

The logo for Reading Schools features the words "Reading" and "Schools" in a large, bold, black sans-serif font. The word "Reading" is on the top line and "Schools" is on the bottom line. The text is flanked by stylized, colorful book spines. On the left side, there are three books: a pink one, a yellow one, and a green one. On the right side, there are three books: a yellow one, a blue one, and a pink one. The books are arranged in a slightly overlapping, vertical stack.

Reading Schools

**Reading Schools pilot
2019/20**

Final evaluation report

Executive Summary

[Reading Schools](#) is an accreditation programme to help schools build and sustain a reading culture. In 2019/20 39 schools (including both primary and secondary) from the Forth Valley and West Lothian Regional Improvement Collaborative took part in a pilot of the programme. This evaluation examines the impact of the programme on learners, learning professionals and schools, and looks at what worked well and what challenges were encountered.

Impact

There was clear evidence of impact on learners, learning professionals and schools as a whole.

- 80% agreed that taking part in Reading Schools helped their school to support learners who are not enthusiastic readers.
- 85% agreed that taking part in Reading Schools helped learners to develop a love of reading.
- 70% agreed that taking part in Reading Schools supported learners' attainment.
- 80% agreed that taking part in Reading Schools supported learners' health and wellbeing.

'A boy in P7 managed to read his first ever book. He has dyslexia so found reading challenging and therefore often was disengaged. Through the initiatives and emphasis that we put in place, he received a gift of a book wrapped up on his desk. He therefore was motivated enough to complete a novel for the first time in his life. He then headed off to high school with this to be proud of and as a reader.' – Learning professional

'One of our ASN pupils had incredible difficulties with her behaviour and social skills. She struggled to engage with others. Through reading, she was able to plan a reading activity (had to use performance and art) to share with younger pupils. She gained so much confidence and self esteem from completing this activity.' – Head teacher

- 100% agreed that taking part in Reading Schools was worthwhile for them as a learning professional.
- 95% agreed that taking part in Reading Schools contributed to their professional development.

'It has really made us think about our practice and encouraged us as educators to reflect on the importance of reading and listening to stories.' – Learning professional

- 76% agreed that taking part in Reading Schools helped their school to support reading in ways they hadn't considered before.
- 71% agreed that taking part in Reading Schools helped to engage members of staff across their school in reading.

- 62% agreed that taking part in Reading Schools helped their school to strengthen links with families.
- 71% agreed that taking part in Reading Schools has / will help their school with HMIE inspections.

'Many families have commented that they have really enjoyed bringing reading into their home life. Some parents have said we have made a difference to them too as they are reading more now they are more aware of the importance of being a good role model for their child.' – Learning professional

'We were recently inspected by HMIE and they spent quite a significant amount of time talking to us about the RS programme and how our young people, staff and community were benefitting from it; they absolutely loved the fact that the school was devoting so much time and energy to this project and was reaping the benefits.' – Principal teacher

What worked well

- 100% agreed that Reading Schools fitted in well with their school's existing priorities and processes.
- 100% agreed that the Reading Schools framework and process helped their school to evaluate and plan their reading for pleasure activities.

'The framework has been a powerful tool for self-evaluation for self-improvement. It is a framework on which to base rigorous, systematic and transparent discussion around where schools are with reading. It allows schools to plan and implement measures to improve.' – Working group member

- 95% agreed that their school received enough support from Scottish Book Trust to take part in Reading Schools effectively.
- 100% agreed that their school received enough support from their local authority or RIC contact to take part in Reading Schools effectively.

'We are loving the whole experience of working with SBT. They are supportive, helpful and passionate about what they do.' – Learning professional

'It is so exciting to be part of this pilot and share what we have done with other schools and authorities as part of the RIC.' – Principal teacher

Challenges

Unsurprisingly, the main challenge reported by schools was the pandemic and associated school closures. In addition to this, they noted a lack of capacity, particularly in relation to the programme paperwork, and/or resources.

Further support for schools

Schools noted that to support their involvement in future they would be keen to meet and share with other schools taking part. There was a strong desire for continued

support from Scottish Book Trust, including the ongoing provision of resources and additional tailored 'one-to-one' support from Scottish Book Trust staff.

Sustainability

- 100% agreed that taking part in Reading Schools was worthwhile for their school.
- 95% indicated that their school would continue to take part in Reading Schools in future years.

'I think it has been such a valuable project to be part of at this stage in our school's reading journey. Some schools will inevitably be further ahead or behind us in terms of their reading culture but the progressive nature of the award will ensure that reading culture is embedded and is not just a token gesture.' – Learning professional

'I really enjoyed taking part in Reading schools. I feel the programme is supportive and clearly explained. I am looking forward to working towards our silver award in the new year.' – Learning professional

Background

Programme design

[Reading Schools](#) is an accreditation programme to help schools build and sustain a reading culture.

The [Reading Schools framework](#) details the Key Areas that are crucial to building and sustaining a whole-school reading culture. Key Areas are mapped against [How Good is Our School? 4](#). Under each Key Area schools can see what they need to do to become a Reading School and advance to silver and gold level.

Scottish Book Trust (SBT) developed the Reading Schools model following a workshop in April 2019 with representatives of SMTs and class teachers from both primary and secondary schools, a local authority officer, representatives from public and school libraries, and a colleague from the field of academia.

2019/20 pilot

Following consultation with Scottish Government and Education Scotland, it was decided to pilot Reading Schools in one Regional Improvement Collaborative (RIC). SBT reached out to representatives of the Forth Valley and West Lothian RIC who were keen to take on the project. A working group was formed comprising RIC, local authority and library service colleagues, Education Scotland, SLIC, Professor Sue Ellis, and participating school staff at various levels of seniority. The working group met monthly and advised on the design of the framework and programme, facilitated contact with schools and supported schools directly.

39 schools took part in the pilot – 13 from West Lothian, 13 from Stirling, eight from Falkirk and five from Clackmannanshire. 31 were primary schools, and eight were secondary schools.

Representatives from each school attended a CLPL session introducing the programme in autumn 2019. Each school then submitted an Action Plan in which they used the Reading Schools framework to evaluate their existing practice around reading for pleasure and detailed the actions they planned to take over the course of the year.

It was initially intended that evidence for accreditation be submitted in June 2020, with a celebration and shared practice event taking place in autumn of 2020. Following the school closures in March 2020, SBT extended the deadline for evidence submission to December 2020. This was to give schools some breathing room during a difficult period, and to allow them to adapt any plans that could no longer go ahead due to restrictions. As of 3rd February 2021, of the 39 schools that participated in the pilot, 34 have been accredited and a further three are in the process of submitting their evidence.

Evaluation methodology

Pilot schools were asked to submit data and feedback for evaluation in the following ways:

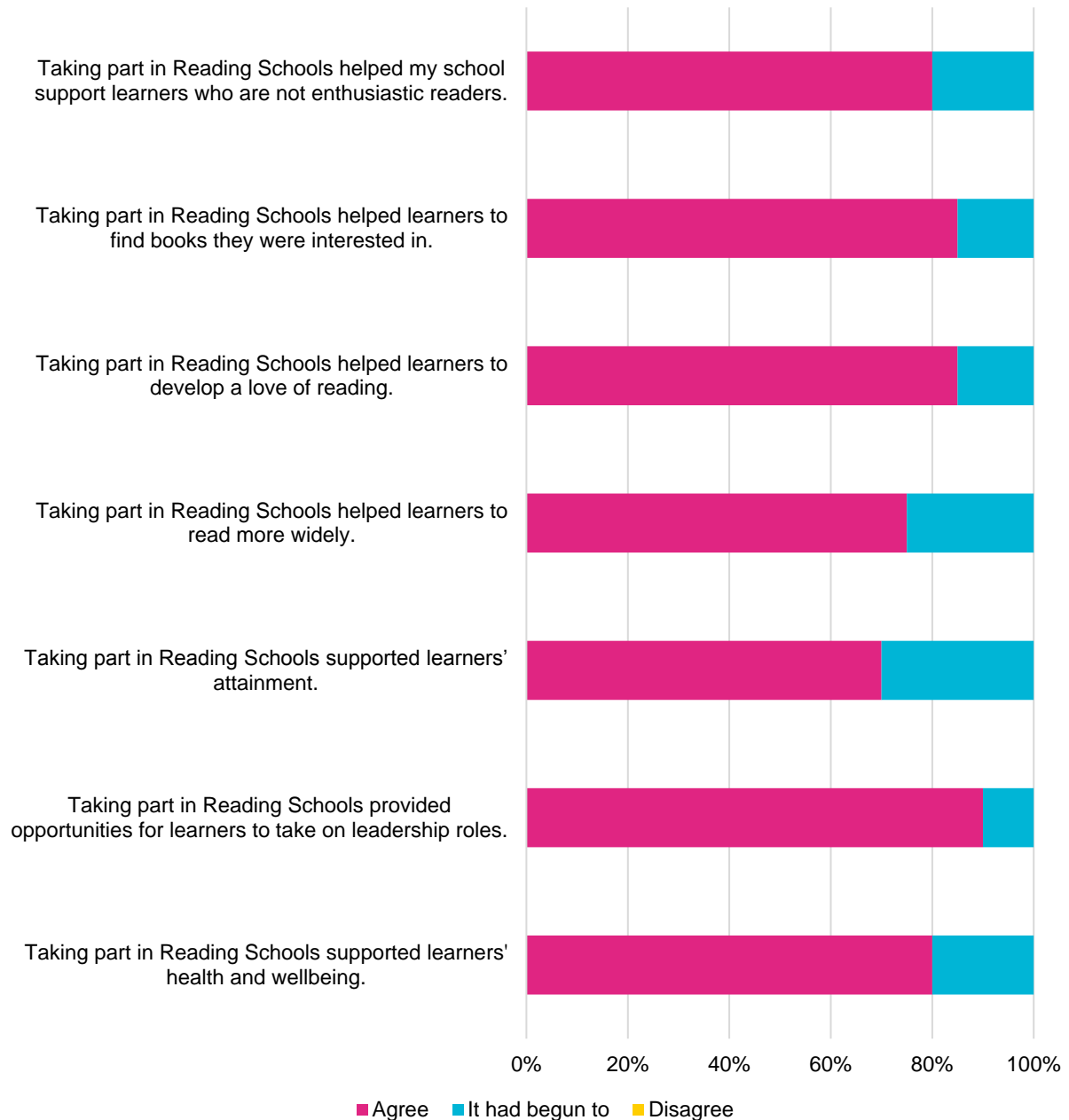
- In December 2019 schools were asked to complete a progress report. This provided early evidence on the efficacy and impact of the programme and allowed SBT to respond to any concerns whilst the pilot was ongoing. All 39 pilot schools submitted a progress report.
- In November 2020 members of the Forth Valley and West Lothian RIC working group were asked to submit written feedback on their experience of the pilot. Five members (one from each local authority and the RIC lead for the project) submitted feedback.
- In December 2020, following submission of their evidence for accreditation, schools were asked to complete an end-of-project survey. As of 3rd February, 21 surveys had been received. Given pressures due to school closures in early 2021, schools were not chased repeatedly for these surveys.
- It was initially intended that data collected through learner and staff attitude surveys would also be used to assess the impact of the pilot. Each school was asked to submit surveys completed by a broadly representative sample of learners and staff alongside their Action Plans. All 39 schools submitted these baseline surveys, with 2125 learner surveys and 395 staff surveys received in total. It was intended that schools repeat the surveys with the same learners and staff towards the end of the year to assess if and how attitudes towards reading had changed over the course of the year. However, in order to ease pressure on schools following the school closures of March 2020 the requirement to submit a second round of attitude surveys was removed. The level of engagement and depth of information received in the baseline surveys indicates that these tools may be used effectively in the future.

All statistics in this report are taken from the December 2020 evaluation survey. The majority of quotations are also taken from the December 2020 evaluation survey, but additional quotations from the December 2019 progress report are included where relevant. Feedback from members of the Forth Valley and West Lothian RIC working group is also included.

Impact on learners

'We feel our school's reading culture has definitely shifted and our children are more enthusiastic and engaged in reading for pleasure. It was a very purposeful and positive experience for our school.' – Learning professional

The impact of Reading Schools on learners



Respondents were very positive about the impact Reading Schools has had on their learners. As the above chart shows, even where learning professionals could not confirm a particular area had yet been impacted, all agreed that the programme had begun to have an effect. This suggests that sustained engagement with Reading Schools will further increase and deepen the impact on children and young people.

Developing a love of reading

- 80% agreed that taking part in Reading Schools helped their school to support learners who are not enthusiastic readers.
- 85% agreed that taking part in Reading Schools helped learners to find books they were interested in.
- 85% agreed that taking part in Reading Schools helped learners to develop a love of reading.

'One student started in S1 as a reluctant reader. Through taking part in Reading Schools, she helped organise the fortnightly reading podcasts and participated in these by interviewing staff and pupils about their favourite books; recording herself reading for younger children and organising book quizzes in school. She attended every author event in school and our trip to the local bookshop. In the bookshop, she commented that she had never been in a bookshop before and what a big library it is! During Lockdown, I called this pupil's family each week to check on her and her mum said that she couldn't keep her going with books. As she has 8 siblings, she was taking herself out into the garden every day to read for hours. She has become a reader!' – Principal teacher

'One highlight of this project was when we successfully applied to visit the BBC studios to be part of the Michael Rosen Author's Live. For all, this was the first time in television studios and for one this was a first trip to Glasgow for one of our SIMD1 pupils. To be able to facilitate this at no additional cost for the pupil was a very satisfying experience and extremely fulfilling. To be able to provide this opportunity for all involved pupils was a personal highlight as engagement rocketed.' – Learning professional

'Reluctant readers having personal successes such as finishing their first book since Primary school. Pupils being more articulate about their reading habits and sharing their book recommendations.' – Learning professional

'We had a child start with us a year ago. Very reluctant reader. Wouldn't read at home or in school. I started to talk to him about books, found out what he was interested in. Would leave books out for him on his desk to try. Kept talking to him about books. Encouraged him to come to our Lunch Bunch Book Club. He came, he loved it, he found books that he liked and is now keen to read. Yay!' – Principal teacher

Supporting literacy and attainment

- 75% agreed that taking part in Reading Schools helped learners to read more widely.
- 70% agreed that taking part in Reading Schools supported learners' attainment.

'Last year, a boy in P7 managed to read his first ever book. He has dyslexia so found reading challenging and therefore often was disengaged. Through the initiatives and emphasis that we put in place, he received a gift of a book wrapped up on his desk. He therefore was motivated enough to complete a novel for the first time in his life. He then headed off to high school with this to be proud of and as a reader.' – Learning professional

Learner voice

- 90% agreed that taking part in Reading Schools provided opportunities for learners to take on leadership roles.

'Pupils know that we are working towards a specific award and this is giving them a sense of pride and ownership in the work they are undertaking. They are aware of what we need to do and within the timescales too. The pupil's level of commitment to the process is very positive.' – Depute head teacher

'The impact on the pupils has been great. The leadership group have really benefitted in terms of developing confidence and ownership of their learning and school improvement.' – Head teacher

Health and wellbeing

- 80% agreed that taking part in Reading Schools supported learners' health and wellbeing.

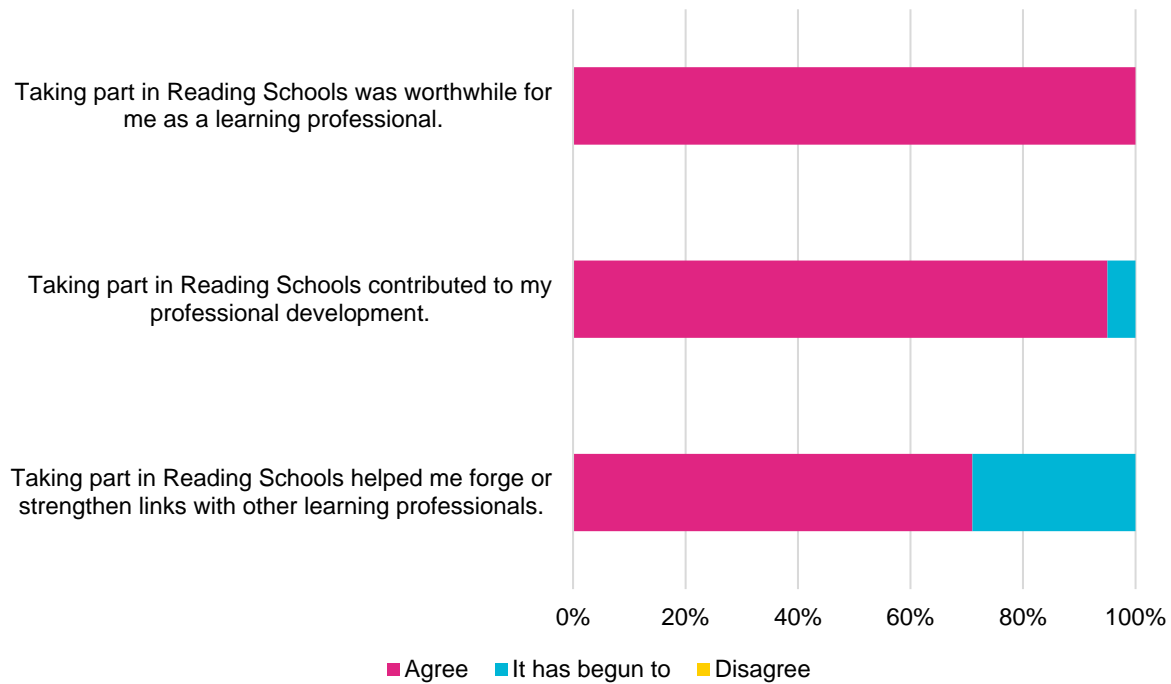
'One of our ASN pupils had incredible difficulties with her behaviour and social skills. She struggled to engage with others. Through reading, she was able to plan a reading activity (had to use performance and art) to share with younger pupils. She gained so much confidence and self esteem from completing this activity.' – Head teacher

'One avid reader was able to share his love of reading with the other members of the class. This helped develop his confidence and form relationships as he was a quiet and shy pupil. All pupils responded positively to his reading journey and looked forward to his feedback sessions. Reluctant readers in the same class showed him respect and admiration. They were motivated to stick with their books to finish reading them as well as trying some new genres.' – Learning professional

Impact on learning professionals

'It has really made us think about our practice and encouraged us as educators to reflect on the importance of reading and listening to stories. It has also made us think about ourselves as readers.' – Learning professional

The impact of Reading Schools on learning professionals



Respondents were also positive about the impact Reading Schools has had for them professionally. As for the learner outcomes, the above chart shows that even where learning professionals could not confirm that Reading Schools had helped them to forge or strengthen links with other learning professionals, all agreed that the programme had begun to have an impact in this area.

- 100% agreed that taking part in Reading Schools was worthwhile for them as a learning professional.
- 95% agreed that taking part in Reading Schools contributed to their professional development.
- 71% agreed that taking part in Reading Schools helped them to forge or strengthen links with other learning professionals.

'For myself, the biggest impact has been having the opportunity to lead this project within the school.' – Learning professional

'The biggest impact would be the focus and drive it has given me as Literacy Lead, in driving this forward through the school.' – Literacy lead

Impact on schools

'Reading Schools has enabled our school to take a new approach to promoting reading and has provided a clear focus for embedding a reading culture across the school.' – Learning professional

The impact of Reading Schools on schools



Overall, respondents were positive about the impact Reading Schools has had on their school as a whole. As with learners and learning professionals, where a respondent could not state that a particular impact had been achieved, many reported that Reading School had begun to support these areas.

Where respondents disagreed with a statement, there is some indication that this was due to feeling their school was strong in certain areas prior to taking part in Reading Schools:

'The reason I disagreed with the statements was because we were already engaged in all of the activities it was just a matter of taking note of them and photographing all that we were doing. We have been really engaged in reading and the love of reading for pleasure for many years at [our school]. However it was not until we really took note of all we were doing that we realised how much we do.' – Learning professional

Impacts around collaboration were unfortunately limited by COVID-19 which meant that schools were unable to take many of their planned events and visits forward:

'Due to the current situation, the most challenging part was linking to parents and the community.' – Learning professional

'Covid restrictions and Lock down have made the community learning difficult. We have had to be creative and think out of the box. We look forward to building on this when things settle down.' – Head teacher

Supporting reading

- 76% agreed that taking part in Reading Schools helped their school to support reading in ways they hadn't considered before.
- 71% agreed that taking part in Reading Schools prompted their school to consider their school library provision.

'This process has allowed us to carefully consider and streamline our approach, ensuring that reading for enjoyment is an embedded and expected part of the curriculum. I have already recommended to other schools and feel the process and support as a whole to be exceptional.' – Learning professional

'Last session we had a number of P7 pupils who reported that 'they did not like reading and did not see the point in it'. This had not been the case when they were younger and we worked hard to try to change their perceptions. Being part of the pilot has really helped us to focus on children's feelings about reading; parents' experiences and practices in reading for enjoyment and also to challenge staff attitudes about their own reading for enjoyment practices.' – Learning professional

Engaging the whole school

- 71% agreed that taking part in Reading Schools helped to engage members of staff across their school in reading. A further 19% reported that it had begun to have this effect.

'Auditing our current provision for reading had the biggest impact for us as a school. It was so encouraging to see the amazing things that class teachers were doing throughout the school that other staff and our wider school community were maybe unaware of.' – Learning professional

'Something that doesn't seem very big or extravagant that has had a huge impact is our staff book club for sharing children's literature. It has helped staff reach for books they might have not used before and all of our staff thoroughly enjoy sharing different books at our virtual book club. It has been great to see teachers swap books and use them with their classes and share their positive experiences.' – Learning professional

'The framework ensures the responsibility is not just on the librarian or English Department.' – Learning professional

Engaging parents and carers

- 62% agreed that taking part in Reading Schools helped their school to strengthen links with families. A further 29% reported that it had begun to have this effect.

'One mum volunteered to read stories to our Early Years classes, her son joined the local library in response to our focus on developing partnerships with library. Her son ended up reading 50 books as part of the Summer Reading Challenge. Her engagement has been pivotal in portraying our success with engaging families.' – Learning professional

'Many families have commented that they have really enjoyed bringing reading into their home life. Some parents have said we have made a difference to them too as they are reading more now they are more aware of the importance of being a good role model for their child.' – Learning professional

Collaboration

- 48% agreed that taking part in Reading Schools helped their school to collaborate with other schools. A further 29% reported that it had begun to have this effect.
- 48% agreed that taking part in Reading Schools helped their school to forge or strengthen links with their local public library. A further 33% reported that it had begun to have this effect.
- 52% agreed that taking part in Reading Schools helped their school to collaborate with community partners. A further 29% reported that it had begun to have this effect.
- 52% agreed that taking part in Reading Schools increased their school's engagement with the RIC. A further 38% reported that it had begun to have this effect.

'Although we had an established reading culture before taking part in reading schools, I think that reading schools helped us foster links with other schools and practitioners we wouldn't have worked with prior to this. Working and communicating with other practitioners and schools has helped inspire us with new initiatives and new ways of continuing to develop our reading culture.' – Learning professional

'One of the many positives we've found from Reading Schools is that it's really pulled schools within our local learning community and council together; we're all collaborating and trying to find ways to work together, and particularly for us as a very rural school, it's given our children a chance to communicate with those from other schools ... both in person and using digital technology.' – Principal teacher

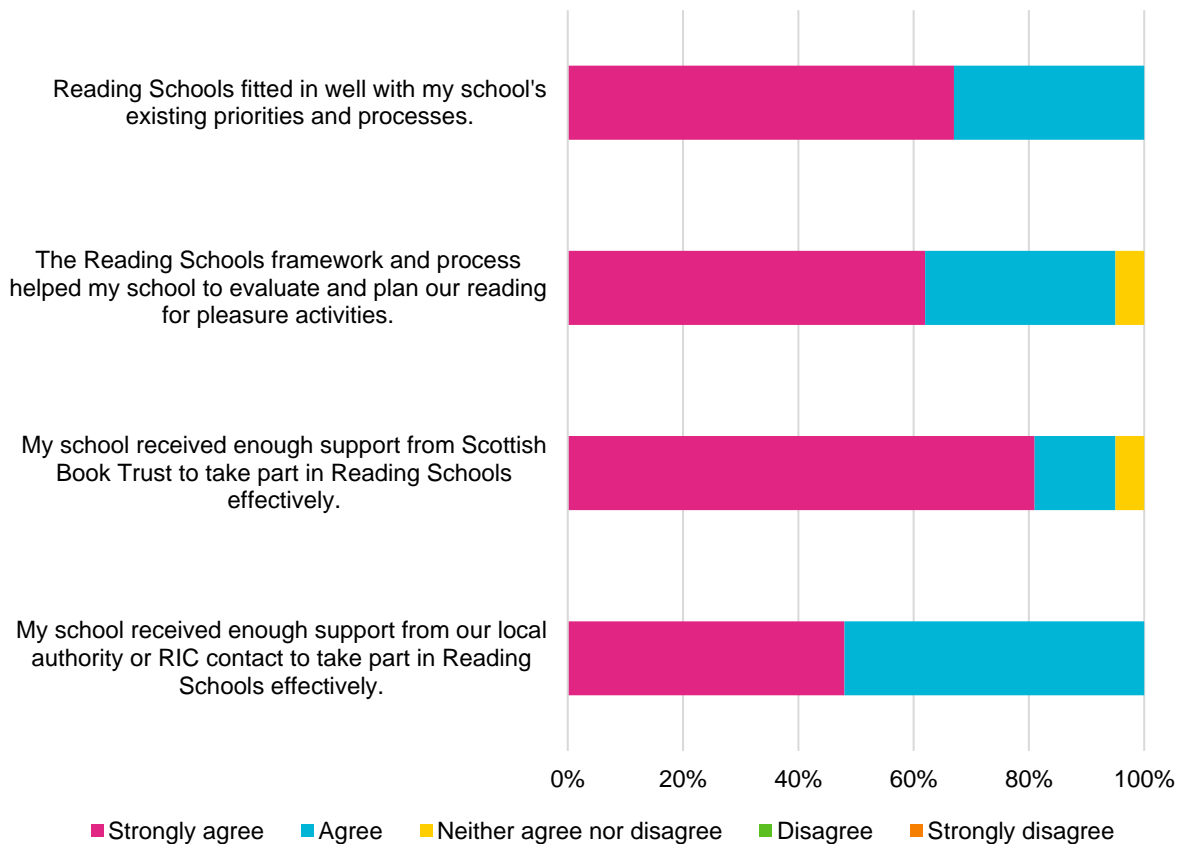
HMIe inspections

- 71% agreed that taking part in Reading Schools has / will help their school with HMIe inspections. A further 24% reported that it had begun to have this effect.

'We were recently inspected by HMIe and they spent quite a significant amount of time talking to us about the RS programme and how our young people, staff and community were benefitting from it; they absolutely loved the fact that the school was devoting so much time and energy to this project and was reaping the benefits.' – Principal teacher

Process – what worked well?

The Reading Schools process



The framework

- 100% agreed that Reading Schools fitted in well with their school's existing priorities and processes.
- 100% agreed that the Reading Schools framework and process helped their school to evaluate and plan their reading for pleasure activities.

'It has shown us that we are already doing a lot in school to promote a reading culture, however allowed us to see where the gaps are and how to fix this – or adapt.' – Learning professional

'We have enjoyed the pilot and have found the process of collating our evidence particularly useful, as we can see all of the fantastic work from our staff, parents and children. We are very proud of the journey we have taken!' – Learning professional

'The framework has been a powerful tool for self-evaluation for self-improvement. It is a framework on which to base rigorous, systematic and transparent discussion around where schools are with reading. It allows schools to plan and implement measures to improve.' – Working group member

Support for schools

- 95% agreed that their school received enough support from Scottish Book Trust to take part in Reading Schools effectively.

'We love working with Scottish Book Trust as there is always someone there to answer any query you may have.' – Head teacher

'We are loving the whole experience of working with SBT. They are supportive, helpful and passionate about what they do. I can say with absolute certainty that the huge strides we have made in building our reading culture this year have been due to the focus we have on Reading Schools and the goals we have set within the Reading Schools framework this year.' – Principal teacher

Partnership working

- 100% agreed that their school received enough support from their local authority or RIC contact to take part in Reading Schools effectively.

'It is so exciting to be part of this pilot and share what we have done with other schools and authorities as part of the RIC.' – Learning professional

'I have thoroughly enjoyed working with Scottish Book Trust. All SBT colleagues have been extremely professional, flexible and supportive. There is genuine recognition of the demands of working in a school and support is readily available. The quality and consistency of SBT resources shared on Twitter and via the website are exceptional.' – Working group member

'SBT have backed up their training by empowering teachers to look at research from authors, from OECD and PISA from the National Literacy Trust and their many partners. They have kept their eye on what is happening locally, nationally and internationally and have led this project in a manner that inspires and facilitates others to become life-long readers.' – Working group member

Process – what were the challenges?

COVID-19

Unsurprisingly, the challenge cited most commonly by schools was the pandemic:

'Sadly Covid restrictions made some of the projects we had planned challenging. We were unable to complete some planned activities so ensuring we still met the required criteria in alternate ways was difficult. We appreciate the understanding and flexibility regarding this though.' – Learning professional

Encouragingly, as of 3rd February 34 of the 39 schools that participated in the pilot have been accredited, and a further three are in the process of submitting their evidence. 95% of the original cohort still being engaged after an extremely challenging year provides further evidence as to the sustainability and perceived value of the programme.

Paperwork

A number of respondents mentioned that planning and collecting evidence had been a substantial task:

'The collation of evidence and the evaluation document was hours of work, whilst I appreciate the importance of gather evidence perhaps it could be more manageable.' – Principal teacher

Whilst, as detailed above, many saw this as a useful process for pinpointing areas for improvement, there is scope to simplify this. Whilst this first pilot was run 'manually', a website is nearing completion to streamline and take these processes online for the 2020/21 pilot.

Capacity and resources

Some respondents noted that a lack of time and/or money had proved challenging. Although this was exacerbated by the pandemic these factors were also cited in the December 2019 progress report, indicating that these concerns will likely remain as and when life becomes more 'normal'.

'Time is always an issue in school.' – Principal teacher

'School librarian's input is appreciated and needed, however, when shared between two schools this is a real challenge time-wise.' – Learning professional

'Access to books the pupils want to read is difficult without a library.' – Learning professional

'Developing our library has been costly and applying for grants is time consuming.' – Learning professional

Process – further support for schools

In both the December 2019 progress report and December 2020 evaluation schools were asked what support would help them to get the most out of Reading Schools in the future.

Opportunity to meet and share with other schools taking part

There were initially plans for schools to meet and share their experiences in autumn 2020 which were unable to go forward due to the pandemic. Comments from schools suggest that this is something they would find very valuable:

'I feel it would be beneficial to have the opportunity to see and hear what other schools are doing to promote reading. This could be in the form of a sharing session, perhaps over google meet or teams. When things do return back to normal, it would be nice to have sharing events.' – Learning professional

'Continue to be involved in developing network through the RIC or to be considered for further involvement with SBT pilots/projects would be amazing.' – Learning professional

'Opportunities to meet more regularly with other schools in the local area to collaborate professionally and for learners to celebrate their journey together.' – Learning professional

Funding for books and library areas

A number of respondents mentioned they were finding it difficult to finance books and improvements to library areas:

'Further resourcing around tight budgets for reading and environmental enhancements.' – Learning professional

'Schools taking part could perhaps be given a primary or secondary school library book pack to help boost their school library collection or given a set of Scottish Teenage Book Prize books so that they could take part in reading and voting.' – School librarian

'Finance to provide up-to-date books/resources.' – Learning professional

Ongoing provision of resources

There were some suggestions for learning resources:

'Perhaps a regular update of the most 'current' reading materials for our learners. Staff may not have time to search for that information, however if it arrived in an email format they are more likely to read it.' – Literacy lead

'Perhaps resources to engage more of our reluctant readers, ideas to engage our parents better and events that encourage community partnerships.' – Learning professional

'Further information and inspiration is always welcome. Resources such as a primary edition of the Reading App for secondary school book recommendations.' – Learning professional

Continued support from Scottish Book Trust

Some schools felt that additional one-to-one support from SBT would be useful, especially to engage the wider staff group:

'I think that it would be beneficial if Scottish Book Trust could talk to all the staff about the award perhaps at a collegiate time to ensure that it is valued by everyone.' – Learning professional

'I found it really helpful when Jen visited my school to help with the Action Plan. Regular visits from the Scottish Book Trust would help.' – Learning professional

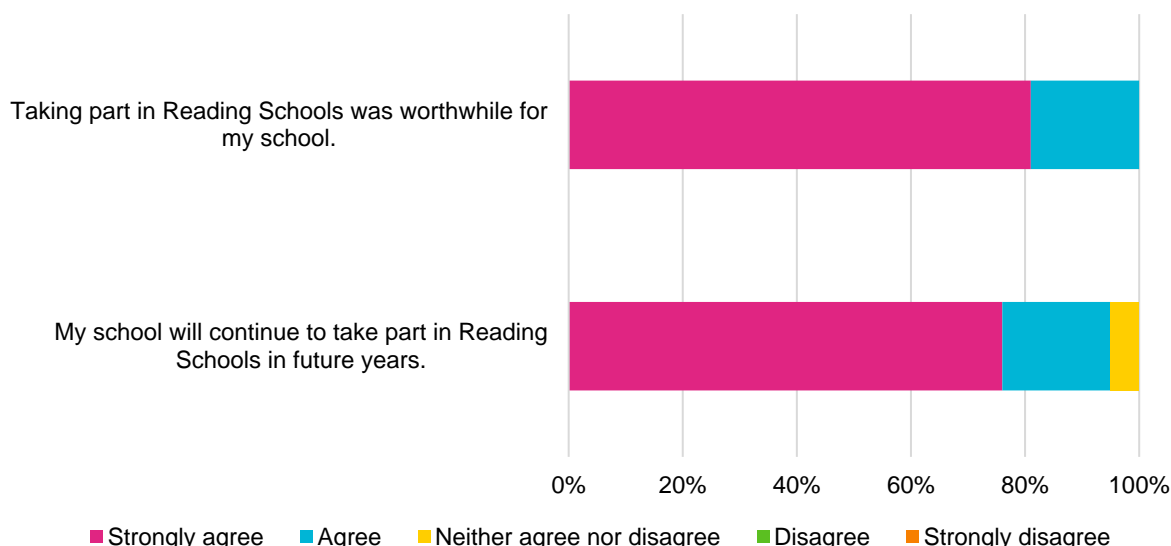
'A bit more promotion/training for the rest of the teaching staff delivered by SBT.' – Depute head teacher

'Continue with the wonderful support we already receive from Scottish Book Trust – regular reminders of events e.g. Authors Live etc.' – Head teacher

Sustainability

'I think it has been such a valuable project to be part of at this stage in our school's reading journey. Some schools will inevitably be further ahead or behind us in terms of their reading culture but the progressive nature of the award will ensure that reading culture is embedded and is not just a token gesture.' – Learning professional

The sustainability of Reading Schools



Evidence around the perceived value and sustainability of Reading Schools was very positive.

- 100% agreed that taking part in Reading Schools was worthwhile for their school.

'Such a large amount of work is undertaken in schools around reading every year, so the fact that this great achievement can be recognised and accredited is really encouraging and worthwhile.' – Learning professional

'Was really worthwhile and has changed the culture within our school for the better. Application was invaluable in directing improvements.' – Learning professional

'I think that this is a sustainable, long-term approach to reading across Scotland and everyone involved with it sees it as beneficial and supportive. We were very much involved with the FMRC and often put in so much work as an authority, however the recognition for this was only for the very few winners. Schools in our authority became a little disillusioned because they felt they submitted and worked so hard and, because of the sheer numbers, there could only be a few winners across Scotland. However, with this approach every school is recognised for their efforts and their achievements and it means there is a pathway to success as the programme is progressive and schools know where they are going next and what they need to do.' – Working group member

- 95% indicated that their school would continue to take part in Reading Schools in future years.

'As we hope to achieve our Silver Award, we would begin looking to Gold and how we can establish strong links with the community. We also hope to increase family engagement and continuing support with the Scottish Book Trust website is greatly appreciated.' – Learning professional

'I really enjoyed taking part in Reading schools. I feel the programme is supportive and clearly explained. I am looking forward to working towards our silver award in the new year.' – Learning professional

'The accreditation provides motivation, recognition and aspiration for schools, the need for schools to reapply after 3 years as well as the opportunity to aim for another level keep the reading for enjoyment momentum alive, which is a powerful and sustainable way to help improve our children and young people's literacy and become readers for life.' – Working group member

Conclusion

Impact

The feedback received from both schools and the RIC working group shows clearly that Reading Schools has had a positive impact on learners, learning professionals and schools.

For learners, schools strongly noted a developing love of reading and support for literacy and attainment, with significant success stories for individual learners. Schools were also positive about the impact on learners' health and wellbeing, with increased confidence and self-esteem in those taking on leadership roles and wider impacts on behaviour and social skills observed.

Learning professionals also found that taking part in the programme had a positive impact on them, with 100% reporting it was worthwhile for them, and 95% saying it had contributed to their professional development.

For schools as a whole, there is good evidence that Reading Schools helped them to support reading and engage the whole school community, including parents and carers. The majority also felt that taking part had or would help their school with HMLe inspections. The reported impact around collaboration was more equivocal, but it is likely that this was affected by the pandemic. There were many comments indicating that schools were keen to make links with other schools and community partners in the future.

What worked well

The robust structure of the programme was welcomed by participating schools, with 100% agreeing that it helped them to evaluate and plan. Many commented that the framework helped to pinpoint what was working well and where action was needed. Schools were positive about the programme's place in their priorities, with 100% agreeing that it fitted in with their existing priorities and processes.

Schools were very positive about the support they received from SBT and the RIC and/or their local authority. Partnership working and collaboration were seen as essential to the success of the programme.

Challenges

COVID-19 was a big challenge for schools taking part in the pilot, with the spring 2020 school closures coming at a time when many had planned community projects. However, 95% of the original cohort are still engaged in the programme at time of writing, suggesting that schools did not see the programme as an 'extra' that should be de-prioritised.

Some schools noted that the paperwork involved in the programme was substantial. This has been significantly stripped back for the 2020/21 pilot and will be further automated with the launch of a dedicated website in spring 2021.

Capacity and resources were also cited as challenges by respondents, with some noting a lack of staff time and a need for funding for books and other resources.

Further support for schools

In response to a question about what would help them to get the most out of the programme, schools noted that they would be keen to meet and share with other schools taking part. As above, they noted a need for funding for books and library areas. Finally, there was a strong desire for continued support from SBT, including the ongoing provision of resources and additional tailored 'one-to-one' support from SBT staff.

Sustainability

The evidence suggests that Reading Schools is a sustainable initiative with potential for impact to build year-on-year: for the majority of areas explored in this evaluation, where a respondent could not state that a particular impact had yet been achieved many reported that Reading Schools had begun to support them in these areas. 100% reported that taking part had been worthwhile for their school, and 95% indicated that they intend to remain engaged in the future.