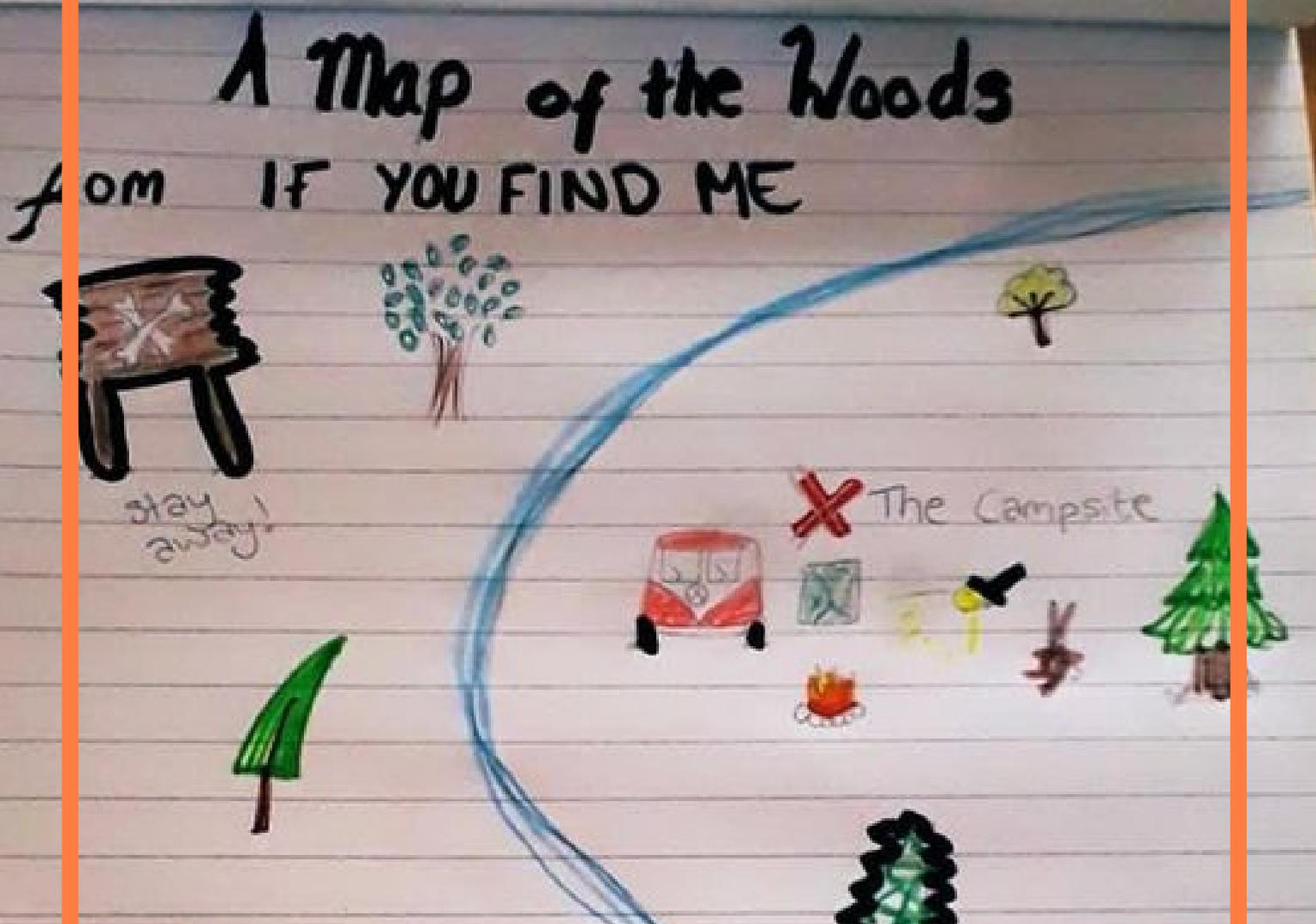


CONTENTS

1	Alford Academy
2	Blackwood Primary
3	Elgin Academy
4	St. Bridget's Primary
5	Webster's High School

ALFORD ACADEMY CASE STUDY



The First Minister's Reading Challenge



Alford Academy

This case study was developed through discussions with school staff, and using feedback gathered by the school from its staff, S2 and S3 pupils and parents.

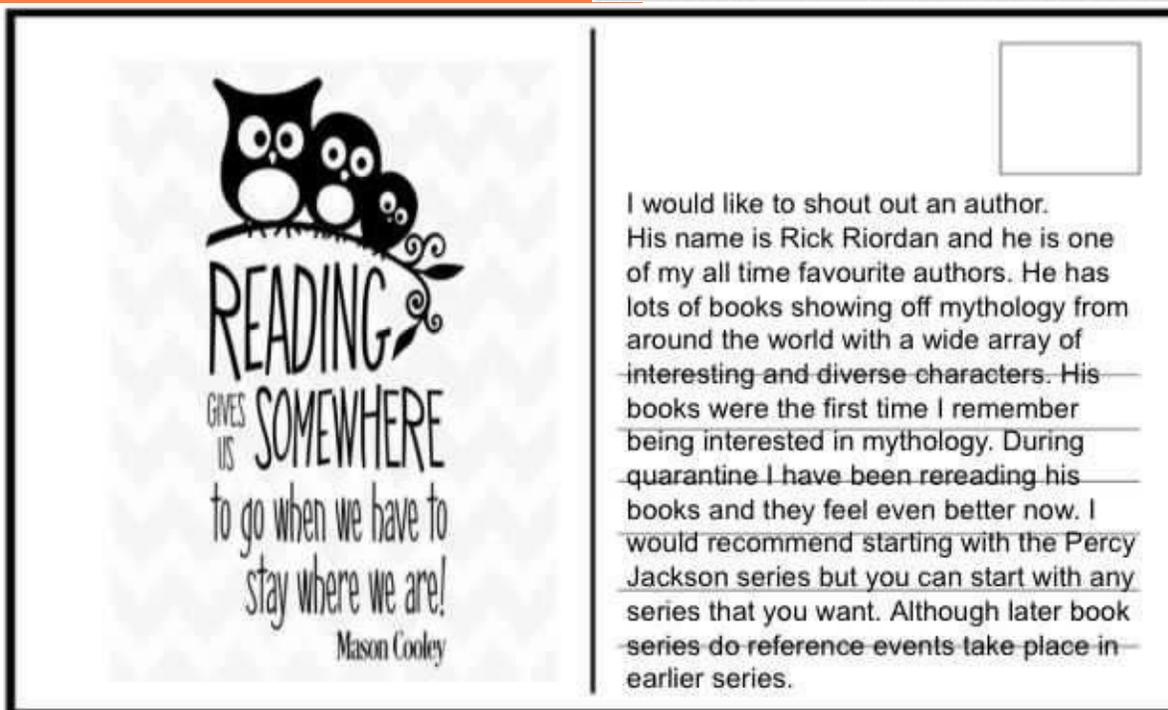
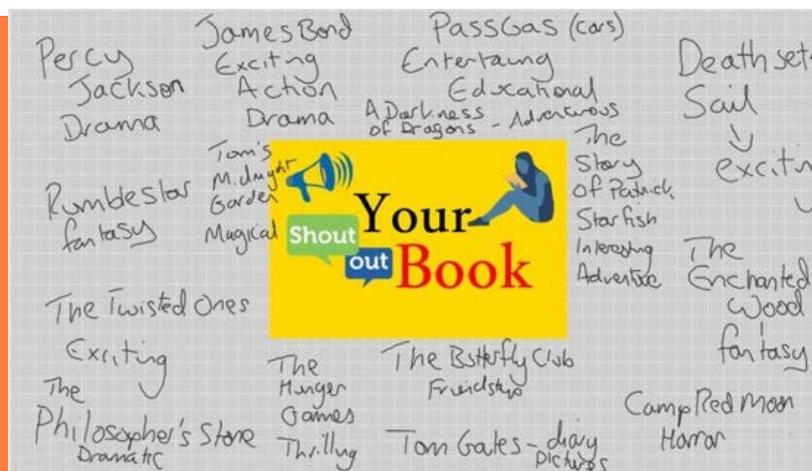
How did you adapt during lockdown?

Staff at Alford Academy continued to engage with pupils during the lockdown. They aimed to focus on supporting pupils' mental health as well as promoting opportunities to read for pleasure. In addition, they hoped that remote learning would encourage pupils to explore new texts and alternatives such as audiobooks.



We wanted the pupils to keep reading, also to give them a chance to have a bit of down time in the midst of everything.”

-Teacher-



Staff used a range of tasks, games and activities to keep pupils engaged. These included:

- **Book shout outs** - Sharing reading recommendations through Google classrooms.
- **Book bingo** – A grid of different tasks for pupils, with the aim of achieving a line, four corners or a full house.
- **Bubbles and Clouds** - Using speech bubbles and pictures of characters to draw a conversation between two characters.
- **Reflective responses** – Pupils shared their views on the benefits of reading in lockdown in response to a quote from Anne Frank's Diary: "Ordinary people don't know how much books can mean to someone who is cooped up".



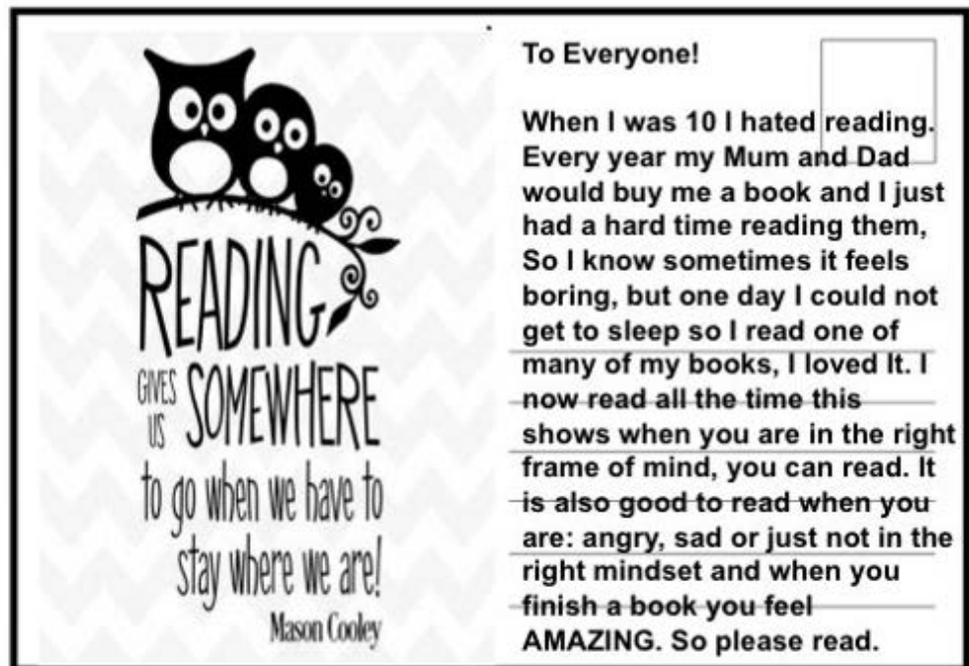
Staff also shared relevant, free resources with pupils so they could access audiobooks and reading materials. These resources came from a range of sources including the Scottish Book Trust website and the World Book Day website.

What worked well?

Broadly, staff felt that the Reading Challenge activities helped pupils to read for pleasure, read more widely and to understand the value of reading for pleasure. They felt that there were plenty of resources online, which were easy to share and adapt.

Staff commented that pupils engaged well with the Reading Challenge activities. For some pupils, the activities helped them engage in reading, where previously they had chosen not to. Some pupils expanded their range, trying new genres. And some pupils reported to teachers that they had more time to understand and enjoy a book, or to read through a series.

In particular, they felt that the Reading Challenge activities helped pupils to understand the value of reading pleasure, especially in the context of remote learning, which required a lot of screen time.



“ Starts with ‘I don’t like reading’, to them being engrossed in a book!”
Parent

“ Slower readers have enjoyed the benefits of audiobooks and have even moved on to actual books after listening.” Teacher

“ Pupils have realised it is good to have a break from a screen and recognise reading as an alternative.” Teacher

One teacher commented that for pupils with additional support needs, reading at home helped to remove the stigma involved in selecting something to read and the form it came in, as they could not see what others were reading.

Pupils themselves commented that the Reading Challenge activities helped them to relax, and was a less stressful way to pass the time during lockdown.

Staff noted that pupils became more active readers, as they had to choose what to read for themselves, and were choosing from a different range of books at home, than they would have at school.

“More responsibility over choosing own texts because they have had the opportunity to look at other options when the usual ones weren't available.” Teacher

Most pupils providing feedback said that they were reading more widely and more often. Pupils said that during lockdown they had more time to read, as they were less busy with their usual clubs and activities. Parents and pupils said that the Reading Challenge gave them something to focus on and something interesting to do. One parent noted that her child was reading more at home, because of the activities at school.



“A lot of spare time so finished books more quickly and read more.” Pupil

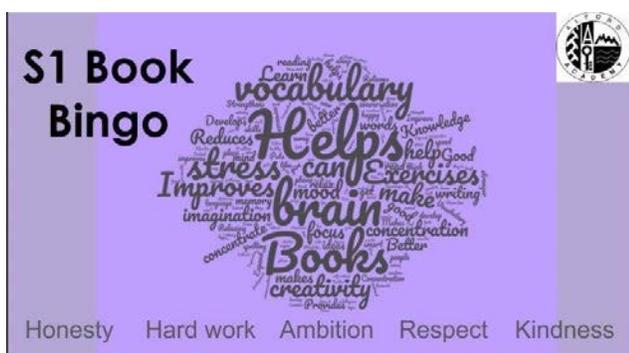
“Once the seed of reading has been introduced in an educational setting, reading for pleasure at home has been a natural, frictionless extension of this.” Parent

Some pupils said that they made good use of audiobooks and podcasts. Pupils said that they enjoyed audiobooks as they were relaxing and helped them to visualise the story. Those who were not keen on reading found that they were more able to engage through audiobooks and podcasts. And a few noted that they enjoyed podcasts because they were factual, and felt that this was a good way to learn about the world.

They enjoyed having an activity to do that did not involve looking at a screen. And a few noted that reading helped them continue developing their vocabulary skills. A few pupils also noted that it helped them establish a better evening routine, reading every night before going to bed.

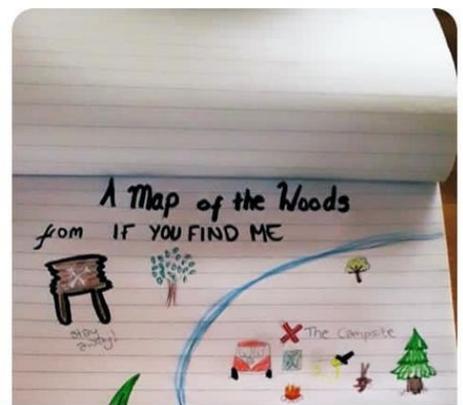
Parents said that they appreciated the efforts made by the school and felt that their children engaged well in the Reading Challenge activities. Most parents said that they valued reading for pleasure with their children, and that the Reading Challenge helped facilitate this.

One parent noted that her son was always more relaxed and happy after the reading, and she felt it had a positive impact on his wellbeing.



AlfordEnglish
@AlfordEnglish

One of our BGE pupils responding to one of our personal reading bingo challenges - draw a map of the area your book is set in 🌍 📖 👏
#personalreading
#learningfromhome



Add another Tweet

“...got you away from computer.” Pupil

“Helps calm your mind before going to sleep.” Pupil

“We both enjoy reading for pleasure and discuss books regularly.” Parent

“ [Pupil] was initially very engaged with the Reading Challenge tasks and I would estimate that the quantity of his personal reading increased due to this.” Parent

Parents also felt that the games and challenges helped motivate pupils to read more, and gave them opportunities to try new genres. One parent felt that the Reading Challenge activities supported their child's wider learning, increasing their knowledge and facilitating discussions around class topics.

What next?

The school hopes to continue developing the presence of the Reading Challenge in the school community, through classroom libraries, the school blog and Twitter account.

Staff said that the Reading Challenge helped them to develop strategies to help with reading and to encourage reading for pleasure. Importantly they felt that this reading culture was growing across the whole school, not only within the English faculty.

“The Reading Challenge has consolidated the reading skills that they already possess, as well as help to expand their general knowledge and vocabulary.” Parent

“FMRC has definitely encouraged us along our path to improve the reading life in the school and therefore improve literacy levels. We are looking forward to building on what we have started and seeing the long term benefits.” Teacher



Catalyst
by Laurie Halse Anderson
I have just read Catalysyt and I loved it. I could not put it down. There were so many up and downs. I'm looking to find more books by this author because she used great adjectives and description. I could see the places she described. I highly recommend it.

A Map of the Woods

from IF YOU FIND ME



stay
away!



The Campsite



Good for fishing





BLACKWOOD PRIMARY

RAINBOW WARRIORS

LITERARY GROUP



The First Minister's Reading Challenge

Blackwood Primary

Rainbow Warriors Literary Group

This case study was developed based on feedback from a principal teacher, two parents and 19 pupils.

Background

During the lockdown from March to June 2020, P2 pupils at Blackwood primary school took part in a story writing project.

The project was initiated by two parents who developed the idea as a way of keeping their children and families connected during the lockdown. Initially, the idea was to create a book of stories to raise money for the NHS, and to recognise the children's achievements. Parents said that the project was designed to be “a story by our children, created to connect our children.”

The school was delighted with the proposal for the story writing project. The principal teacher noted that the Reading Challenge is now embedded into school activity and recognised by parents as a valuable element of the curriculum.



It's a really positive sign of how embedded it is." Principal teacher



The project

Pupils in P2 developed a story about a boy who pressed a rainbow and went on a journey to magical places. The story began with a prologue, 'The Rainbow Button' written by a parent. Pupils then added the chapters of the story.

Each pupil wrote or illustrated a part of the character's journey, detailing what he did and where he travelled.

Each section of the story was added to a shared Facebook group, so pupils could follow the progress of their character.

The pupils were inventive and sent their character on a creative and exciting adventure:

“

My story was set in the leisure centre and he went into a basketball game.

He went in a jungle and he got magical berries. His world was grey and when he ate a coloured berry he changed colour.

The boy got into lego land and he swam in some lego. A giant lego megalodon came and ate him!

He went to Harry Potter and chose his house and he chose Gryffindor. He met Harry Potter, Ron and Hermione.

The boy went to a land of candy and three fairies were stuck in icing. He got some bananas and strawberry laces to pull them out the icing.

He went to outer space and he saw rainbow aliens that changed colour. He built a rocket.”

”

“ I am pleased to say that we managed to get everyone from the Primary 2 class to submit a story! We felt that it was important that all the Primary 2 children were included.” Parent

“ I am immensely proud to have been co-facilitator of the project ...It was a lot of hard work and coordination however the joy it gave to the children made it all worthwhile.” Parent



“ I think it’s that sense of belonging for them when they’re at home.” Principal teacher

“ It gave me company and I felt people were there.” Pupil

“ It helped me use my imagination.” Pupil

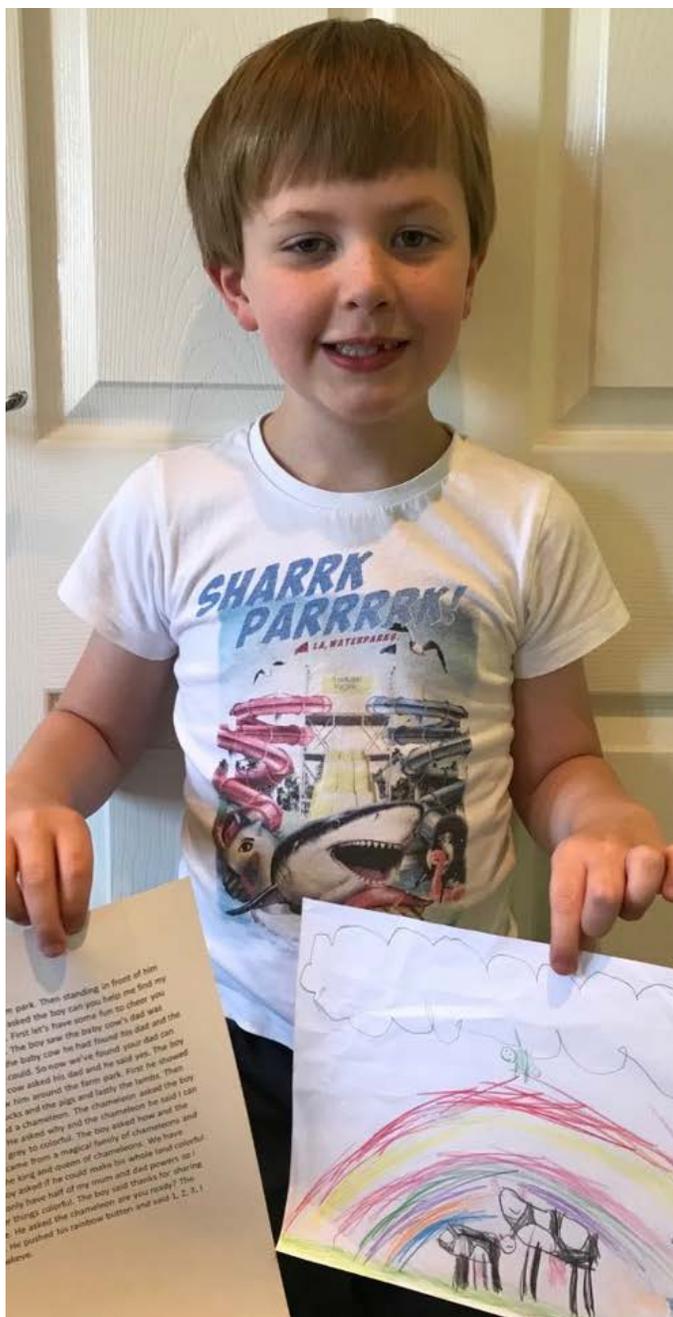
Pupils said that they enjoyed writing and illustrating the story. Some said that they enjoyed working on the project independently, and others said that they enjoyed writing the story with their parents. Parents also said that they enjoyed the project. Whilst some found it challenging to tap into their creative skills at home, every pupil from the P2 class submitted a story for the book.

What worked well?

The pupils and principal teacher felt that the story writing project helped bring pupils together, which was particularly important while the school was closed and pupils could not come together.

Pupils noted that the project encouraged them to use their imaginations, and to read more at home. They enjoyed reading what their friends had written and seeing everybody’s work come together.

The principal teacher noted that the activity pulled together a range of literacy skills, including structuring and visualising a story. Pupils reported that taking part in the story writing project helped them with their reading and writing skills. In particular, they commented on improvements in their handwriting, spelling and vocabulary. A few pupils commented that the project helped them develop a growth mindset.



“ It helped practise my spelling for when we came out of lockdown.”
Pupil

“ ...it helped with using finger spaces, it helped make our handwriting better.” Pupil

“ Without knowing, she was practicing her handwriting, sentence structure, reading and drawing but in a way that she enjoyed.” Parent

The principal teacher felt that the project supported pupils to use and develop a range of skills. Although the school already works closely with parents, this project provided a new way for parents to support their child's learning.

“ This project not only encouraged and highlighted the gifted and creative talents of our children but it also connected families, a school and a community during a very challenging time.” Parent

Another parent noted that the project helped her to focus during lockdown, whilst she was shielding, working and caring for two children. She particularly appreciated the way that the project helped the families to connect and get to know each other better.

“ It gave me a focus out-with the craziness of lockdown and helped the children stay connected with their peersI got to know the children and parents in my daughter’s year much better as a result.” Parent

The parent who had initiated the project felt it had been very successful in its aim of connecting pupils. They also felt that it brought the community together to focus on a common goal. They noted that although there was no pressure or requirement to take part, the majority of families chose to engage in the project.

“ It is something I am very personally proud of and I will always think that in some way our little project was something ordinary which became something quite extraordinary!” Parent

“ This project not only encouraged and highlighted the gifted and creative talents of our children but it also connected families, a school and a community during a very challenging time.” Parent

One parent, who had helped to start the story with the prologue, and after reading all the pupil stories, she has been inspired to finish her own ‘Rainbow Button’ story.

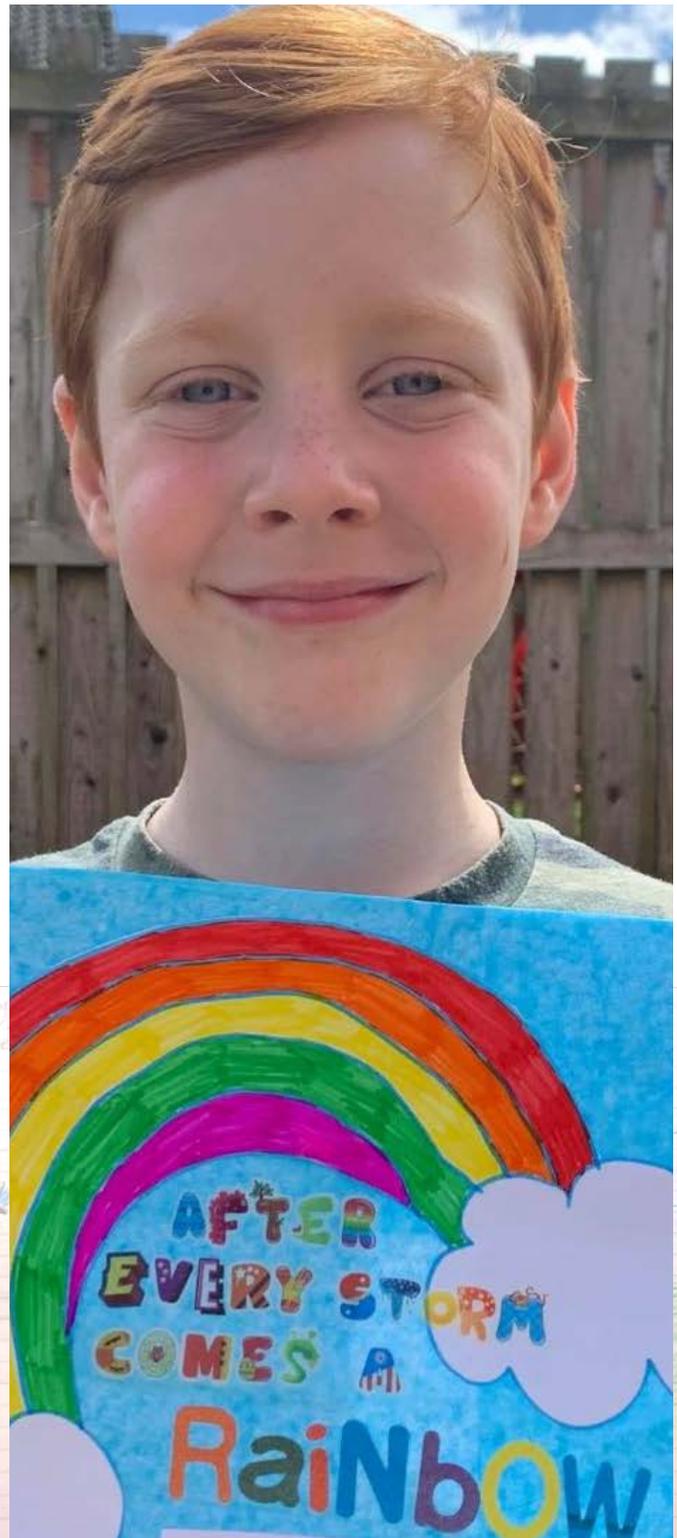
“ ...2020 has been such an unpredictable and at times difficult year for people and this story has helped to inspire so many.” Parent

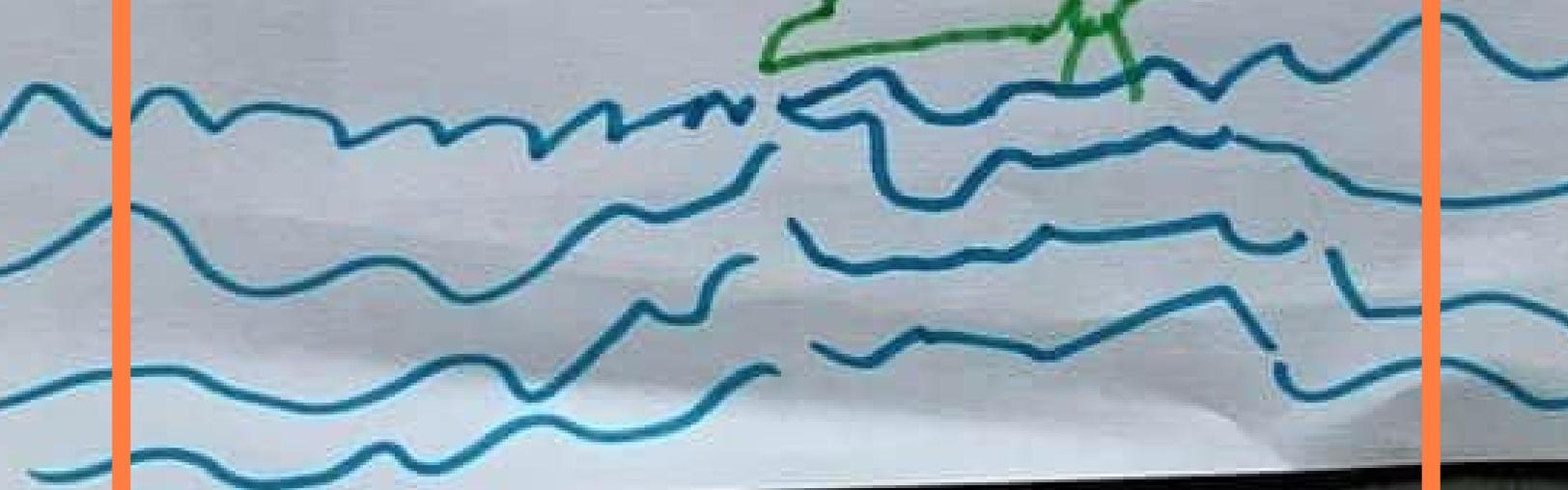
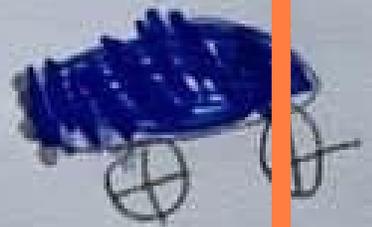
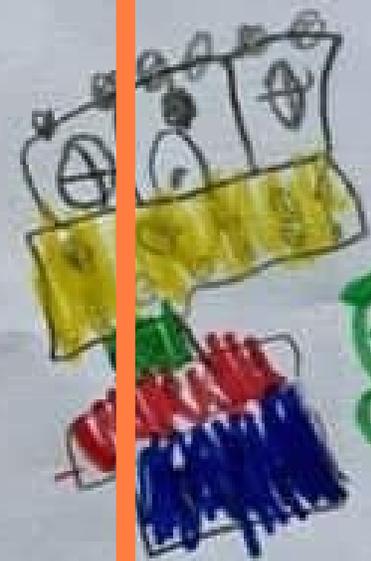
What's next?

In June 2020, pupils, parents and teachers were delighted to win the Pupil Reading Journey award. Having won the Pupil Reading Journey award, the school is now ready for a new year of reading challenges and activities.

“Everyone was delighted and felt so proud of what our Primary 2s had achieved. We still can't believe we won!!!” Parent

The school intends to print copies of the story for the pupils once the pandemic is over. It also hopes to sell copies of the story to raise money for the school and the NHS.







ELGIN ACADEMY CASE STUDY

The First Minister's Reading Challenge

Elgin Academy

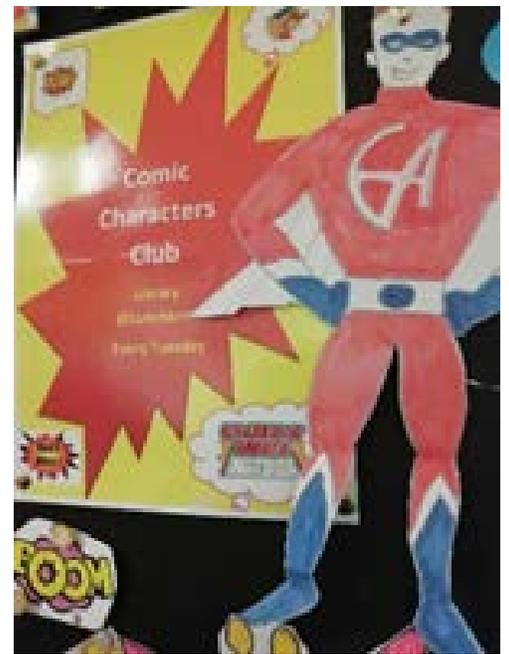
This case study was developed based on feedback from the school librarian, nine pupils and one teacher.

Background

Elgin Academy has been engaged in the Reading Challenge for two years. It is primarily led by the school librarian but has been well received by staff across the school.

Reading Challenge resources and posters are displayed throughout the school, including the "What am I reading" signs on classroom doors. The school runs a range of reading activities for staff and pupils including:

- Comic characters book group
- Novelties book group
- Reading Ambassadors
- Staff book group
- Regular reading events, competitions and author interactions



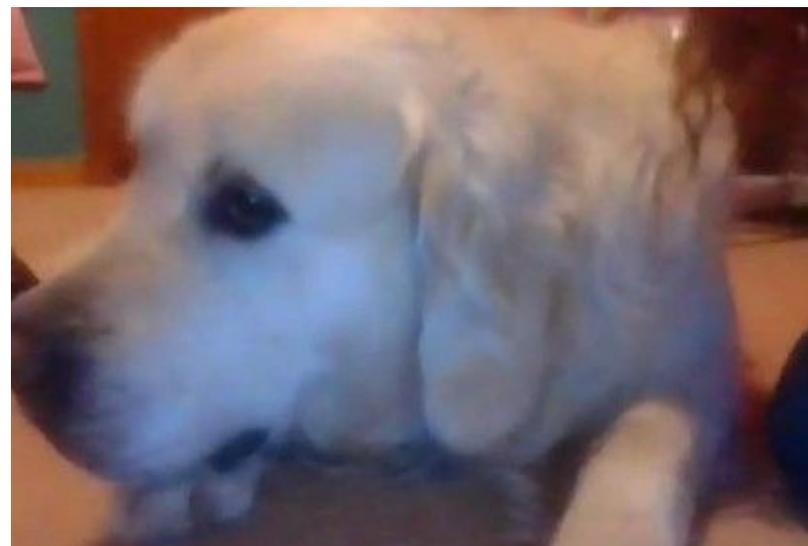


How did you adapt during lockdown?

Ongoing engagement

During the lockdown, when pupils were educated from home, the school librarian moved all the book groups online and created an online bulletin board and a virtual library website. She also worked with the other school librarians across the local authority to share ideas and book recommendations for pupils.

Pupils and staff were able to continue meeting for their weekly or monthly book clubs, via Teams. And they used dedicated Teams channels to share information.



Pupil led engagement

Pupils from one book club also met online via Skype, in addition to their weekly book club. They led their own extra-curricular reading activities, developed short films and conducted interviews with authors Danny Weston and Robin Scott-Elliot.

Interview with Robin Scott-Elliot

**Novelties Book Club
Spring/Summer Term Video**

The school librarian and school staff created short films to share their current reads and recommendations. These films were shared across classes and with pupils in the book clubs.



I feel that is important to be a reading role model. To tell young people what I am reading and I enjoy sharing my reading with my pupils.”



P7-S1 Transition Support

To support transitions for P7 pupils moving into secondary school, the school librarian developed a dedicated Teams channel which linked to staff from the five feeder primary schools. Through the channel she shared book recommendations and set up a challenge for pupils to design a poster of their favourite book that has been made into a film.

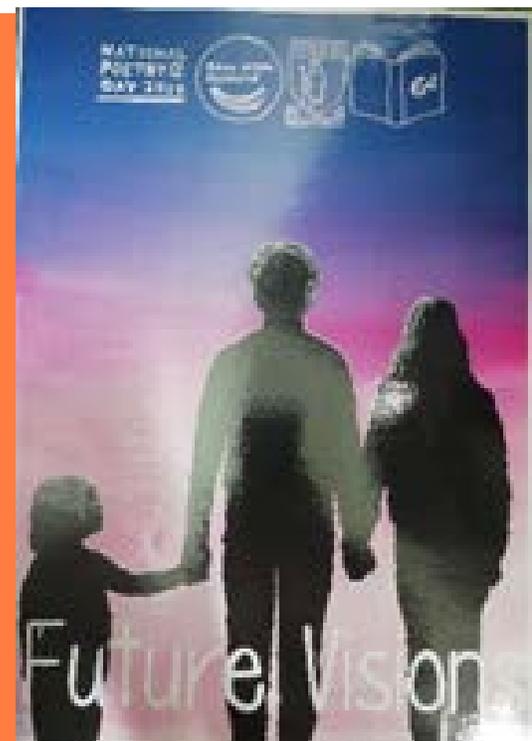
The aim of the work was to introduce P7 pupils to the school library and its resources, and to familiarise them and their parents with library staff.

Pupils from the Novelties book club also created a film for transitioning P7 pupils. The film introduced the book club and highlighted the range of book clubs and reading activities at school.



'Future Visions' project

In addition to the ongoing engagement with pupils via book groups and videos during lockdown, the school librarian created a reciprocal reading and writing project for pupils in S1 and S6. This was developed, also during lockdown with a colleague in the English department. The project started on National Poetry Day (1 October) and will finish during Book Week Scotland (16-22 November).



Impact on pupils

Pupils said that they enjoyed continuing their reading activities during lockdown. For most, the activity gave them a positive activity to do and helped them keep engaged with reading.



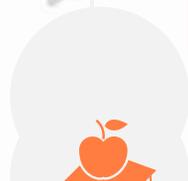
One pupil felt that the activities helped make her and her peers aware of how much they were reading. She noted that this varied, with some people reading more, and others reading less than they would have at school.

“It filled time when we were stuck at home with nothing to do.” Pupil



“We weren't reading as much because we didn't have a scheduled time to read. Some people read more though, to keep from getting bored.” Pupil

“It gave me a break from conventional school work.” Pupil



Another pupil, from the Novelties book club, noted that developing book reviews and recommendations gave him some direction with his reading, and helped him to read more widely.

A few pupils noted that without the ongoing activities, they would have found it difficult to return to school, and the volume of reading required.



“Making the videos gave me a good reason to read something I wouldn't usually pick up.” Pupil

“It helped keep up our reading for English. So when we came back we were in the swing of things.” Pupil



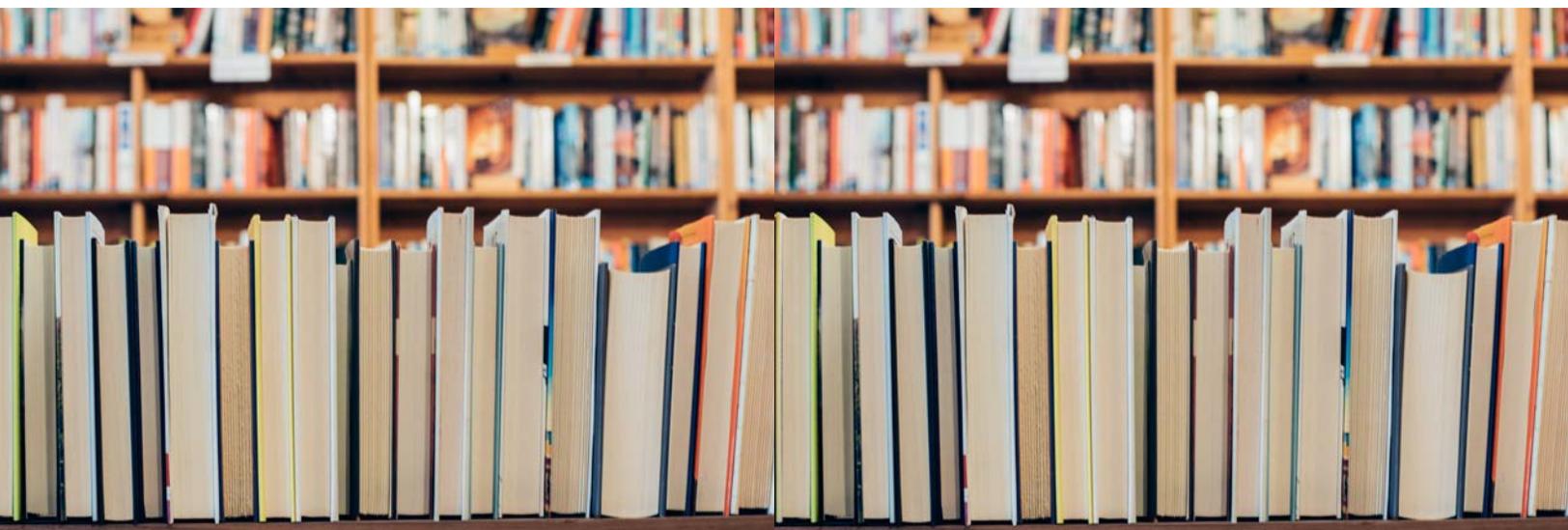
What worked well

Staff felt that the activities during lockdown worked well to keep pupils engaged and connected, both with staff and with their peers. The school librarian noted that she would normally have a lot of informal contact with pupils, but was concerned that after lockdown, there would not be a way to maintain this.

“ I thought I was going to lose contact with them, and I was really quite worried about it.” School librarian

She was pleased that pupils engaged with and returned to the online book groups each week. She was also happy to see that pupils took the initiative to continue their reading group through Skype. They would then update the librarian with their progress.

“ What I noticed was how well they all worked together.” School librarian



Returning to school

Since returning to school, pupils have continued to use the Teams channel and are also keeping online reading diaries. The librarian noted that this change is likely to remain, as they would prefer not to use paper reading diaries again.

The engagement with P7 pupils worked very well. Pupils seemed to enjoy the challenge and many have since joined the school book clubs after moving into S1.

“It meant that when the P7’s joined, I had a really good idea of who they were, they knew me, too.” School librarian

The Future Visions project is ongoing, and since returning to school, pupils have also been able to engage in socially distant paired reading sessions. To maintain safety only one pupil can hold the book during the session and all books are quarantined for a week after reading.

“The pupils love writing poems and letters to each other, to ask questions and give advice.”
School librarian



What was challenging?

Due to local authority regulations, not all staff were able to engage in video calls with pupils. For the librarian, this meant that she was only able to engage with pupils via audio. Whilst this was challenging, it also prompted the pupils to set up their own Skype group, so that they could engage in video conferencing and see each other.

Pupils said that whilst it was initially challenging to work as a team online, they soon became used to it. One pupil noted that working together online helped more pupils to contribute, in a way they wouldn't normally have participated at school.

One teacher also noted that relationships are key to supporting and encouraging reading, and that this was more challenging to achieve through virtual methods of engagement.

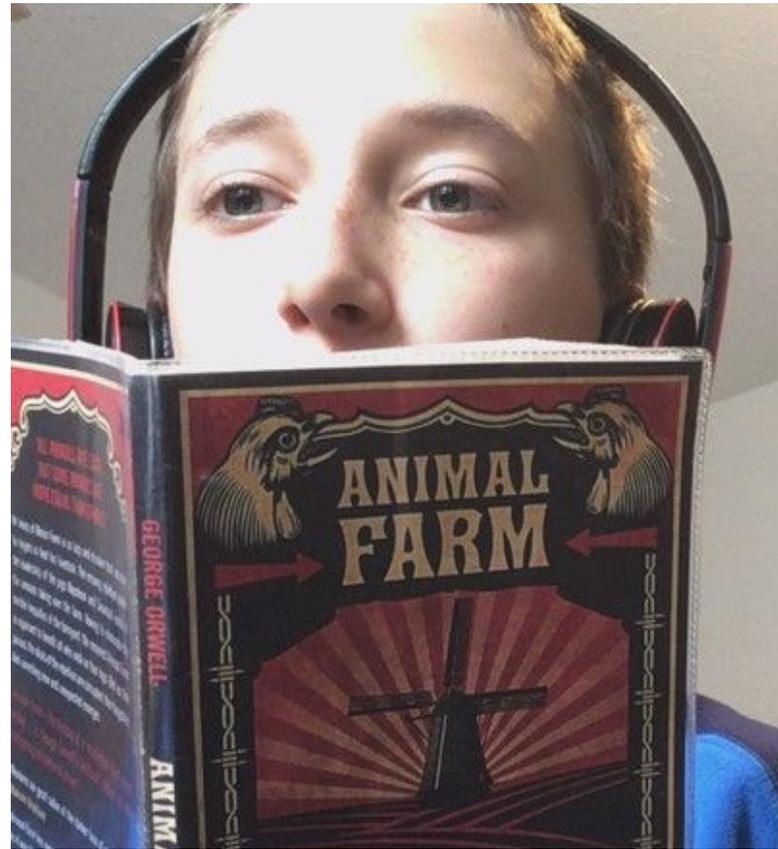


Lockdown forced us to learn different approaches about what we did in the classroom and to try to make it work virtually. Sometimes these worked and sometimes they didn't." Teacher

What next?

Pupils are looking forward to a range of Halloween themed activities, including a spooky story session, quiz and competition.

They are also planning activities and events for Book Week Scotland.





ST. BRIDGET'S PRIMARY CASE STUDY

The First Minister's Reading Challenge

St. Bridget's Primary

This case study was developed through discussion with the Principal Teacher, and feedback gathered by the school from its staff, pupils and parents/carers.

Background

St Bridget's primary school has been taking part in the Reading Challenge since 2016/17, when it won the School Reading Journey prize. Since then, it has used the Reading Challenge to create a structure for developing a reading culture and improving literacy.

The school is an important community hub, located in the centre of a housing estate. It serves many pupils from the most disadvantaged parts of the area.



I wanted to have a backbone for the work and to create a reading culture.” Principal teacher



Regular Reading Challenge Activities

The school is actively engaged in a range of reading activities. Staff have made use of practical resources from the Reading Challenge, Bookbug and Read, Write, Count, as well as various online resources from Scottish Book Trust, such as Authors Live.

Within the school, each class signs a reading pledge and Reading Challenge posters are prominent and visible around the school. Whenever possible, authors are invited to attend the school to read to pupils and encourage a love for reading and writing. These sessions are open to parents and carers as well, to encourage a whole family approach to reading at school and at home.

“When the authors come in, it makes me want to read the books.”
P6 pupil

Reading is also incorporated into the P1-P7 buddy programme. The pupils complete a Reading Journal together and use stories to explore their thoughts and feelings.

The school also runs a successful lunchtime ‘**Eat and Read**’ club. The club provides a relaxed and informal environment for pupils to read and have their lunch. There is no obligation to take part in formal activities or book reviews, and pupils can come and go throughout the lunch hour.

“It is lovely to see the Primary 7 develop positive relationships with their Primary 1 buddy through reading activities.” Class teacher

What has changed?

Over the past four years, St Bridget's has used the Reading Challenge to develop a strong reading culture across the school.

Pupils said that they enjoyed reading for pleasure, and that they understood the value of reading for pleasure. They reported reading a wide range of books and reading materials, and indicated that they were using books to develop their interests.

Some pupils also felt that their reading skills were improving, because they were reading more.

A few pupils commented positively on the Reading Passport, which they used to monitor their reading. A few pupils indicated that the Passport encouraged them to read more, or to challenge themselves.

“Overall, the Reading Challenge has had a positive impact on both children and teachers within the class, giving us all the chance to escape into another place.” Class teacher

“I like reading because it is good for your brain and it helps you learn. I especially like science books! Reading makes me happy because I get to imagine the story in my mind and help my imagination get better.” P3 pupil

“I know I'm getting better at reading because I am getting faster and understand the story better. I didn't always get some of the words before.” P5 pupil

“I think that I am getting better at reading and writing and I know more words.” P4 pupil

“I want to challenge myself to read 'chunkier' books not just easy books just so that I can fill in my passport.” P4 pupil





Parents spoke positively about their involvement in the Reading Challenge, and the impact they felt it had on their children. They felt that the school worked well to engage pupils in a range of reading activities.

“ I think that the school do a great job at making reading a daily routine and the kids all do it regularly. It is a great thing for kids that don't really like reading. Parent

“ I think the library card membership push has been brilliant because we are now down there more than before.” Parent

The school encourages parental engagement through shared reading programmes, social media and activities. One parent was involved in a digital storytelling project with their daughter. They worked together at the school over six weeks to create a short video about a story.

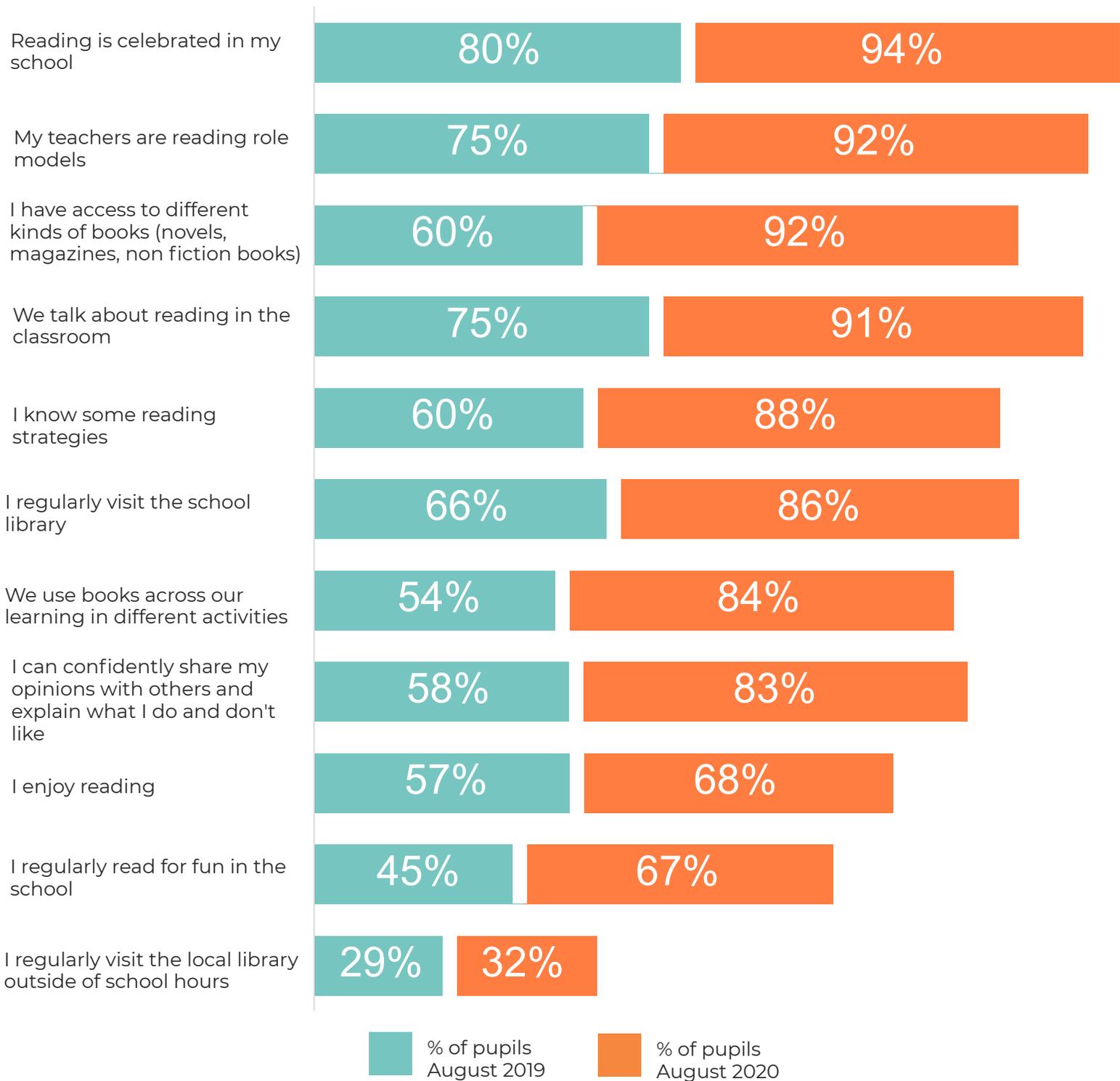
During 2019/20 the school worked closely with parents and the local library to achieve library membership for every pupil in the school. Pupils enjoyed regular visits to the library and are now more familiar with the library as a community resource, using it for wider activities, such as the coding club.

“ It was great learning a new skill and working with my daughter.” Parent

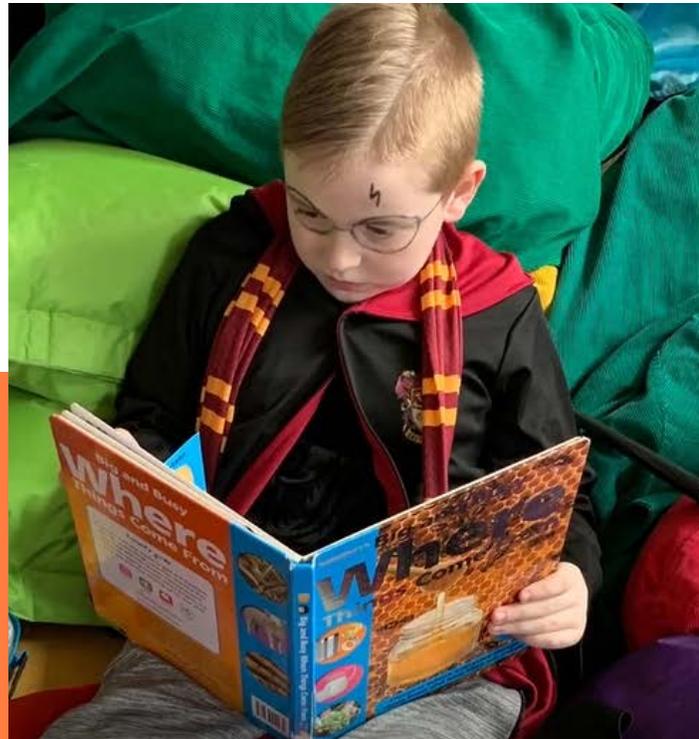
P6 and P7 pupils run a library club within the school library, acting as school library leaders. This year they conducted two surveys to understand how their peers perceived the reading culture in the school and if attitudes had changed. The survey was conducted with pupils from P1 to P7, first in August 2019 and again in February 2020.

The survey found a significant increase in pupils talking about reading (75% to 91%) and reading for pleasure at school (45% to 67%). By February 2020 over 90% of pupils felt that their teachers were reading role models and that reading was celebrated in the school.

Pupil perceptions of the reading culture at St. Bridget's Primary School



More pupils said that they were regularly visiting the school library, and there was also a small increase in the proportion of pupils who said they regularly visited the local library.



For us, it's about getting reading off the page and making it come alive."

Principal teacher.

Over the past four years, the Headteacher feels that he has seen an improvement in attitudes towards reading and engagement in class work. Class teachers also felt that the Reading Challenge supported pupils, and was a valuable initiative. They noted that the Reading Challenge gave pupils an opportunity to set goals, celebrate their achievements and participate in an activity as a community.

Staff and pupils reported that the Reading Challenge facilitated discussions about reading and helped pupils to choose interesting and appropriate reading materials. They felt that having dedicated time and activities for reading helped motivate pupils and supported them to achieve their reading goals.



Having the Reading Challenge as a focus helps them to feel part of a community as they share with others information about books they have read and it is consistent across the whole school." Class teacher



Yes, the challenges are motivational and we can access a bigger variety of books." P6 pupil



The daily time set aside is so enjoyable for the children and it has made previously reluctant readers much more likely to choose a book and actually finish it." Class teacher

During lockdown

The public health situation and subsequent closure of schools from March to June 2020 was a challenging period for the school and the local community. Not all pupils had regular access to computers or other devices at home, and often the internet bandwidth did not allow for effective online learning.

“ I like reading in school because I don't have a lot of different types of books at home” P5 pupil

“ My teacher helped me during Lockdown by phoning us twice a week when I found something hard and needed help.” P5 pupil

To help pupils maintain their reading habits the literacy coordinator created a weekly challenge poster, with various reading challenges for pupils to complete with their families. This initiative was well received and facilitated good engagement.

The school also encouraged pupils to access books through free reading subscription services, such as EPIC books and Scholastic Reading Pro.

During this period teachers maintained daily contact with pupils, sending classwork tasks via email and by making wellbeing telephone calls to families twice a week.

Staff from the early years team created daily story time videos which included a story read aloud and an accompanying task or activity. To support the transition from nursery to P1 staff worked together to set reading related activities and projects. P1 teachers also created videos of themselves reading their favourite stories, to help pupils become familiar with their faces and voices.

“ I used EPIC books at home during lockdown. I liked that you could get books for free and listen to audio books on it too.” P5 pupil

Many pupils said that they enjoyed reading during the lockdown, as they had more time to read, and could read with their family. Some said they accessed new reading materials, through the school. Others noted that they did not have a lot of books at home, and that they missed the range of books available at school.

“At home I could read for as long as I wanted.” P6 pupil

“We didn’t have time pressure and Dad could help me.” P6 pupil

“I read less that I used to.” P6 pupil

What's next

Pupils have continued with Reading Challenge activities on their return to school and are currently planning their activities for World Book Day and Book Week Scotland.

“We have set ourself a class challenge to read 50 books! We have already read 18 and I think we’ll reach our target by February, maybe.” P5 pupil





WEBSTER'S HIGH SCHOOL CASE STUDY



The First Minister's Reading Challenge

Webster's High School

This case study was developed from discussions with the school librarian and feedback from a faculty head, one parent, a pupil and a staff member who is also a parent.

How did you adapt during lockdown?

To keep pupils engaged in reading for pleasure, the school librarian developed an 'All around the world' challenge. Pupils logged the number of pages they had read and these were converted into 'miles', allowing them to 'travel' the globe.

The idea was based on similar reading schemes the librarian had coordinated, based on the number of pages read by pupils. The primary aim of the project was to keep pupils in the habit of reading for pleasure.

“Because of lockdown, and because we couldn't go anywhere, I thought this was a nice idea.” School librarian

“I think the notion of travel whilst we were all effectively stuck at home provided some much needed escapism.” Faculty head

“Reading helps to exercise your brain and is also great for your mental health. It can allow you to escape somewhere else, into someone else's life or another country etc.” Pupil



How did the project work?

The project was delivered online, with pupils engaging through Microsoft Teams. Pupils decided which destinations they wanted to travel to, and the school librarian helped bring the journey to life through a route map with quizzes, interesting facts about each destination and 360 degree tours of the locations where possible.

Pupils were able to join the challenge with any kind of reading material, including audio books. Pupils 'travelled' across the globe and even completed specific challenges within the journey, such as climbing Mount Everest and Mount Fuji. In total, around 40 pupils from S1 to S4 took part in the project, and **133,767 pages** were read.

“Initially the pupils were very keen to engage with something. They looked forward to having a way to keep in touch.” School librarian

“It was very straightforward to record the number of pages we had read on Teams and it was lovely to get the messages from the library staff encouraging us on our journey.” Parent/teacher

Although the project was only planned to run through term time, a few pupils were keen to continue 'travelling' through the summer. The school librarian supported them to continue logging their pages and keeping in touch with each other. For these pupils, the continued engagement over summer was particularly important.

“It was inspiring to see how much reading some of our pupils were doing during lockdown...” Faculty head



What worked well?

Staff felt that the main benefits for pupils were around the continued engagement with others and the sense of community that was built through the shared project. The school librarian also noted that the project helped pupils to keep reading, and to be more aware of how much they were reading. One pupil noted that although she already enjoyed reading, the project helped her realise how much she read.

Pupils said that their reading habits changed during the lockdown, because of the Reading Challenge activities. And one pupil said that it had helped her to access a new genre.

One pupil felt that it was important to read for pleasure because it helped develop her imagination. She particularly enjoyed this project because it allowed pupils to “travel the world from the comfort of our own homes.”

“For some pupils, just the engagement with staff and other pupils was important.” School librarian

“Taking part in it felt very much like being part of a community... It was a reminder that the rest of the world still existed and encouraging young people to read enabled them to escape for a while into their books.” Parent/teacher

“I feel that for some pupils who were feeling anxious and overwhelmed with the demands of online learning this event provided an opportunity to remain connected with the school community and gain recognition for the independent literacy work they were engaging in.” Faculty head

“I think that the Reading Challenge activities did encourage me to read more in lockdown...Because I had more time to spare I read so much more than I usually would.” Pupil



For some pupils, the project evolved into a family reading challenge as their parents and siblings joined in, logging their pages and contributing to the miles travelled.

Parents said that they enjoyed taking part in the Reading Challenge alongside their children. One parent felt it was an enjoyable shared activity, which helped her encourage her daughter to read, and facilitated further discussions about reading at home.

“ I also did start to read more Murder Mystery genre novels after a friend had suggested a few to me, and I loved them!”
Pupil

“ I think it helped keep them reading. But it maybe made them aware that they hadn't been reading as much.” School librarian

“ ...one pupil even asked if her mother could log pages too, so it was very much a family affair.”
Faculty head

“ As a family activity it opened up discussions about what we were reading and introduced the fun element of competition as to who could read the most pages.”
Parent

“ My daughter enjoyed these and looked forward to learning about the different places.”
Parent/teacher

“...one pupil even asked if her mother could log pages too, so it was very much a family affair.”
Faculty head

“I really loved our school’s reading challenge as it taught us about different landmarks around the world and there was also a section to recommend books to other pupils which was very helpful too. I would absolutely take part in the challenge again during the holidays or if we had to go in to another lockdown.”
Pupil

“I was very impressed with the commitment and enthusiasm of the library staff in keeping the page updated to encourage pupils.”
Parent/teacher

“To be honest, I don’t think there could be any improvements on our challenge, and if I had to pick one, I would say it would be good if we could travel round the globe in real life, but of course that isn’t actually going to happen.” Pupil

For a small number of the pupils, the project supported their wider interests in literacy. For example, one pupil joined the project after completing a novel for the first time. Having finished a novel she was inspired to continue reading, and logging her pages with the project.

School staff also reported that much of the success was due to the ongoing commitment from library to staff, to engage pupils and sustain their enthusiasm.

After returning to school in August 2020, pupils and staff were rewarded with a crocheted bookworm along with the grand total of the pages they had read, to recognise their achievements.

What was challenging?

Staff reported few challenges to this project. The school librarian felt that it was manageable and flexible.

