

# Evaluation of the First Minister's Reading Challenge

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**Final report**

**Scottish Book Trust**



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Appendix 1 Method (Separate document)

# Executive Summary

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## About this report

This is an evaluation of the First Minister's Reading Challenge (the Reading Challenge), commissioned by Scottish Book Trust. It was developed between March and October 2020.

In March 2020 schools in Scotland were closed to most pupils, to prevent the spread of Covid-19. Pupils were supported to continue their education remotely, learning from home.

During July 2020, Research Scotland developed an interim report which explored the extent to which the Reading Challenge delivered its intended outcomes. It drew on the views and experiences of pupils, school staff and library staff involved in the Reading Challenge, gathered through surveys. It also explored the impact of the Bookzilla app and the effectiveness of the programme's marketing.

During October 2020 Research Scotland conducted a further survey with schools. This aimed to gather views and experiences from schools relating to how they adapted when schools closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Research Scotland also developed a series of case studies focusing on the work of six schools. These case studies are included as part of this evaluation as a separate document.

This report includes findings from all of the research conducted.

## About the First Minister's Reading Challenge

The First Minister's Reading Challenge is funded by the Scottish Government and delivered by Scottish Book Trust.

The First Minister's Reading Challenge was launched in August 2016, initially for P4 to P7 pupils. It has now expanded to provide support and resources for 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'.

The programme has the following objectives, which apply across all areas of the work to support and promote reading for pleasure:

- being flexible and inclusive;
- supporting schools to build a reading culture;
- supporting involvement of families, libraries and communities;

- securing buy-in and support from teachers and other practitioners, such as library staff and family / community learning contacts;
- supporting attainment;
- supporting closing the attainment gap; and
- being sustainable.

## Outcomes achieved

Broadly, survey respondents felt that the Reading Challenge facilitated reading for pleasure amongst pupils, helping staff encourage pupils to read and empowering them to encourage reading for pleasure. Most respondents felt that pupils were:

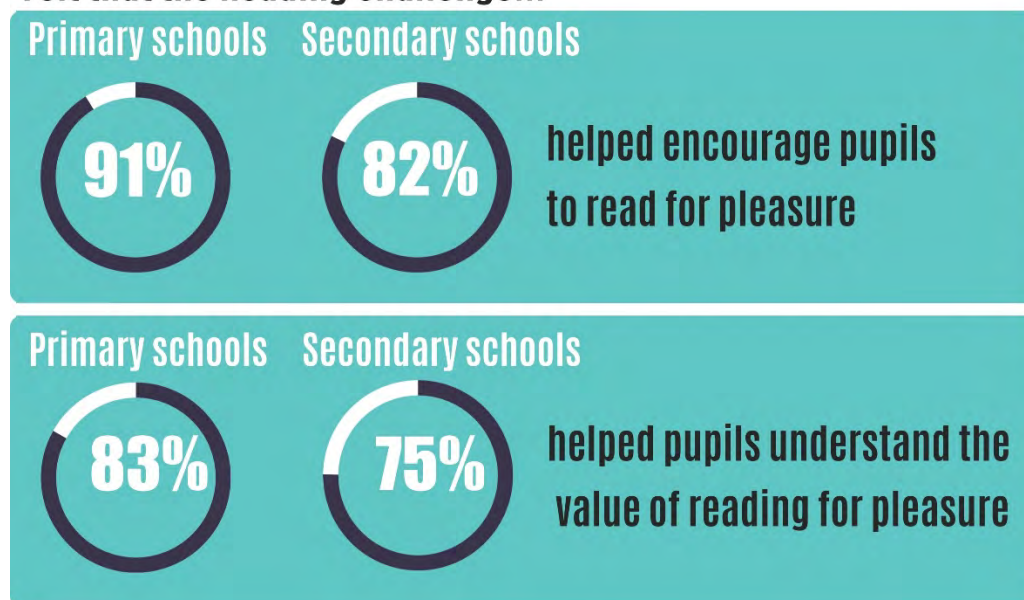
- reading for pleasure more often;
- reading more widely; and
- understanding the value of reading for pleasure.

There were also reported improvements around attainment, both in terms of raising attainment overall and reducing the poverty related attainment gap.

## Reading for pleasure

Respondents shared various examples of how they had encouraged reading for pleasure through the Reading Challenge. Survey findings indicated that most schools felt the Challenge helped encourage reading for pleasure and that pupils understood the value of reading for pleasure.

### Felt that the Reading Challenge...



Most respondents also reported that pupils were reading more often and more widely since they began engaging with the Reading Challenge. They reported that pupils were demonstrating more confidence in reading and sharing their views.

## Outcomes around developing a reading culture at school

Broadly, most respondents felt that the Reading Challenge helped to raise awareness of the value of reading for pleasure, and that it was well supported at all levels, including senior management. However, a third of library respondents did not feel that the Reading Challenge helped them obtain the support of colleagues or community members.

## Outcomes around school, family and library partnerships

Broadly, staff from schools and libraries felt that they had made better links and partnerships with each other. Predominantly, schools reported better links with libraries and parents, rather than community groups. Similarly, libraries reported better links with schools and parents, but not with community groups.

### Felt that the Reading Challenge...

Primary schools   Secondary schools



**helped them develop  
better links with parents**

“As an avid reader I enjoyed taking part in the Webster's High reading challenge with my daughter during lockdown. I thought it was a great idea and I found it was a not only a good way to encourage my child to read but found it interesting to see how much I was reading too.”

## Outcomes around attainment

Survey respondents reported a range of improvements in attainment around literacy, such as reading and writing skills. They also reported improvements in wider learning skills such as engagement, focus and motivation. However some were still unsure how the Reading Challenge affected pupil attainment in their school.

Importantly, some respondents reported that this was a measurable impact that they attributed, in part, to the Reading Challenge activities. This is a significant outcome for the Reading Challenge. In previous evaluations, respondents felt unable to comment on changes in attainment. Respondents' willingness to share examples indicates that over time, the Reading Challenge is having an impact on attainment and that this is recognised by school staff delivering the activity.



## Felt that the Reading Challenge...

Primary schools   Secondary schools



contributed to improved attainment

Primary schools   Secondary schools



contributed to reducing or closing the poverty related attainment gap



The data indicated that staff felt there was more impact than in previous years for pupils who have additional support needs, are identified as socioeconomically disadvantaged or who speak English as an additional language.

### Outcomes for libraries

Library respondents were broadly positive about the benefits of the Reading Challenge. Libraries indicated that the Reading Challenge provided a platform for them to showcase their work around reading for pleasure and that it increased use of the library by children and young people. Around half of the library respondents felt that the Reading Challenges helped to engage young people and families, to a certain extent.

## Felt that the Reading Challenge...

Primary schools   Libraries



provided a platform for them to showcase their work and reading for pleasure

Primary schools   Libraries



helped to increase pupils' use of the library



## Bookzilla

Broadly, school staff and pupils commenting on the app felt that it was well designed and engaging. The challenges and dares were identified as key strengths of the app which pupils found engaging. However, school staff and pupils felt that there were not enough books and the range of books was not wide enough to engage pupils. Many suggested that the ability to read books or access reading material through the app would improve its functionality.

## Delivery during the Covid-19 pandemic

The closure of schools due to the Covid-19 pandemic prompted many schools to use new and innovative methods of engagement with pupils. Respondents said that the change in the learning environment posed particular challenges, in terms of priorities and the resources available. Despite the unexpected changes, many schools adapted their approach in order to continue delivering the Reading Challenge.

## Key Successes

Overall, respondents to the surveys felt positive about the Reading Challenge and the support and resources it offered. They appreciated that it was flexible and that it could be used to support wider literacy work.

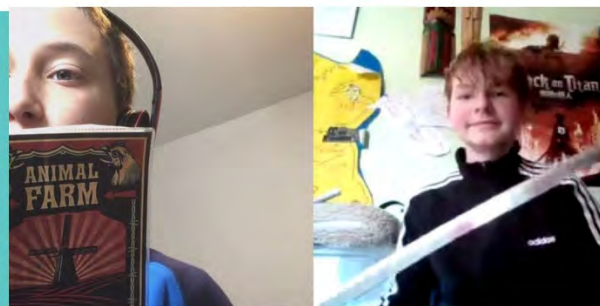
### Felt that the Reading Challenge...

Primary schools Secondary school

91%

93%

was flexible



Primary schools Secondary school

92%

90%

was accessible



Respondents felt that partnerships and collaborative working between schools and libraries worked well. And where parental engagement in the Reading Challenge had previously been challenging, there appears to be good progress made in some areas.

The flexibility and adaptability of the programme was particularly beneficial when schools were closed from March to June 2020. Many schools indicated that they had adapted activities and used a range of Reading Challenge and wider Scottish Book Trust resources to engage with pupils.

## **Areas for Development**

As in previous evaluations, respondents from schools commented on the wider challenges in the education sector around staff time and capacity. Whilst these are recognised challenges, they are outwith the scope of the Reading Challenge to address.

During the period of school closures, some schools found it challenging to engage pupils. Although the Reading Challenge offered a range of support and digital resources, there were wider challenges in some localities around access to appropriate devices and technology.

Some respondents provided suggestions for improving the Reading Challenge. The most useful resources for many were the best practice examples, as they provided inspiration and ideas on how to structure the work. Respondents also felt that more resources, particularly digital resources or signposting to freely available digital resources would be valuable. Those who said they had not engaged with Reading Challenge suggested that they would benefit from communication and engagement with the Scottish Book Trust earlier in the year, as well as good practice examples and evidence of impact.



# 1. Introduction

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## About this report

- 1.1 This is an evaluation of the First Minister's Reading Challenge (the Reading Challenge), commissioned by Scottish Book Trust. It was developed between March and October 2020.
- 1.2 During July 2020, Research Scotland developed an interim report which explored the extent to which the Reading Challenge delivered its intended outcomes. It drew on the views and experiences of pupils, school staff and library staff involved in the Reading Challenge, gathered through surveys. It also explored the impact of the Bookzilla app and the effectiveness of the programme's marketing.
- 1.3 During October 2020 Research Scotland conducted a further survey with schools. This aimed to gather views and experiences from school relating to how they adapted when schools closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Research Scotland also developed a series of case studies focusing on the work of six schools. These case studies are included as part of this evaluation as a separate document.
- 1.4 This report includes findings from all of the research conducted.

## Context

- 1.5 In March 2020 schools in Scotland were closed to most pupils, to prevent the spread of Covid-19. Pupils were supported to continue their education remotely, learning from home. In addition to surveys, this evaluation originally intended to further explore the views of pupils and school staff, through case studies and interviews. As schools were closed, it was not possible to conduct this fieldwork.
- 1.6 After schools reopened, we conducted further fieldwork, remotely. This included a survey to explore of how schools engaged with the Reading Challenge during the period from March to July 2020 when schools were closed, and a series of case studies.

## About the First Minister's Reading Challenge

- 1.7 Since the First Minister's Reading Challenge launched in August 2016 it has expanded its remit, and now provides support and resources to schools, libraries and community groups across Scotland.

Target group		
Year 1	2016/17	P4-P7
Year 2	2017/18	All primary pupils Pilot with secondary schools
Year 3	2018/19	All primary All secondary Introduction for libraries and community groups
Year 4	2019/20	All primary All secondary Libraries Community groups

- 1.8 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.
- 1.9 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.
- 1.10 Funding is available through Inspiring Classrooms and Creative Workshops grants. These allow schools to host authors/creative practitioners and purchase supporting resources.
- 1.11 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.

## Intended outcomes

- 1.12 Overall, the Reading Challenge aims to support reading for pleasure. The programme has the following objectives, which apply across all areas of the work to support and promote reading for pleasure:
- being flexible and inclusive;
  - supporting schools to build a reading culture;
  - supporting involvement of families, libraries and communities;
  - securing buy-in and support from teachers and other practitioners, such as library staff and family / community learning contacts;
  - supporting attainment;
  - supporting closing the attainment gap; and
  - being sustainable.

1.13 The intended outcomes of the Reading Challenge are:

- 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.

1.14 The intended outcomes for secondary schools also include:

- Senior management recognise the impact of reading for pleasure.
- Reading for pleasure is embedded across the curriculum.
- Pupil voice / leadership is developed through the programme.

1.15 The intended outcomes for libraries also include:

- Family usage of public libraries increases.
- Children and young people read for pleasure more frequently and/or more widely.
- Provides a platform for public libraries to showcase their work around reading for pleasure with children and young people.

1.16 The intended outcomes for community groups also include:

- Reading cultures in wider communities are developed (through effective use of reading role models).
- Reading for pleasure is given a high status outwith the school environment.

## **Delivery of the Reading Challenge**

1.17 The First Minister's Reading Challenge is funded by the Scottish Government and delivered by Scottish Book Trust. 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.

1.18 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.

- 1.19 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.

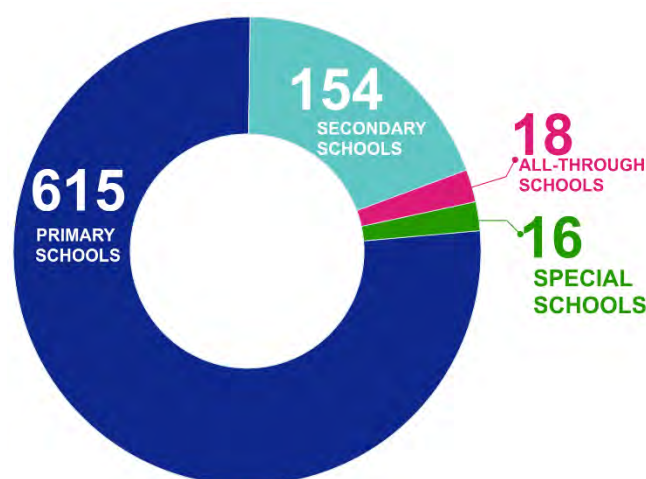
## 2. Participation in the Reading Challenge

### Introduction

- 2.1 This chapter explores participation in the Reading Challenge. During 2019/20, the Reading Challenge reached pupils through more than 800 schools, 73 libraries and 61 community groups.

### Schools registered

- 2.2 In 2019/20, **803** schools registered to take part in the Reading Challenge, across all 32 local authority areas. This is 31% of all schools in Scotland<sup>1</sup>. This indicates a reduction of 25% compared to the previous year when 40% of schools were registered.



- 2.3 The proportion of schools registered for the Reading Challenge has decreased each year. However, the proportion of secondary schools registered has not decreased as much as primary schools. And the proportion of libraries registered has increased. This may indicate that some schools are continuing to engage with the Reading Challenge.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Primary	75%	47%	38%	31%
Secondary	-	-	61%	47%
Libraries	-	-	10%	13%

<sup>1</sup> Based on Scottish government databases recording 2,565 schools, including primary, secondary, special, grant-aided and independent schools. (2,471 publicly funded schools + 94 independent schools)



- 2.4 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.

Type of organisation	Number registered	Total number of this type of school	Proportion of this type of organisation
Primary	615	1,967	31%
Secondary	154	326	47%
Primary and Secondary	18	46	39%
Special/Grant-aided	16	132	12%
Libraries	73	541	13%

\*Analysis excludes 94 independent schools. Data on FMRC membership is not available for these schools

## Participation in challenges

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

Primary schools	<b>School Reading Journey</b> This challenge recognises the progress of primary schools that have taken steps to develop a reading culture, and get pupils reading for pleasure more.
	<b>Gaelic Medium Education Reading Journey</b> This challenge recognises the progress of Gaelic Medium primary schools to encourage reading for pleasure and to develop a reading culture.
	<b>School-Community Partnership Reading Journey</b> This challenge recognises how primary schools have worked in partnership with libraries and community organisations to develop a reading culture in the wider community.
	<b>School Reading the Most Books</b> 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.
	<b>Pupil Reading Journey</b> This challenge recognises the progress made by individual pupils around reading for pleasure and becoming more active readers.
	<b>Pupil Reading Most Books</b> This challenge recognises individual efforts to read more and to read more widely.

<b>Secondary schools</b>	<b>Reading Inspiration</b> This challenge celebrates the progress secondary schools have made towards building a reading culture.
<b>Libraries</b>	<b>Library Reading Culture</b> This challenge celebrates the way in which libraries have inspired children to read for pleasure through the Reading Challenge.
<b>Community Groups</b>	<b>Community Reading Culture</b> This challenge celebrates the way in which community groups have inspired children to read for pleasure through the Reading Challenge.

2.6 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.

2.7 In 2019/20 the Reading Challenge received 103 entries to one or more of the challenges from schools, libraries and community groups. Most submissions (48) came from primary schools, with 27 from secondary schools and two from community groups. There were no submissions from libraries. Most submissions were for the school reading journey, pupil reading journey or reading inspiration challenge.

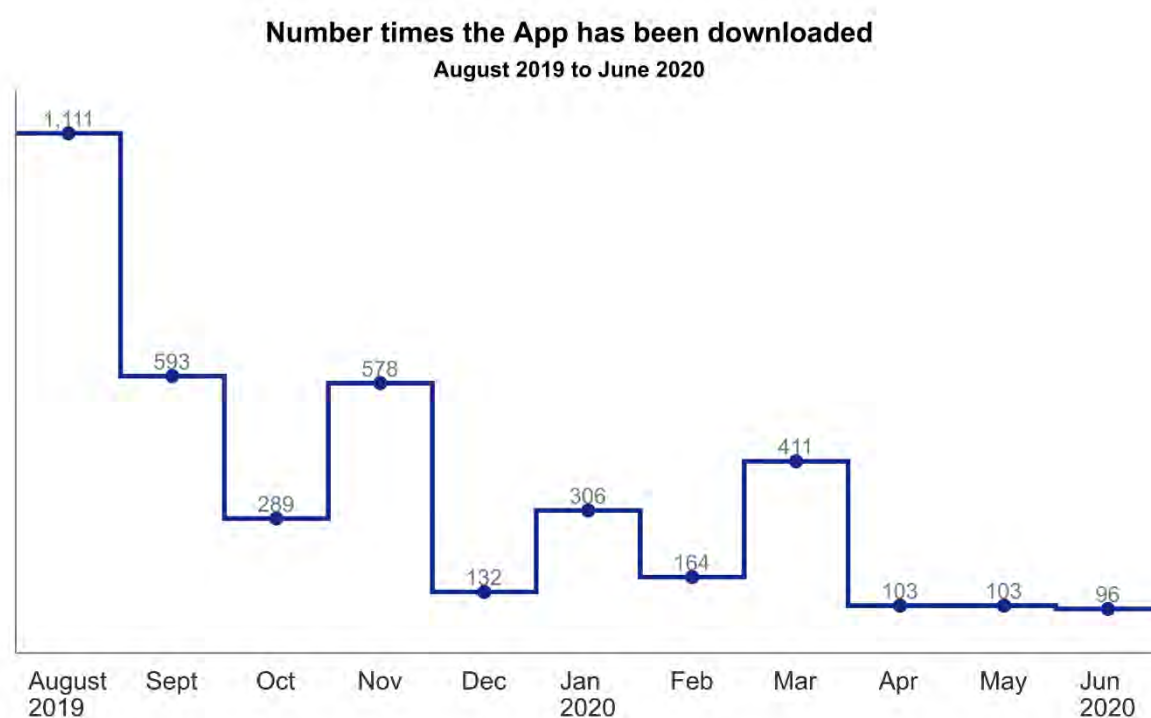


2.8 The overall figure is significantly less than in 2018/19, when the Reading Challenge received 422 submissions. However, the public health situation, due to the coronavirus pandemic, is likely to have impacted on submission rate.

- 2.9 Of the organisations registered with the Reading Challenge, 11% submitted an entry. This is significantly lower than in previous years, where 36% and 18% in 2018/19 and 2017/18 submitted. It is likely that the lockdown, which closed schools, libraries and community groups had an impact on the ability of these organisations to submit an entry. Despite this, there were still 27 submissions from secondary schools.

## Bookzilla – the Reading Challenge app

- 2.10 The Bookzilla app was launched on 18 August 2019. 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. The app can be downloaded by anyone, for free on both android and iOS devices.
- 2.11 As at July 2020, the app had been downloaded **3,886** times. The chart below shows the number of times the app has been downloaded each month. On average, the app has 55 users per day. App use peaked directly after the launch, with another increase in use during March, possibly due to the changes in learning methods after schools closed in March.



- 2.12 The app does not collect any personal data from users. However, the way users engage with the app can provide an indication of what they are reading and how much they are reading. As at July 2020, users indicated that they:
- Had read **4,328** books;
  - Planned to read **13,805** books
  - Had completed:

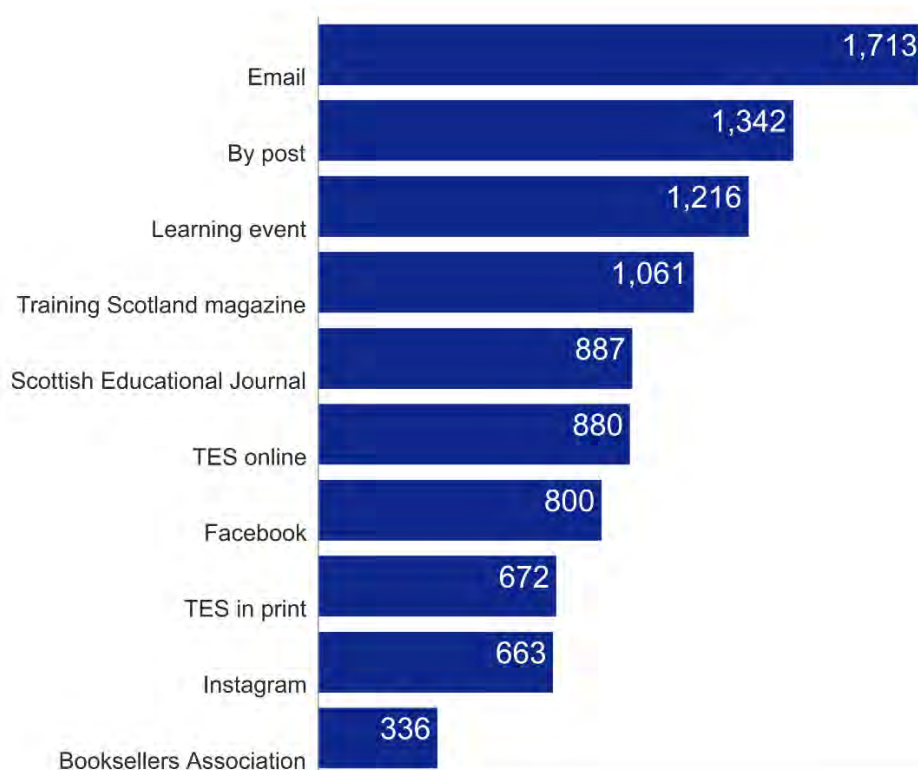
- **174** 'dares'; and
- **152** 'challenges'.

2.13 More information on user experiences of the app is included in Chapter 4.

## Awareness

- 2.14 Our surveys explored how school respondents 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.
- 2.15 A few respondents choosing 'other' said that they found out about the Reading Challenge through social media, after hearing about it at conferences, workshops or events, or from being involved in the Reading Challenge in previous years.
- 2.16 We also asked respondents from schools how they would like to receive information from Scottish Book Trust, regarding the Reading Challenge. Most respondents said that they would like this information by email, post or at a learning event.

### How would you like to receive information about the Reading Challenge?



**[This score is a weighted calculation. Items ranked first are valued higher than the following ranks, the score is a sum of all weighted rank counts.]**

2.17 Many respondents also suggested that Twitter would be a useful way to reach them. Other platforms mentioned included Glow and YouTube. A few respondents suggested that engaging with local authority education newsletters would be useful, as these are often weekly communications that reach all teachers. Some respondents provided specific examples, such as:

- ELATE magazine (Edinburgh)
- Teen Titles magazine
- Twitter account for English and Literacy in Scotland @EnglishScotland
- Scottish Association for the Teaching of English (SATE) blog.

## Involvement

2.18 In order to take part in the Reading Challenge, 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 Reading Passports** – These included individual and group passports. Individual passports were mostly used in the primary school setting, helping individuals keep track of and review their reading choices. Group Passports are posters 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 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 in-person and online training sessions for over 1,000 education 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. During the period of school closures (from March-June 2020) Scottish Book Trust also delivered sessions supporting practitioners with new methods for distance and blended learning.
- **Using an Inspiring Classrooms grant** – this grant provides up to £500 for primary schools to deliver an activity involving an author or a creative practitioner, or support professional learning and development of a reading culture in the school.



- **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 a reading culture, including reading materials, resources and author visits.
- **Using a Creative Workshops grant** – This grant provides up to £500 for libraries to deliver a project involving an author or creative practitioner.
- **Entering challenges** – All organisations were encouraged to enter one or more of the Reading Challenges, selecting the category that was most applicable to their experiences. Organisations could submit in any format, including written/illustrated submissions, power point presentations and videos.

2.19 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.

## Library participation

2.20 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. A few respondents selecting 'Other', 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.

## Reasons for not being involved – Primary schools

2.21 Eighteen (13%) respondents to the survey of primary schools indicated that they were not involved in the Reading Challenge in 2019/20.

2.22 Of these, eight respondents said that they had previously been registered for the Reading Challenge.

2.23 Broadly, the main reasons given were that:

- there were already other initiatives in the school that aimed to encourage reading for pleasure (44%);
- there was already a strong reading culture in the school (17%);
- they were not sure what the benefits would be (11%);
- they were not aware of the Reading Challenge (6%); and
- they did not have enough resources (6%).

- 2.24 A few respondents said that they did not realise they were required to re-register, or that they had forgotten to re-register. And a few said that the school had other priorities or initiatives to focus on. A few respondents noted that there was a mixed response from pupils, particularly with regard to using the Reading Passports and recording their reading habits.

## Reasons for not being involved – Secondary schools

- 2.25 Four (7%) respondents to the survey of secondary schools indicated that they were not involved in the Reading Challenge in 2019/20. The main reasons given were that:

- they were not aware of Reading Challenge;
- there were already other initiatives in the school that aimed to encourage reading for pleasure; and
- they did not have enough time.

## Reasons for not being involved – Libraries

- 2.26 For libraries, ten of our survey respondents (36%) said that they had not been involved in the Reading Challenge. The main reasons given were:

- there were already other initiatives in the library that aimed to encourage reading for pleasure;
- they were not aware of the Reading Challenge;
- they did not have enough time or resources; and
- there was already a strong reading culture in the library.

- 2.27 Some library staff noted that they did not have staff to deliver it, either because they were understaffed, or had new staff who were not familiar with the Reading Challenge. And a few said that the schools in their area were not involved in the Reading Challenge, and so they were not able to deliver it to pupils.

“We were keen to be involved - but we are run purely by volunteers, so we had limited time to do this in reality.” **Library respondent**

## Factors for consideration

- 2.28 We also asked the respondents what would encourage them to get involved. For school respondents, the main areas that would help staff to engage in the Reading Challenge were:

- examples of good practice;
- evidence of the impact it can have;
- more information and communication earlier in the school year;

- examples of different approaches for older and younger pupils; and
- free resources, particularly books.

“Ideas and examples of best practice in high school would be useful and would provide inspiration.” **Secondary school respondent**

“We do a lot with Read, Write Count, Book Week Scotland etc ... would like to see how to transfer the same enthusiasm to older readers.” **Primary school respondent**

2.29 Library respondents said that they would be more involved if they had more time, more information and better incentives and resources for children. A few respondents suggested that more guidance on how to implement the Reading Challenge would be useful.

“We had a box of passports delivered but didn't really know what to do from there - maybe having someone getting in touch to check that we know what we're doing and to give us some ideas about what to do would've been useful - this may be quite labour intensive from the SBT point of view, but would have really helped us to get it going.”  
**Library respondent**

2.30 One library respondent suggested that it might be beneficial to encourage library-to-library partnerships, as well as school-library partnerships.

### 3. Outcomes for young people, schools and communities

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#### 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:

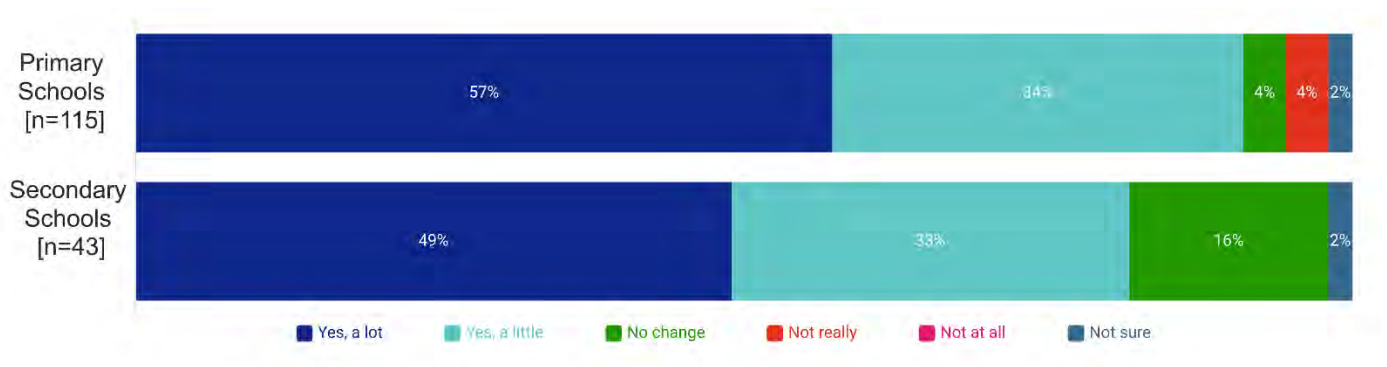
Reading for pleasure is valued and encouraged.
Pupils read for pleasure more frequently and/or more widely.
Pupils are active readers, making reading choices and developing areas of interest which they pursue, as far as possible, independently.
Senior management recognises the impact of reading for pleasure.
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.

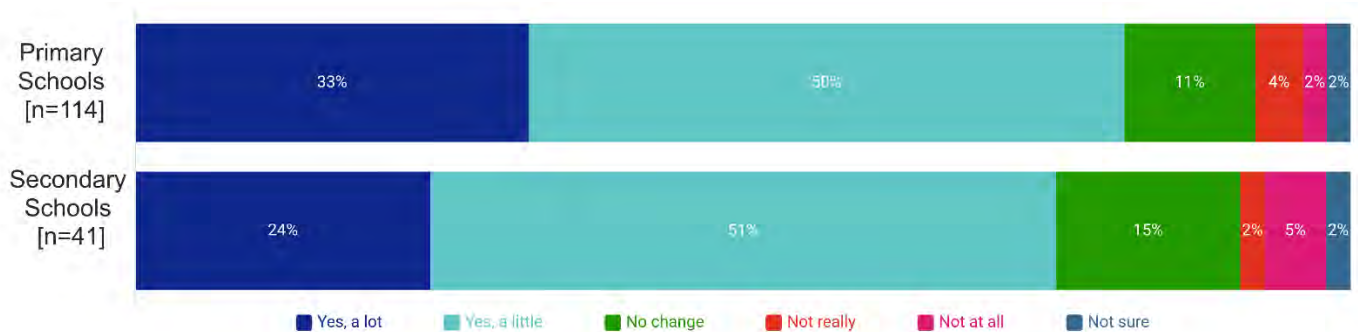
3.4 Survey data shows that most school respondents felt that the Reading Challenge helped staff encourage reading for pleasure, with over 80% of secondary school respondents and 90% of primary school respondents feeling that it helped a little or a lot.

## The Reading Challenge helps school staff encourage pupils to read for pleasure



3.5 Most school respondents also felt that the Reading Challenge helped pupils to understand the value of reading for pleasure. However, most only felt this ‘a little’ rather than ‘a lot’.

## Children and young people understand the value of reading more for pleasure



3.6 Some schools and libraries shared examples of the different ways they had encouraged reading for pleasure, through regular activities, events and reading groups.

“We believe that by investing part of our week in reading for pleasure we are highlighting to our young people the importance of reading. Parents often ask us how their children could better improve their English skills and we all agree that more personal reading helps in their confidence and approach to different reading related tasks.”  
**English teacher, Secondary**



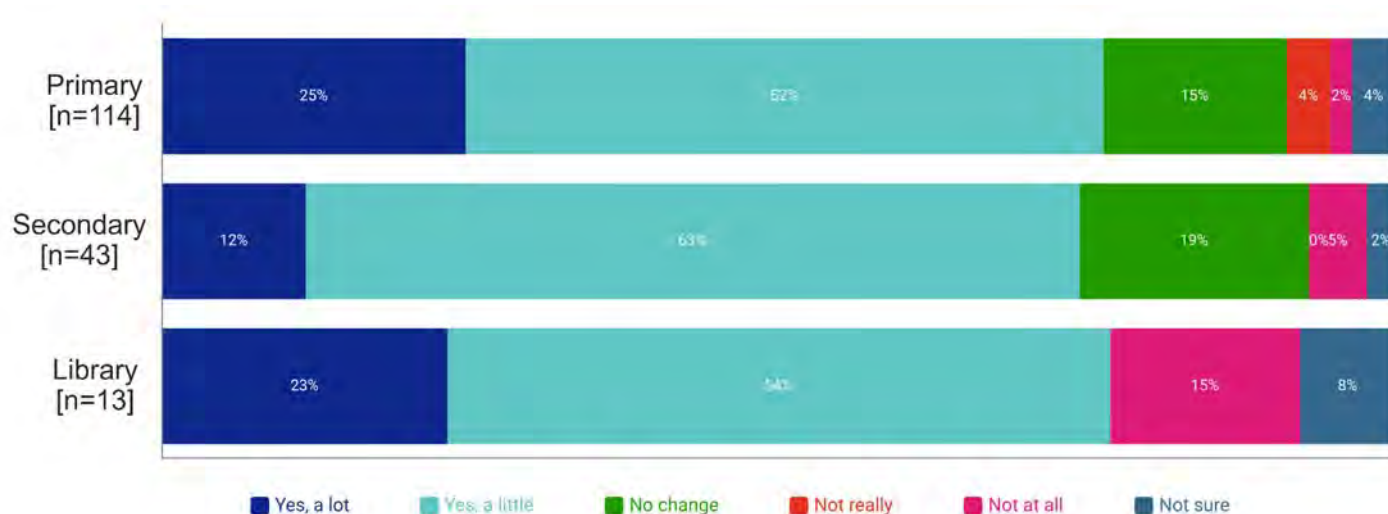
## Outcome: Pupils read for pleasure more frequently and/or more widely

- 3.7 Most respondents felt that children and young people were reading for pleasure more since they had started doing the Reading Challenge.
- 3.8 Most respondents from schools felt that the Reading Challenge had a little impact on how much children were reading for pleasure, with few reporting that it had no impact.
- 3.9 However, library respondents did not feel that the Reading Challenge had the same impact, with 17% feeling that it did not help children read for pleasure more frequently, and a quarter stating that they were not sure.

### Children and young people read for pleasure more



### Children and young people read more widely



- 3.10 Some respondents commented specifically on this outcome, reporting that they had noticed pupils reading for pleasure more often, including pupils who were previously not keen on reading.

“More children are reading for pleasure in class, with a small increase at home.” **Principal teacher, Primary**

“We can see reluctant readers begin to change their perspective on reading. It becomes less of a chore and something that allows them to relax and participate in a classroom hobby, of sorts!” **English teacher, Secondary**

- 3.11 And a few respondents noted that pupils were accessing a wider range of books since engaging in the Reading Challenge.

“It has engaged children who previously were reluctant to read. They are now beginning to read different texts and enjoy reading in library areas.” **Class teacher, Primary**

“Children now have exposure a wider range of texts and are encouraged to read a wider range of book. This has increased the amount of texts our pupils are engaging with.” **Class teacher, Primary**

“The competitive element of the challenge also helped children to read a wider range of texts which they ended up enjoying.” **Principal teacher, Primary**

### **Outcome: Pupils are active readers**

- 3.12 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.

- 3.13 Respondents from schools and libraries reported that pupils were becoming active readers, and more confident in sharing views and talking about reading.

“It has helped my reading group to build confidence in discussing books and talking to other people in the library about reading.” **Library assistant, Library**

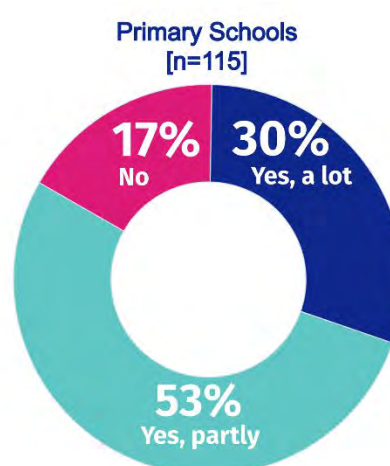
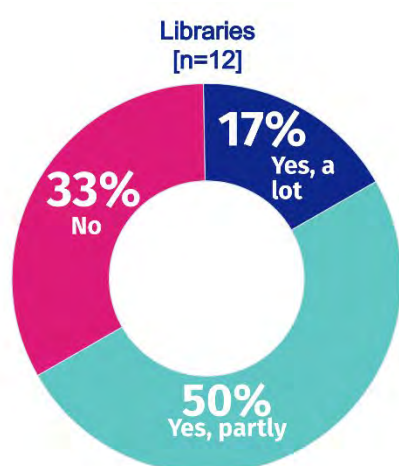
“Children around the school are much more equipped to engage in discussions about reading for pleasure and are increasingly likely to take personal reading as a free choice activity.” **Principal teacher, Primary**

## Outcome: Senior management recognises the impact of reading for pleasure

- 3.14 The Reading Challenge aimed to raise awareness of the importance of reading for pleasure at all levels, including at senior management level.
- 3.15 Most school respondents felt that they were empowered to encourage reading for pleasure. However almost a third of secondary school respondents did not feel that senior management recognised the value of reading for pleasure. And a third of library staff reported that they did not feel the Reading Challenge helped them to win the support of others.

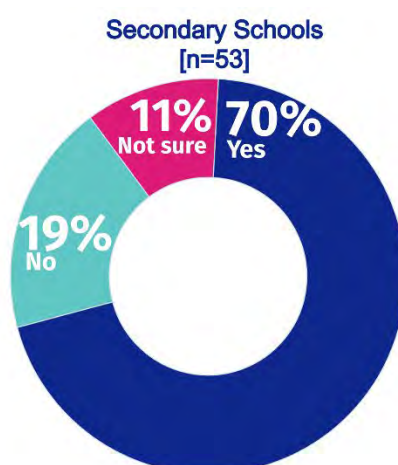
Did the Reading Challenge help you to win the support of other people (e.g. colleagues, school staff, parents/carers, community practitioners) in terms of encouraging reading for pleasure?

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

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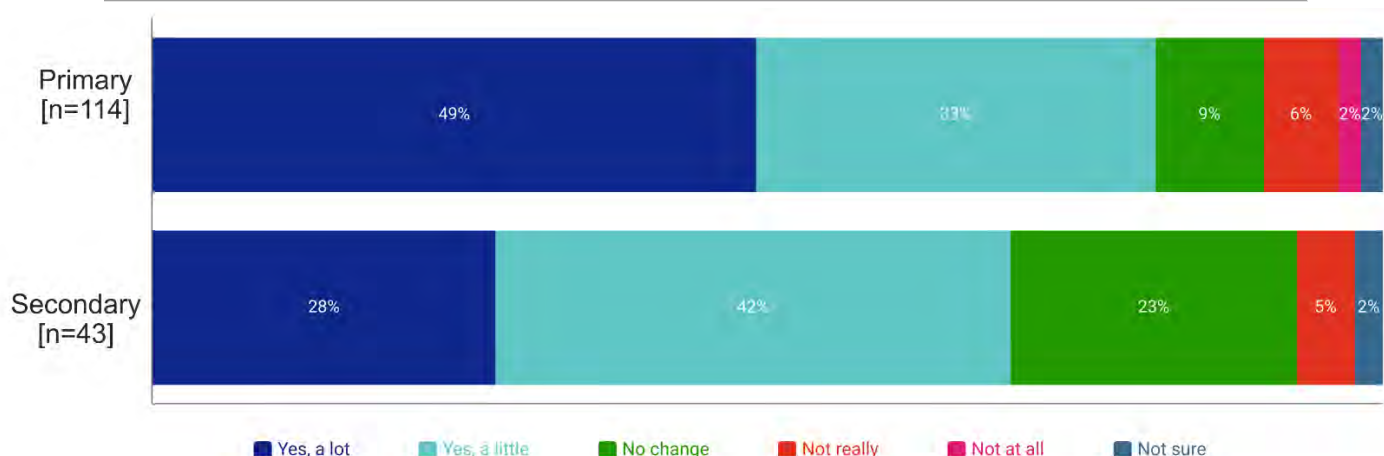
## School staff feel empowered to encourage reading for pleasure



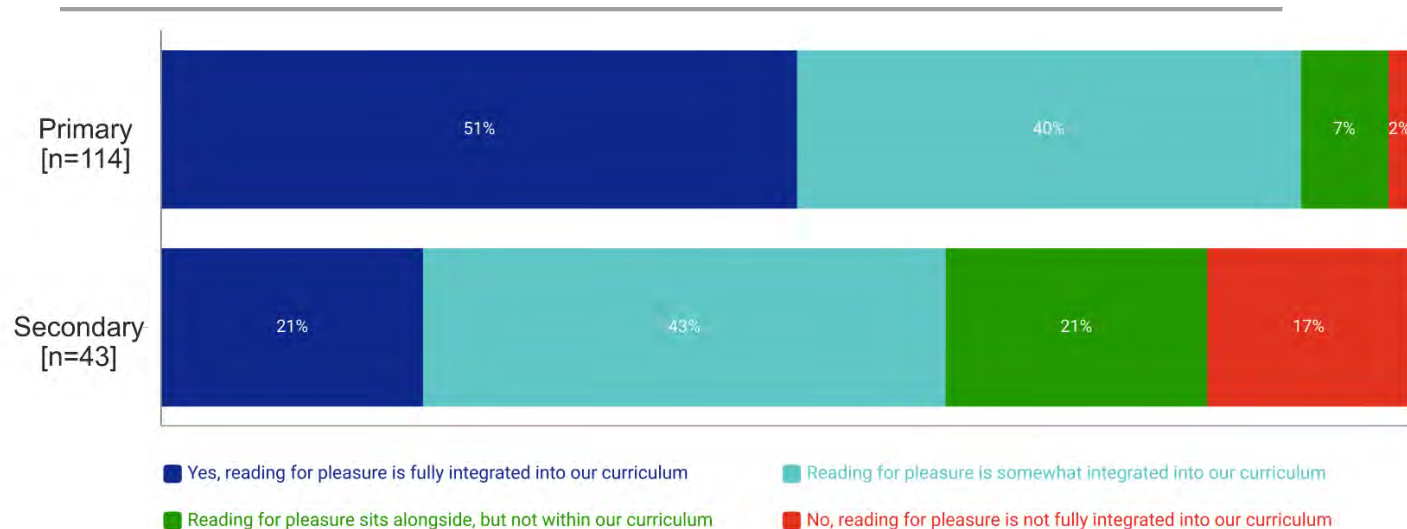
## Outcome: Reading for pleasure is embedded across the curriculum

- 3.16 The Reading Challenge aimed to help teachers and schools to integrate reading for pleasure into the curriculum.
- 3.17 From our survey, more than half of respondents said that reading had been incorporated into the school curriculum, in some way. Primary school respondents felt this more strongly, with almost half feeling that it had helped a lot.

## The Reading Challenge helped reading to become an integral part of the school curriculum



Do you feel that your school integrated reading for pleasure into the school curriculum through the Reading Challenge?



- 3.18 Most primary school respondents felt that reading for pleasure was integrated into the school curriculum, with a few noting that it was part of the wider school or local authority literacy policy. A few respondents noted that this had already been the case, prior to the school’s engagement with the Reading Challenge, and that the Reading Challenge had fitted well with the school priorities around reading. One respondent noted that having the Reading Challenge in the school reminded teachers to set aside time for reading, which could often be lost in a busy timetable.

“The Reading Challenge is just part of how reading is implemented in our curriculum.” **Principal teacher, Primary**

- 3.19 Some respondents provided examples of how reading was integrated, and how pupils responded to this. Some schools had regular ‘ERIC’ (Everyone Reading in Class) visits to the local library or reading clubs within the school. And one respondent reported that pupils would now choose to read during breaks or when they had free choice of activity in class.
- 3.20 Others felt that reading was not yet integrated into the curriculum. For these respondents, the main issue was the limitation of what they could fit into the school day. One respondent worked in a specialist unit for pupils with additional support needs and felt that although there were benefits to reading for pleasure, it was difficult to integrate into the setting.

“There is some reluctance to embed reading for pleasure in the English curriculum at this school... I am working hard to encourage teachers to integrate reading for pleasure into the English syllabus and encouraging teachers across the school to promote reading for pleasure.” **English teacher, Secondary**



“With timetable constraints and the coverage of skills we need to teach, reading for pleasure has to come near the bottom of the reading activities within the school day.” **Class teacher, Primary**

- 3.21 Secondary school respondents provided a mixed response. Some felt that reading for pleasure was integrated into the curriculum, and others said that they still struggled to achieve this.
- 3.22 Where it was well integrated, respondents gave examples of whole school activities. For example, pupils in different year groups involved in activities on World Book Day, or all pupils in S1-S3 having 5-10 minutes of reading time at the beginning of lessons.

“We read for ten minutes at the start of every lesson with every class in the BGE. Our colleagues in Social Subjects support us with this and they incorporate 5 minutes of reading for pleasure into their lessons. We'd like to keep working to embed this as fully as we can in different parts of the curriculum.” **Principal teacher of English, Secondary**

“Staff across the school fully support and engage in reading for pleasure through reading in registration (S1-S3), Book Week Scotland and World Book Day events, what I am reading/watching posters on classroom doors and recommending reads for our staff summer reading list.” **English teacher, Secondary**

- 3.23 A few respondents indicated that although reading for pleasure was integrated into the English department, it was not integrated across the whole school.

“This is a slow start and while Reading for Pleasure is becoming more integrated in English and Literacy activities, we have yet to fully engage other departments.” **School librarian, Secondary**

“I think that rfp [sic] is seen very much as an add on in my school, and something that is the responsibility of the English department staff and Librarian.” **School librarian, Secondary**

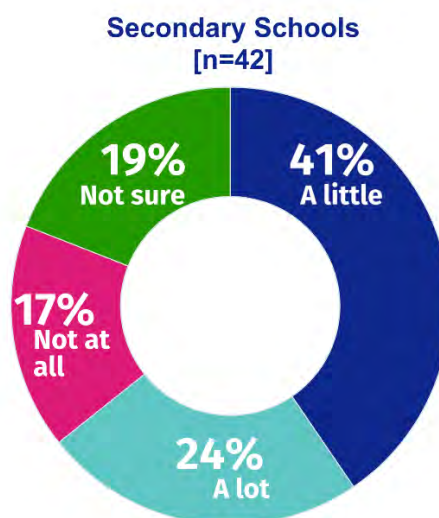
- 3.24 Several respondents said that this was an area of progress, and they hoped to see reading for pleasure becoming more integrated over the coming years. One respondent noted that pupils who participated in Reading Challenge activities in primary school, might be more likely to engage.

## Outcome: Pupil voice / leadership is developed through the programme

- 3.25 The Reading Challenge aimed to support the development of leadership opportunities for pupils, and provide opportunities for pupils to have their voice heard.
- 3.26 Survey responses indicate that over half of secondary school staff felt that the Reading Challenge helped develop leadership skills and provided an opportunity for pupils to have their say. However, over a third did not feel that this outcome had been achieved, or were unable to say.

To what extent have Reading Challenge activities provided opportunities for pupils to have their voice heard, or to take on leadership roles?

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- 3.27 A few respondents provided examples of how pupils were supported to take on leadership roles through the Reading Challenge. A few said that pupils were consulted on how the school delivered the Reading Challenge. And a few mentioned that pupils were part of leadership groups or committees with responsibilities for gathering feedback from their peers and developing the range of books in the school library.

“Library pupil committee viewed the current library stock sourced new and current genre of books, planned a new layout for the school library. Pupils have assisted in restocking and laying out of the library and library areas within the classes too.” **Principal teacher, Primary**

“All of our pupils will now be consulted on the books they would like to have in the library using the £370 from Book Fair rewards so that all of them have ownership including those who can’t afford new books themselves. They can see themselves reflected in the books they have chosen and books which deal with children like themselves at the heart of the stories.” **Library assistant, Library**

- 3.28 In addition, one library respondent reported that young people were providing recommendations to others, in their roles as Reading Ambassadors.

“I encouraged my reading group to become reading ambassadors and promote reading to others by becoming Book Doctors, providing book recommendations by prescription.” **Library assistant, Library**

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

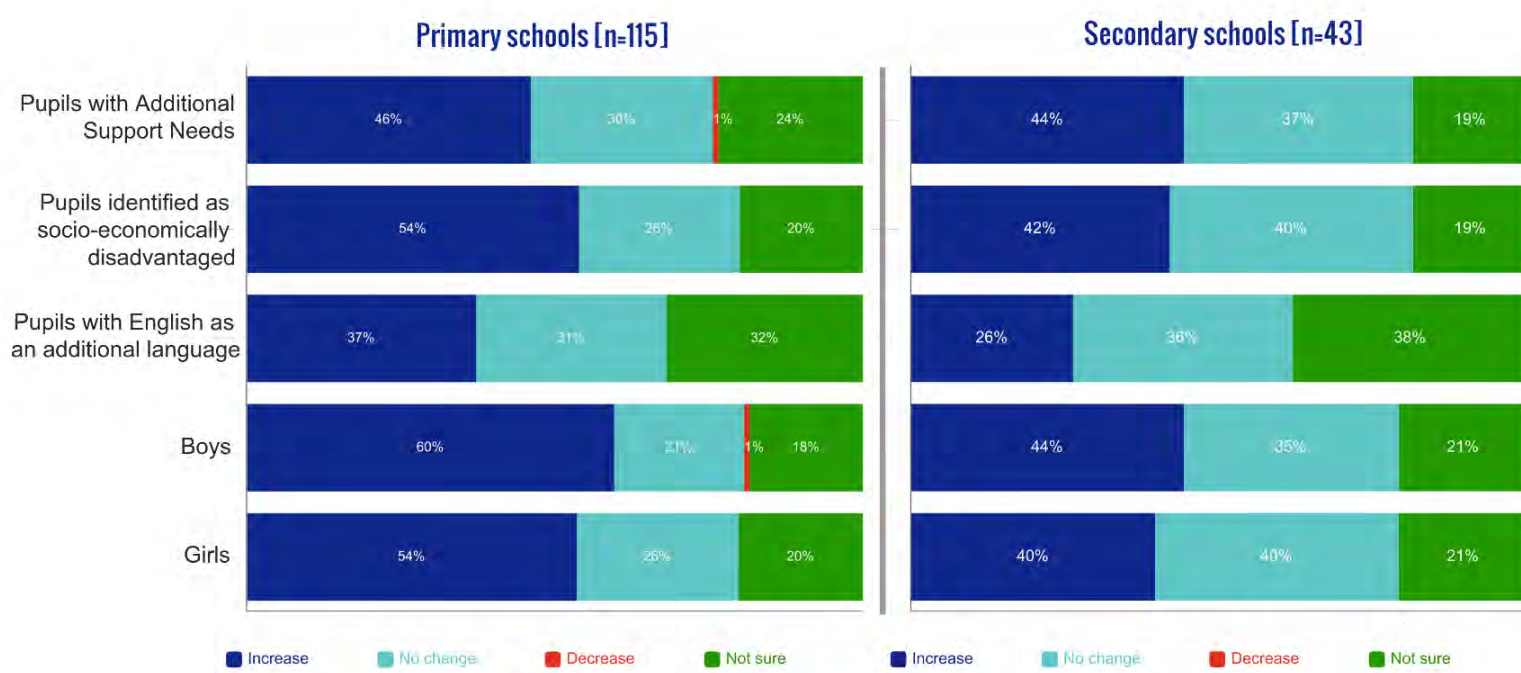
- 3.29 This is a secondary intended outcome for the First Minister’s Reading Challenge, aiming to support attainment – alongside the wide range of other initiatives taking place within schools across Scotland.
- 3.30 The data shows that some respondents felt the Reading Challenge had facilitated increased reading for pleasure amongst specific groups. Although not all respondents felt that there were improvements for these groups, the data shows a significant increase from the previous year.
- 3.31 Comparing results in 2018/19 with 2019/20, it was clear that more staff now feel the Reading Challenge is having an impact on pupils who require additional support.

#### Staff views on impact of the Reading Challenge this year



- 3.32 Survey responses show a similar pattern across primary and secondary schools, with more respondents indicating improvements for boys, pupils identified as socioeconomically disadvantaged and pupils with additional support needs than other groups. Around a fifth of respondents were unable to indicate if the Reading Challenge had achieved these outcomes.

Have you noticed any changes in the level of reading for pleasure amongst particular groups of pupils because of the Reading Challenge?




- 3.33 Schools reported that the Reading Challenge helped pupils with literacy specific skills, such as vocabulary and writing. A few respondents also felt that it helped more broadly with focus, motivation and engagement in class.

“More children accessing books has helped increase and improve vocabulary.” **Principal teacher, Primary**

“Reading for pleasure has clear impact on children’s overall performance in literacy and in concentration and focus too.” **Class teacher, Primary**

“Our assessment data has shown an increase in reading and writing attainment which we believe is partly due to developing a reading culture within the school where children are choosing to read for pleasure. This in turn has helped develop a wider vocabulary and offered a range of writing possibilities.” **Principal teacher, Primary**

“We have attainment data to demonstrate pupils are reading more and attainment for almost all is improving. Children in Primary 1 and 2 are involved in Big Bedtime Read initiative, this has had a positive impact on family engagement.” **Head / deputy head teacher, Primary**

“Certain targeted groups have shown a slight increase in their attainment and achievement. Reading has also fed into other aspects of Literacy including Film  so we believe our children have begun to engage with texts more and in innovative and creative ways 😊.” **Challenge Leader of Learning For Literacy, Primary**

“Very simply, our children are reading more and this is helping to raise attainment.” **Head / deputy head teacher, Primary**

- 3.34 Secondary school respondents said that the Reading Challenge had worked well with S1 and S2 pupils who were more likely to engage and buy into the Reading Challenge activities. Comments from respondents indicated that S1-S3 was most often the target group for the Reading Challenge.
- 3.35 One secondary school respondent noted that more of their ‘reluctant’ readers were reading for pleasure.
- 3.36 A few respondents felt that the Reading Challenge activities supported wider learning. One primary school teacher from a Gaelic medium school felt that the Reading Challenge supported wider learning, for both English and Gaelic.

“For me in a GME context, having a daily book focus has helped the pupils’ literacy skills in so many ways but mainly in their acquisition of Gaelic.

Since starting the challenge three years ago I can see an increased amount of spoken language and understanding of language among all pupils, including those who would be the targeted pupils in the poverty related category. I have not always been able to measure this always but know from experience of previous years pupils that there is an improvement in their fluency of Gaelic. Picture books in particular have enabled Gaelic immersion to be maintained when pupils have very little language as there is the visual element to hook the words on.

Pupils have a delay in starting reading in GME but when they do, they often have more of an idea of vocabulary, how words work and the structure of sentences.” **Class teacher, Primary**

- 3.37 Although this was not an intended outcome for libraries, one library respondent reported that the Reading Challenge had helped them to engage with and support a young person who had migrated to Scotland and did not speak English as his first language. The young person was supported to choose appropriate books to read aloud to the library staff.

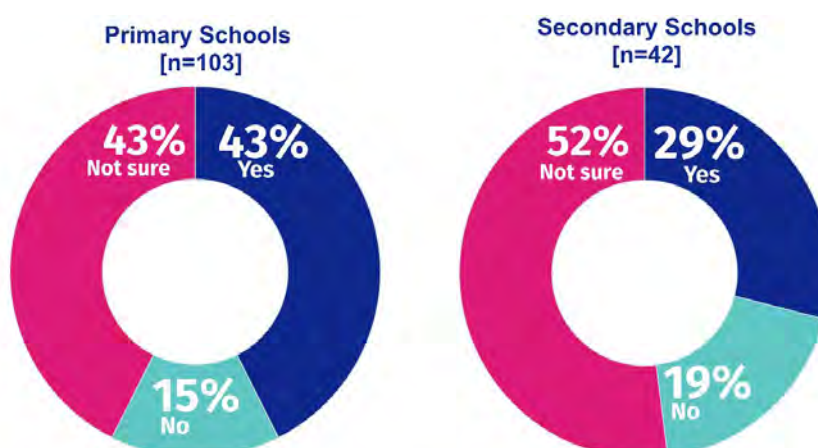


“...I assisted him and his mother select books to read, he would take them away, then read them to me the following week throughout the challenge.” **Library assistant, Library**

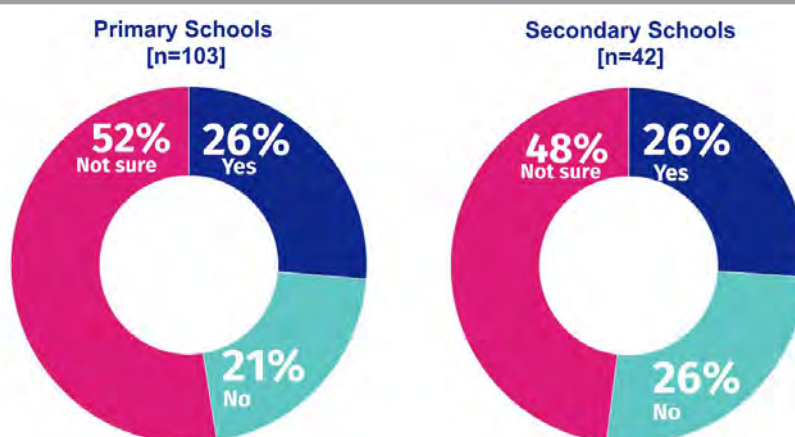
## Outcome: Reading for pleasure supports closing of the attainment gap

- 3.38 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.
- 3.39 As in previous evaluations, many respondents were unsure if the Reading Challenge had contributed to improved attainment and were reticent to state a response either way.

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



Do you feel that the Reading Challenge has contributed reducing or closing the poverty related attainment gap for pupils in your school?





- 3.40 However, those who did feel the Reading Challenged had supported attainment, provided more information on the initiatives they had used to improve attainment or reduce the attainment gap. Some respondents had measured this and were able to report on clear improvements for pupils.
- 3.41 Respondents reported improvements in reading skills, fluency and the pupils' calculated reading age. Some noted that their improvements were achieved through targeted interventions. And some respondents noted that they used the Reading Challenge along with other, literacy focused programmes such as Accelerated Reader.

“We have used data to analyse the attainment gap in our school. We are in an area of deprivation...The First Minister's Reading Challenge has helped us, along with other measures to raise the profile of reading in our school. In the very near future we will be evaluating the impact of the actions we have taken but looking again at our data to measure the impact.” **Class teacher, Primary**

“By carrying out reading for pleasure surveys both in school and via parents we have been able to see an increase.” **Principal teacher, Primary**

“We can guarantee that children from the most deprived families are getting more opportunities to read and to have access to a wider genre of books. We have a large proportion of children with English as a second language who also fall into the deprived category and a fair proportion of these children have their reading ages above average.” **Class teacher and Literacy Lead, Primary**

“Several children have improved their reading age in accordance with the accelerated reading Star reader test, they have spoken more freely about books and have engaged more with each other about books.” **Class teacher, Primary**

“We have Benchmarked certain children and reading attainment is improving steadily.” **Principal teacher, Primary**

- 3.42 A few respondents noted that the increased resources at school, particularly books or reading spaces, were accessible to all pupils regardless of their socioeconomic status. Some teachers felt that this was particularly important for pupils who did not have access to safe, comfortable reading spaces at home. Activities such as book swaps helped ensure that pupils who would not otherwise have access to books were taking books home, which they could keep.

“Additionally, we know that reading for pleasure can be a challenge in difficult home environments and so providing space, time and opportunity for young people to engage with books of their choice, as

well as a library service, is hugely important for us.” **English teacher, Secondary**

- 3.43 In one secondary school, some of the class competition winners were the most vulnerable pupils. The impact of winning a competition was significant for them and their families.

“The library also provides a safe space for several pupils who come in to read or do homework or charge a Chromebook because sometimes there is no electricity at home.” **Literacy/Library teacher, Secondary**

- 3.44 Some respondents noted that engagement with the curriculum was important, in order to improve attainment. They felt that the Reading Challenge helped engage pupils, and that this would in turn improve their attainment at school. One respondent noted that engagement with pupils doubled after the Reading Challenge activities. And one noted that pupils with additional support needs had engaged with reading more through the Reading Challenge events and activities.

“Certainly there is a more positive appreciation of books and reading for pleasure, and more of a willingness for pupils to take on texts that they are interested in. This can only help with engagement with the curriculum as general knowledge increases and more connections and links are made.” **English teacher, Secondary**

“Pupils from lower SIMD household have been able to access really good quality reading materials from our school library, and most importantly, have been actively encouraged to explore new writers and genres.” **English teacher, Secondary**

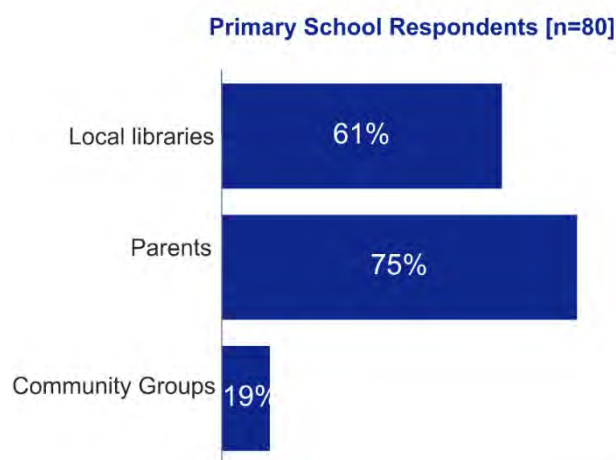
- 3.45 One primary school respondent noted that the Reading Challenge was part of the wider work in the local authority, targeting children affected by the poverty related attainment gap. They felt that the Reading Challenge was a good resource and helped raise the profile of the wider work within the school.
- 3.46 Some respondents were confident that the Reading Challenge had contributed to reducing the poverty related attainment gap for pupils, however they had not measured the impact of their Reading Challenge activities.

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

- 3.47 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.
- 3.48 Primary school respondents felt they had made better links with parents and local libraries, much more than with community groups.

### **Primary schools make better links with...**

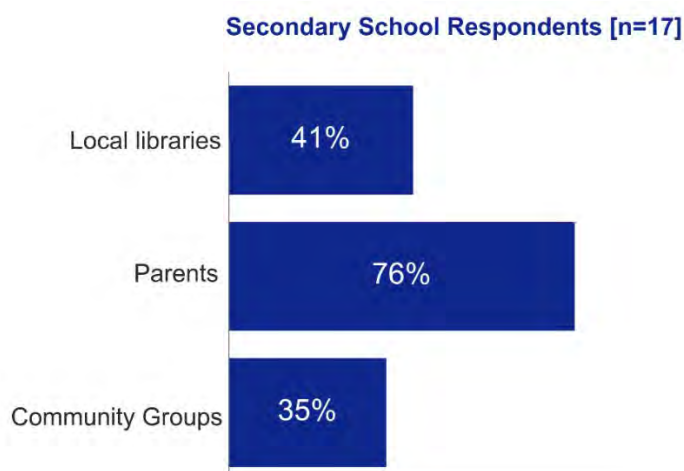
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- 3.49 Secondary school respondents felt that they had made better links with parents/carers more than with local libraries and community groups.

### **Secondary schools make better links with...**

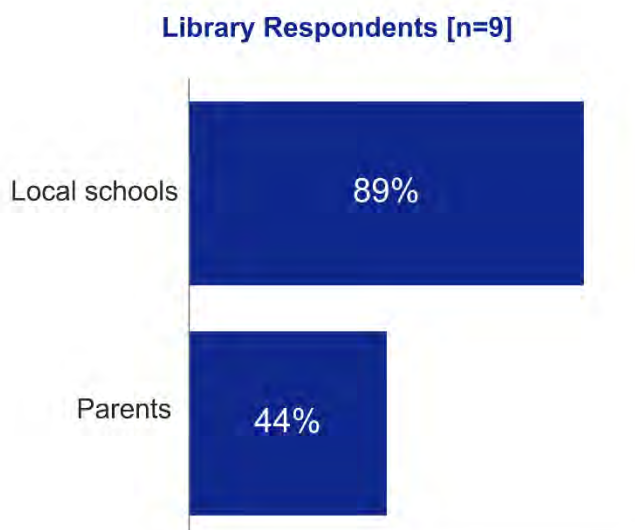
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- 3.50 Library respondents felt they had made better links with local schools and parents/carers, but not with community groups.

#### Libraries make better links with...

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- 3.51 School and library respondents felt that working together helped improve access to resources and opportunities for pupils. Although some respondents reported that there were already strong links between schools and local libraries, others said that the Reading Challenge had helped to facilitate this.
- 3.52 Library respondents reported that they had developed better and stronger links with schools and parents. One library worked with local schools, extending World Book Day into World Book Week in order to accommodate 14 school classes for 'Story and Snack' activities.

- 3.53 The Reading Challenge helped engage more children in library activities, and encouraged more children to become library members.

“We have created a very strong link with P4 Class and a support class who now visit the library every week. Previously we didn't have much of a connection with the school.” **Library supervisor, Library**

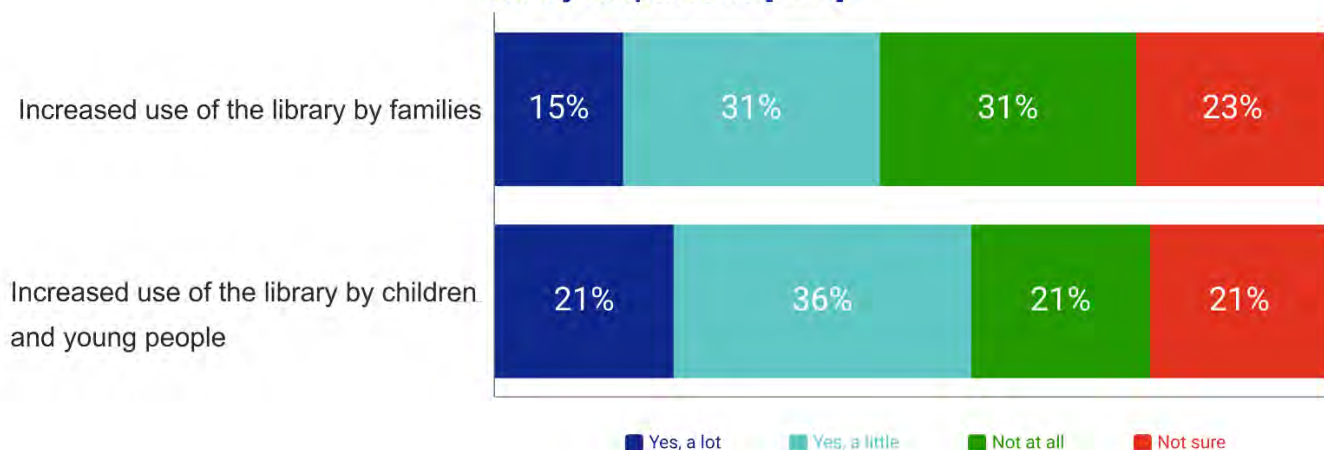
- 3.54 A few library respondents commented that they felt the Reading Challenge had wider benefits for the library, such as:
- more class visits from local schools;
  - winning competitions; and
  - increased priority of reading in local schools.

## Outcome: Family usage of public libraries increases

3.55 Of the respondents to the library survey, half felt that the Reading Challenge helped increase the use of the library by children, and almost half felt it had increased wider use by their families.

In your opinion, what have been the benefits of being involved in the Reading Challenge?

Library Respondents [n=14]



3.56 Where the library had a reading group, the staff were able to engage with parents when they dropped off their children, encouraging everyone in the family to read more.

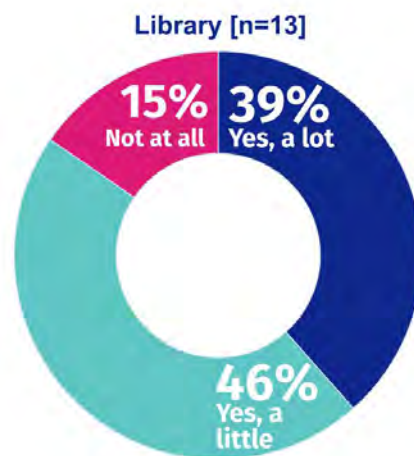
“We have developed stronger links with the parents as many of them come in with the children when they come into the group and it encourages them to read more. **Library assistant, Library**

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

3.57 Of the library respondents, 11 (85%) felt that the Reading Challenge had provided libraries with a platform to showcase work around reading for pleasure.

The library has a platform to showcase its work around reading for pleasure with children and young people?

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## 4. Bookzilla – The Reading Challenge app

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### Introduction

- 4.1 We asked school staff, library staff and pupils about their experiences of the Bookzilla app.

### Pupil views

- 4.2 We received pupil feedback on the app from two online surveys and written reviews from 28 S1-S3 pupils at one school.
- 4.3 Of the 13 survey respondents, six used the app and seven did not. Those who used the app found it easy to use. Most said they were using it at home, and a few said they used it at school and when they were out and about.
- 4.4 All of the respondents felt that the app encouraged them to read for fun, read more often and try new genres. And most felt that it helped them to talk about reading and to encourage other people to read.
- 4.5 Pupils had mixed views on different aspects of the app. Generally, pupils completing the surveys and providing written feedback said that they found the app easy to use. They liked the challenges, dares and the way that they could personalise the app.
- 4.6 Some pupils also liked that it helped them to find new books to read, and to keep track of their reading. Some, but not all, said they would recommend the app to others.

“It helps me find books I haven't seen before then I'll read them.”

“It's an amazing easy to use free app why the hell not?!”

“I found this app very easy to use and understand.”

“I will keep using this app regularly and I give this app a four and half star rating.”

“I would definitely use it regularly as I feel it would encourage me to read more than usual.” **Pupils**

- 4.7 However, many pupils said that they did not enjoy using the app. Some thought that they would be able to read books through the app, and were disappointed that they were unable to do so. And many felt that the selection of books was not wide enough, with some feeling frustrated that they could not always find the book they were currently reading. Pupils often suggested that it would be useful to have a wider selection books available on the app.
- 4.8 The main suggestion they had to improve the app was to increase the number of books. Several pupils also suggested that it would be helpful if they could read books through the app.

“I would probably use this app more if they update the app with more books and authors.”

“I would improve the app by making more challenges and adding more books onto it.”

“I was a little disappointed as I would be encouraged to read more if I could actually open the books.”

#### **Pupils**

- 4.9 And a few pupils felt that the app was difficult to use on their phone, as they were unable to load it, or found that it took up too much memory space on their phone.
- 4.10 Although most found it easy to use, a few pupils suggested that a tutorial or instruction guide would be helpful. A few pupils suggested that more games or quizzes would be beneficial. And a few pupils noted that the recommendations seemed more appropriate for younger pupils.
- 4.11 Of the respondents who had not used the app, two had heard of it, and two had not. One respondent said that they were not using the app because they already read a lot, and another said that they did not have enough storage space on their phone to install it. However, both of these respondents said that they would be interested in an app that provided reading recommendations and challenges.
- 4.12 One pupil who provided feedback for a case study said that she used the app during the ‘lockdown’ when schools were closed. She used the app to find books from genres that she would not normally access. Like other pupils, she felt it would help if she could read books, or extracts of books via the app, or if she could purchase books through the app.

### **School and library staff views**

- 4.13 Of the secondary school respondents, 13 (28%) reported that they knew their pupils were using the Bookzilla app, and 11 (23%) said that their pupils were not using it. Around half (49%) were not sure. And 13% were using the app as a classroom resource.

- 4.14 Of the primary school respondents, only six (5%) had used the app as a classroom resource. However, 102 (86%) felt that the app, or something similar would be of interest to them and their pupils. One respondent noted that an app might be a more engaging way for pupils to record their reading, compared to the Reading Passport.

“I think there are less cumbersome ways of recording books read and I think an app would be a great way forward.” **Principal teacher, Primary**

- 4.15 And of library respondents, four had used the Bookzilla app themselves, and two were aware of library users accessing the app. However, nine respondents felt that it might be useful for their library users.

### What works well

- 4.16 Broadly, secondary school and library respondents had similar views to pupils. They felt that the app was well designed and that it was easy to navigate.

- 4.17 Teachers and library staff said that although their pupils were not always interested in using the app, it was still a valuable resource for teachers and parents.

“It is useful to offer this app to parents and careers, because at parents evening English colleagues are always being asked what their child should be reading. The English team are able to suggest the Bookzilla app.” **School librarian, Secondary**

“The pupils were interested in it initially but have gone back to previous reading habits. The staff love it!” **School librarian, Secondary**

- 4.18 A few respondents noted that the tools for engagement, such as the challenges and dares, were good, and kept pupils interested. And a few noted that it was a useful addition to other resources, supplementing other activities and programmes.

“The app is well designed, eye catching and quite novel.” **School librarian, Secondary**

“It's a valuable resource for making lists and recommendations for junior and young adults, and for keeping track of books to buy for the Library. We had a young adult book group over last summer and are keen to try to engage young readers to develop their reading over the summer.” **Senior Library Assistant, Library**

“It helps reluctant learners and pupils enjoy the challenges. It opens discussions about book.” **English teacher, Secondary**

- 4.19 A few respondents indicated that the app tended to work well with younger pupils (primary school, S1, S2) in secondary school, but not with older pupils.

“I've had some positive responses from primary aged kids I've shown it to, and from S1 kids - but not with older pupils. ... Those who have downloaded it tend to be kids who are already reading in their own time.” **Principal teacher of English, Secondary**

- 4.20 One school librarian said that they had used the app with S1 and S2 pupils, delivering a launch event where they were introduced to the app and shown how to use it. And some felt that in order for it to be well used, the app needed to be championed by teachers.

“Like so many other digital resources, I think it's going to work best with a really energetic push from a classroom teacher and time given to exploring it in class - I'm not aware of many of our pupils using it at home.” **Principal teacher of English, Secondary**

- 4.21 A few respondents to our 'return to school' survey indicated that they had promoted the Bookzilla app to pupils. One secondary school English teacher noted that some pupils were purchased books by their families. They noted that the Bookzilla app may have helped pupils choose what books to purchase, as the school and public libraries were closed and they encouraged pupils to use it.

“We don't have evidence to show engagement but we did promote these and continue to suggest to pupils that using the Bookzilla app can be a good way of finding new reads.” **English teacher, Secondary**

## What could be improved?

- 4.22 In line with pupils' experiences of the app, school staff noted similar issues and difficulties using the app. A few had trouble downloading and using the app, particularly on Chromebook laptops, which pupils had access to at school.

- 4.23 They felt that the app would benefit from having a wider range of books, particularly for new, reluctant or struggling readers. A few said that it would be helpful if the app provided an option to add books from outwith the app to a reading list. Respondents also noted that it would be useful for the app to provide a way for pupils to access reading material.

“Pupils have noted that many books they like are not listed on the app; many pupils were disappointed that they could not read books on the app.” **English teacher, Secondary**

“The children don't really use the app; it doesn't really hook in the reluctant readers, and the enthusiastic readers find that there are not enough books in the database for them to feel the app is credible.”

**School librarian, Secondary**

- 4.24 Staff responding to the survey had a few suggestions for improvements. One respondent suggested linking the app with other similar platforms, such as Goodreads, might be useful. Another suggested offering monthly ebooks or audiobooks through the app.
- 4.25 Some respondents felt that the app needed to be promoted more widely. A few respondents noted that they had not heard of the app before completing the survey, and would now be looking into it. And a few respondents said that they had not used it this year, but would use it in the future.

## 5. Delivery and process outcomes

### Introduction

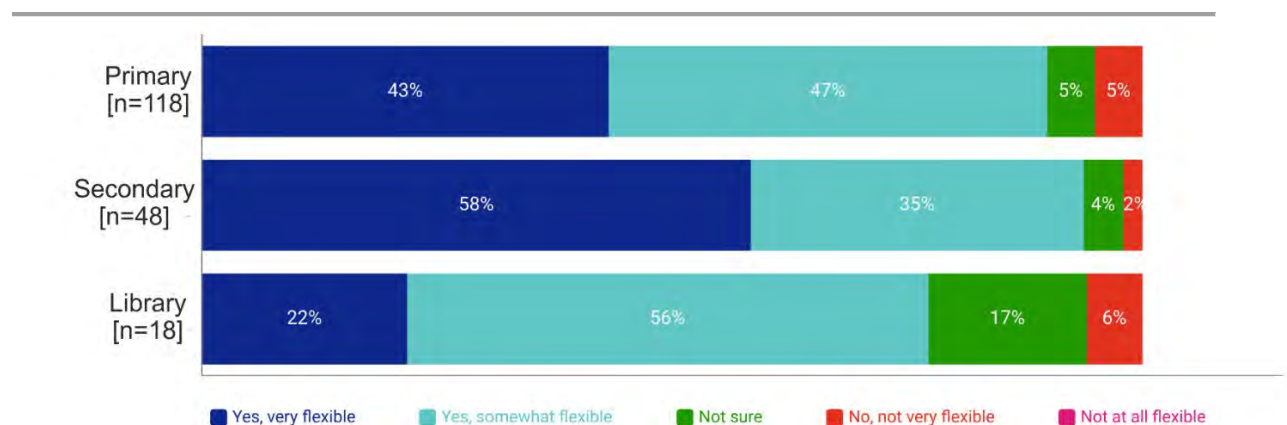
5.1 This chapter will explore the extent to which the First Minister's Reading Challenge has achieved its outcomes around the process of delivering the Reading Challenge. The intended outcome was that the design of the Reading Challenge supports reading for pleasure by:

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

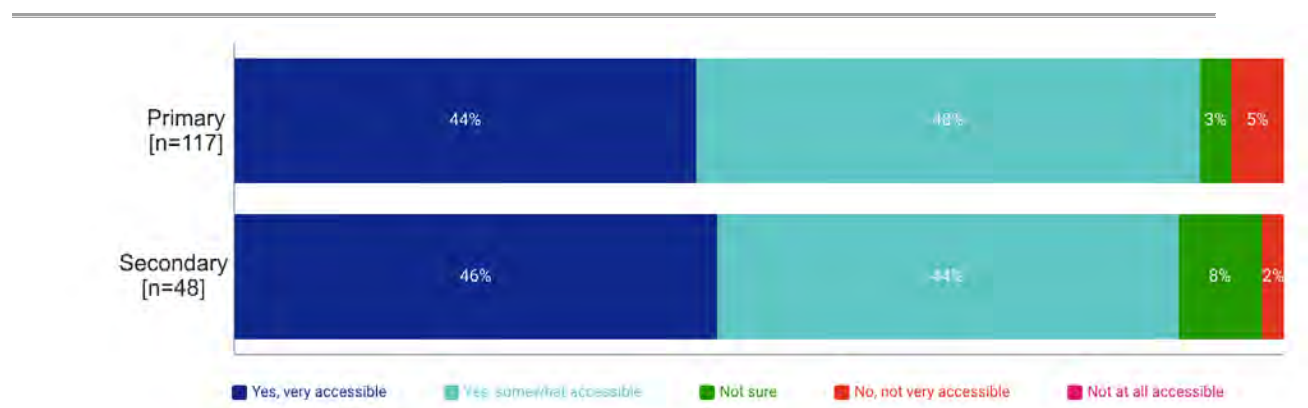
### A broad and flexible approach

5.2 Most respondents from primary and secondary schools felt that the Reading Challenge was flexible and accessible.

Do you feel that the Reading Challenge is flexible enough to suit the needs of your school/library?



Do you feel that the Reading Challenge is accessible enough to all pupils in your school?





5.3 We deliberately gathered mainly quantitative data on these outcomes so that the surveys were short and easy to complete.

5.4 Comments from survey respondents indicated that they valued the support and resources provided through the Reading Challenge. As in previous evaluations, respondents appreciated the broad, flexible approach, but also felt that they would benefit from ideas, suggestions and examples.

“It seems that the Reading Challenge can be as flexible as one wants it to be. And that is one of the challenges for schools. It takes time reading all the many emails and highlighted bits that come through. Perhaps more information at the start and suggestions.”

**School librarian, Secondary**

5.5 Respondents greatly appreciated support in the form of funding or resources such as books and author visits, which would otherwise be costly to purchase.

“Funding is always an issue when you have big ideas that pupils will buy into.” **English teacher, Secondary**

5.6 A few respondents mentioned the webinars, which they had found valuable. And one respondent noted that they appreciated the way the Reading Challenge valued all the contributions from schools and pupils.

“I love how you share ideas from so many different schools and don't just favour a few who are already established as succeeding.”

**Class teacher, Primary**

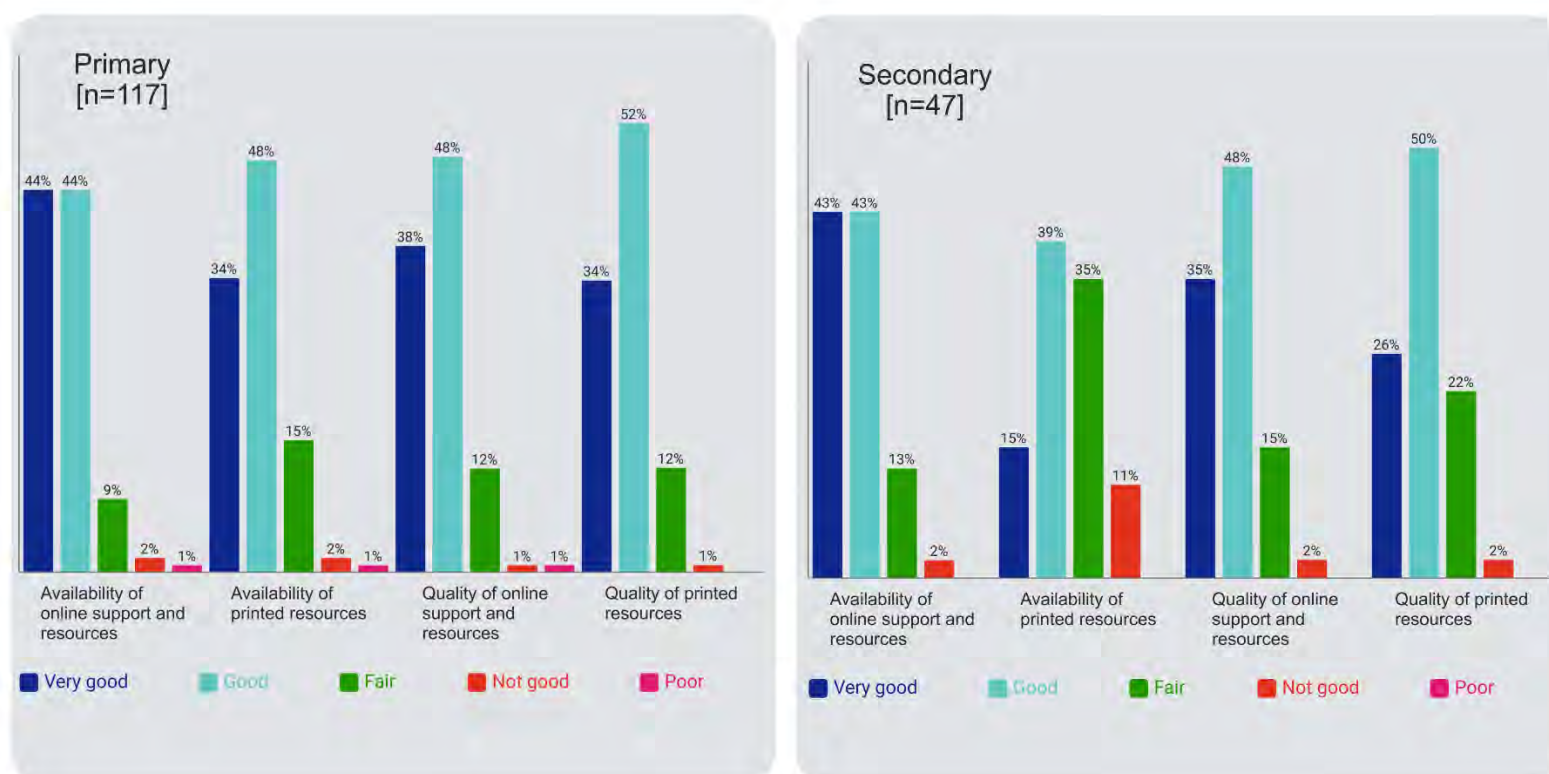
5.7 Overall, respondents indicated that they felt the Reading Challenge was well resourced and delivered.

“The FMRC's resources are invaluable as a catalyst for ideas.”  
**Literacy/Library Teacher, Secondary**

## Support and resources

- 5.8 Overall, most respondents to the school surveys said that they felt the support and resources were good or very good.

How do you feel about the availability and quality of support and resources that you have been provided?



- 5.9 Scottish Book Trust delivered a range of support and training sessions – both in-person and online. These sessions included training on building a reading culture, a book discovery series for school staff and information sessions for PGDE students.
- 5.10 During the school closures, Scottish Book Trust supported school staff with blended learning. This included support on reading books aloud over video, developing teacher knowledge of children's books, and sustaining a reading and writing culture during lockdown.
- 5.11 Teachers, librarians and other practitioners attending the sessions commented positively on their experience. The comments indicate that the sessions were useful and motivating.

“Your webinar session was fantastic, concise and inspiring, I am full of ideas now and cannot wait to share it with my colleagues! Thank you very much for organising this.”

“I am inspired and can't wait to get started! An incredibly useful session, so glad I tuned in.”

“I loved hearing about all the ideas and opportunities that you provide. It was inspiring to see all the ideas and suggested activities - really makes me want to get back into reading myself and get it going in my classroom.”

**Support session attendees**

## Being sustainable

5.12 Most school staff responding to the survey felt that the Reading Challenge helped them develop new techniques to support reading for pleasure. Views were very similar between primary and secondary school staff.

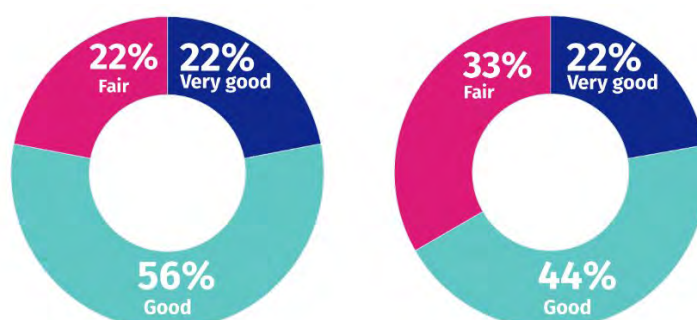
You develop new techniques to support reading for pleasure



## Libraries

5.13 Most respondents to the library survey felt that the resources available through the Reading Challenge were good or very good.

Views on the availability and quality of resources and support



## 6. Challenges and success factors

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### Introduction

- 6.1 This chapter explores the key challenges and success factors of the Reading Challenge. This chapter draws on the experiences and perceptions of the survey respondents from primary schools, secondary schools and libraries.

### What worked well

- 6.2 School and library respondents commented on the aspects of the Reading Challenge which worked well. The key successes were around:
- partnership working;
  - parental engagement; and
  - supporting wider literacy work.

### Partnership working

- 6.3 Primary and secondary school respondents said that linking up with libraries had helped with the promotion of wider initiatives and activities, and helped pupils to access reading groups and events.
- 6.4 Primary school respondents reported more engagement with libraries delivering shared events and activities. Whereas secondary schools reported using local libraries to a certain extent, but also worked with the school library and librarians.

“We have worked alongside the local authority Community Librarian to help us evaluate our current practice and things to do for the future.” **Principal teacher, Primary**

“We have a strong link with our local library with them visiting us and us visiting them!” **Class teacher, Primary**

- 6.5 Similarly, library respondents felt that partnership work had been successful, and had improved their links with schools, and their ability to engage schools in more reading-based activities.

“Our connection with local schools has improved greatly, this is also linked to the Summer Reading Challenge. We are about to start helping a local school with their paired reading scheme.” **Librarian, Library**

- 6.6 A few respondents said that they had engaged with community members to support reading for pleasure, or worked more broadly across the community.

- 6.7 A few respondents reported working with cluster primary schools and local care homes, with pupils reading to care home residents or infants. And one respondent noted that the local minister helped to judge the school's Reading Challenge competition, and local businesses supported the Reading Challenge by advertising events.

“Through the Inspiring Classrooms fund we were able to bring a storyteller into the library. This was a very new experience for the children in the class and they all enjoyed it and it broadened their views on what makes a good story.” **Library supervisor, Library**

## Engaging parents

- 6.8 Previous evaluations found that parental engagement was challenging for schools and libraries, and was an area for development. Comments from survey respondents this year indicated that schools and libraries were using the Reading Challenge to engage with parents.
- 6.9 Respondents said that parents were made aware of the Reading Challenge and some schools delivered whole family activities, school visits and family reading events. Reading Challenge resources, such as reading lists were also shared with parents to help them support pupils to read for pleasure at home.
- 6.10 Respondents described family activities which involved toddlers from cluster nurseries coming into the school to be read to by S1 pupils, or paired parent-child reading sessions.

“Our family reading lunches and use of Twitter have helped us develop a particularly strong link with our parents and families. They feel part of our reading journey as they can post 'reading messages' to us on Twitter and can participate in our reading lunches which encourage families to share reading together.” **Principal teacher, Primary**

- 6.11 One primary school reported that the book fair had been a particularly good method to engage pupils whose parents spoke English as an additional language.
- 6.12 In another primary school, the library partnership facilitated further work with a local parent's group. And one primary school started working more closely with parents at a community café.

## Supporting wider literacy work

- 6.13 As in previous evaluations, respondents said that they used the Reading Challenge effectively, in conjunction with other literacy initiatives and activities. In particular, a few respondents mentioned the Accelerated Reader programme. Some used this, and did not feel the need to engage in the Reading Challenge, and others felt that the Reading Challenge supported this programme.

“We are a renaissance [Accelerated Reader] school and do the Reading Challenge alongside this to further encourage reading for pleasure which is fully embedded in our curriculum.” **English teacher, Secondary**

“Before taking part in the FMRC we used Accelerated reading to encourage pupils to read for pleasure and choose books independently. FMRC has integrated well and fits nicely alongside AR.” **Class teacher, Primary**

“It is a work in progress as we have only completed one year so far but I think it will help to have the backing of a national body and the provision of research that SBT provides (stats, case studies etc) is invaluable to 'selling' reading for pleasure to staff.” **School librarian, Secondary**

“The FMRC has provided a great 'skeleton', back bone and support for us to flesh out our reading programme.” **Principal teacher, Primary**

- 6.14 As in previous evaluations, we found there was a mixed response to the Reading Passports. Some respondents found it useful, with one primary school class teacher noting that the Reading Passports helped them better understand what pupils were reading. They found it was a useful way to keep track of reading habits.

## Creative approaches

- 6.15 Schools described a range of events, activities and competitions they had delivered as part of the Reading Challenge. Broadly, these were a good way to engage pupils, raise awareness and demonstrate reading as a fun activity.

- 6.16 Some respondents noted that it helped when the approach was simple and did not excessively burden staff or parents.

“We have tried to share simple tips and strategies to encourage parents to reinforce reading as a valuable and enjoyable activity without placing any additional burden or pressure on them.” **Principal teacher, Primary**



- 6.17 Where schools, libraries and community partners had come together to deliver reading activities, these worked well, helping to form and cement links. A few respondents reported that they had formed links with authors or specific organisations (e.g. publishers) which had given them access to unique opportunities discounts or resources.
- 6.18 One primary school continued to actively engage pupils in the Reading Challenge, launching a 'Reading Challenge Week' through an online learning platform, during the school closures.
- 6.19 Some respondents offered particularly unusual or creative opportunities:

### **Secondary school**

- Reluctant readers were supported to read to infants and adults. They were also encouraged to create personalised stories for their audiences, linking reading with writing skills. The school found that this helped to build their confidence.
- Working with the local authority museums department to help design captions for artefacts in a new museum space.
- Running a regular 'reward and recognition' scheme, with a pupil selected as 'star reader' and given prizes each term.
- Developing closer links with the school science department, incorporating fiction books into science lessons.
- Incorporating outdoor learning into the Reading Challenge activities, building dens as part of a project linked to the class novel.

### **Primary school**

- Using the Reading Challenge in interdisciplinary learning, using books and stories across different subjects.
- Writing a weekly column in a newspaper.
- Using reading for pleasure to engage pupils who have additional support needs (some are nonverbal) and build on their learning by working on activities linked to the story.

### **Challenges and areas for improvement**

- 6.20 The onset of the coronavirus pandemic and subsequent school closures in March 2020 had an impact on some schools and some planned events. A few respondents noted that the activities they had planned would not go ahead, and that some of their initiatives were difficult to implement when pupils were learning from home.

- 6.21 Although we did not ask respondents directly about the challenges they faced, a few respondents from schools mentioned that they had challenges around the lack of staff, resources and buy-in from senior management.

“[[It] is a part of our overall literacy strategy but taking a bit of a back seat at moment with me as part time librarian only so much I can do.”  
**School librarian, Secondary**

- 6.22 Library respondents noted similar challenges as the previous year, in terms of limited staff and opening hours, and little interest from young people. This meant that they were restricted, in terms of how much they could engage with young people in the area.

- 6.23 A few respondents commented on the aspect of partnership work with schools. Some libraries found it challenging to engage young people in the Reading Challenge without the support of local schools.

- 6.24 We asked all survey respondents if they had suggestions for improving the Reading Challenge.

- 6.25 The most mentioned suggestions were for examples of best practices and digital resources. Some respondents felt that it would help to have structured or focused ideas, to kickstart the activity.

“[[More examples of how other schools are working. It is good that it is fully flexible but at the same time I feel like I am not sure that I am doing it 'right'.” **Principal teacher of English, Secondary**

- 6.26 In particular, some primary school respondents felt that the Reading Passports could be more accessible and engaging for young pupils if it had a different layout, or if it was a digital tool.

“[[Some children are not engaged with completing a Reading Passport as they do not enjoy writing. Using an app or another method to record books read might engage them more.” **Class teacher, Primary**

“[[The Reading Passports are not suited to our children with ASN or EAL learners. Our younger pupils have not been able to use their passports independently so adapting the resource for these learners would help.” **Principal teacher, Primary**

- 6.27 Respondents also suggested the following resources and ideas:

- more practical, downloadable resources;
- more promotional resources (such as pens, stickers, bookmarks);
- access to ready printed materials;
- resources that can be adapted for use in classroom and library settings;
- a list of freely accessible ebooks and audiobooks;

- information on digital storytelling;
- Twitter-based challenges for families to engage with;
- advance notice to help with forward planning for schools;
- online events with authors;
- differentiation of resources for pupils at different levels, with ASN or EAL;
- more updates, events and communication through the year, to keep schools focused; and
- a sharing system for expensive resources – so schools can borrow from each other.

## 7. Return to school survey

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### Introduction

- 7.1 During October 2020, we conducted another survey with schools. The aim of this survey was to understand how the Reading Challenge had been used by schools during the 'lockdown' period from March to June 2020, when pupils were educated from home.
- 7.2 The survey asked respondents if their school had engaged in the Reading Challenge during this time, what worked well and what was challenging. The survey was predominantly qualitative using open questions, with a view to gathering views and experiences, rather than quantitative data.
- 7.3 This chapter sets out the findings from the survey.

### Delivery during 'lockdown'

- 7.4 Most respondents indicated that lockdown and closure of schools to most pupils had disrupted their Reading Challenge plans, at least partially.
- 7.5 Of the respondents, 73% said they had engaged their pupils in the Reading Challenge during 2019/20, with 27% saying that they had not engaged. Of those who had engaged, around a quarter said that they had registered to take part, but stopped part way through.
- 7.6 Some respondents indicated that their plans were not interrupted, or that they were able to adapt and deliver activities remotely. One teacher noted that most of the Reading Challenge activities had already been completed by March, in time to submit an entry to the Challenge, and so they did not feel the need to focus on the Reading Challenge during lockdown.
- 7.7 Broadly, respondents said that they were able to maintain some activity with pupils, such as individual reading activities. However, they found it more difficult to deliver group, whole class or whole school activities. And several respondents noted that they missed the whole school events and celebrations that formed a substantial element of the school's Reading Challenge output.

“It was more difficult to maintain the whole school challenge but individual class activities were easier to adapt and encourage.”  
**Principal teacher, Primary**

“However, we missed out on opportunities for face to face discussion and support plus other book-related events we would also hold in school.” **English teacher, Secondary**

- 7.8 Respondents said that they used a variety of different communication methods and platforms. Many respondents said that they engaged well with pupils and families via email, messaging apps (such as SeeSaw), Twitter and GLOW. Some said that they used specific platforms such as Google Classrooms or Microsoft Teams to deliver schoolwork and wider activities, such as the Reading Challenge. A few respondents said that they made telephone calls to pupils' homes, or did socially distanced garden visits, which worked well and provided an opportunity for more direct contact.

“As an authority, we used our online google classroom to share links specifically about Reading Challenge activities, such as sharing a direct link to the website.” **Class teacher, Primary**

- 7.9 There were mixed views on the use of online platforms. Some respondents found them very useful, whereas others did not find there was good engagement. For most respondents, teaching remotely was a new experience which they had to adapt to very quickly. Some found that once they became familiar with the technology, they were able to make good use of it.

“While we initially struggled to get our children online and learning once we did we had a large uptake in online learning and the use of Microsoft Teams really helped staff feel confident in communicating reading the way they would in the class with their pupils.” **Principal teacher, Primary**

## Types of activities

- 7.10 Staff used online platforms to continue delivering Reading Challenge activities such as quizzes, creative challenges, dares and book reviews. Some were able to continue challenges such as ‘get caught reading’ or to promote ‘drop everything and read’ sessions. And a few noted that they encouraged pupils to create a ‘reading den’ or make use of outdoor spaces for reading activities. They also used these platforms to share Reading Challenge resources for pupils, or links to Scottish Book Trust resources.

“The upper school accessed the reading passports and the digital versions were easy to use for remote learning. They also provided a way for pupils to share their favourite books and home learning which they could complete at their own pace.” **Class teacher, Primary**

- 7.11 Where possible, staff adapted activities, such as book clubs and Storytime sessions, online. Some were able to deliver live sessions, and others recorded these and shared them as short films.

“Storytime and Snack - The allocated time where children enjoyed a story and snack in school with their class teacher was moved onto an online platform allowing children the opportunity to view live

storytelling sessions or recorded ones when it was convenient for them.” **Principal teacher, Primary**

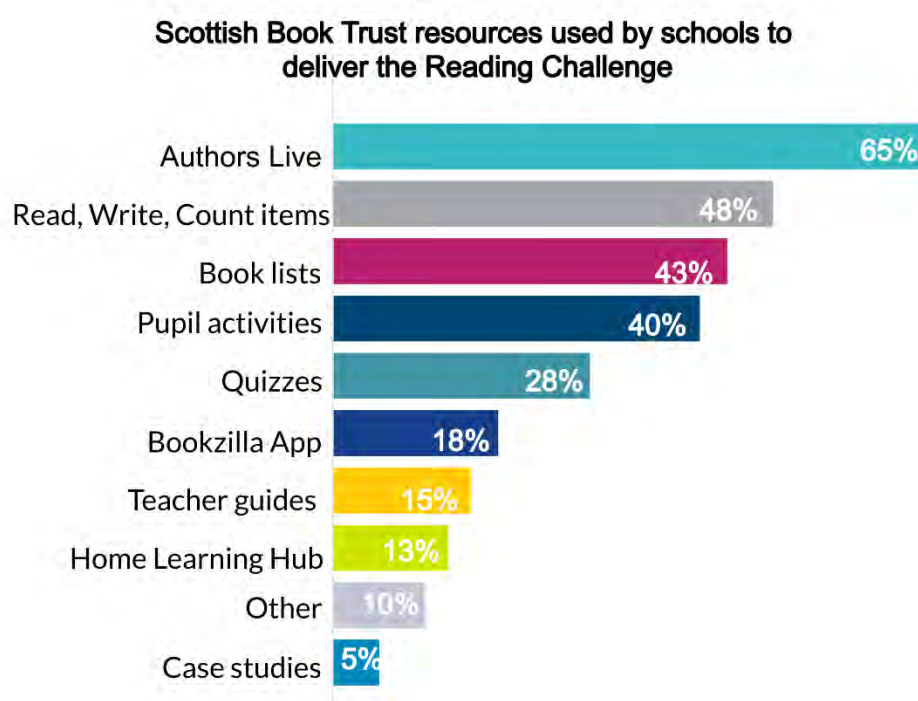
“They loved listening to stories read by staff online and they also liked books being set by the class teacher to do novels studies.”  
**Head teacher/deputy head teacher, Primary**

- 7.12 Some respondents indicated that they continued to model positive reading behaviours and practices by sharing photos of themselves reading, or videos of themselves reading aloud or reviewing books or providing recommendations.

“I created P1-3 and P4-7 reading classrooms using google slides. Each teacher read a story with author permission and used their bitmojis to create a reading area for each stage in the school.”  
**Principal teacher, Primary**

## Using Scottish Book Trust resources

- 7.13 Most respondents commented positively on the resources available through the Scottish Book Trust website. Most had used at least some of the resources, with Authors Live and Read, Write, Count resources the most popular.
- 7.14 Two respondents commented that they used wider resources, beyond the Scottish Book Trust for their Reading Challenge work. One respondent said that they used the Accelerated Reading programme and another said that they created their own resources based on the Active Reading programme.



- 7.15 Staff felt that the interactive resources, such as Authors Live or quizzes led by teachers were particularly beneficial when pupils were learning remotely. They felt that during the lockdown pupils needed to be guided towards activities and needed more encouragement to engage.

“Authors Live was a tremendous resource for remote learning. Our pupils really enjoyed watching the events and completing follow-up response activities.” **Class teacher, Primary**

“Children enjoyed taking part in quizzes as teacher suggested activities more than choosing and reading their own selection of texts.” **Head teacher/deputy head teacher, Primary**

- 7.16 One respondent felt that, because of poor internet bandwidth in their area, resources that were printable and could be sent home were the most useful. Some respondents also felt that the book lists, home learning hub and resources aimed at teachers were helpful.

“Teachers guides supported me to adapt and plan activities. The Read, Write, Count items are really adaptable.” **Class teacher, Primary**

“Reading lists were helpful if parents contacted us and asked for recommendations - we directed them to the SBT site.” **Head teacher/deputy head teacher, Primary**

## Flexibility of the Reading Challenge

- 7.17 Most respondents felt that the Reading Challenge was flexible and allowed them to adapt to the new model of teaching remotely.

- 7.18 The approach varied across schools. Some respondents said that they were able to supply pupils with Reading Passports and books to take home, so were able to continue activities.

“It was flexible enough for those children with access to reading materials at home.” **Class teacher, Primary**

“Yes, as we concentrated on continuing to read as much as we could.” **Class teacher, Primary**

“We worked to provide content online for children to read as well as encouraging them to read other genres.” **Anonymous**

- 7.19 However many commented that the wider challenges around engagement, access to resources and other priorities meant that they were unable to engage as they would have liked to. Some respondents felt that despite the flexibility of the Reading Challenge, the extreme change in circumstances prevented them from continuing Reading Challenge activities.



““Could have been but encouraging pupils remotely was very difficult - in fact almost impossible. Many did not engage with school work let alone reading.” **Anonymous**

““It might have been flexible enough but it was the model that our school decided to go on that prevented me from continuing with the work - I wasn't working with my own classes during lockdown but rather was given responsibility for the Higher cohort.” **Anonymous**

““Yes, the fact that we stopped was more down to pressures on staff - encouraging reading for pleasure fell down the list of priorities at the start of lockdown.” **Anonymous**

- 7.20 Some respondents noted that despite the challenges and interruptions in activity, they were doing as much as they could, and would be increasing activity.

““Yes, but my efforts were required elsewhere. We have restarted this year with gusto!” **Anonymous**

““Due to a change in school management and staffing, we hadn't fully managed to drum up engagement for the 2019-20 session. We would like to do it this session though.” **Anonymous**

## **Adapting to new methods of engagement**

- 7.21 Respondents gave mixed views on how pupils and families adapted to remote engagement with the Reading Challenge. Some were very positive and felt that pupils and their families engaged well. Others did not feel that there was good engagement from pupils.

““Some took great pride in the amount and scores of their reading, others did no reading.” **Head teacher/deputy head teacher Primary**

““I think children found it quite difficult to adapt.” **Principal teacher, Primary**

- 7.22 Many respondents said that they had learned new skills and techniques for engaging pupils, which they would continue to use. Over half (62%) said they would continue to use these after pupils returned to school. And a small proportion (15%) said they would use these methods again if pupils had returned to remote learning.

““As a school our digital skills improved through the use of Twitter, Microsoft Teams and You Tube.” **Principal teacher, Primary**

- 7.23 Respondents commented on their improved skills around making videos and screen casting, which they felt had helped boost engagement and were generally useful skills to carry forward. Some respondents also felt that the online platforms were useful for managing and tracking homework. Some respondents noted that specific resources, such as Apple Teacher, Oxford Owl Reader and other online providers of books and reading materials were useful. One teacher said that as they are still not able to share books or send books home with pupils, these resources have continued to be well used.

“Once I had the hang of it, I found creating videos and screencasts useful.” **Librarian, Secondary**

- 7.24 However some respondents said that they had had little engagement with pupils via online platforms and that there were limitations to what they were able to do through online platforms. One librarian noted that because they did not have a class, they had reduced access to pupils. And one secondary English teacher said that in their local authority, they were not permitted to deliver live lessons, which limited their ability to engage with pupils.
- 7.25 Some respondents felt that as there was so little engagement with pupils, or because the focus was primarily on core literacy and numeracy, they did not communicate with pupils about the Reading Challenge.

“The Reading Challenge was put on hold on the whole.” **Class teacher, Primary**

“We found it difficult to communicate specifically about the Reading Challenge on top of other commitments and adapting to remote teaching and learning.” **Principal teacher, Primary**

- 7.26 Respondents commented that although some pupils engaged, the engagement was not as good as it would be within the school setting. They felt that many activities could not be adapted to remote learning, such as paired reading, group tasks and assemblies.

“I don't think that they engaged as well as they would have face-to-face. There were issues with non-engagement of students to online learning as a whole either due to technological barriers or not feeling motivated.” **Librarian, Secondary**

“Mixed response - easier to encourage engagement face to face.” **Class teacher, Primary**

- 7.27 Where there was good engagement, respondents felt that this was usually from pupils who engaged well at school or who had good support at home. Providing physical materials and hard copies of resources also helped pupils to continue engaging at home.

- 7.28 A few respondents noted that there was better engagement from younger pupils and those in early years, as parents and carer were more engaged and hands-on with their learning.

“The children who were able and enthusiastic about being online and doing school work engaged well. However, this was less than half the school population.” **Head teacher/deputy head teacher Primary**

“Parents were supportive and encouraged the activities of the challenges at home where they could and often took part themselves...For those with limited technology paper copies were dropped at houses.” **Head teacher/deputy head teacher Primary**

### What worked well

- 7.29 The key factors that enabled engagement in the Reading Challenge were:

- access to reading materials;
- dynamic activities; and
- parental support and buy-in.

- 7.30 Having access to appropriate materials and resources was important. Where pupils had access to digital materials (e.g. through school iPads or personal devices) this was straightforward. Some schools were able to send pupils physical resource packs including reading materials, and found that these worked well.

“Yes, the digital passports and online resources were a great remote learning support.” **Class teacher, Primary**

“Not all pupils engaged and it was about providing alternatives such as paper versions or doing garden visits to apply technology so they could contribute.” **Head teacher/deputy head teacher, Primary**

- 7.31 School staff also reported that pupils engaged differently depending on the type of activity. They found that pupils responded well to activities involving direct engagement, such as reading together or being read to via short films.

“If left to their own devices, not actually sure how much reading they actually got through...so reading to them was good as they could listen and we discussed the book every time we met up on Zoom.” **Librarian, Primary**

- 7.32 One teacher said that their school had distributed the yearly novel to all S2 pupils earlier in the year, and so all pupils in the year group had a shared novel which they could base Reading Challenge activities around.

- 7.33 Where parents were engaged and supportive, schools found that pupils were more likely to participate in Reading Challenge activities. For example, in one school, a group of parents initiated and led the Reading Challenge activity during lockdown.

“We found that some of our parents then created their own P2 family challenge at home to keep the pupils connected during lockdown.” **Principal teacher, Primary**

“Thankfully our parent body are really enthusiastic readers and support their children to access a wide range of reading material.” **Class teacher, Primary**

## Challenges

- 7.34 The key challenges for school in delivering the Reading Challenge were:

- engaging pupils;
- engaging families; and
- adapting to a new teaching model.

- 7.35 One of the biggest challenges schools faced during the lockdown was engaging pupils. Where, in the school and classroom environment, pupils had previously engaged enthusiastically in Reading Challenge activities, some schools found that pupil engagement decreased significantly.

- 7.36 Many respondents noted that there was an overall challenge in communicating with and sustaining engagement with them remotely. These difficulties were often linked to the broader unpredictable situation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

“It was difficult at times to reinforce the reading challenge during lockdown. We had to tread very carefully due to increased pressures on families and gentle encouragement to engage in home learning without causing additional stress was our main priority.” **Class teacher, Primary**

- 7.37 As discussed throughout this chapter, there were also practical factors affecting pupils’ ability to engage: their access to reading materials at home and their ability to access online materials.

- 7.38 Many staff commented that pupils who were not able to access the internet at home were not able to join in the online activities or access digital materials.

“Many of our students did not have a device at home or working internet to access materials remotely, for instance.” **Librarian, Secondary**

“Due to technological barriers, caring responsibilities and general disengagement, we had a difficult time getting many of our pupils to engage with online learning at all.” **Librarian, Secondary**

“Not all of our families had access to the technology to allow them to engage in this easily.” **Principal teacher, Primary**

- 7.39 Under normal circumstances pupils would have access to a wide range of reading materials through the classroom, school library and local community library. During the lockdown this access was greatly reduced. Some respondents noted that their pupils did not have a lot of access to books at home, with a few saying that they knew many of their pupils did not have any books or reading materials at home.

“We struggled with this as we couldn't circulate school books, the public libraries were closed and many children don't own their own books.” **Head teacher/deputy head teacher, Primary**

“Many of our pupils have no books at home.” **Class teacher, Primary**

- 7.40 Staff noted that some pupils did not seem to have the motivation to engage, either in school work or the Reading Challenge. They also noted that pupils and their families had many other competing priorities - not all families were able to engage to the same extent.

“We ensured that all families had access to devices but we still struggled to get families engaged.” **Head teacher/deputy head teacher, Primary**

“I think it was difficult, particularly if there isn't a reading culture within their home setting.” **Class teacher, Primary**

- 7.41 One primary school head teacher noted that they were planning to encourage more parental engagement as soon as possible by running parental engagement sessions with a focus on reading.

- 7.42 Some respondents said that parents were often struggling to adapt to the new circumstances, and were also overwhelmed with the volume and variety of digital resources.

“Our parents and pupils were already overloaded with different types of learning being sent to them, using all different formats.” **Head teacher/deputy head teacher, All through school**

- 7.43 Adapting to using new online platforms and teaching digitally was challenging for both school staff and pupils.

“Working remotely was a challenge for the whole school since we did not have a platform in place and had a steep learning curve.”

**Principal teacher, Primary**

- 7.44 One of the key challenges for school staff was to balance the teaching priorities. For some schools, simply getting some level of engagement with pupils was important. Staff reported that they felt they needed to prioritise wellbeing or core literacy and numeracy, over wider curricular activities such as the Reading Challenge.
- 7.45 Many respondents said that their priorities and responsibilities changed significantly during lockdown. Some respondents said they were focused on maintaining engagement with families and providing more general support.

“It wasn't a priority at that time.” **Head teacher/deputy head teacher Primary**

“The lockdown situation itself and our own learners complex support needs meant that our immediate focus was on supporting families and wellbeing of our vulnerable young people - they were not able at the time to access formal learning opportunities.” **Class teacher, Secondary Inclusion Support Service**

“Being able to keep in touch and finding the balance or not overwhelming families but also providing adequate support.”  
**Principal teacher, Primary**

- 7.46 Staff also noted that their own priorities and responsibilities changed under the lockdown. For example, in some schools, teaching responsibilities were altered or reassigned. And the availability of teaching staff, and their access to pupils was different to how it would have been in the school environment.
- 7.47 Staff found it difficult not only to engage with pupils effectively, but to monitor their progress. One respondent noted that they had to trust that pupils were working on tasks as they were not able to check their progress or see their work.

“There was a big element of trust for the Reading Challenge.”  
**Class teacher, Primary**

- 7.48 Some staff felt that the lack of a dedicated teaching environment and physical resources was a challenge. They felt that the school environment facilitated dynamic and active reading, which could not be achieved when pupils were reading individually at home.

“...nothing replaces the feeling and enjoyment of physical books.”  
**Principal teacher, Primary**

“I think that remote learning hampered 'book talk' between pupils, however, we endeavoured to share the pupils comments and ideas within classes where possible.” **Class teacher, Primary**

“The more motivated pupils engaged at home with this but we missed having the opportunity for pupils to be encouraged face to face and supported/motivated to keep reading and then to take part in a Challenge activity of their choice.” **English teacher, Secondary**

## Future support

7.49 Respondents were asked what other types of support they would find helpful, to facilitate blended learning or learning from home.

7.50 Many respondents said that they were very happy with the resources available, and that they had made use of them prior to and during the lockdown. In particular, respondents said they valued the Authors Live sessions, and would welcome more online storytelling and discussion sessions.

“I can't think of anything extra to what is already provided, and the Authors Live recorded events are really useful to link to.” **Librarian, Secondary**

7.51 The most repeated suggestion was for free reading resources, both as e-books or physical books. Some respondents felt that it would be useful to have a wider range of online reading materials, which would cater to the range of reading abilities and interests of pupils.

“A wide range of books which are banded according to PM benchmarking would be excellent.” **Acting Deputy head teacher, Primary**

“Any access to books online would be useful to support children who have limited availability at home. Any fun activities related to books which encourage children to participate in reading and discussing books/stories.” **Head teacher/deputy head teacher, Primary**

7.52 However, many respondents reiterated that not all pupils had access to the internet or suitable devices at home. One respondent felt that physical resources, such as books and magazines, were particularly valuable during a time when so much activity was delivered online. A few respondents added that it would be useful to include tasks, such as reading comprehension tasks, along with these.

“A lot of time was already being spent online for learning it would have been lovely for children to be able to disconnect or take a



break from technology and allow themselves the opportunity to enjoy a physical book or reading resource in their hands.” **Principal teacher, Primary**

“Free print books. I know it's a silly ask, but for our kids some of the only learning they will have completed in lockdown will have been reading books. They don't have the technology to access ebooks, and many of them have no books at home.” **Librarian, Secondary**

- 7.53 A few respondents also suggested that more training would be useful, particularly around how to facilitate the Reading Challenge online.
- 7.54 Some respondents also noted the need for greater awareness of the importance of reading, and reading for pleasure. They felt that Scottish Book Trust could do more to promote the importance and value of young people reading outside the school environment, and reading for pleasure. One respondent felt that the Reading Challenge needed to be improved, and that it should focus more on championing the work of schools and libraries.
- 7.55 A few respondents indicated that it would be useful for resources to be compatible with different online platforms, and to be easy to edit.

## 8. Conclusions

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### Introduction

- 8.1 Overall, the Reading Challenge was well received by the people we engaged in this research. Staff from schools and libraries responding to the surveys reported that pupils had benefitted from taking part.
- 8.2 In total, the Reading Challenge reached 803 registered schools and 73 registered libraries during 2019/20. The number of schools registering for the Reading Challenge decreased from 2018/19, for both primary and secondary, however the decrease is not as significant as in previous years, indicating that more schools are continuing their engagement. The number of libraries registered increased, indicating an increased awareness amongst libraries.
- 8.3 In March 2020, schools in Scotland were closed to most pupils and teachers, due to the coronavirus pandemic. This is likely to have had a significant impact on the Reading Challenge activity in schools, and submissions to the Reading Challenge, which were significantly fewer than the previous year.
- 8.4 Our survey, conducted in October 2020 after pupils returned to school found that the period of school closures prompted many schools to use new and innovative methods of engagement with pupils. Some respondents noted that the sudden change in learning environment and methods posed particular challenges, in terms of the resources available and the priorities of each locality, school and family. Despite these challenges, many schools adapted their approach in order to continue delivering the Reading Challenge.

### Outcomes achieved

- 8.5 The Reading Challenge has shown good progress towards all of its intended outcomes, particularly around the key outcomes focused on reading for pleasure and outcomes around integrating reading into school activity.
- 8.6 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 environments and priorities.

## **Outcomes around reading for pleasure**

8.7 Broadly, survey respondents felt that the Reading Challenge facilitated reading for pleasure amongst pupils, helping staff encourage pupils to read and empowering them to encourage reading for pleasure. Most respondents felt that pupils were:

- reading for pleasure more often;
- reading more widely; and
- understanding the value of reading for pleasure.

8.8 These outcomes were reported more strongly by schools, than by libraries.

## **Outcomes around developing a reading culture at school**

8.9 Most respondents from schools felt that the Reading Challenge helped to embed reading for pleasure into the school curriculum, and that they were empowered to encourage reading for pleasure. However, a third of library respondents did not feel that the Reading Challenge helped them obtain the support of colleagues or community members.

8.10 School respondents provided examples of how they had embedded reading for pleasure into the curriculum and where they felt there was room for development.

## **Outcomes around school, family and library partnerships**

8.11 Broadly, staff from schools and libraries felt that they had made better links and partnerships with each other. Predominantly, schools reported better links with libraries and parents, rather than community groups. And similarly, libraries reported better links with schools and parents, but not with community groups.

## **Outcomes around attainment**

8.12 Survey respondents reported a range of improvements in attainment around literacy, such as reading and writing skills. They also reported improvements in wider learning skills such as engagement, focus and motivation. Some respondents provided examples of improvement in attainment, and reduction in the poverty related attainment gap. Importantly, some respondents reported that this was a measurable impact that they attributed, in part, to the Reading Challenge activities. This is a significant outcome for the Reading Challenge. In previous evaluations, respondents felt unable to comment on changes in attainment. Respondents' willingness to share examples indicates that over time, the Reading Challenge is having an impact on attainment and that this is recognised by school staff delivering the activity.

- 8.13 The data shows that staff felt there was more impact than in previous years for pupils who have additional support needs, are identified as socioeconomically disadvantaged or who speak English as an additional language.
- 8.14 Over half of secondary school respondents felt that the Reading Challenge helped pupils to take on leadership roles and have their voices heard. However, over a third said that they did not feel this had been achieved, or were not sure.

## **Outcomes for libraries**

- 8.15 Broadly, library respondents felt that there was some benefit to engagement with the Reading Challenge but not always 'a lot' of impact. Library respondents felt that the Reading Challenges helped to engage young people and families, to a certain extent, but around half of respondents did not feel this way, or were unsure. However, most respondents felt that it provided a platform for the library to showcase its work.

## **Bookzilla**

- 8.16 The Bookzilla app received a mixed response from pupils and school staff. Broadly, pupils and school staff identified the same strengths and areas for development.
- 8.17 Overall, most people felt that the app was well designed and engaging. The challenges and dares were well received. However, they also felt that there were not enough books and the range of books was not wide enough to engage pupils. And many had assumed that they would be able to read books through the app, and felt that this function would improve the app and their use of it.

## **Delivery: What works well**

- 8.18 As in previous evaluations, survey respondents were happy with the way the Reading Challenge was delivered and administered. Most respondents were positive about the support and resources they accessed. And most appreciated the broad, flexible approach of the programme, which allowed them to use the Reading Challenge to support wider literacy work.
- 8.19 Respondents also felt that the partnership approach between schools and libraries had worked well, providing more opportunities for young people. And this year, more school and library respondents commented on positive engagement with parents, which had previously been challenging.

## **Delivery: Areas for development**

- 8.20 A few respondents commented on the challenges they faced, regarding lack of staff time and limited capacity. These are recognised challenges within the education sector, but are outwith the scope of the Reading Challenge to address.
- 8.21 Survey respondents offered suggestions for improvements. The most requested resource was best practice examples, to help guide activity or provide inspiration. Respondents also suggested improvements around digital resources, physical resources and online engagement. Schools that were not involved in the Reading Challenge said also that they would benefit from best practice examples, evidence of impact and free resources. They also noted that it would be useful to have contact with the Scottish Book Trust earlier in the school year.

