of the P2 and P3 bags is intended to support the overarching RWC programme aims:

- Contribute to the joint aims of raising attainment for all and closing the attainment gap, with the focus on the latter
- Provide resources and advice to parents and children to support fun and accessible home-based learning (incorporating growth mindset principles, particularly in relation to numeracy)
- Ensure good integration between the bags and the wider social marketing campaign (in line with the strategic approach of belief, competency and behaviours)
- Secure buy-in and support from teachers and other practitioners, such as library staff and family/community learning



Methods

In previous years the analysis and final report was conducted by an external independent evaluator. In 2019–20 these tasks were carried out in-house by SBT which risks bias. As in previous years, SBT staff were responsible for survey design and data collection. This year the evaluation includes an analysis of the local authority survey. While this survey has been carried out in previous years for internal use, it was not included in the final evaluations. The local authority contacts were asked to participate in the evaluation as part of their RWC role. The parent and learning professional surveys were circulated through SBT contacts and marketing channels.

Learning professional survey

Respondents were offered the chance to win a box of books and learning resources for their class. The survey focused on the English language editions of the P2 and P3 RWC bags. Learning professionals looking to give feedback on the Gaelic bags were asked to contact the programme manager directly. The survey received 443 responses from learning professionals.¹ 42 additional responses came from parents. These responses were excluded from the analysis.

Local authority survey

RWC has a contact in each local authority through which the bag numbers, school communications, and distribution is organised. The majority of local authorities, and the Scottish Council of Independent Schools, responded to our requests for participation in this evaluation. No responses were received from Aberdeen City Council, Clackmannanshire, East Lothian Council, Fife Council, Glasgow City Council, North Lanarkshire Council, and Orkney Islands Council. Some local authorities (East Ayrshire and Argyll and Bute) returned multiple entries. A response from a class teacher was excluded from the analysis.

Initial parent and carer survey

The survey was incentivised with respondents given the option to enter a prize draw to win a bag of games, books and activities for home learning. We gained 1,144 responses by January 2020 from parents in 26 local authorities.²

Follow up parent and carer survey

489 respondents to the initial parent/carers survey consented to participate in further research. These were contacted in July 2020 with an online follow up survey which gained 75 responses. The survey was incentivised with a chance to win a £50 book token and we gained responses from 20 local authorities.³

¹ Some local authorities (South Lanarkshire and Edinburgh in particular) were overrepresented. There were no responses from Aberdeen, Clackmannanshire, Dumfries and Galloway, East Lothian, Inverclyde, Orkney, Shetland, Stirling, West Dunbartonshire, or the Western Isles.

² Some areas represented a disproportionate amount of responses including Aberdeenshire (25%), Angus (12%), and East Dunbartonshire (12%). There were no responses from Clackmannanshire, North Ayrshire, Orkney, Shetland, West Dunbartonshire, or the Western Isles.

³ No responses from: Clackmannanshire, Dumfries & Galloway, Dundee City, East Lothian, Fife, Inverclyde, North Ayrshire, Renfrewshire, Shetland Islands, Stirling, West Dunbartonshire, or Comhairle nan Eilean Siar.

There was a strong response to all four surveys. However, the findings of this evaluation should be taken only as an indication of attitudes to the programme. There were no returns to any of the surveys from Clackmannanshire and other local authorities were not representative proportionately. Respondents to the parent and learning professional surveys submitted responses voluntarily and the surveys were circulated through SBT channels. The respondents self-selected and may already have been invested in SBT work meaning that the findings should not be considered entirely representative.

Contents feedback

The bags were popular overall with over 90% of parents and children liking the bag very much or quite liking it. Our initial parent survey indicated that only 7% of parents and 6% of children were indifferent to or disliked their RWC bag.

P2 bag

'My son loves to read king cat he thinks it's so funny. The rockets and meteors game is really good for their counting and turn taking. The story dice was great for his imagination he loves being able to make up stories using the dice these are all great learning tools.' (Parent)

The RWC P2 bag contained two books as well as games and activity suggestions:

- *Steve, Terror of the Seas* by Megan Brewis
- *The King Cat* by Marta Altés.
- Story Cubes.
- A notebook and writing pencil.
- A Rockets and Meteors game with two dice and four counters
- A wipeable dot pattern board on the reverse and a dry-wipe pen.
- A parent/carer guide



The books were the most popular items in the bag overall with *Steve Terror of the Seas* (54%) and *The King Cat* (49%) chosen by many parents as favourite items. A minority mentioned the reading level was too easy for their child, though others suggested this was positive as it made the book accessible to other children in the household. Feedback on the books focused on the children's enjoyment of them:

- 'My son loved everything in the bag and has made good use of all the items. In particular he loves the Steve Terror of the Seas book and we regularly read it together.' (Parent)
- 'Daughter liked the story, especially as she could read it herself. It helped that the teacher read it to her at school too.' (Parent)

The story dice were also popular. Feedback on the dice indicated the items were useful for developing creative, literacy, social, and critical thinking skills, as well as engaging children who were not previously interested in writing:

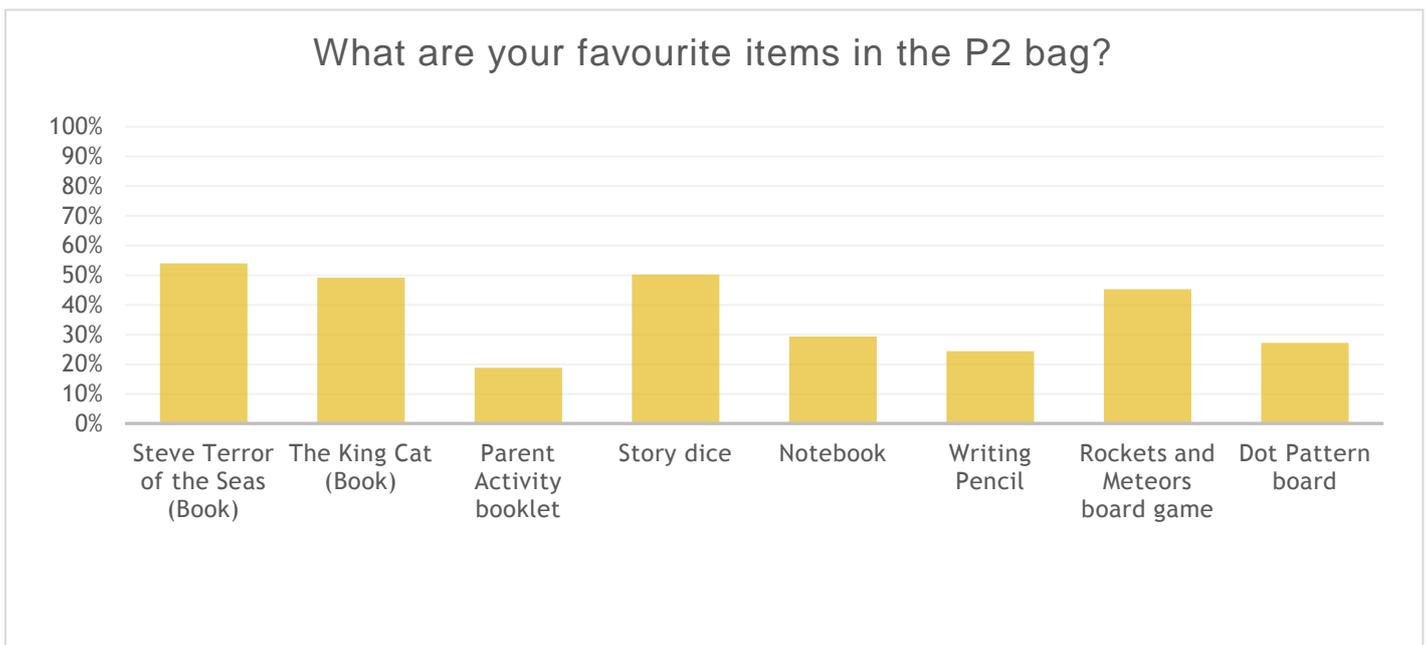
- 'My child loves using these products and the dice are particularly helpful as he is not as interested in writing as he is numbers - however, this helps a lot with gaining more interest in writing.' (Parent)

Comments on the numeracy related items (the Rockets and Meteors and Dot Pattern boards) mentioned they were being used to support numeracy activities from school. Parents reported using the games as a fun activity in different places and contexts:

- 'I like the rocket game because it's fun and easy to play. I like the dot pattern board because you can trace the dots to make the shapes you need in case you are not good at making shapes.' (Parent)
- 'The dot pattern board and pen; we loved this! We started playing games during breakfast time and whilst I was making dinner. We loved taking turns to join the dots to win points and I introduced my daughter to various word games. Love it!' (Parent)

Feedback on the notebook, writing pencil, and parent activity booklet focused on their usefulness. The notebook and pencil were the items the respondents were most likely to say their children already had access to. However, some noted that the gifting of these items directly to their children gave them a sense of ownership:

- 'They have been drawing more in their notebook with their 'special' pencil so have both enjoyed every bit of this bag.' (Parent)
- 'The parent's booklet was full of great information and new exciting ideas to try out. Loved it!' (Parent)



P3 bag

'As a parent it's difficult to juggle daily tasks and taking a moment out to do some fun educational activities with the kids, having the pack meant we had to make time to try it.' (Parent)

The 2019 P3 bag also contained two books as well as activities:

- *You're Called What?* by Kes Gray and Nikki Dyson
- *The Knight Who Said 'No!'* by Lucy Rowland and Kate Hindley.
- Galactic Fantastic with time and story activity cards on the reverse.
- A notebook and writing pencil.
- Three multi-sided dice.
- A parent/carer guide



As with the P2 bags, the books were the most popular items. *You're Called What?* was the item most commonly chosen as a favourite by parents completing the survey (59%). This item seemed to strike a chord with children who were inspired to create their own activities. *The Knight Who Said 'No!'* was noted as a favourite item by 46% of respondents with parents commenting that the book boosted the confidence of their children. Some parents mentioned that the books were below their child's reading level, but others reported that the books were pitched at the right reading level for their child.

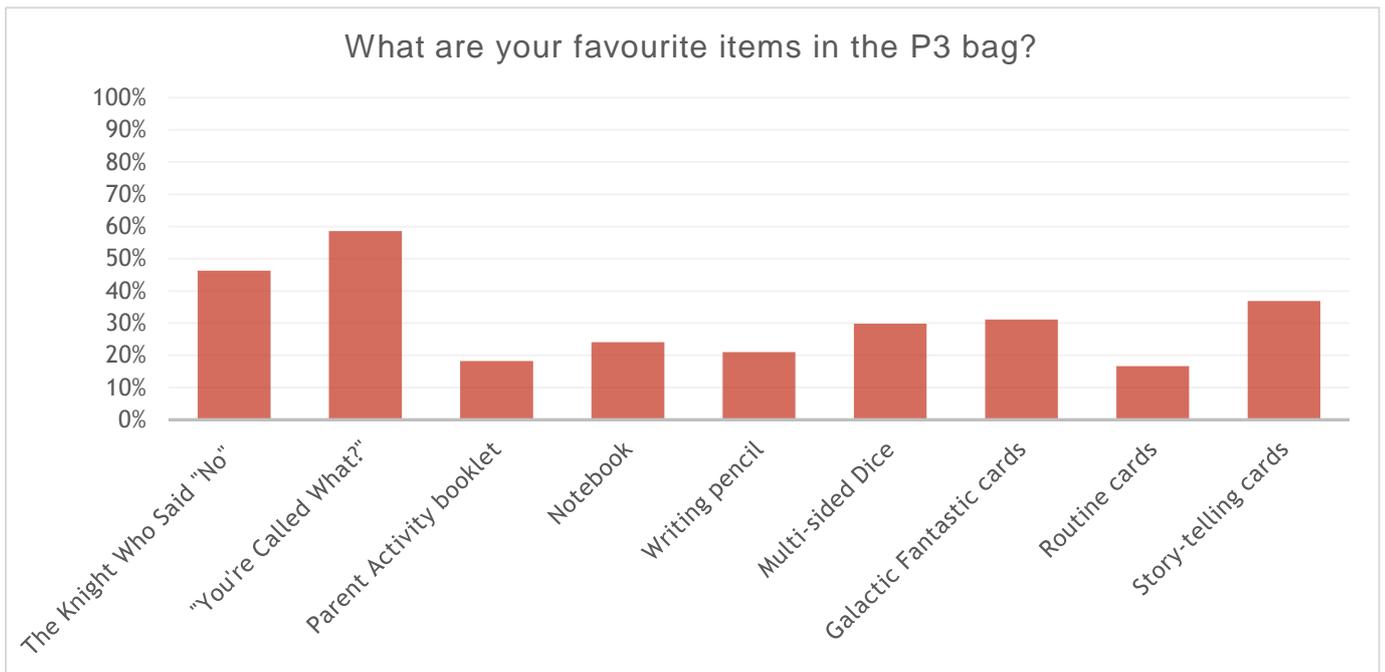
- 'The book are very good, good story and appropriate for the age group targeted. The illustrations are also great.' (Parent)
- 'My children felt that the reading material was set at a level too low for their reading ability.' (Parent)
- 'My son absolutely loves the books, particularly 'You're called what' which has quickly become a favourite of his. They are exactly right for his reading age.' (Parent)

The card games, and particularly the storytelling cards, in the P3 bags were also popular with respondents. Comments made about the storytelling cards focused on creativity and child engagement:

- 'My son sometimes struggles with imagination, so the story telling cards really help him to think and try to explains his imagination a wee bit.' (Parent)

The notebook and pencil received mixed feedback with some respondents reporting their children enjoying and using them, and others saying they already owned them. However, feedback on the numeracy items (Galactic Fantastic cards and multi-sided dice) was positive and centred more on numeracy development and learning through play:

- 'Playing cards are extremely fun and can be used for both numbers and letter recognition and learning.' (Parent)



Suggestions for improvement

The surveys asked for suggestions for items to be included in future RWC bags. Learning professionals emphasised a demand for bilingual parent guides to engage households who speak a mix of languages. Parents and carers generally indicated they did not want anything additional or asked for more books in future bags, though some requested more accessible items in future bags to engage children with additional support needs. Parents who completed the follow-up survey suggested items that would have been useful in lockdown. These included more books, activity ideas related to emotions, whiteboards, writing materials, craft items and more numeracy materials.

Those who reported disliking a specific item in the current bags were a handful of parent respondents. These respondents did not see the bags as necessary as they had the means to purchase them. Some noted environmental concerns about plastic packaging or would prefer to have been gifted a box rather than a bag.

Most suggestions for improvement came from learning professionals who asked for resources in different languages, enough bags for the pupils, and more communication in advance. The most common suggestion was an additional bag for the class teacher to allow for preparation and demonstration.

Teacher assessment of contents

'I love the story cubes for inspiring writing and combining reading, writing and numeracy helped interest children who would at times be reluctant to challenge themselves in those areas. Love the bags!' (Learning professional)

Feedback on the quality of the bag contents from learning professionals was overwhelmingly positive. While respondents to the parent survey were more likely to focus on the books in their comments, the learning professionals commented on the contents as a whole.

- 'I thought the contents were attractive, age appropriate and varied in the respect that they could be used in many different ways. I think the children were delighted with the contents of their bag.' (Learning professional)
- 'As a teacher I enjoy reading the stories and taking part in activities with the children relating to the books. The bags are always of high quality and are met with enthusiasm from the children.' (Learning professional)

A couple of the respondents did not think the pencil and notebook were useful and would prefer an extra book. Two composite teachers noted that parts of the games were small enough for younger pupils to eat. The books, story cubes, and numeracy items were singled out by a high number of respondents as being particularly useful:

- 'The children loved the books and the note pads. Children wrote stories in the note pads and have put them in our library corner to share their stories with other pupils.' (Learning professional)

Parent/carer initial assessment of contents

'My 2 year old loves reading both these books with us. It makes for a great family reading time and my P.2 proudly shows them to him. The story dice fit in my bag and can be used during periods of waiting - train, cafe, meal prep. thank you for the lovely variety.' (Parent)

Feedback from parents with P2 and P3 bags was overwhelmingly positive about the items and their quality. Neutral comments were generally restricted to noting that a family already had access to these items or the ability to purchase them. Negative feedback on the quality of the bags as a whole only occurred in one instance. A number of respondents reported using the bag together, often with other children in the household or as a family:

- 'The story telling cards are brilliant for starting points for making up stories for both adults and children and are a lovely activity to do together.' (Parent)

It is interesting to note that both the books with non-fiction elements scored highest with parents. *You're Called What?* and *Steve Terror of the Seas* were highlighted as sparking an interest in animals and nature. Some P3 parents reported doing more research with their children to find out more about the animals featured:

- 'We had a lot of fun reading this book as a family, and it led to doing further research into the creatures in the book to find out if they were real or not. We were all amazed to discover that all the creatures were real, and our research

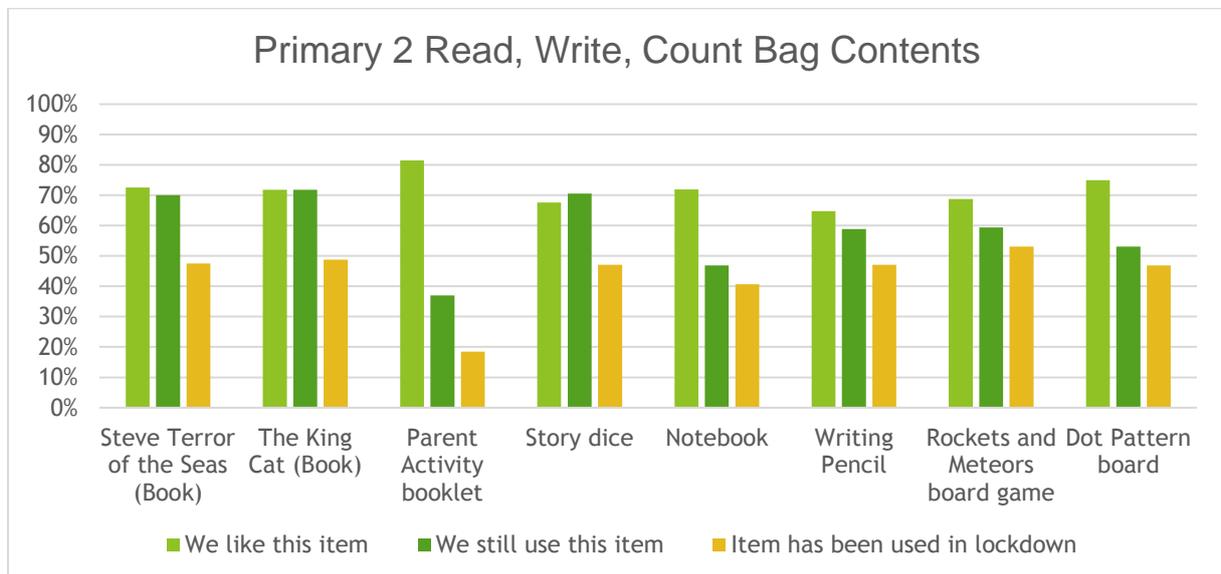
caused us to learn more about them and their habitats - it was fun and educational for all of us!' (Parent)

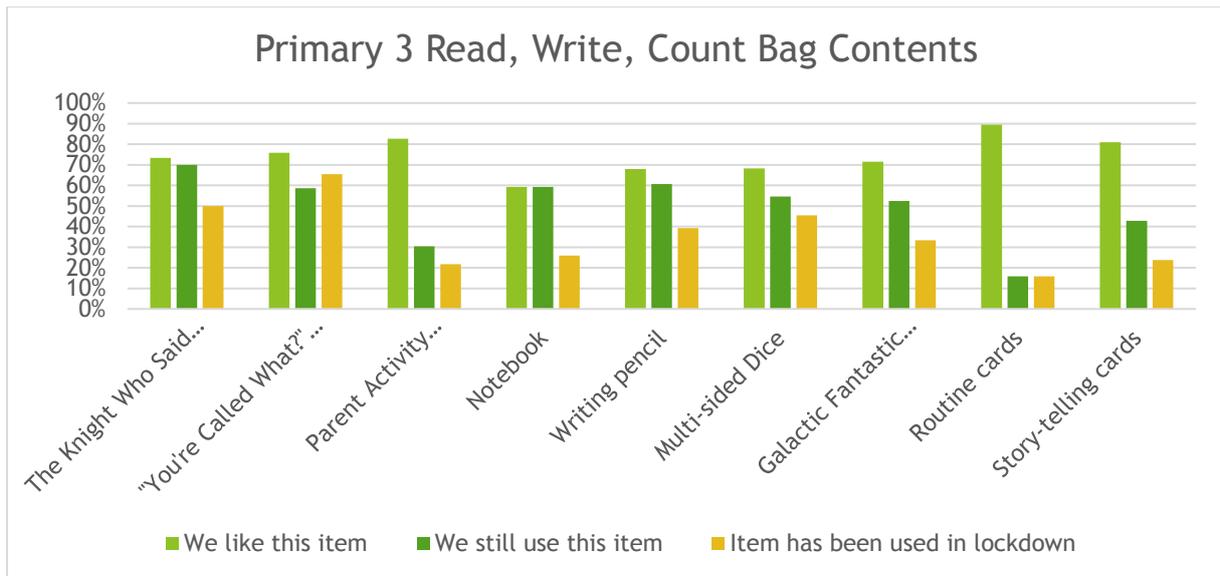
Response offered in initial parent survey	Which of these best describes how you think about the bag?	Which of these best describes how your child thinks about the bag?
Likes it very much	68%	67%
Quite likes it	25%	25%
Neither likes nor dislikes it	5%	6%
Doesn't like it much	1%	0%
Doesn't like it at all	1%	0%

Parent/carer assessment 6–9 months after gifting

We identified a number of themes from the initial RWC parent survey that we wanted to explore further. In the first survey we received a number of comments from parents who felt the novelty value of the bag would fade quickly. In the follow-up survey only 14% strongly agreed (and 24% slightly agreed) that their child was initially excited by the bag but had not used it recently.

Respondents reported that they were still using many of the items from the November 2019 bags in July 2020. The books from both bags were still being used by 59–72% of respondents. Items in the P2 bags were more likely to still be in use than items in the P3 bags.





Gifting and logistics

Communication

The resources and bags are provided by SBT, but distribution of the bags and communication with the schools is cascaded through a named local authority contact. According to our local authority survey, email was the most popular method of communicating with schools. Others described additional efforts such as signposting (websites / blogs / newsletters) organising gifting sessions, and follow-up calls with head teachers.

We asked respondents to our school survey if they were provided with information about the bags before their arrival. 55% were given information in advance and 16% were not. Those who were unsure were primarily class teachers who noted that the school management or administration might have been aware of the bags in advance. 84% of respondents had time to familiarise themselves with the bags before gifting. One mentioned being shown the bags at a twilight session the night before, with a number suggesting that more time with the bags would have been useful.

Distribution

Most local authority contacts chose to distribute the bags directly to schools rather than through a central distribution point (82% vs 18%). Those who had chosen to have their bags delivered directly to schools noted a strong preference for this method. Storage, local authority staffing cuts, the location of rural schools, and ease of organisation were cited as reasons for a central distribution model.

- 'Efficiency of delivery; simple logistics - no requirement to find suitable space to store and then deliver to all schools; receiving the bags direct gave the schools a greater sense of ownership.' (Local authority contact)

Out of the local authority contacts who commented on the communication with this year's delivery company, Spring, 78% rated their experience as 'positive' or 'very

positive'. 76% of the 26 respondents who received feedback from schools said this was 'positive' or 'very positive'. Those reporting 'neutral' to 'very negative' feedback primarily cited incorrect numbers of bags in deliveries as a point of stress. Respondents noted difficulties in ordering the correct number of bags for their pupils in advance.⁴

- 'There was often a discrepancy between the number ordered for a school and the number required by the time they were delivered. There was a lot of subsequent requests and distribution require.' (Local authority contact)

The response to the initiative was overwhelmingly positive, with the only negative responses indicating that there was a shortage of bags due to changing class numbers. Learning professional respondents stressed that any delays in getting the correct number of bags to the schools disrupted planned gifting events and activities.

Gifting

- 'We went on a book hunt around the school. When we got back to class our books were there.' (Learning professional)

RWC bags are designed to be gifted alongside the Bookbug P1 Family Bag during Book Week Scotland in November to link the gifting to a wider national celebration of reading. 92% of local authority contact respondents indicated that their schools were aware of the gifting timeline, though this did not necessarily mean that the books were gifted during Book Week Scotland 2019:

- 'Many schools gift them books at a time that suits the school Calendar. Some wait until a less busy time such as world book day or term 3.' (Local authority contact)

71% of teachers reported gifting the RWC bags in November. Others gifted them before or after November. A couple of respondents mentioned waiting for World Book Day (March). A few others noted that the end of November was a busy period for schools.

Gifting events are encouraged through RWC local authority contacts as an opportunity to maximise interest in the bags. 70% of respondents to the parent survey reported that the bags were sent home with their child. 9% said the school sent the bag home with the child with additional information for parents. 18% reported attending a gifting event at their school, library or community centre. It is possible that there were gifting events involving the children, but not their carers, that the respondents to our survey were not aware of, or that the schools provided additional information as part of the bag contents that the parents thought was part of the original bags.

⁴ SBT currently gathers required numbers from the local authority contacts in August and supplies all local authority contacts with surplus to assist with requests from schools for extra bags.

33% of respondents to the learning professional survey sent the bags home with the children without any additional information. 11% added information to the bags before sending them home, 36% invited parents to an event at the school, and 15% created a gifting event for children.

- 'I shared and explored the bag with my class in the weeks before we gifted them so they were excited to finally be able to take them home and share them with their parents and carers.' (Learning professional)

RWC in Schools

Introducing the bags

'I loved his bag and the activity that I attended when it was received, I feel this would benefit parents who are struggling with ideas for homework.' (Parent)

Teachers gave details of innovative and engaging activities they ran in schools with the RWC bags. Most events focused on activities with the pupils to create a sense of excitement around the gifted items:

- 'Our Reading Ambassadors 'gifted' the boxes to classes. They sat wrapped up at the front of classrooms for days to build a little hype and enthusiasm.' (Learning professional)
- 'Created an imaginative trail to find our book bags in school grounds, opened our bags as a class and shared the contents with our P3 friends (they shared theirs with us too.' (Learning professional)

Others included parents in their gifting activities:

- 'Gifting Celebration Day. Families information session. Stories and songs round the campfire with children and families. Activities with children and families in class.' (Learning professional)
- 'Family Learning Event - all parents and pupils came to receive their bag and had activities from the booklet laid out, with cosy corners to read the book with their family.' (Learning professional)



RWC in the classroom

Respondents whose class received the P2 bag reported higher rates of engagement with the bags during school time. 14% of teachers with the P3 bag did not use the bags in class at all, compared with only 4% of teachers with the P2 bag.

Correspondingly, the P2-only items were used in class more frequently than the P3-specific items. P2 teachers used the storytelling dice (34%), Rockets and Meteors (28%), and dot pattern board (20%) in class more frequently than P3 teachers used the multi-sided dice (23%), numeracy games (17%), or routine and story cards (14%). Reading the books in class was by far the most popular activity for both P2 (74%) and P3 (67%) bags.

Teachers who used the bags in the classroom drew on the resources to explore reading, writing, and numeracy activities with their pupils:

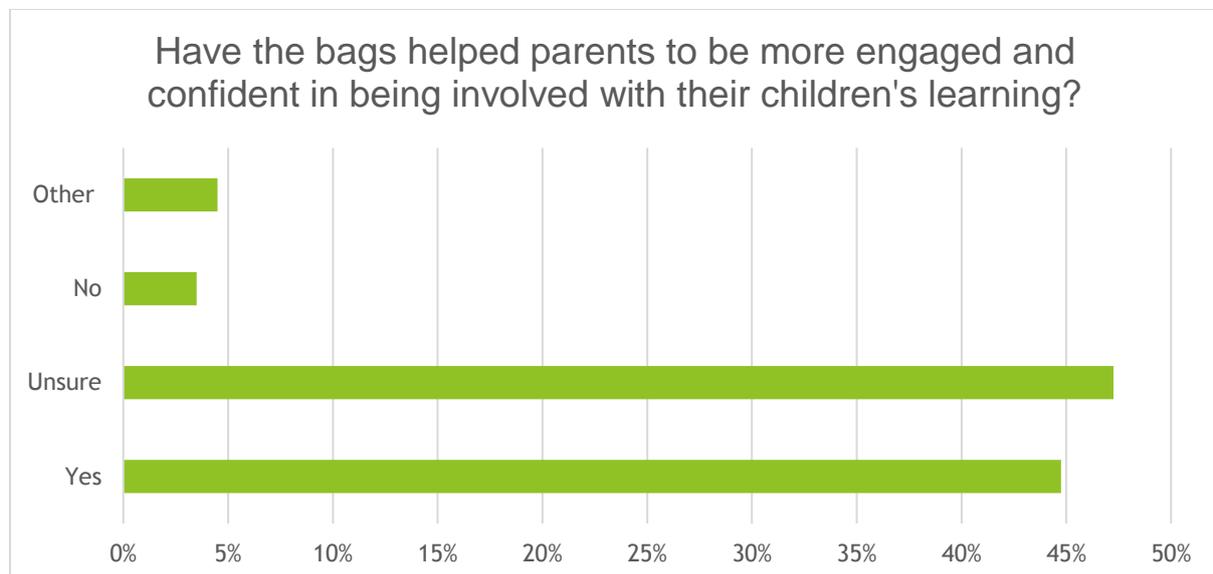
- 'Based a maths activity on one of the books and created our own castles with symmetrical patterns.' (Learning professional)
- 'We used the book about the King Cat and developed our topic around this. We created a class vet in the role play area.' (Learning professional)
- 'Based our writing on one of the books and created a fact-file for our own animal with an unusual name.' (Learning professional)

How did you use the RWC bags in school?	P2	P3
Sent letter home to parents with the bag	45%	40%
Organised a gifting event with parents	45%	31%
Organised a gifting event without parents	16%	10%
Read the books in class	74%	67%
Ran a shared reading project	11%	10%
Used the notebook in class	12%	8%
Created displays in the school	11%	8%
Did some of the suggested activities (from website or Parent Guide)	43%	32%
Visited the local library with my class/school	15%	12%
Encouraged pupils to join the local library	27%	26%
Set homework activities	9%	11%
N/A – I did not do any activities with the bag	4%	14%

Home learning

Forging home learning links

'The resources are very easily accessible. They ensure that adults are not intimidated by the contents and this means that it is really easy for children and parents to readily get stuck in together. Our families certainly engaged confidently in the activities on offer at the sessions - which again helps to contribute to an overall positive picture.' (Learning professional)



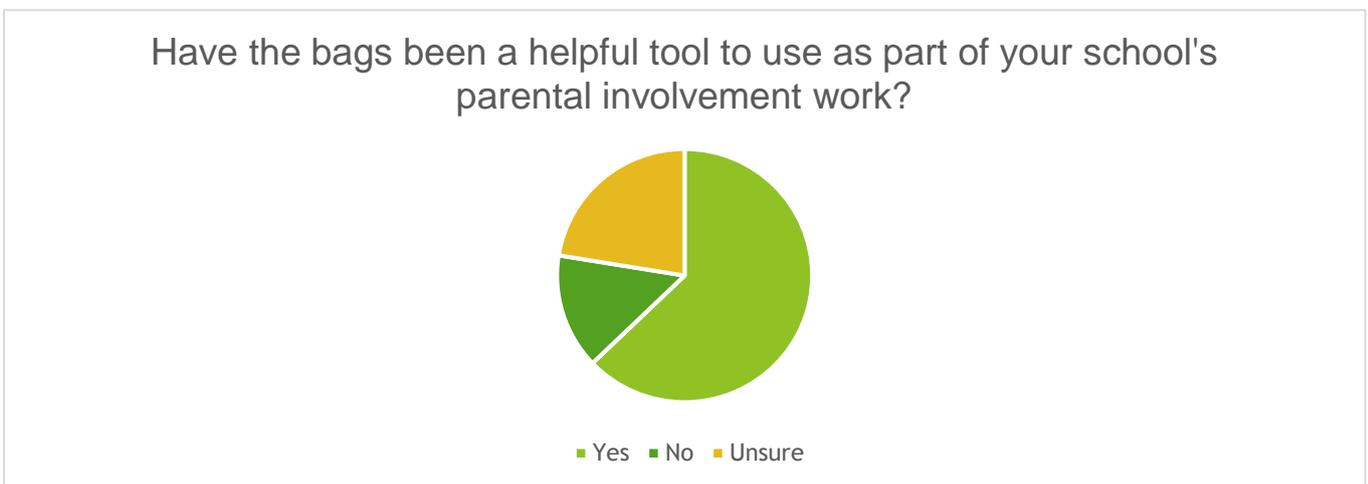
60% of learning professionals reported that the RWC bags had helped to build better links with parents and carers. Negative responses commonly noted that parental engagement was already high in their area. A recurring theme in the positive responses to this question was that the gifting events with parents were key to engaging them.

We asked the learning professionals if they thought the RWC bags had helped parents become more engaged and confident in being involved in their child's learning. Many respondents were unsure, citing lack of evidence. 45% thought the bags had helped.

Learning professionals were asked if the RWC bags had been useful as a tool for existing parental engagement work. 63% agreed that the bags had been helpful, with some indicating that the bags were an incentive that attracted parents who did not normally attend school events:

- 'We see parents for these planned sessions that may not usually attend other events.' (Learning professional)

Many positive responses mentioned gifting events with parents and there were some comments indicating that respondents who had not run gifting events with parents were now considering these for future years.



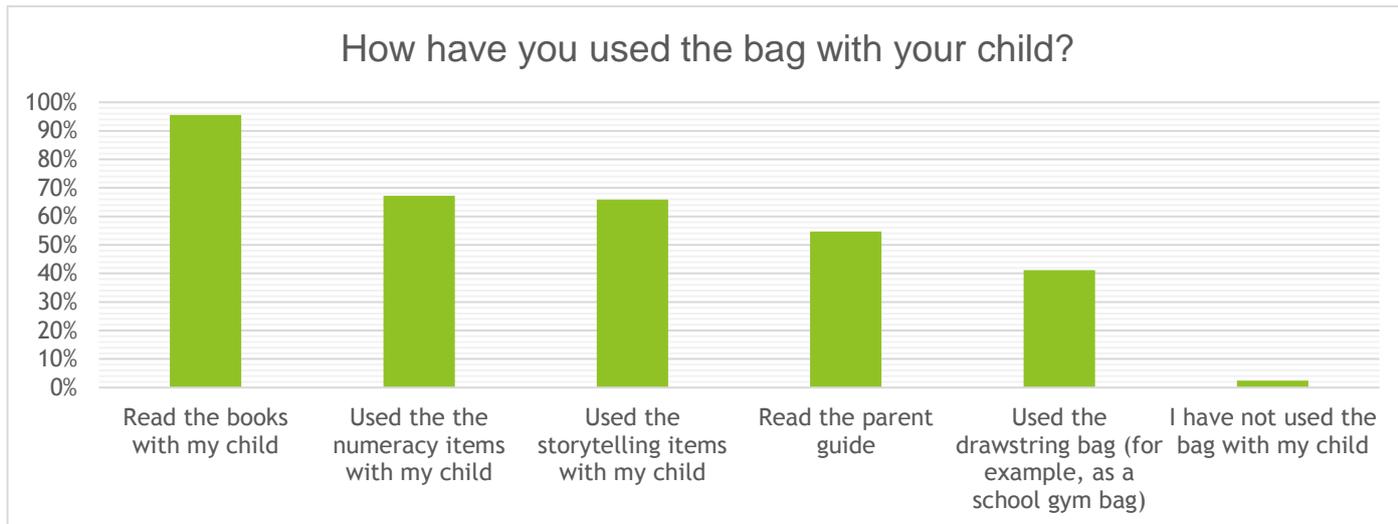
Using the bags together

'Immersed ourselves in the magical worlds that you created or helped us to create!!!'
(Parent)

The majority of respondents had already used the contents of their RWC bag with their child at the time of our initial survey. Only 2% said they had not used the bag with their child. 22% said they used it together a lot, 48% that they used it a fair bit, and 22% had used it a little. When commenting on their favourite items in the bag, respondents reported using the items as a family, siblings sharing the items, and friends / extended family using the bag contents together.

- 'All are great games and activities to engage in fun learning that includes parents in supporting child development.' (Parent)

The most popular RWC activity for parents and children to engage in together was reading the books. 96% of respondents reported reading the books with their child. 67% used the numeracy items together, and 66% used the storytelling items with their children.



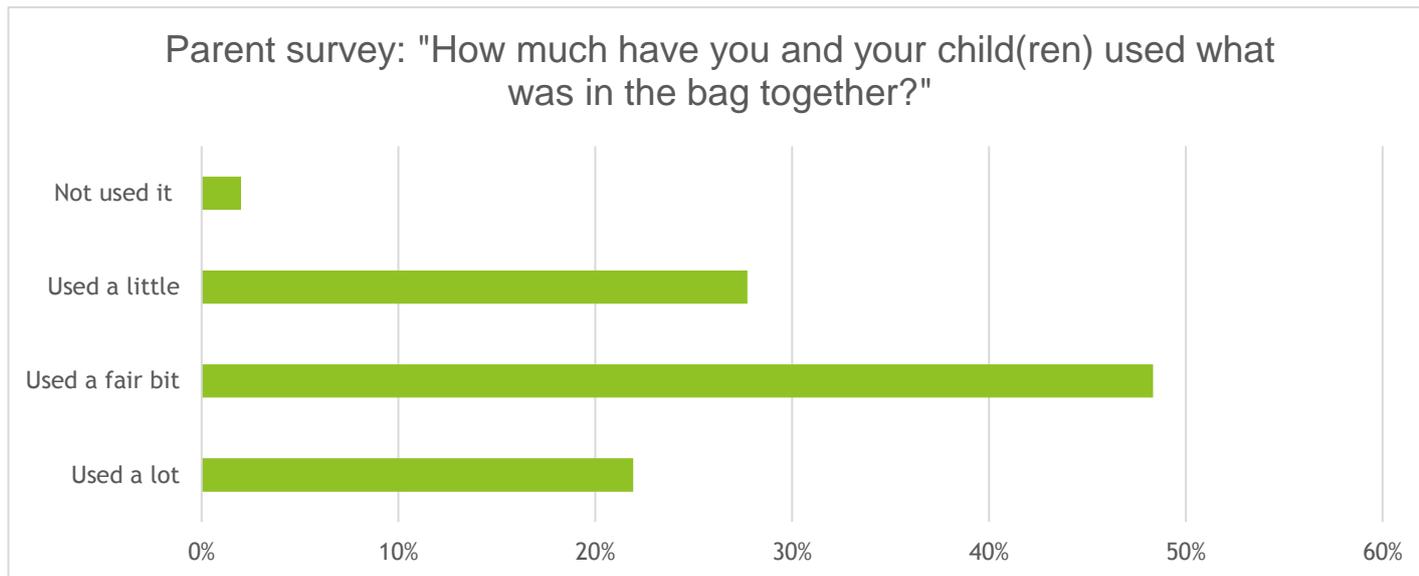
Trying new things

55% of parents read the activity guide. We asked respondents if they had tried any new things since getting the bags. 45% had tried out new ideas, 33% said they had done things they used to a little differently, and 19% said they had not done anything different since receiving the bag. Again, some commenters stressed that they were already highly engaged before the RWC bags arrived. Others noted that they used the bag as a prompt to try new things, or that they were always looking for new ideas to try with their child. Parents were most likely to have looked for more books by the authors featured in the bags (29%) or visited a library or resource centre for new ideas (22%). They also reported speaking to family/friends (12%) or their school (9%) for ideas. Others turned to online resources (14%) or visited the Parent Club website (9%).

- 'When a bag comes home I'm reminded/encouraged to try out new things with my children.' (Parent)

70% of respondents reported that the 2019 RWC bags made them more confident in engaging with their child's learning. The respondents who took the time to provide additional comments overwhelmingly reported that they were already confident:

- 'I'm confident with reading, writing and numeracy but the bags add something new and different to keep learning a bit more fun.' (Parent)



Support and resources

Learning professional training and resources

'I absolutely love these resources and find them so valuable for our children.'
(Learning professional)

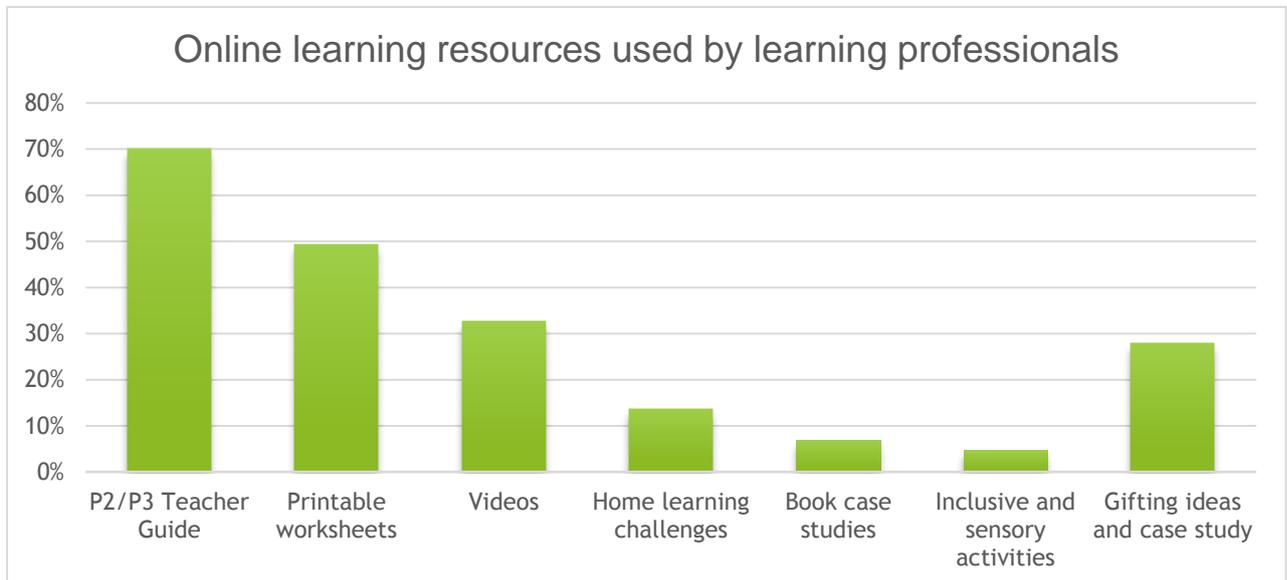
There are learning resources available to download for free from the SBT website to assist learning professionals with the RWC bags. We asked respondents if they were aware of these resources. 40% knew about the resources and used them, 25% were aware of them but had not used them, and 34% were not aware of the SBT resources. The teacher's guides were used heavily with 70% of survey respondents making use of these. Almost half (49%) used the printable worksheets, and 33% consulted the videos. 28% used the gifting ideas while others consulted the home learning challenges (14%), case studies (7%), or inclusive resources (5%).

Feedback from teachers who used the resources was positive:

- 'We loved the resources and found all the activities great. The parents feedback was that in previous years they had never done the activities but having them laid out, made them do it and it was very worthwhile.' (Learning professional)
- 'I found the activity ideas connected to the books useful and fun for the children. The printable activities were easy to implement and use.' (Learning professional)
- 'I think the resources online and the build up towards it - making things more interesting and creating a sense of anticipation all helped with their

enthusiasm. Also the resources have got better over the years.' (Learning professional)

A number of respondents who were unaware of the resources before taking the



survey noted their intention to use them in the future. A couple based in remote or rural areas of Scotland due to poor internet access.

Survey and unsolicited email feedback on the RWC training sessions and webinars was positive. 13% of respondents to our learning professional survey had attended an in-person session and 3% a webinar. The majority of learning professionals did not attend one of the SBT CLPL sessions but indicated that they would be interested in a future session (57%). 27% would not be interested in attending a session in the future.

- 'The CPD I attended in Edinburgh city was useful to show the resources available online for use and how best to use the bags to their full potential. It was very good to see the bags earlier to have an idea and be able to pre-plan.' (Learning professional)
- 'I went on an information course with ideas how to gift bags. This was very useful when organising my own gifting workshop :)' (Learning professional)

Local authority support and resources

'All very useful to promote RWC and to help get the message of sharing the bags at home across to families.' (Local authority contact)

SBT issues each local authority contact with an information pack to support the distribution of the bags. The majority of respondents reported reading the RWC information pack, though 19% said that they had not read it. Feedback from those who read it was positive. More than two thirds (21) took the time to comment. 20 of these comments were positive, describing the pack as helpful, useful, and good for sparking ideas. The one neutral commentator indicated that they were already familiar with the programme:

- 'It is clear, concise and very informative. I often refer back to it.' (Local authority contact)

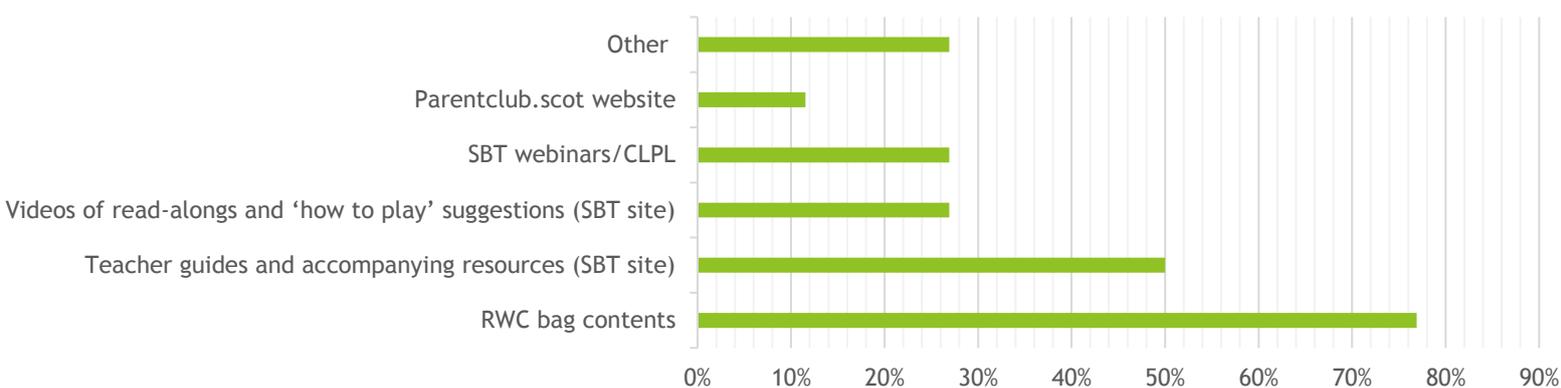
Most contacts reported using the bag contents to promote RWC (77%). Half made use of the teacher guides and accompanying resources on the SBT website. 27% used video content (read-alongs and 'how to play' suggestions) on the SBT site and 27% promoted RWC through webinars or other SBT CLPL. 12% used the Parent Club website to promote the programme. One contact noted that they do not use the resources directly but signposted teachers to them.

Feedback on the accompanying resources was positive, particularly where an outreach coordinator had visited the area or the staff had engaged with the CLPL programme. One respondent appreciated the resources but found the website challenging to navigate. Suggestions for other resources included a promotional flyer to email to schools and a teacher's pack.

Communication from SBT with local authority contacts has predominantly been via email or phone. Contacts were asked if they would have found it helpful to have a face-to-face meeting or attend a lead contact event in future years. 84% of the 25 respondents who answered this question were happy with the current methods of communication. Other suggestions included a webinar or, if there were significant changes to the programme, face-to-face contact.

- 'If I was a new Lead Contact or if there were significant changes to RWC, a face to face meeting would be great but, at present, I get all the information I need via email or calls and this seems to work well.' (Local authority contact)

Materials used by local authority contacts to promote RWC



Parent/carer support and resources

'Helps me a lot especially during lockdown.' (Parent – follow-up survey)

In our follow-up survey we asked whether the Parent Guide had been useful.⁵ 34% of respondents reported using an idea from the Parent Guide in lockdown (though in a separate section only 20% said they had used the item itself during lockdown).

⁵ 48 commented on the parent guide. 29 reported using it with the remainder either not using it or doing so only briefly.

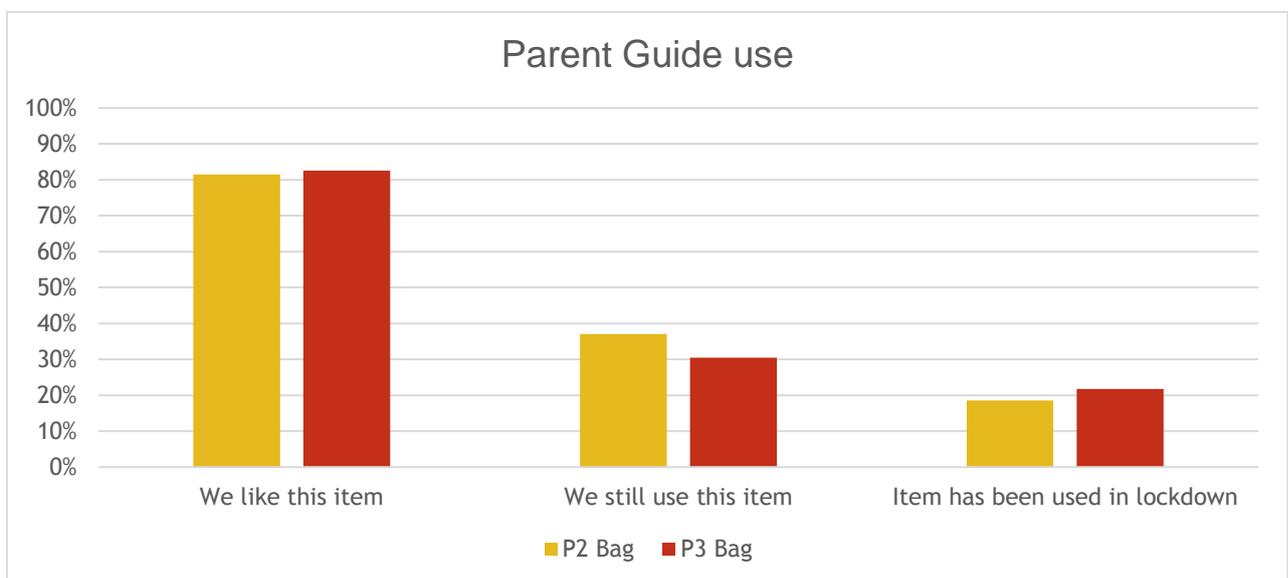
They reported using the guide in lockdown, for home learning, and using it in conjunction with the items in the bags:

- ‘During the week before Easter there was no work from the school so used the parent guide then.’
- ‘It’s a good clear easy to understand guide.’
- ‘I’ve used the advice on how to discuss books with my child- prompting questions etc’

Respondents who had not used the Parent Guide themselves sometimes felt it was unnecessary and sometimes recognised its use for others:

- ‘I feel I have lots of my own ideas and my days are child lead. My children have their own ideas too so nothing new popped up but I know people who would find this kind of help invaluable. There are carers I think who make their lives way more stressful by not engaging and encouraging use of free materials.’

A number of the respondents mentioned reading the Parent Guide when they received the bag but not using it after this. One suggested that a smaller guide would have been less intimidating. A few of those who did not use the guide mentioned that they did not need ideas for activities or that they got ideas from other sources (e.g. their work in a school).



Long-term uses and impact

Impact on pupil attitudes

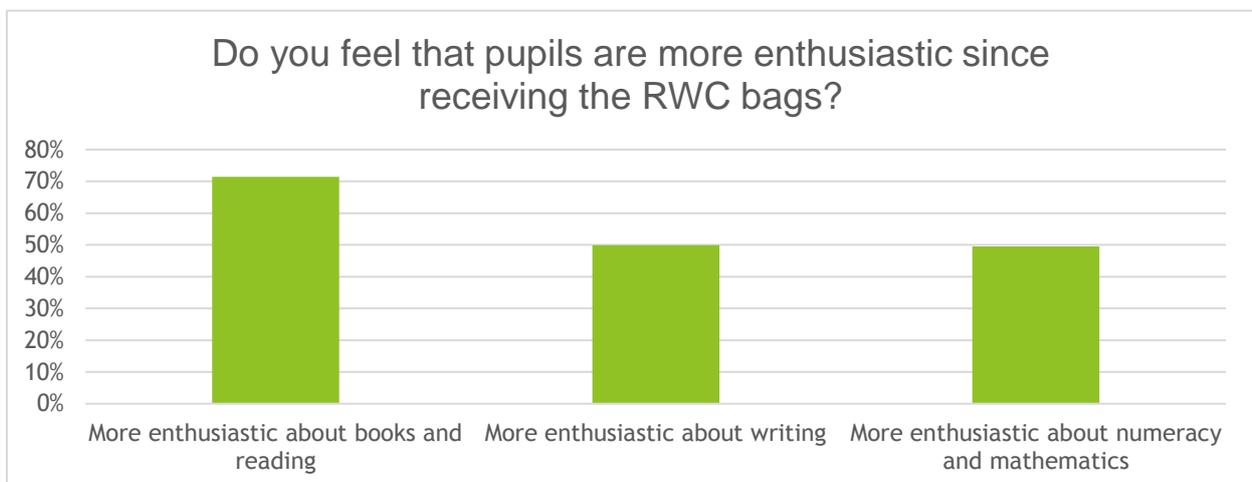
'We have no access to library service and our families are not able to buy many books etc for their children. So these bags provide a bit of a lifeline in terms of getting books into homes. Great to have such good resources that families can actually be supported to use for literacy and numeracy even if they are not always good with reading etc themselves.' (Learning professional)

We asked the learning professionals for their opinion on whether their pupils were more enthusiastic about reading, writing and numeracy since receiving the RWC bags. 71% felt that the children displayed more enthusiasm about reading and books. A number of teachers commented that it was difficult to say for sure, and that their classes were already enthusiastic about reading, or that there were a number of contributing factors to the attitudes of their pupils. Others commented on an initial spike in interest but were ambivalent about a long-term change in attitudes:

- 'One parent has fed back that their child now reads every night!!!' (Learning professional)
- 'Many of the activities inspired some in the class to increase sustained interest. Many in the class already had good enthusiasm and it was nice for them also to further the positive ethos around this.' (Learning professional)
- 'I do not see a difference in the level of interest long term. The children are always very excited about the books and the resources are excellent for parents to use with the children. (I say this as a parent too!)' (Learning professional)

Half of the learning professionals surveyed judged an increase in pupil enthusiasm about writing since they were gifted the RWC bags. Some teachers did not notice a change in pupil attitudes to writing, or noticed an initial enthusiasm which was not sustained. As with their comments on attitudes to reading, the respondents stressed that the RWC bags were only one factor in developing positive pupil attitudes towards writing. Teachers who noticed an increase in enthusiasm often described the ways they had used the bags to sustain an interest in writing or integrated them into their existing practice:

- 'I feel pupils are more excited about writing due to a combination of the book bags, writing lessons in school and encouragement from other places.' (Learning professional)
- 'I think my previous experience of the bag allowed me to try new activities with the children from the start of the year so enthusiasm for 'free writing' and incorporating maths skills when reading, etc. have been ongoing. This has been undoubtedly boosted by the RWC.' (Learning professional)



49% of learning professionals surveyed felt that their pupils were more enthusiastic about mathematics and numeracy since the RWC bags were gifted to them. Some

teachers commented with observations that the bags had a noticeable impact on enthusiasm for numeracy. Others did not see a change in enthusiasm or were reluctant to single out the RWC bags as impacting attitudes to numeracy. Again, respondents emphasised that the bags supported numeracy activities but within the context of other initiatives.

- 'The numeracy activities have helped create interest and enthusiasm and have given context for learning.' (Learning professional)
- 'Many were keen on Numeracy before receiving the RWC bags. Their confidence grew especially the children who had a relative attend the event.' (Learning professional)

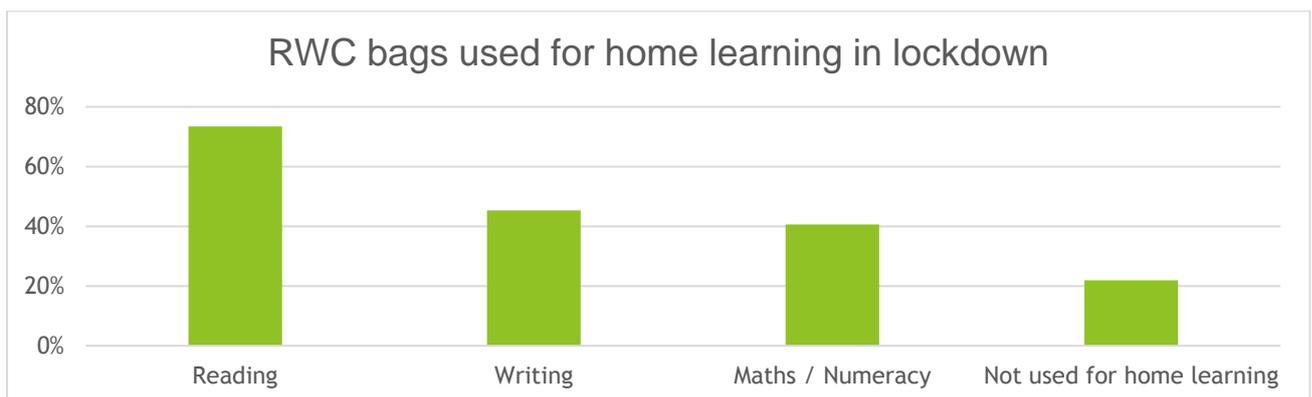
Lockdown and home learning

'I was always grateful to have the items but am even more so now.' (Parent – follow-up survey)

Our follow-up survey suggested that, during the lockdown, the bags were used to help with home learning. 39% of respondents reported using the items in the bag for schoolwork. Only 22% had not used the bag for home learning. Others used the bag to support their child's reading (73%), writing (45%), and numeracy (41%) skills.

Parents reported using the bags for home learning in a variety of ways:

- 'The rockets game was used most days during lockdown as a warm up activity before we did my son's number work. He also enjoyed making up sentences with the story dice and reading the books too.' (Parent – follow-up survey)
- 'We used the books for school work during lockdown. And the paper and pencils always come in handy.' (Parent – follow-up survey)



Others did not identify their activities as home learning but focused on enjoyment and entertainment:

- 'The story telling cards have been great to use in lockdown. As a single parent I've had to take my daughter to the supermarket and we used the cards as an activity when the queues were initially very long. They were a great distraction and lovely activity to do together.' (Parent – follow-up survey)

- ‘The books were the best items because reading together is something we do a lot, at bedtime every night. The “You’re Called What” book still stimulates a lot of interest and we regularly research all the different creatures in it which is educational for all of us!’ (Parent – follow-up survey)

Parent follow-up survey: activities during the lockdown using the Read, Write, Count bags	
Read the books together	90%
Played the numeracy games together	53%
Used the writing materials or prompts to create stories	56%
Visited the Scottish Book trust website for learning or play ideas	24%
Visited the Parent Club website for learning or play ideas	15%
Tried an idea from the parent activity guide	34%
Used items from the bag for school work	39%

The lifespan of a RWC bag

‘I’ve always appreciated the bags and the children always like the contents, they think the books are carefully chosen for all children to enjoy.’ (Parent – follow-up survey)

In the initial survey 78% of parents thought they would continue to use the bags for a few months. A couple of respondents mentioned that the bags themselves were beginning to wear thin or fray. The life cycle of the bag content was short for some families:

- ‘Likes it very much when he first receives it but his interest in it fades very quickly (desperate to read the books in the first instance but hasn’t gone back to them or shown an interest in reading them again).’ (Parent)

Though some later return to them:

- ‘My child loves receiving the bags every year since nursery. He enjoys the new books and wants to do the activities. He will forget about them for a while and then go back to them.’ (Parent).

In the follow-up survey 61% agreed that they had used the items in the bag for longer than they initially anticipated. We asked respondents to comment on if their thoughts on the bags, their contents or the parent activity guide changed since they first received them. A minority (three out of 31 comments) disclosed that their attitude towards the bags had changed since they first received them. The respondents whose initial assessments of the bags had changed were more positive about the bags than before:

- ‘I feel more confident and get fresh ideas from there. Reading the parent guide make me feel more sure that spend time with our children is really important.’ (Parent – follow-up survey)
- ‘I realised its benefits.’ (Parent – follow-up survey)

The majority reported that their initial assessment of the bags was still valid. Two respondents retained a generally negative attitude to the bag:

- 'First impressions were that the bag was pitched too simple and this has proved true. However, there may be other children who have engaged with it and parents who found the ideas and resources useful.' (Parent – follow-up survey)

The remainder reported having a positive initial impression of the bags and continued to hold this impression:

- 'I love the idea of the bag and I think it is extremely useful for parents who are not confident reading with their children. For us, reading and books have always been important so the bag is a nice bonus but not something that drives what we do with our children.' (Parent – follow-up survey)
- 'I appreciate them every year and they always contain so much. It's a privilege I'll miss now my boy is heading into p4. Both my children have also enjoyed playing schools with them so it's encouraged role play.' (Parent – follow-up survey)

While only 31 respondents volunteered comments on whether their attitudes to the bags changed, the three who reported a positive shift in attitude represent 10% of the (very small) sample suggesting that the bags might be appreciated more over time. One response mentioned that the family was still using a RWC bag from a previous year:

- 'We still use the bag to take stuff exploring. We have also made use during lockdown of some items from p2 bag we got last year.' (Parent – follow-up survey)

Parent involvement

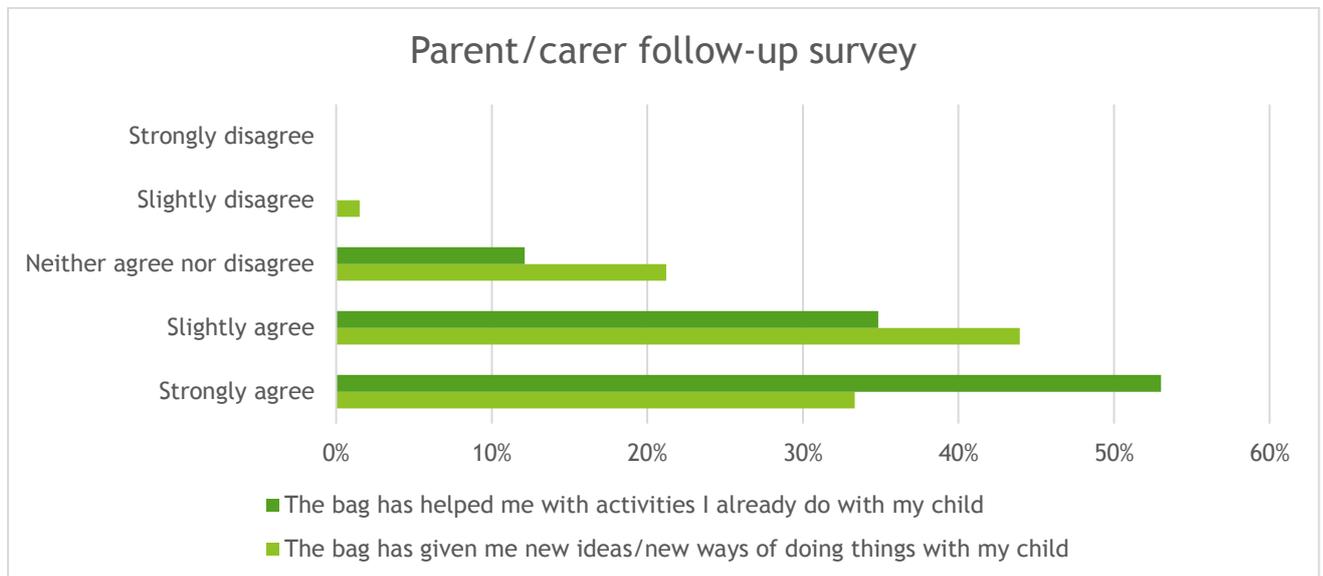
'The pack is great for engaging my child in reading and in literacy related tasks. The parent activity booklet is also extremely useful in guiding parents on how to best support their children with literacy. All the items were beneficial. We were grateful to receive them. It added extra fun to our reading time.' (Parent)

In our initial survey of parents 70% of respondents reported that the 2019 RWC bags made them more confident in engaging with their child's learning. 32% noted an increase in confidence in supporting reading, 25% in maths or numeracy, and 21% in writing. Some comments suggested parents found the bags boosted their confidence.

- 'I enjoy helping my child with all of the above [reading, writing, and numeracy] but sometimes I'm not sure how to help him successfully for his age. The information provided in this pack has given me some new ideas and built my confidence in helping him to reach his full potential.' (Parent)

Our follow-up survey offered some evidence that the RWC bags and resources boosted parental involvement in home learning activities. 68% of respondents

agreed that the bag made them feel more confident about getting involved with their child's learning. 88% agreed that “The bag has helped me with activities I already do with my child.”



77% agreed that the bag gave them new ideas or new ways of doing things with their child. They described trying learning and playing using the bags, sometimes as a family:

- 'I found the story cubes extremely useful during lockdown. The school were not setting many writing tasks so I used them to motivate my daughter to write. She loved the act of throwing the dice and making up her own stories. We also used them for story telling. My eldest daughter even joined in the storytelling (S1) and sometimes our stories were hilarious!' (Parent – email July 2020)

Comments gathered as part of our learning professional survey also agree that the bags have a role in strengthening parental involvement and providing access to books:

- 'Very good programme to link learning at home, allowing parents to support their child's development.' (Learning professional)

Conclusion

'I am a teacher as well as a parent and I know some children simply don't have books of their own at home so we must provide them. So important!' (Parent)

The response to the surveys was strong from parents and carers (1,144 compared to 513 in 2018–19) and from learning professionals (443 compared to 239 in 2018–19). Parents responded positively to the books and the bags, particularly when they had attended a gifting event at their school. The majority reported they enjoyed the bags and used them with their child or as a family. Some gave feedback on making the bags more accessible or were critical of the programme involving universal gifting.

Respondents highlighted their child's enjoyment of the bags and learning through play.

- 'It was great to get a tool to interactively play with the children. Fun learning definitely engages their attention for longer periods of time.' (Parent)

The books were particularly popular, and a high number of respondents used the contents together as a family. Specific comments included accounts of children enjoying trying new learning activities:

- 'Anything that makes my son interested in reading is helpful. He wrote his own story and drew a picture, something he wouldn't usually do without encouragement. He also spent a lot of time looking at the space alien cards.' (Parent)
- 'We still read them both regularly and during home schooling in lock down, my daughter chose Steve Terror of the Seas as her favourite book and did a book review for school! We also used the board game and dot board to pass time while indoors on rainy days. These packs are invaluable!' (Parent – follow-up survey)

Respondents who did not like the bags were a small minority. These respondents stated they were able to purchase resources themselves, cited environmental concerns, felt they were in the best position to decide on their child's learning resources, or felt that their children were too advanced for the resources provided.

- 'I do not need freebies or told how to engage with my child's learning.' (Parent)

Other respondents commented that it was inclusive for all children to be given the same resources. There were a number of unprompted requests for similar programmes for different age groups:

- 'I think there's something very special about everybody in the class getting the same bag. Even though we're a literate household involved in our son's education, when he sees all his friends getting this too, it makes it more social and normalised activity, and I think seeing that this is something everybody does is good. Obviously it's also great to get these resources to families who are less involved / have less at home without any sense of stigma or difference.' (Parent)

The overall response to the programme from learning professionals was very positive. While some experienced issues with local communications and delivery, they majority rated the quality of the bags, their contents, and the resources highly. They reported using the kits in school and for making links with parents. Teachers also indicated that the bags had an impact on their pupils' enthusiasm for reading, writing, and numeracy, as well as helping facilitate home learning. Learning professionals who answered the survey were positive about the programme as a whole:

- 'Please keep going with this extremely important resource for Scotland's children.' (Learning professional)
- 'I think they are a very valuable and generous gift and I am sure make a big difference to children who may not have access to quality books at home.' (Learning professional)
- 'A fantastic resource that really ramps up my class' enthusiasm for reading. The texts are well-chosen and we have worked with the local library in the past to provide workshops for pupils and parents, which works very well.' (Learning professional)

This included teachers in schools in areas of high deprivation who commented that access to literacy and numeracy resources were particularly important for their classes:

- 'This is such a great resource and is particularly valuable in our area of high deprivation.' (Learning professional)
- 'The bags are amazing. I teach in an area with extreme deprivation and some of my pupils never get new book- sometimes any- bought for them so this bag is very special to them.' (Learning professional)

Recurring themes in responses from local authority contacts included pupil enjoyment, parental engagement, and closer links between schools and families. Local authority contacts reported difficulties with estimating the number of bags needed for their area. This group of respondents highlighted the impact of the bag gifting to families who needed support with home learning:

- 'Provided resources for pupils who have less opportunity to access learning materials as a result of poverty or lack of parental knowledge/support or confidence.' (Local authority contact)
- 'Very high quality materials for learners and their families' (Local authority contact)

Overall, all three groups of respondents were enthusiastic about the programme and offered anecdotal evidence that the bags were contributing to the overarching aims of the RWC campaign.

- 'An excellent vehicle for parental engagement and home learning.' (Local authority contact)
- 'I think the book bags and additional resources and activities are a great initiative and one that opens a whole new world to some children while expanding the world of those who are already immersed in reading, writing and interactive literature.' (Parent)



Appendix 1: Outcome-based evidence

Outcome 1: attainment

Outcome 1: contribute to the joint aims of raising attainment for all and closing the attainment gap, with the focus on the latter

'The effective use of RWC bags helps to promote both literacy and numeracy as well as family learning and engagement.' (Local authority contact)

Parents, local authority contacts, and learning professionals gave anecdotal evidence of the RWC bags supporting behaviours which raise attainment.

- 'Our daughter has loved receiving the Read Write Count Bag. The excitement of what is inside and what new book she can read. Reading was never her strong point however since receiving the bags it has made her curious and interested.' (Parent)

There was support from all three groups of stakeholders for the programme to remain universal. A minority of parents suggested the bags should be gifted in a targeted way but the majority of parents agreed with local government and learning professionals that the universal gifting was positive.

- 'Because every child gets the same bag, it's a lovely inclusive thing for them to share and talk about their experiences with their peers.' (Parent)

Professionals, including those working in areas of deprivation, noted that the resources had an impact in their area.

- 'In some schools the impact is immeasurable. For some children these books are the only books that they own.' (Local authority contact)
- 'Some of our children do not have their own books at home so these are real 'treasure'!' (Learning professional)

Outcome 2: home resources

Outcome 2: provide resources and advice to parents and children to support fun and accessible home-based learning (incorporating growth mindset principles, particularly in relation to numeracy)

'Learning by playing I love it. Stronger relation with my son.' (Parent)

We asked the local authority contacts for the project for their professional opinion on what the impact of the RWC bags were in their area. Several respondents emphasised the importance of the programme for bringing accessible literacy and numeracy resources to families with limited access to these at home.

- 'RWC bags provide books and learning materials for many children across Renfrewshire who would otherwise be at risk of missing out. Our research tells us that some of our children do not have books at home or have parents who are not always knowledgeable about supporting their child's learning. RWC really helps to combat this. It's also a fantastic resource to support schools and families in working together - an area of focus for us all at the moment.' (Local authority contact)
- 'Helped to facilitate greater family engagement in schools and complemented really well the schools' home learning initiatives.' (Local authority contact)
- 'Through RWC events in school it has encouraged parents to get reading with their children and for parents to read independently.' (Local authority contact)
- 'Positive impact, engaging children and families with reading.' (Local authority contact)

This is supported by the evidence from parents that they used the bags at home in a range of ways to support numeracy, reading and writing activities. Respondents to our initial parent survey described using the bag together as a family and to support home learning.

- 'Can take the bag to grannies house and fun activity to do with all the family.' (Parent)
- 'The contents provides a great range of activities to encourage reading and imaginary skills. It also provides opportunities for families to engage in these activities together.' (Parent)

- 'The bags are filled with fun things, makes you sit longer with your child and read through everything together.' (Parent)
- 'These bags are always welcome and make learning together fun. There are always new ideas to try out.' (Parent)

This was confirmed by our follow-up survey with parents in July 2020 where parents cited the bags and Parent Guide as useful for home learning and entertainment during lockdown.

- 'We've enjoyed using the resources you gave us, they've provided extra learning opportunities and fun during lockdown too.' (Parent – follow-up survey)
- 'I particularly liked the writing resources and can't think of any other that would've helped more than they have.' (Parent – follow-up survey)

Outcome 3: integration

Outcome 3: ensure good integration between the bags and the wider social marketing campaign (in line with the strategic approach of belief, competency and behaviours)

A minority of learning professionals and local authority contacts suggested that the 2019 bag gifting was integrated with other connected programmes. However, they did report an awareness of the bags and their connections to RWC resources.

- 'Very useful - our teachers now look out for these every year as they know there is always a range of materials and resources created to go along with the bags and the books within them.' (Local authority contact)

Parents reported using the bags to access additional RWC resources through Parent Club, the SBT website, or through their school:

- 'There were some really good ideas in the parent activity booklet and helpful reminders to relax and enjoy reading which is a nice reminder in a busy lifestyle. I wasn't aware of the parent club so will also be joining that.' (Parent)

Outcome 4: support from professionals

Outcome 4: secure buy-in and support from teachers and other practitioners, such as library staff and family/community learning

Learning professionals who responded to our survey displayed significant support for RWC through positive feedback, using the bags in schools and running RWC events with children and families. There was some evidence that class teachers continued to use the bags for homework and home learning activities after the initial gifting events:

- 'Son engaged with the game well independently, however, the class teacher used the resources as part of homework tasks and engaged him further.' (Parent)

- I really like the story dice. They are a simple resource which can be used both independently and as part of a group. Great to use as homework activities to improve writing experiences.' (Learning professional)

A few teachers gave specific instances where they used the bags as part of an outreach initiative. One respondent to our learning professional survey used the bags as a spark for setting up a regular learning club and another for increased library membership:

- 'Started and maintained a Family Learning Club for P2 and P3 parents from 2pm till 3pm every Monday before and after Christmas....what a success... We've had 20 core parents turn up every week to work with their children! We love it.' (Learning professional)
- 'As a result of our trip to the library, we now have 12 more p3 children with a library membership!' (Learning professional)

A number of local authority contacts displayed a great commitment to integrating the bags in their area into the wider RWC programme, though we do not have data from enough local authority contacts to draw concrete conclusions on this group of stakeholders.