



Read, Write, Count Evaluation 2018/19

Introduction

What is Read, Write, Count?

Delivered by Scottish Book Trust, the Scottish Government and Education Scotland, the Read, Write, Count campaign is a national programme that seeks to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of Scotland's children by providing advice and support for the families of children in Primary 1, 2 and 3. It is a key part of the Scottish Government's commitment to raise attainment for all and close the attainment gap.

The Read, Write, Count campaign runs alongside a number of other initiatives such as the PlayTalkRead and Bookbug programmes delivered in the early years (including Primary 1). All seek to encourage families to work together to enjoy reading for pleasure as well as to promote the inclusion of reading, writing and numeracy in families' everyday lives.

Through the Read, Write, Count campaign, all children in Scotland from Primary 1 to Primary 3 receive a gifted bag of books and other family-friendly accessible resources to support learning at home which complements learning in the classroom. By involving schools in the gifting process, the campaign hopes to promote home-school links, and increase parental engagement in children's learning.

Read, Write, Count bags

Free bags of books and other learning materials have been given to children from birth to Primary 1 for a number of years with Scottish Book Trust's Bookbug programme. Since 2015, the P1 bags have had extra writing and counting materials from the Read, Write, Count campaign.

In 2016, for the first time, children in Primary 2 and 3 received Read, Write, Count bags containing a mix of books, fun counting games and materials for writing. Children in Gaelic Medium Education are entitled to receive their Bookbug and Read, Write, Count bags in both English and Gaelic. This was repeated in 2017 and 2018.

In 2016, bags were sent directly to schools; in 2017 bags were sent to all local authorities for onward distribution and in 2018, local authorities could decide for themselves which distribution approach they preferred. Schools are encouraged, wherever possible, to gift the bags during Book Week Scotland, a national event that takes place during November each year.

Aims and objectives

The 2018/19 evaluation supports earlier in-house and external evaluations of the Read, Write, Count bag gifting campaign which have all provided positive feedback to help shape the process of delivery and inform the content of the bags over time.

As with previous years, the evaluation sought to evidence success of Primary 2 (P2) and Primary 3 (P3) bags against a number of outcomes specified for the wider Read, Write, Count campaign, namely that it will:

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

This report sets out the findings of the 2018/19 Read, Write, Count evaluation, and also provides a comparison of findings with the previous year to evidence some of the progress and particular successes that have been achieved. Learning from the 2018/19 campaign is also highlighted to allow evidence-based development of the packs in future years.

Methodology

Two separate surveys were developed to canvass the views of learning professionals and parents/carers separately, as follows:

- **Learning professionals survey** – all schools who received the Read, Write, Count bags were invited to complete the feedback survey. The survey was available online and contained 24 substantive questions seeking feedback on how resources had been used, how and when they had been gifted, teacher familiarity with the campaign and use of wider Read, Write, Count resources as well as feedback on perceived impacts of the bags.
- **Parent/carer survey** – all households who received the bags were also invited to provide feedback. The parent/carer survey also contained 24 substantive questions and was administered online. It focussed on use of the resources at home, perceptions of the bag contents, impacts on parental engagement and children's learning and suggestions for improvements.

A mix of closed and open-ended questions were included with a number of free text fields to allow respondents to comment on what they had liked/not liked about the bags or to make suggestions for changes in the future.

Survey invitations were issued in December 2018 via contacts in each local authority area (a mix of administrative/clerical staff, education staff and libraries). There was also some follow-up activity, with Parent Club being asked to tweet about the parent/carer survey and Education Scotland including it in newsletters for both parents and teachers. The deadline specified for return was 21 January 2019.

As with previous years, everyone who completed the survey was entered into a prize draw to win a bundle of learning resources, games, etc. worth £50. One was aimed at teachers to win classroom resources and the one at parents to win activities for home-learning.

Analysis was carried out in April 2019 and this report presents the findings from the surveys of learning professionals and parents/carers and local authorities.

Research caveats

It is important to stress that the findings presented here reflect only the views of those who opted to respond to the surveys and should not be considered representative of all those invited to take part.

Most notably, there was a lower response to the learning professionals survey this year with twelve local authorities¹ having no schools that provided a response (and one local authority accounting for 29% of responses). The number of responses by area was also not proportionate to the number of schools located in those authorities. One explanation for the low response rate may be the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which meant that a decision was made not to email schools directly, in case the contact appeared to be 'cold-call' in nature. Timelines were also tighter this year, meaning that both teachers and parents would have had less time to complete the surveys before the deadline. The lower response rate and the different methods of survey administration means that comparisons between years are not entirely reliable, but do nonetheless provide an indicative insight into how views/practices have changed over time.

Similarly, despite another strong response from parents/carers, there is no way of knowing if the profile of those who responded this year is similar or different from the profile of parents/carers who responded in previous years. While this makes direct comparison of findings over time slightly unreliable, the strong response overall still allows a robust insight into parents/carers views.

Overall, therefore, while findings should not be generalised too broadly, the results still allow a clear insight into how packs were received, were used and how they may have impacted on pupils and families' engagement with the Read, Write, Count ethos.

¹ There were no responses from schools in Aberdeen, Clackmannanshire, Fife, Inverclyde, Midlothian, North Lanarkshire, Orkney Islands, Perth and Kinross, Shetland Islands, Stirling, West Dunbartonshire or the Western Isles

Feedback from learning professionals

Respondent profiles

There were 239 completed questionnaires from learning professionals in 2018², compared to 593 the previous year.

Most responses were submitted by either Primary 2 Teachers (32%) or Primary 3 Teachers (25%). As with last year, around a quarter of responses (21%) came from Composite Class Teachers and 5% came from Head Teachers. The remaining 17% were submitted by 'other' staff, including Deputy Head Teachers, Principal Teachers, Learning Co-Ordinators, Support and Library Staff.

This year, there were slightly more responses from individuals that had received the Primary 2 bag (40%) compared to either the Primary 1 bag only (30%) or both (30%). This was a slightly different distribution, compared to last year.

Table 1: Responses by bag recipient type and year

	% of Respondents 2017	% of Respondents 2018
Primary 2 Bag	39%	30%
Primary 3 Bag	33%	40%
Both	28%	30%

Main findings

How the resources were used

All those who received the Primary 2 bags were asked how the resources had been utilised both in class, and as part of home-school events/projects. Table 2 below shows that the majority of schools used the resources by reading the books in class (38%). This was also the most popular means of use last year.

Over a quarter of schools reported that they did some of the suggested activities from the website or accompanying Parent Guide (22%), or organised gifting events with parents (21%).

The new Rockets and Meteors game that was introduced in 2018 was used less than the Snakes and Ladders resource which had been provided the year before (used by 9% and 17% of respondents respectively) and the least used resource was the notebook (used by only 5% of schools, the same as last year).

² Although 247 surveys were returned, 7 were from parents and 1 was from a pupil, and these were removed from the data for analysis purposes.

Table 2: How did you use the P2 Read, Write, Count bags in school?

	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Read the books in class	118	38%
Did some of the suggested activities (from website or Parent Guide)	67	22%
Organised a gifting event with parents	65	21%
Sent letter home to parents with the bag	55	18%
Pupils just took bag home	52	17%
Encouraged pupils to join the local library	38	12%
Used the storytelling cards in class	34	11%
Used the Rockets and Meteors/blank clock face in class	28	9%
Ran a shared reading project	27	9%
Other	26	8%
Visited the local library with my class/school	21	7%
Organised a gifting event without parents	21	7%
Created displays in the school	19	6%
Set homework activities	15	5%
Used the notebook in class	15	5%

Some of the ‘other’ activities mentioned by schools included:

- linking with the local library/librarian to share/read books;
- using the packs for in-class and out of hours activities with parents (including family engagement sessions);
- use of the bags as part of after school learning clubs for pupils/families;
- demonstration of book sharing techniques;
- engaging in writing activities linked to the books;
- reading parties/social events linked to the bags (including a community treasure hunt linked to the bags in one school);
- art/craft activities linked to the books (including creating story-boards); and
- finding and watching/listening to the stories online;

One school mentioned that they had encouraged parents to attend planned Read, Write, Count activities at the local library by sharing information during a parent gifting session (both parents receiving the P2 and P3 bags).

Others had involved children from the upper school to create events linked to the books and involve older pupils in sharing the resources with their younger peers:

“The children were joined by selected P7 pupils who helped out with the gifting of the bags and also read stories and explored the bag contents with the

children. All children were also given a hot chocolate drink to enjoy with their stories.”

Another school reported that the bags had been used for a number of different activities (for both P2 and P3 recipients):

“I ran a P2 Family Learning Club over 5 weeks. Parents worked with their child on a variety of reading/writing activities related to the books in the bag. Challenges were set for home. We used the 'read aloud' clips on YouTube and followed up with art and craft, story maps, posters, etc. Food was provided and it went well. Parents reported they felt more positive supporting their child to enjoy books. The numeracy clock gave an input using the maths resources.”

Those who had received the Primary 3 bags were also asked how the resources had been used. Table 3 below shows that a large proportion of schools read the books in class (45%), and this was the most popular way in which resources were used (the same as last year and the same as for P2 bags).

Table 3: How did you use the P3 Read, Write, Count bags in school?

	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Read the books in class	102	45%
Organised a gifting event with parents	63	28%
Did some of the suggested activities (from website or Parent Guide)	58	26%
Used the storytelling cubes in class	56	25%
Pupils just took bag home	44	19%
Encouraged pupils to join the local library	42	19%
Sent letter home to parents with the bag	41	18%
Used the Ocean Commotion/Money Cards in class	35	15%
Other	32	14%
Visited the local library with my class/school	24	6%
Set homework activities	17	8%
Organised a gifting event without parents	17	8%
Ran a shared reading project	16	7%
Created displays in the school	15	7%
Used the notebook in class	14	6%

Slightly more schools organised gifting events with parents for the P3 bag in 2018 compared to last year (28% and 21% respectively). The least use resource was the notebook, consistent with the P2 bag and consistent between years.

'Other' ways that the P3 bag had been used included:

- art and craft activities related to the books;
- involving local libraries/librarians;
- use of the bags as part of after school learning clubs for pupils/families;
- reading with older buddies or social events around the bags; and
- linking bags to other topics being studied in class.

Again, many schools used the resources to engage the whole school or work with older year groups, especially where children were a part of composite classes:

"In my P2,3,4 class this year we did some shared activities in school. P3 did an information survey with their pictorial atlas from the bag and my P4s were given an assortment of atlases including the one from the bag to evaluate and order from our very first big book atlas right up to one of my own son's Geographical atlas. The parents of my P2,3,4 class are regular visitors to the classroom and were able to see the children's work on display and to discuss it with them."

Preparation and awareness

More than half of schools (59%) said that they had been provided with information about the bags before their arrival. This was a slight increase from last year (52%). Nearly one in five had not (18%), consistent with last year with only 23% saying they were unsure (compared to 31% last year). This suggests that there may either have been better communication from local authorities to schools, or better communication within schools this year to provide clarity to teachers in advance of the bags arriving to school.

In some cases where information had not been provided by the local authority, it had instead been received from others. Staff absence was noted in one school as a reason for lack of communication and in only one case was it suggested that information was received too late.

Respondents were asked if they remembered receiving a letter detailing the contents of the Read, Write, Count bags and the learning resources available during Maths Week Scotland in September 2018. Just over a third (34%) said that they did, and just under a third (30%) said that they did not. The remainder were unsure (36%).

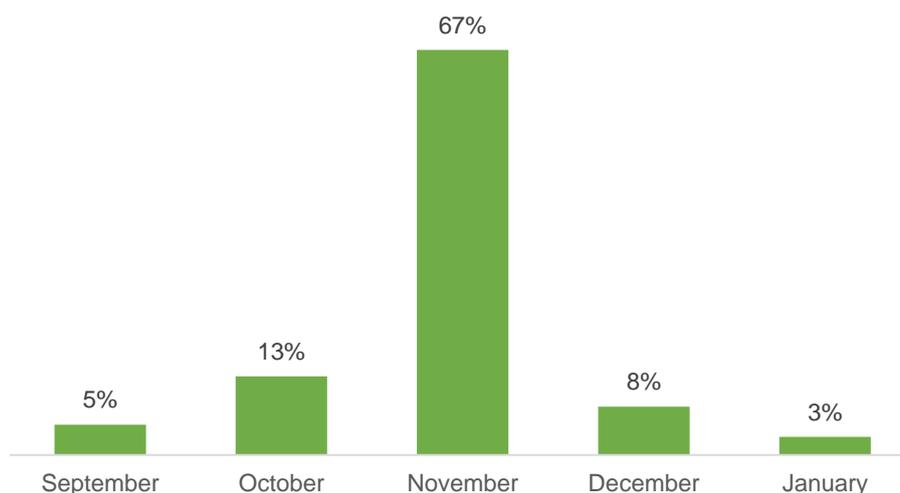
Again, in some cases where respondents had not received the letter, they expressed that it would have been sent to someone else within the school instead (e.g. the school's Literacy Co-ordinator or other member of staff).

As with last year, the majority of professionals who responded to the survey said that they had time to familiarise themselves with the contents of the bags before gifting (80%). Almost one in five, however, had not.

When and how bags were gifted

Figure 1 shows that the majority of schools (67%) gifted their bags in November 2018. The proportion gifting bags after Book Week Scotland (which is the recommended distribution date for schools) was considerably lower than last year (11% and 23% respectively).

Figure 1: When did you gift the bags to pupils?



Only one school said that they still had not gifted the bags at the time of the survey and three could not remember. Others simply commented that they had handed them out at the time/date given in the letter from SBT.

All schools were asked how they had gifted the Read, Write, Count bags in 2018. Table 4 below shows that almost a third of schools invited parents to an event or session at the school as part of the gifting process (the same as last year). A slightly larger proportion of schools created gifting events to get the children excited this year compared to last (20% and 15% respectively) and fewer simply sent them home as they were provided (28% this year compared to 37% in 2017).

Table 4: How did you gift the Read, Write, Count bags this year?

	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
I invited parents to an event or session at the school	69	31%
I sent them home with children as they were provided to me	62	28%
I created an event around the gifting to get children excited	44	20%
I sent them home with children alongside additional information for parents	29	13%
Other	18	8%

Some of the 'other' gifting methods included:

- sharing the packs as part of a P7 buddy or peer-reading session;
- gifting packs as part of storytelling sessions led by school or library staff;
- Head Teachers leading sessions to gift the bags;
- issuing bags as part of a homework task; and
- storytellers coming into school.

Again, some schools reiterated that they shared the bags as a conclusion to Book Week Scotland, sharing them at assemblies or specially organised events for parents/carers (e.g. gifting afternoons, etc.):

"The parents attended the school during learning time to see their child working at carousel tables and the parents took the bags home after the event. 3 tables were set up with planned activities based on each of the books from the P2 and P3 bags. 1 table was allocated to the maths activities."

"We invited parents along to our Gifting Event. The P2, P2/3 and P3 classes familiarised themselves with the related resources which were on the website. At the Gifting Event, a presentation was made to parents outlining the initiative and they were shown where they could find all relevant information. The bags and contents were introduced then presented to the pupils. Pupils and parents then spent time exploring the bags together. Pupils who were unable to have parents there, were able to take part in a variety of related activities in their classrooms. All pupils were able to take their bags home that day."

"The books and contents were shared with the children in class. The parents were invited into school and I spoke to them about the importance of literacy in school and how important it is to read to their children at home. The children then came along to the parent workshop and were gifted their book bags. The event was a great success."

Only one school reported that the proposed time of gifting had been prohibitive, i.e. the end of November, in the run up to Christmas:

"As it was a very busy December period with our Nativity and parties, etc. taking place, it would have been beneficial to stage an event, but too busy with festive events. Perhaps if we receive bags a little earlier in October/ November, there would be more time to organise such an event."

As with last year, just under half of respondents (46%) said that they had combined their gifting of the Read, Write, Count P2 and P3 bags with the Bookbug P1 Family Bag. A quarter (25%) did not and the remaining 29% were not sure.

Some schools confirmed that all bags were gifted as part of Book Week Scotland, either on the same day or at some point during the same week (with P1 gifting often having a dedicated event). Where bags had been distributed at different times or at

different events, this was mainly due to large class sizes making it difficult to combine gifting:

“We did 3 separate events, one for each year stage. All followed a similar process: parents invited into classes to use books and resources with their children; parents taken to different room to discuss use of bags, give feedback with additional members of staff; children brought to room and families enjoyed a snack together before going home.”

Other Scottish Book Trust learning resources

Half of all schools said that they had used the Read, Write, Count Teacher Pack on the Scottish Book Trust website (a slight increase from 47% last year). There was also reasonable use of the other learning resources on the Scottish Book Trust website, with just under a quarter (22%) using the online printable worksheets.

Table 5: Did you use any of the free Scottish Book Trust resources?

	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Used the Read, Write, Count Teacher Pack on Scottish Book Trust website	119	50%
Used any other learning resources on the Scottish Book trust website	61	26%
Used online printable worksheets	53	22%
Contacted Scottish Book Trust for an outreach visit	4	2%
Other	15	6%

Other resources that had been used included the online video of Emily Mackenzie reading ‘Eric Makes a Splash’, GIC resources or teachers’ own resources to support different and innovative ways of using of the packs:

“I did look at some of the online resources but we had our own ideas that we wanted to use.”

Outreach visits

Several respondents said that they were not aware of the online resources, or that they could request an outreach visit.

Only two schools provided details of their outreach visit, suggesting that it had been combined with a parent/carer invitation into the school. Although there was little evidence of awareness or uptake of outreach visits, there was evidence that this is something schools would welcome in coming years:

“Would love to involve Scottish Book Trust for an outreach visit in the future.”

Additional resources

The main 'other' resources that schools said would have been useful to them included:

- a 'display' or 'sample' bag (to keep in school, so that they do not have to use one of the children's bags for demonstrations or to facilitate guided reading);
- games or ideas for games linked to the packs or worksheets to complete in class;
- a Bookbug puppet;
- book review forms;
- more maths/numeracy resources (including time resources, e.g. clocks, days of the week, months, seasons and more dice);
- guidance on how to set up learning events/lesson plans tied to the bags;
- live author sessions;
- shared reading resources;
- posters to encourage children to read;
- e-books and an audio version of the books to benefit English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners/families; and
- direct communication between class teachers and SBT, rather than via nominated contacts in schools (since communication can get lost). It is important to note, however, that SBT do not have access to a list of direct teaching staff in schools and so this may be difficult to implement in practice.

Others who requested a 'class pack' or 'teacher pack' said that, if this had been sent in advance, it would have allowed them to prepare for the main packs arriving in school. Similarly, a letter/email to class teachers, rather than letters sent to managers or administrators in the school may allow class teachers to prepare better, it was suggested. Indeed, time to prepare and plan how to use the resources was perhaps the most commonly requested type of 'other' support:

"Could the teacher information be available well in advance of the books. Even at the start of the school year or at the end of the previous school year. It just would've given me more time to plan things."

"I think the resources given were simple to follow and provided enough guide. More time to prepare and look at the bags is a resource in itself."

"It would be good for teachers to have knowledge of the contents and focus of the bag well before the event as it would give us time to prepare appropriate activities to engage children and their parents."

Others simply commented that they required nothing more and that they felt the existing packs were an excellent resource. One school suggested that any more resources could be off-putting:

"I liked the ones that were in the packs. Too many would put parents off and the children would get bored."

Contents of the bags

Learning professionals were asked if there was anything that could have been done to improve the contents of the Read, Write, Count bags for the children and families receiving them. Most respondents said 'no' and indicated that they had found the bags and the contents excellent, as in previous years:

"The children at our school are very enthusiastic about reading and books – they loved the bags and the books. From a teaching point of view the books in all the bags were of a very high standard this year – we loved them!"

"They were lovely and had great resources in them to give ideas of how to practise maths, writing and reading at home and enjoy sharing learning and reading together."

Professionals particularly complemented the clocks and numeracy games, which they felt might be absent in some homes, as well as the quality of the books, parent guidance and the accompanying online resources.

The only suggestions for improvements were to make the Gaelic books simpler for children to understand when the books are being read to them, resources related to phonics, more games, and more information for teachers ahead of the books arriving in schools. One respondent also suggested picture guidelines for parents who don't have a high level of reading skills and may have found it difficult to use the bags with their children.

The only other suggestion was that items in the bags could be linked to a theme.

Impacts on reading

Learning professionals were asked for their views on whether the packs had been impactful on pupils. Encouragingly, 72% of schools reported that they felt pupils were more enthusiastic about books and reading since receiving the Read, Write, Count bags (compared to 74% last year). Specific impacts included children reading more during school time completing more homework (linked to the bags) as well as children reading the books repeatedly, within class and at home:

"The class are already enthusiastic readers I wouldn't say it made them any more so. They were, however, delighted with the bags and the related activities. P3s in particular were very excited about the atlas and P2s the crocodile book."

One of the greatest impacts of the bags on reading was seen to be that they encouraged parents to read with their children:

"My pupils love reading books already but I think the biggest advantage was to raise the importance of reading and pointers to successful reading with parents."

Those who said that the bags had not been impactful in this way said that was mainly because the pupils were already enthusiastic about reading:

“A one-off gift is very nice but does not have a huge level of impact – resources are already in classroom and children who are enthusiastic already use them.”

Several other learning professionals commented that it was very difficult to measure impact, especially where pupils were already well engaged or where the school was undertaking wider activities to encourage reading for pleasure:

“We are driving reading for enjoyment as a school at the moment so hard to identify the impact of RWC in amongst it but fantastic resources and a wonderful opportunity for them all to have them.”

Some noted that the impact had been more obvious in the short term, rather than the long-term (i.e. during BWS and the week after gifting, but less so over time).

Impacts on writing

Fewer schools (47%) said that pupils were more enthusiastic about writing since receiving the Read, Write, Count bags (compared to 52% last year). Again, comments were made that the lack of impact was possibly because pupils were already enthusiastic about writing, or that it was difficult to evidence or measure impacts *per se*.

Where impacts had been noted, this included children using the writing resources from the bags on multiple occasions, e.g. bringing notebooks back into school to use and pupils reporting using the notebook at home:

“I was delighted to see that two of my poorer writers were the ones that loved having the notebook and were also the ones to bring their stories into class to share. Lots had older siblings who helped them with the writing too.”

Impacts on numeracy

Just under half (49%) of learning professionals reported that pupils were more enthusiastic about numeracy and mathematics since receiving the Read, Write, Count bags (compared to 47% last year). Again, most said that they had no evidence to support impacts as this was hard to measure when the bags complemented other ongoing numeracy related activities in the school. Some single instances of impact had, however, been seen by some teachers:

“A boy in my class has said he has been practising his sums in the note pad in his bag.”

“They really enjoyed the white boards and being teachers, giving sums on their whiteboards for others to complete at home.”

Despite no measurable impacts, several teachers commented that the children had really enjoyed the games within the bags and had particularly enjoyed having an opportunity to share them with parents (especially the dice, money games and clocks).

Table 6 provides a cross-tabulation of impact by gifting approach. It shows that, where gifting events were created with the children, the perceived impacts on enthusiasm for books and reading were particularly strong. Inviting parents to attend events or sessions at schools, as well as sending home additional information for parents appears to have been impactful across the board. In schools where bags had been sent home as provided, the only perceived impact was on enthusiasm about books and reading. Given small numbers of respondents in each cluster, however, these findings should be interpreted with caution.

Table 6: Gifting approach and perceived impact

	More enthusiastic about books and reading	More enthusiastic about writing	More enthusiastic about numeracy and mathematics
I created an event around the gifting to get children excited	Yes = 30 (77%) No = 9 (23%)	Yes = 17 (45%) No = 21 (55%)	Yes = 15 (41%) No = 22 (59%)
I invited parents to an event or session at the school	Yes = 45 (74%) No = 16 (26%)	Yes = 29 (48%) No = 32 (52%)	Yes = 38 (62%) No = 23 (38%)
I sent them home with children alongside additional information for parents	Yes = 25 (89%) No = 3 (11%)	Yes = 17(61%) No = 11(39%)	Yes = 16 (57%) No = 12 (43%)
I sent them home with children as they were provided to me	Yes = 33 (65%) No = 18 (35%)	Yes = 25 (50%) No = 25 (50%)	Yes = 20 (42%) No = 28 (58%)

Impact on teaching practice

A large proportion of respondents (80%) said that the Read, Write, Count bags and gifting had had a positive impact on their teaching practice (a marginal increase compared to 79% last year).

Comments included that the bags had helped teachers foster more positive parental relationships, had helped them to create enthusiasm among their class groups, had been impactful in giving them experience of organising gifting events/parental engagement activities and making teachers think more about linking reading and writing together with numeracy. The resources had also helped deliver teaching in a fun way and had encouraged shared learning as good teaching practice. Another teacher commented that the bags helped them to keep their practice “fresh”.

Among those who felt there had been no impact, this was because books had only been in school for a short time before being gifted, and had not been used by class teachers, as well as teachers feeling that they were already working at a sufficiently strong level with regards to reading, writing and numeracy.

Over half of teaching professionals (55%) said that they would be interested in attending a Read, Write, Count CLPL session (compared to 59% last year). Just over a quarter (26%) were not, mainly because they had already attended an event and the remaining 19% were 'unsure'.

Things that staff would like to see covered at such a session included:

- an early preview of what will be included in the bags and ideas on how to use them (e.g. contents of bags, how to organise events, ideas of activities, shared reading ideas, etc.);
- ideas for specific games and activities to do with the books;
- lesson ideas/lesson plans and homework ideas;
- how to engage reluctant readers, how to support readers who are struggling to read and how to challenge learners who have a good grasp of reading;
- how to maximise the learning experiences of each resource within the bag;
- how to speak to parents to share what teachers do in a way they understand/are willing to learn;
- ideas to use with parents to show how to use the bags effectively at home; and
- ideas about how others have used the bags to develop links with parents and how others have launched/gifted the bags.

Others commented that anything that would enhance both the learner experience and help to further strengthen home learning links with parents/carers would be welcomed.

One possible barrier to attending such an event may be staff time/availability, it was suggested.

Parental engagement

Nearly two thirds of respondents (62%) said that the Read, Write, Count bags had explicitly helped build better links with parents and carers (compared to 57% last year).

Examples were given where parents had approached the school to ask for further information, and some schools had received feedback from parents stating it helped them to engage more with their child's literacy/numeracy learning. Some reported seeing more comments from parents in homework jotters and others commented that discussion with parents had been strong during gifting events:

"We shared an enjoyable event for the parents to engage with their child in various activities based around the contents of the bags. This was quite an informal session and parents engaged in much discussion around the activities and learning."

Many schools said that they felt they already had good links, but it was nonetheless good to be able to provide new resources for home.

Some felt they had not maximised on the opportunity to engage with parents but hoped to do that more in future years. Others felt that engaging parents remained a challenge

that the bags could not in themselves overcome. The variable attendance at organised events had also made some teachers unsure of how valued the bags were at home:

"I'm not sure the some of the parents (or the children) fully appreciate the gift bags and the wealth of talking and listening they could do with their children."

"It is usually a good way to encourage parents to come to school, but depends on the class. Some parents more willing to give up their time to come in than others. I didn't have a good turn out this year, but did last year."

Others suggested that the bags were just another part of already strong parental relationships, rather than an improvement:

"Speaking with parents during our open afternoon and discussing how books and resources could be used at home helped to strengthen our parents as partners relationship."

As with last year, there were mixed views around whether the bags had helped parents to be more confident in being involved with their children's learning. Under half of schools (44%) said that they had but a similar proportion (46%) were unsure. This was mainly due to lack of feedback from parents and the fact that any impacts would be confounded by other activities/initiatives being organised by the school, which were similar to or complementary to Read, Write, Count.

There was also a perception that the parents who attended events were most likely to be those who were already confident and engaged:

"For some parents, but these parents are usually the parents who would be involved anyway."

"Those who engage are more engaged. Those who don't still aren't."

Overall, over half of schools (55%) said that the bags had been a helpful tool to use as part of their school's parental involvement work. Unlike last year, a larger proportion specifically said that they had not (26% compared to 13% last year) and a smaller proportion were unsure (19% compared to 33% last year). Comments suggest that this may be something that schools may work to change next year.

Other comments

Most of the other comments provided by learning professionals related to their perceptions of the resources as being of excellent quality, and being much appreciated and enjoyed by teaching staff, pupils and parents alike:

"A fantastic resource for children and parents, thank you."

"Children love the books. They are good quality and have lovely stories."

Several commented that the free nature of the resource was invaluable in helping to reach some of the more deprived families and learners, as well as contributing towards closing the attainment gap:

“...these bags are so well received by some of our most disadvantaged children. The quality of materials is excellent and their faces light up when given the bag.”

“It is a brilliant thing to do and ensures that all children have access to books in their own homes.”

“Personally, I feel these resources are invaluable for pupils and families, especially those who do not have access to a local library and/or who cannot afford to purchase books for their children.”

Schools also reiterated that they felt even more could be done to engage parents if schools had more time to prepare and plan how to use the resources, and several also commented that more thought may be needed on how to gather feedback from parents around perceptions of the resource, use and impacts.

Many urged that the initiative be continued in future years.

“It’s a fantastic campaign, and the bags are truly wonderful. They bring joy to the children and they stimulate their creativity. Keep up all the amazing work you do.”

Feedback from parents and carers

Respondent profiles

A total of 513 usable responses were received³, which was less than half the number received last year. Response rates were variable by local authority and no responses were received Aberdeen, Fife, Inverclyde, North Ayrshire, Orkney Islands, Shetland Islands, Stirling or the Western Isles. Parents/carers in one local authority (East Renfrewshire) accounted for 31% of all responses received and the bias in the sample should be born in mind in considering the results below.

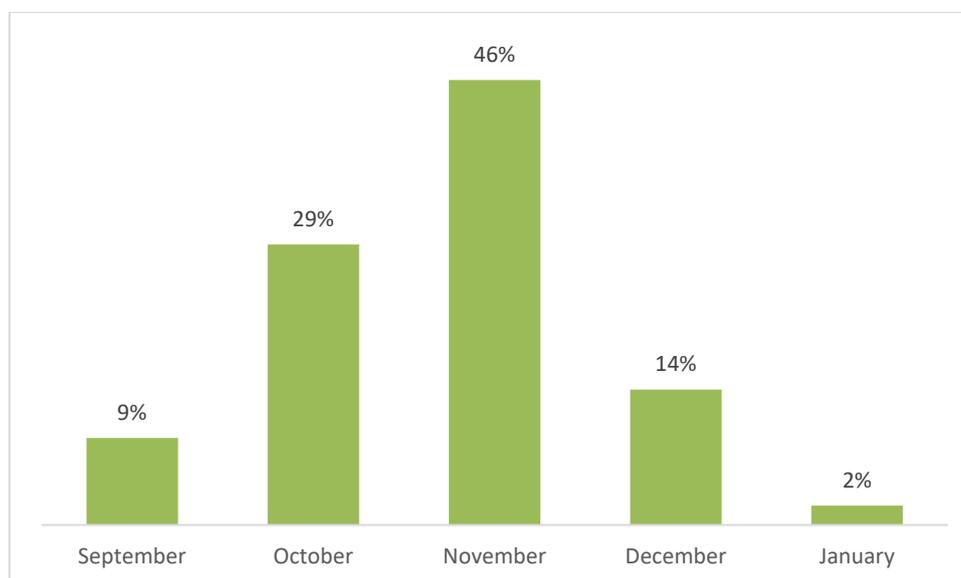
Main findings

The sample was split between those who received the Primary 2 bag (56%), the Primary 3 bag (40%) or both (4%) which was, proportionately, exactly the same distribution as last year.

When and how bags were gifted

Almost half of parents/carers reported that they had received their bags in November 2018 – an increase from 39% in 2017. Almost a third (29%) had received them in October and just over one in ten (14%) had received them in December. There were very few bags gifted outside of these months and, overall, gifting seems to have been more concentrated over a shorter time period in 2018.

Figure 2: When did your child bring home their Read, Write, Count bag?



³ Although 568 responses were submitted overall, a large number of these contained no responses to the substantive questions (i.e. only the name of the child/children's school and contact details were provided). One respondent said that they did not receive a bag.

A large majority (62%) of parents/carers reported that bags had been sent home with their child from school – a drop from 71% who said the same last year. Almost a fifth (19%) said that it had been sent home with additional information about the bag and what it was for – an increase from 15% last year.

There was also an increase in the proportion of parents/carers who reported that they had attended an event or session at the school/library or other community centre to receive the bag (17% this year compared to 13% last year).

Table 7: How was the bag given to you and your child?

	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
The school sent my child home with it	318	62%
The school sent my child home with it and provided me with additional information about the bag and what it is for	97	19%
I attended an event or session (at school/library/community centre) where my child was given their bag	87	17%
I picked up my bag from the local authority or they sent it to me	-	-
Other	10	2%

Where other methods of receipt were reported, this included bags being gifted at a session in the local library, afternoon sessions being offered for parents after bags had been sent home and workshop sessions in school. In two cases events had been offered but the parents/carers had been unable to attend.

How the resources were used

The ways in which the bags had been used at home was the same as last year, with a large majority of parents/carers reporting that they had read the books with their child/children (84%), used the numeracy items (62%) and/or used the storytelling items. Half of parents had also used the parent guide.

Table 8: How have you used the bag with your child?

	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Read the books with my child	430	84%
Used the numeracy items with my child	319	62%
Used the storytelling items with my child	272	53%
Read the parent guide	254	50%
Used the drawstring bag (e.g. as a school gym bag)	172	34%
None of the above – I have not used the bag with my child	4	1%

The dice were seen as particularly helpful and had been used for other games, in some cases. The clocks were also mentioned as having been used by families and some had used the resources for innovative games outside of the home:

“We have a writing/mark making area in our home in the children’s play area as it’s something we all love to do. So, the items are used regularly. The drawstring bag stays nearby so we can use it to transport items to other areas of the house, for example when we do treasure hunting so we can easily move items from room to room to create our treasure maps.”

Indeed, the bag itself had been used for various purposes, including being used for carrying gym kits/swimming kits, storing art materials, storing books, as a travel bag, for shopping, etc.

Only a very small number of parents/carers said that they had discarded/recycled everything except the books, or had not used the bags.

Half of respondents said that they had used the bag ‘a fair bit’ (51% compared to 55% last year) with a further 27% saying that they used it ‘a little’ and 21% saying that they used it ‘a lot’ (compared to 26% and 18% respectively last year). Only 1% of all respondents said that they either had not used the bag or did not intend to do so, also consistent with 2017.

When asked how long they anticipated that they would keep using the bags, most parents/carers indicated that they would use the bags for a few months (78% compared to 76% last year), about a month (7%) or for a few more weeks (6%). The remaining 9% said that they had either already stopped using the bags or did not intend to use it any more. Overall, the patterns of use were the same as those reported in 2017.

Favourite items

Parents and carers were asked what their favourite items had been in the P2 bags. Table 9 below shows that the most popular items were the two books and the double-sided rockets and meteors game and blank clock face with counters. The popularity of different items was similar to last year.

Table 9: What are your favourite items in the Primary 2 bags?

	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
A Tale of Two Beasts – Fiona Robertson	147	48%
Double sided Rockets and Meteors game / blank clock face with dice and counters	136	44%
Open Very Carefully – Nicola O'Byrne and Nick Bromley	131	43%
Finger Puppets	89	29%
Notebook	78	25%
Writing Pencil	67	22%
Parents Activity booklet	54	18%

Many respondents commented that they loved all of the resources, or that all resources were “great”. Indeed, when asked if there were any items that they disliked in the bag, 80% said that they enjoyed all of the items in the bag (the same as last year).

Many parents and carers gave particularly positive feedback on the books, and had found the topics engaging. Books were described as being of good quality, simple stories with good illustrations, attention grabbing, interesting and inspiring. Although both P2 books were appreciated, *A Tale of Two Beasts* received particularly strong feedback for generating discussion between families:

“A Tale of Two Monsters showed that there are often two sides to a story – each character has a different perspective as to what’s happening.”

“Good to have things for you to work on at home together. The story is lovely with a nice touch of looking at two different perspectives giving you plenty to discuss.”

“My little boy LOVES the holes in the book! He’d never seen anything like it. He now reads words in other books pretending the crocodile has eaten those too and I’ve to guess which letter the crocodile has eaten.”

Parents and carers commented that they liked the ‘active’ rather than ‘passive’ approach to learning, and many reported that they had enjoyed reading books together with their children:

“I love reading and it gave me and my children some quality time together, it also helped one of my children to read a lot better and to explain what the story was about.”

“It engaged the children; they were learning without realising!”

Others reported that the items, particularly the games, had encouraged play/interaction across the whole family, with younger siblings using the resources alongside direct recipients:

“Children love a new book to make bedtime special and the game went down well, encouraged him to play a game with his sister and played with us.”

“My child enjoyed everything in the bag but I would say the book A Tale of Two Beasts was read frequently. We sat as a family to play her new game and she happily doodles drawing for all her friends and family. The bag contained everything my child enjoys; it was a lovely gift to her.”

Several parents and carers also reported that the notebook and pencil had been used a lot at home for drawing and other creative activities. The clock face, although mentioned less frequently, was seen as a useful addition to more traditional household play resources.

There was perhaps some indication from the free text comments that the items other than the books might be more easily forgotten or discarded, although some also commented that these items could be more valuable for some families than others:

“As above all are great, but beyond the books the other items get looked at then forgotten about – sorry. I know my son loves numbers and would definitely enjoy a maths challenge or a tables chart. I appreciate the rocks and meteors games was a practical numeracy game but he's got similar games so didn't seem that interested.”

“Not really interested in the games. We have so many high-quality games already – valuable resource for those who do not.”

“We enjoyed everything, though my son forgot about the finger puppets and clock face so they haven't really been played with since opening.”

“Good quality well illustrated books. The other items are nice but don't tend to get used after the first day.”

One suggestion was made that the items could have been gifted over a number of weeks to have longer lasting impact, rather than all at the same time.

Only a small number of respondents commented that they were unsure if the resources were “necessary” (especially the pencils), and some felt that the books and finger puppets, in particular, may be “too young” for children at this age. There was, in fact, mixed feedback on the finger puppets with some suggesting that these were too childish and others suggesting that they had inspired imaginative play:

“My son's imagination with the puppets was just amazing he loved role playing and making up stories, it was like reliving early years again. I loved it!”

“We were not fans of the puppets. While they looked lovely, they didn't inspire my child to play or interact with them.”

This resource seemed to split opinion among parents/carers, unlike last year where there was more unanimous support.

Some comments were also made that the meteor game was a little confusing in its layout and that the activity leaflet may have been “a little patronising”:

“The rocket and meteor game was set out in a confusing way for my 6-year-old and did not follow methodically as other versions of this game would.”

“The rockets and meteor game looked as if it could be played like snakes and ladders but the numbers weren't set up in the same way as snakes and ladders so we couldn't actually play it.”

Only 19 respondents (6%) specifically stated that there were any items that they did not like.

The favourite items in the Primary 3 bags were the storytelling dice (the same as last year) and the picture atlas. The fiction book and card game were also favourite items for around a third of parents/carers.

Table 10: What are your favourite items in the Primary 3 bags?

	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Storytelling Dice	107	47%
Children's Picture Atlas – Collins	101	45%
There is No Dragon in This Story – Lou Carter and Deborah Allwright	75	33%
Ocean Commotion card game with reversible money cards	67	30%
Notebook	34	15%
Writing pencil	31	14%
Parents Activity booklet	20	9%

As with the Primary 2 bag, a large proportion of parents/carers said that they liked everything in the bag (72%).

The storytelling dice were seen as encouraging creativity, as well as encouraging family play, with several respondents reporting that they had been used with/by younger siblings too. The dice had allowed parents/carers to expand ideas and have lots of dialogue with their children, it seems:

“Enjoyed making stories up as a family and ensured younger sibling could join in too.”

“Great tool to get kids talking and creating, encouraging them to use their imagination.”

“The dice are brilliant! They are interactive yet simple and provides us with endless laughs as we create stories together. Both my children (P1 and P3) have loved the dice and we use them daily.”

The storytelling dice, in particular, were seen as a welcome gift for children who may be reluctant readers:

“Something different and my son who is not an avid reader or writer was more interested in writing a made-up story and we played games of who could come up with the silliest and funniest. We also played this at our family Xmas dinner.”

The atlas was described as being easy to use, good for encouraging imagination/discussion and was also seen as a welcome change from fiction books:

“Because it was large and colourful and very easy to explore. My son loves learning about different countries and has been inspired to travel the world!”

“Geography was always very interesting to me and I loved looking at maps and ended up travelling many places before settling. I would like to install this in my daughter about how exciting and interesting other countries in the world are. Travelling is a huge learning process and opens your mind up to the way other people live.”

“We spent a lot of time reading and playing with the atlas. It’s illustration of animals and landmarks were great and helped embed learning.”

“The atlas was a great change as my child is really interested at the moment in learning about countries and capital cities! We attend the library to get fiction story books so the atlas was something different and appropriate for stage!”

“The picture atlas provided lots of excellent opportunities for us to look at the world. My child had lots of questions to ask after looking at it together which widened her knowledge of both the world and mapping skills.”

The money cards were also welcomed by many as a way of encouraging numeracy development in a fun way:

“I thought this was fantastic, both my children love top trumps so this was super. But I really liked the money cards and the money bingo game. I keep these cards in my bag when we go out for playing with the children.”

Again, many people simply commented that they had enjoyed everything in the P3 bag and had found the contents educational, fun and interactive:

“Everything was great. The stories were level appropriate and everything was very interactive. As a parent it gave me ideas on how to engage my child with reading and writing. For my daughter, the storytelling dices were great as they allowed her to use her imagination.”

“I found all the items in the bag really interesting, useful and educational. Both my child and I spent lots of time reading and learning from them. He particularly loved looking through the atlas.”

“My son loves non-fiction texts and learning new facts about the world. The atlas was lovely addition to his collection of non-fiction texts. He isn’t overly keen on story writing but the story dice have encouraged him to verbally create stories with either myself or his older sister. He has started to create his own short stories at home something which he was reluctant to do before outside of the classroom. We also have started creating stories while out and about on walks too with items we spot on our route. We love to play card games and board games in our household so the card game was a firm favourite with my son.”

Only 13 respondents said that there were items that they did not like and, in most cases, they referenced the age appropriateness of the fiction book (i.e. being “too young”).

Other items

Suggestions for other items which parents/carers would like to see included in the bag included:

- bookmarks;
- 100 square or times table charts;
- CDs (with music, stories, etc.) or DVDs;
- chapter books/novels for more advanced readers;
- a mini whiteboard;
- dictionary;
- pencil case/stationary;
- reading diaries;
- toys;
- phonics guide/sound cards;
- audio books;
- playing cards,
- more maths games;
- more writing books/notebooks; and
- more books (especially non-fiction).

One respondent suggested autism/Asperger tactile items and another suggested items themed around anti-bullying, to help introduce these issues to children and encourage discussion on the topic. Others suggested more information on how to join the local library, encourage reading, etc.

Overall ratings

Two thirds of parents/carers (66%) reported that their child liked the bag very much compared to 67% last year. A further 29% said that they quite liked it, compared to 28% last year. Cumulatively, 95% of all parents/carers in both survey years gave a positive rating for how their child perceived the bag:

“Wonderful idea that my child looks forward to receiving.”

“My daughter really loved this bag and was so excited bringing it home from school.”

“My son was very excited by the bag. The package made the books more exciting, more of a treat.”

“It’s exciting to get a present like that at school and makes numeracy and literacy more exciting.”

Similarly, 71% of parents/carers said that they liked the bag very much, compared to 62% last year, and a further 26% said that they quite liked it, compared to 28% last year (i.e. collectively, over 90% of all respondents gave a positive view in each survey year):

“It’s a brilliant resource, especially for those children who maybe don’t have access to books as easily as some.”

“Always happy to receive resources to use at home.”

“It’s fantastic to ensure children have access to these items, and even for those who do already it’s a real treat.”

The main concern among parents who gave less positive ratings was whether the bag should be gifted universally, or whether a more targeted approach may be more prudent:

“It’s a nice idea but not sure if should be supplied to all children. Our house is bursting with books and we visit the library so didn’t actually need it but I expect it was a lovely treat for some other children less fortunate. Perhaps it could be targeted at children from less fortunate backgrounds.”

Perceived impacts

Respondents were asked to rate their agreement/disagreement with a number of statements relating to the impact of the resources.

Table 11: Perceived Impacts on Parents/Carers

	Strongly Agree	Slightly Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The information in the bag made me realise how important it is for a parent to be involved with their child's learning (n=446)	59%	18%	20%	1%	2%
The bag has made me feel more confident about getting involved with my child's learning (n=446)	42%	22%	30%	3%	3%
It's given me lots of new ideas/new ways of doing things with my child (n=445)	39%	37%	18%	4%	2%
The things in the bag were not aimed at a parent like me (n=443)	5%	8%	33%	15%	39%
The bag hasn't changed what I do or the way I do things with my child (n=445)	16%	28%	30%	17%	9%

The same as last year, the strongest agreement overall was that the information in the bag had made parents/carers realise the importance of parental involvement in their children's learning (59% strongly agreed and 18% slightly agreed).

The same proportion (76%) said that the bags had given parents/carers new ideas/new ways of doing things with their child (compared to 74% last year).

Nearly two thirds of parents/carers (64%) also agreed with the sentiment that the bag had made them feel more confident about getting involved in their children's learning (compared to 61% last year).

Despite some earlier comments about the bags perhaps being more suitable for 'other' families, only 5% of respondents strongly agreed that the bags were not aimed at parents like themselves. Most provided either neutral ratings or disagreed with this statement.

The sample was split in terms of whether the bag had changed the way that parents/carers did things with their children.

Confidence with reading, writing and numeracy

Parents and carers were also asked to what extent the bag had made them more confident with reading, writing, mathematics/numeracy and engaging with their child/children's learning. Table 12 shows that the biggest impact on confidence was parents/carers engaging in their child/children's learning. Indeed, 48% of respondents cited this compared to only 38% last year. Confidence in reading and numeracy was also reported by a slightly higher proportion of parents this year compared to last (24% compared to 20% and 18% compared to 16% last year respectively). The same proportion in each survey year (15%) reported increased confidence in writing.

Table 12: Would you agree that the bag has made you more confident?

	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Reading	124	24%
Writing	77	15%
Mathematics/Numeracy	93	18%
Engaging with your child's learning	244	48%

As with last year, a large number said that they had tried new things or shown a more active interest in reading, writing or numeracy related activities since receiving the bag. This included:

- trying out new ideas/doing new things (35%);
- doing things they used to do a little differently (27%)
- visiting the library or other resource centre for new ideas (19%);
- talking to friends and/or family about doing new things (11%);
- talking to the school/teacher about what parents/carers can do at home (10%);
- visiting the Read, Write, Count website (24%);
- looking for books by the same authors of the books in the bag (27%); and
- looking at other websites/going online to find out new ideas (12%);

Only 13% of parents/carers said that they had not yet done any such activities since receiving the bag or did not intend to (3%).

Overwhelmingly, the main reason cited for not having increased in confidence or changed their activity was that parents/carers were already confident in these areas and/or were already well engaged or involved in their children's education and learning, providing mixed experiences. Some such parents/carers commented that they had used the resources with other children, had purchased additional resources linked to the bags (e.g. more books by the same author) or devised new games linked to the bags or their contents.

Other comments

A number of respondents provided additional comments and these mainly related to how much children had enjoyed the resources, and how the resources were

particularly valuable for vulnerable families or those living in deprivation, but were still appreciated by all:

“A really lovely idea. My son is very lucky and we buy a lot of books and spend a lot of time reading with him but I can imagine there are a lot of children who are not as lucky and this will be very useful and exciting for them.”

“I think the bags are a fantastic idea. Books are very prominent in our home [but it’s] always nice to get new ones and appreciate that there may be children without easy access to books so think it’s great that they are provided to all children.”

“Think they are great for parents who may need extra guidance. For others who are already very involved in encouraging reading, numeracy, etc. it is not so helpful. Having new books to read is always great though.”

“This is a good resource for those who need support or ideas. I personally didn’t learn anything new, but that doesn’t mean I don’t recognise the value of the resource for many other parents. I enjoy it simply for gaining more books for our library in the house and for the handy bag.”

While some parents said that they had not necessarily engaged ‘more’ in their children’s learning as a result of receiving the bags, many acknowledged that it had made them engage differently or more creatively:

“Great tool for children and encourages you to be more creative with your child’s learning.”

“I think it was a great idea, it made me realise that there are different ways to play with my child other than just reading together a story. Thank you!”

Some used the other comments section to provide additional praise for the engagement activities/events that they had attended in schools/at libraries.

Again, the only negative feedback related to some perceptions that the bag was not necessary for all children, and should be targeted at those who may benefit from it most, as well as comments that the bags themselves should be recyclable (noting, of course, that they are already reusable).

As with learning professionals, many simply expressed thanks and said that they hoped the initiative would continue in the future:

“I cannot express how magnificent this free resource is. It is a great initiative which should be appreciated by all parents involved.”

Discussion

Main findings

The evaluation attracted a strong response from learning professionals and parents/carers alike. Together, the surveys provided valuable learning to inform the development of the bags in the future. Main findings include:

Learning professionals

- that the resources are well used in schools, with many taking time to read the books in class or play the games with children before sending bags home;
- that schools continue to appreciate the resource and more schools are making efforts to promote the bags with parents over time;
- there is evidence that some schools link well with local libraries as part of the gifting process;
- resources are seen as good complementary resources to the learning that is already taking place in schools;
- the bags provide a good opportunity for schools to reach out to parents and encourage home-school links;
- schools find it difficult to evidence impacts of the bags on reading, writing or numeracy but, where gifting events are held with the children, the perceived impacts on enthusiasm for books and reading seem particularly strong; and
- learning professionals would welcome even more advanced notice of the bags arriving and a chance to plan ahead.

Parents and carers

- parents and carers appreciate the gifts and provide positive feedback around children's engagement with the bags;
- children appear to like the books, in particular, and the addition of a non-fiction book to the P3 bag this year was particularly welcomed;
- as with last year, the storytelling dice were particularly well liked, as was the game in the younger age group;
- a large proportion of parents/carers reported reading the books to their children, not only at the point of gifting but repeatedly thereafter; and
- the bags appear to impact positively by making parents/carers realise the importance of parental involvement in their children's learning, providing new ideas/new ways of doing things and making some parents/carers feel more confident about getting involved in their children's learning.

Success against outcomes

In addition to seeking general feedback on the resources, the evaluation sought to assess how far the programme had achieved success against the outcomes for the project which were agreed with the Scottish Government, namely:

- Outcome 1 – to contribute to the joint aims of raising attainment for all and closing the attainment gap, with the focus on the latter;
- Outcome 2 – to provide resources and advice to parents and children to support fun and accessible home-based learning (incorporating growth mindset principles, particularly in relation to numeracy);
- Outcome 3 – to ensure good integration between the bags and the wider social marketing campaign (in line with the strategic approach of belief, competency and behaviours); and
- Outcome 4 – to secure buy-in and support from teachers and other practitioners, such as library staff and family/community learning.

Table 15 below summarises the findings from the evaluation which may be considered to evidence achievement against each of these outcomes.

Table 15: Summary of evidence to support outcomes

Outcome 1	Outcome 2	Outcome 3	Outcome 4
<p>The fact that bags are given to all children was seen as a key strength of the initiative among respondents, ensuring that all children have access to books/other resources in the home</p> <p>While some parents suggested more targeted distribution to those most in need, others agreed that universal coverage was required since all children benefited from new resources to inspire their learning</p> <p>Only a very small proportion of parents reported that they felt the bags were not suitable for them – most agreed that they would benefit all types of families, and that they facilitated family activities and involvement of younger siblings in educational play</p>	<p>Bags are used in a wide variety of ways and, even where parents/carers report that they are already very involved in their children's learning, the bags provide inspiration for new and creative ways of working with children i.e. impact on the way that parents/carers engage, rather than the level of engagement</p> <p>Numeracy gifts were seen as fun and engaging and parents reported that learning through play occurred as a result</p> <p>Families reported that they had enjoyed linking with the school to learn about the resources and explore ways of using the resources at home. Many had also accessed wider resources as a result</p>	<p>Schools show an improved awareness of links between RWC and Bookbug bags this year with many coordinating their gifting events</p> <p>More schools gifted the bags during BWS/November, as advised, compared to last year (i.e. more concentrated distribution)</p> <p>Many learning professionals and parents/carers accessed the supporting online resources, including the RWC website</p> <p>Lead Contacts actively promoted the linked websites to schools</p>	<p>Evidence suggests that many schools involved libraries in their gifting process and that library staff played a role in promoting bags</p> <p>Teachers widely support the initiative and look forward to it each year – some perceive it to now be part of the annual calendar of events</p> <p>A large proportion of learning professionals said that the bags had impacted positively on their teaching practice</p> <p>More than half expressed interest in attending a CLPL event (most who did not had already attended such an event)</p> <p>Lead Contacts are using local networks well and are keen to strengthen these by learning from the experience of others</p>

Learning for the future

Key learning from the evaluation which could be used to inform the future development and success of the P2/P3 packs includes:

- the need to further raise awareness of the initiative among some class teachers and to get them involved in planning for the gifting early on, ideally encouraging even more schools to gift the bags during BWS (rather than in October or December). This may require correspondence directly with P2/3 teachers;
- ensuring that schools receive sufficient numbers of packs to allow for each pupil to have their own set – this may be by asking schools to allow a small contingency in their orders to cover changes in the school roll/pupil movement between schools, etc;
- allowing copies of the packs to be provided to Lead Contacts and class teachers well in advance of the main gifting, to allow them to familiarise themselves with the content and plan engagement activities around the bags (with spare copies to be retained for in-class use);
- even greater promotion of the online support resources for teachers and parents, to maximise engagement with the campaign as a whole;
- raising awareness of the outreach resource for schools, to maximise uptake;
- there may be scope to reduce some of the stationary resources, e.g. pencils and notebooks, as these are the least well received and attracted some scepticism from parents (although were still welcomed by many others);
- exploring ways of ensuring that children with additional support needs or English as a second language can still be involved and benefit from the campaign, by exploring if resources in alternative formats are needed, or if there is a way of advising parents and learning professionals on how to use the standard resources in adapted ways;
- exploring ways that schools and parents/carers might be able to evidence impacts of the resources; and
- working with schools to ensure that parents/carers get involved in the gifting and are invited to provide feedback either to schools or to SBT directly.

Conclusions

As with previous evaluations, feedback from all stakeholders this year shows that the Read, Write, Count bags are much appreciated, well used and keenly anticipated by learning professionals, pupils and parents/carers alike. The main challenge is around ensuring that all children receive the bags in a timely manner and that parents are invited to engage with schools to make the most of the resources. Although the bags have the biggest impact in the short term, the longevity of the books and games, in particular, is clear and the resources are also being used by a wider group of children than only those who receive them, with much evidence that siblings too benefit from the gifts. Even where family participation in reading, writing and numeracy has not increased as a result of gifting, it appears that parents and carers are inspired by the bags to be more creative, imaginative and are more confident to engage with their

children in even more fun and interesting ways. There is also clear evidence of a desire to see the initiative continued in the future.