



Photo by Josh Applegate on Unsplash

Keeping your reading culture alive during blended learning

Age 5-16

CFE Levels First to Senior Phase

Resource created by Scottish Book Trust

scottishbooktrust.com



Scottish Book Trust
inspiring readers and writers

Contents

Reading role models	2
Social networks	4
Events and celebrations	5
Involving families	7
Involving communities	8

About this resource

Keeping a reading culture alive during the coronavirus pandemic can seem like a daunting task, especially with pupils learning at home and with reduced access to books. The aim of this resource is to give you support and ideas to help you continue to build a strong reading culture. The activities will build on routines and work you have supported pupils to establish during lockdown, as well as routines established in school in 2020. The resource includes a range of ideas, some new and some familiar, which have been adapted to be flexible and suitable for blended learning.

We have included examples from schools and libraries across Scotland to give you a flavour of how other educational settings are adapting to the current situation. You do not need to use all the activities in this resource; choose activities that suit you, your setting and your school priorities.

Two other resources that you may also find helpful are:

- [Safe book borrowing during COVID 19](#)
- [Guidance on reading books aloud online and sharing book digitally](#)

Reading role models

Here are some quick ideas to support staff to continue to act as reading role models during the pandemic, and to empower school reading ambassadors and pupil role models.

Be a reading role model

It is very powerful for pupils to see a teachers reading life, particularly if you are sharing the rewards but also the challenges you experience while reading.

Encourage staff to talk with pupils about their current reading life, and the challenges they face. We are not reading machines, and we are all facing challenges in the current situation. Discussion points could be:

- Libraries and school libraries are closed, so we are all facing restricted access to books. Is this an opportunity to re-visit old favourites?
- You might be missing the variety that a library offers, or the opportunity to browse and select book. Discuss this and remind pupils it is okay to miss things right now and to find choosing a book hard.
- It can also be difficult to concentrate right now, and you might find yourself starting a book and not finishing. Remind pupils that is okay. Ask your pupils if they feel the same.
- You might not feel up to tackling a full text right now, but a short poem a day might be enough, or a short story. You can share this experience (and a daily poem) with your pupils.
- On the other hand, you might have found you have more time for reading this year. Share this experience with pupils and see if they are feeling the same.
- Have you found your reading habits change? For example, are you reading more magazines, recipes or instructions right now? Discuss with pupils how their reading habits might have changed over the last few months.

'I am currently reading' badges

Ensure you have your "I am currently reading" badge visible! Whether this is on your door as a door sign, or a larger badge that is visible online or readable whilst socially distant, make sure you have your "I am currently reading" badge prominent. Badges or signs are a great way to get pupils talking about books, and send a clear message that you value reading.

If you are regularly communicating with pupils or parents/carers via email or other communication platforms, be sure to pop what you are currently reading in your signature. You might encourage families to do the same.

Staff at Dunfermline High acted as reading role models throughout lockdown and the pandemic, they were determined to keep talking about books and created digital "currently reading" posters. You can [find out more in this case study](#).

You could also set pupils the task of creating or designing their own badges based on what they are reading. You could encourage pupils to up-cycle and use materials they find around the home, or which might have gone into their recycling bin, to create their badge.

Staff interviews

Staff interviews are a great way for staff to ask as reading role models. Pupils can interview staff digitally via your chosen communication platform, or in person (following school guidelines and recommendations on social distancing). You could record the video (or audio) of the interview and share it on your social media platforms or via your online learning platforms. You could feature a different staff member each week- and remember to include all your school staff, not just teachers. Questions could include:

- What was your favourite book as a child?
- Are there any books you would recommend to pupils?
- What is the best non-fiction book you've read recently?
- How do you choose the books you read?
- What was the last book you read but didn't finish?
- What are you currently reading?

You can take this further by getting pupils to interview members of the community too. Dundee Libraries shared short videos of their staff recommending books throughout lockdown via Twitter and [#LockdownLibraries](#). Invite your local librarian to interviewed, or invite them to share recommendations for pupils.

Pupil role models

It is important that you continue to involve pupils as reading role models, even during this challenging time. If you already have pupils acting as reading role models as reading ambassadors or pupil librarians, you could ask them to:

- Plan a reading event such as [Look for a Book Scotland](#), placing books in unexpected places for others to find and read (but not delivering an event until restrictions allow).
- Ask reading ambassadors to contribute book recommendations to weekly e-bulletin.
- For ambassadors keen to connect with their peers, offer them an online space where they are able to talk about books as a group.
- Host a reading café, virtually or in person. For virtual events, ask pupils to share their reading on Sway (or another suitable platform).

- Ask pupils to contribute to an application to host an online author visit through our [Live Literature funding programme](#), or through our [Scottish Friendly Children's Book Tour](#).
- If pupils have a reading partner in a younger year, ask them to record a reading for their reading friend, or write a story to share with their buddy. Our [paired reading toolkit](#) has lots of ideas and resources to help.

Social networks

To support reading across a school, it is important to create networks that allow staff and pupils to talk about their reading lives. This builds confidence and gives learners the space to explore and discover their own reading identity. You can still foster and develop social networks through a mix of in-person and digital learning.

Recommendations wall

Create physical and/or a digital recommendations wall- there websites that allow you to create post-it style boards which pupils can add recommendations to. You could try [Note.ly](#) or [Noteapp](#).

If you are in school, you can still add to a wall display with recommendations from pupils. You can photograph its progression and share with pupils.

To keep pupils sharing recommendations, Strathdeyon School posted books between different classes as surprise gifts. You could run something similar digitally, sending e-books (or e-book recommendations) between classes. Encourage pupils to tailor their recommendation to what they think the other class will enjoy.

Responding to reading

Allowing learners to share and respond to what they have read is a great way to create social networks between peers, but also with the wider school community.

Pupils can:

- Write a journal entry or create a visual response to a book that has been read aloud.
- Create a book trailer, [digital story](#), video blog or blog to share.
- For older pupils and where appropriate, use social media to share comments and thoughts on their reading material.
- Use music, dance or drama to create a creative response to the book that can be shared virtually.

Book clubs

Book clubs are a great way to stay connected and keep conversations flowing, even when we are apart. You can:

- Continue to run book clubs online. St Mary’s Primary School in Bo’ness continued their “Read with the Heid” book club but moved the book sharing onto [Twitter](#). Pupils still heard about what their head teacher was reading.
- Milnathort Primary School held an [online reading café](#) to continue their school book club.
- Use digital learning as an opportunity to join a book club with other schools in your local cluster and encourage conversations across the schools.

If you are looking to set up a staff book club to support staff to talk about their reading lives and create a social network across your setting, explore our [how to run a staff book club resources](#).

Write across the school

Start a whole school or class story and share it for the story to be continued. Start the story yourself (or even invite an author to start the first line), then pass to one pupil (digitally or a hard copy where appropriate). They continue the story, and then send it to the next pupil, and so on until every pupil has contributed. The finished story can be revealed at live premiere online involving members of the school community. Pupils could also create their own sound effects to complement parts of the story and bring it to life digitally! This is a great way to get pupils talking about writing, and building their confidence.

Events and celebrations

As part of your whole school reading culture, it is important to celebrate reading and reading achievements. Celebrating reading through events can create a buzz of excitement around reading, and can help bring unite and connect your pupils during blended learning.

Authors Live

Watch a [Scottish Book Trust Authors Live event](#)! Our Authors Live programme brings the best UK authors, poets, illustrators and storytellers straight into your classroom. Why not hold a virtual book festival- create a timetable for pupils to watch one event each day of the week? Or encourage pupils to watch different events and discuss them in your next online meet. To get families involved, these events are also available on BBC iPlayer.

Take part in the Bookbug Picture Book Prize

Taking part in a national vote is a great way to celebrate reading. Although official votes for this year’s [Bookbug Picture Book Prize](#) closed on 5 February 2021, you can still [watch our online video readings of each book](#) and hold your own classroom vote! Scottish Book Trust offer [some great activity ideas](#) to help you get excited about

voting. This would be a great project to run as pupils return to the classroom to support pupil voice and to help pupils settle into working together again.

Many schools also use the Bookbug Picture Book Prize books for paired reading projects. You can still organise this digitally, setting aside time for pupils to speak to their buddy about the books, or watch the videos online together. You can use our [paired reading toolkit](#) to help plan activities. Once restrictions allow, you could even take your reading outside and have a socially distanced reading session together.

Riverside Primary School (West Lothian) adapted their paired reading project, gifting books virtually via Microsoft Teams from their Primary 7 friends to their Primary 1 partner, and pupils could talk about the books.

Holding an author event

Bringing a writer, illustrator, poet or storyteller to young people is a hugely rewarding experience for you and your pupils. Scottish Book Trust runs the [Live Literature](#) programme, which allocates part-funded writer visits and is available for digital events.

Scottish Book Trust also runs [Scottish Friendly Children's Book Tour](#), which is currently providing full-funded online events with a range of authors, illustrators and poets. Explore our website for more information on upcoming tours and to watch previous events.

Places books take us

If you are registered for the First Ministers Reading Challenge, you can download resources to hold a virtual “places books take us” celebration event. It is available for both [primary](#) and [secondary](#), and will help you celebrate reading at home. If you are not already registered, [register now](#).

The theme “places books take us” can help to open discussion with pupils around books as escapism, and a way to experience different cultures when we cannot physically travel.

You could plan a day of celebration activities around this resource. For example, pupils can watch an [Authors Live](#) or an online author event in the morning, then drop everything and read or plan a reading den in the afternoon, and end on a reading quiz from this resource. You can also use the resources and videos available from [World Book Day](#) to plan a home-reading celebration day.

Set curricular reading challenges

Whilst pupils are at home, you can set weekly or monthly challenges based around books and learning across the curriculum. These could include:

- Act out a scene from the book (Drama)
- Create a sound using items from home for a character in a book you are reading (Music)

- Film a book review or book trailer (Technologies). Our resource made in partnership with [Into Film](#) will help with this.
- Draw a book setting (Art)
- Research a place where a book is set (Geography)

Read to... challenge

Choose a destination to read to- it could be in Europe, or a completely different continent. Webster High School [read to Kathmandu](#) and to the top of Everest! Once you decide where you are reading to, you can link to other curricular areas such as Modern Language or Geography. For example, if you read to Paris, you could learn French words and phrases for when you “arrive”, and read maps to plan how you would get around.

Involving families

Although parents, carers and families can't come directly into school, there are still opportunities to engage in reading. Many parents will already be engaged with their children's reading life due to home learning.

Run a mini social media campaign

Post a call out to parents on your school's blog, website, and Twitter or Facebook account. You could ask them to share some of the following things:

- Books they'd recommend for particular age groups
- Children reading something unusual
- Great bedtime reading
- Books dads have enjoyed with their children (targeted campaigns tend to work well for fathers)
- All the *reading*, not just books, that they do in a week (this helps to show pupils that all reading is good reading!)
- Their own favourite books (this helps encourage parents and carers to be reading role models to their children by keeping up their enthusiasm for reading)
- Reading during the holidays
- Children taking part in the extreme (or less-extreme) reading challenge.

Collecting stories project

Ask pupils to speak to family members about what they like to read. Collect and share all these stories together as a class or whole school. These stories could be made into a digital book, or shared as a podcast. This project could be extended to

collect stories from the local area and become an oral history project, and involve members of the local community.

Door challenge

Many schools run classroom door book challenge, and there are some great examples from [Oban High School](#). Decorating a classroom door is a great way to create a welcoming environment, especially when your school may be looking different due to safety alterations due to COVID-19.

Get pupils involved by asking them to design a book door in class, or as part of a home learning challenge. The class could vote for the one they would most like to decorate their classroom door with when they return to school. When it is safe and you are able to, you can invite the winning design and family into school for a grand opening.

Involving communities

Involving members of the community might seem challenging right now, but you can still share your reading life with the local community and encourage participation in school life in creative ways.

Invite members of the community in

Rather than inviting members of the community physically into school, you could invite community members to be a “mystery reader” and share a photo or video for students to guess who is reading. You could also invite members of your local community to share their reading journey and reading life in more detail during a special session, such as local sports teams or police officers. This shows pupils that people across the community value reading and create space for it in their lives.

During Book Week Scotland, Dundee Libraries ran a series titled “My Favourite Things” where they asked authors and other members of the community to share some of their favourite things (including books). You could invite pupils and members of the community to do the same.

Quotes around the community

We cannot share books physically right now, but pupils can still share their favourite quote either in chalk on pavements or laminated and tied to the school gates/fence for passersby to enjoy.

Community podcasts and recommendation videos

If your pupils have been creating and sharing book trailers or recommendation videos, these can be shared with the wider community online and members of the community invited to be involved in a video or school podcast.

Pen pals

Many schools ran paired reading projects with local care homes, or visited to share performances. This is not currently possible, but you could set up a pen pal scheme with a local care home, or through a charity that works with elderly people living alone in your area. Pupils could write stories, or discuss what they have been reading.

Celebrate achievement

You can still celebrate pupil achievement in community spaces. This might be on the school website or through Twitter, but also through spaces in local newspapers or community newsletters. You could even see if there is space on the notice board in your local supermarket to celebrate reading achievements and let the community hear about your reading activities and journey. Castle Douglas Primary School has a great partnership with their local newspaper, which regularly includes pupil book reviews.

Window displays

In school, you might decorate your windows with pupils' artwork or create an enticing book scene. Pupils can do the same at home, although probably not on the same scale! Pupils can put books in their window to show others what they are reading or create a rainbow book stack. Alternatively, pupils could also draw their own book covers if they do not have access to books to create a rainbow. A star-rating system can be added to the poster (or next to the books) to let people know how much they enjoyed the book.

Book windows are a great way to create a sense of community in your local area, and show members of the community that pupils at your school enjoy and want to share their reading, even in challenging times.