



# Read, Write, Count Evaluation 2017/18

## **Introduction**

### **What is Read Write Count?**

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.

Delivered by Scottish Book Trust, the Scottish Government and Education Scotland, it aims to build on the success of other similar initiatives such as the PlayTalkRead and Bookbug programmes delivered in the early years (including Primary 1) and encourages parents and families to include easy and fun reading, writing and counting activities in their everyday lives. The introduction of the Read, Write, Count campaign means that all children in Scotland from Primary 1 to Primary 3 now receive a gifted bag of books and other family-friendly accessible resources to support learning at home which complements learning in the classroom.

By providing resources which support home-school links, and seek to increase parental engagement in children's learning, Read, Write, Count aims to build not only confidence of parents and children in their learning together, but support positive educational outcomes.

### **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, these 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.

In 2016, bags were sent directly to schools; in 2017 bags were sent to all local authorities for onward distribution to every primary school in the country between September and November, for distribution to children and families during Book Week Scotland (27<sup>th</sup> November – 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2017).

### **Aims & Objectives**

In 2016/17, an in-house evaluation of the Read, Write, Count bags was undertaken. It showed that there was considerable support among teachers for the bags and their use at home, as well as positive feedback from parents/carers and children on the contents of the bags and their impact on learning.

In 2017/18, Scottish Book Trust again gathered feedback data on the bags and an independent evaluation was commissioned to explore whether the gifting programme had helped to achieve the outcomes set by the project team prior to development, building on the outcomes intended for the full campaign, namely to:

- 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.

The evaluation also sought to gather feedback on how the gifting programme could be improved, to evolve over time.

This report sets out the findings of the 2017/18 Read, Write, Count evaluation, and acts to support the evaluation carried out last year.

## **Methodology**

Two distinct surveys were developed to canvass the views of teaching professionals and parents/carers separately. A mix of closed and open-ended questions were included to explore such things as use of the resources, how the bags had been gifted, how they had been used, impacts of the resources on pupils' enjoyment of reading, writing and numeracy and impacts on professional practice and parental engagement. A number of free text fields were included to allow respondents to comment on what they had liked/not liked about the bags or to make suggestions for changes in the future.

All schools who received the Read, Write, Count bags were invited to complete the feedback survey. The survey was available online and contained 23 substantive questions seeking feedback on the resources. Schools were incentivised to take part in the survey by a prize draw for a box of books and learning materials.

All households who received the bags were also invited to provide feedback. The parent/carer survey contained 25 substantive questions and was also online. Respondents were again incentivised by a prize draw for a Read, Write, Count goodie bag.

Survey invitations were issued via Read, Write, Count contacts in each local authority area, and the link was also posted on Scottish Book Trust Twitter and

Facebook channels. Colleagues were encouraged to share the survey invitations with their networks. The survey invitation was also emailed directly to all primary schools at the start of February (using the school office email address) and schools were asked to pass the survey link on to the Primary 2 and Primary 3 teachers, as well as to share it with parents/carers, either on social media or on their website, etc.

The survey opened in mid-January and a reminder was sent the following month, alongside reminder prompts on social media. The deadline was the end of February.

To support the learning from the surveys, a small number of follow-up telephone interviews were carried out where respondents had provided their contact details and consented to be re-contacted. A total of 4 interviews with teaching professionals and 6 interviews with parents/carers were carried out to capture more detailed feedback. Interviewees were selected on the basis of their earlier responses, with a mix in geography and feedback that had already been provided on the resources (to get a mix between those who gave largely positive or negative feedback in the surveys). Some respondents were chosen because their school/their family had reported particularly innovative use of the resources.

The analysis of survey data took place throughout June 2018, with interviews with teachers, parents and carers staggered between June and August. The body of this report presents the survey findings and the case study write ups are attached as Annex A.

### **Research Caveats**

Although both surveys attracted a robust response, it is important to stress that the findings presented here reflect only the views of those who opted to respond to the survey. They should not, therefore, be taken as representative of the entire teaching profession nor the wider parent/carer population, and the findings should not be generalised too broadly. That being said, the volume of data generated and the mix in views from professionals from a range of backgrounds, and parents/carers living across Scotland still provides a rich and valuable understanding of how the resources were received.

# Feedback from Professionals

## Respondent Profiles

A total of 593 valid responses were received<sup>1</sup>. The majority of respondents were either Primary 2 Teachers (33%) or Primary 3 Teachers (27%). Just under a quarter (24%) were Composite Class Teachers and 4% were Head Teachers. The majority of 'other' respondents were Deputy Head Teachers, acting Heads/Deputes or Principal Teachers, Primary 1 Teachers or support staff (including Literacy Co-ordinators and Raising Attainment Teachers). At least one response was received from all local authority areas, except East Ayrshire.

Among those who responded, there was a fairly equal split in the proportion whose class had received the Primary 2 bags (39%), the Primary 3 bags (33%) or both (28%).

## 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 1 below shows that the majority of schools used the resources by reading the books in class (47%), giving the bags to pupils to take home (23%) or doing some of the suggested activities from the website or accompanying Parent Guide (23%). Almost a quarter of schools (22%) organised gifting events with parents and nearly one in five schools (17%) said that they sent home letters to parents to accompany the bags. Most schools used a combination of engagement activities.

The least used resource in class was the notebooks (5%), while the snakes and ladders/maths maze was used by 17% as an in-class activity.

Some of 'other' ways in which P2 bags were used included:

- workshops/interactive sessions for parents to explore the bags;
- visits to the local library, linked to the bags;
- special classes organised around the books/other materials in the bags;
- assemblies to accompany the bag gifting;
- advertising/commenting on the bags on social media;
- pupil votes on the contents of the bags; and
- engaging older pupils in sharing the books with the lower school.

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<sup>1</sup> Although 605 full responses were received, 12 were from parents and so were removed from the data for analysis purposes

**Table 1: How did you use the P2 Read, Write, Count bags in school?**

	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Read the books in class	276	47%
Pupils just took bag home	139	23%
Did some of the suggested activities (from website or Parent Guide)	137	23%
Organised a gifting event with parents	132	22%
Sent letter home to parents with the bag	100	17%
Used the snakes and ladders/maths maze in class	99	17%
Encouraged pupils to join the local library	94	16%
Used the storytelling cards in class	69	12%
Ran a shared reading project	54	9%
Visited the local library with my class/school	51	9%
Organised a gifting event without parents	43	7%
Set homework activities	44	7%
Created displays in the school	37	6%
Used the notebook in class	29	5%
Other	78	13%

Similarly, all those who had received the Primary 3 bags were asked how the resources had been used. Table 2 below shows that, again, the most popular activity was reading books in class (41%), followed by sending the resources home with pupils (22%) or gifting events with parents (21%). Most schools used the bags in a combination of ways, although the in-class use of the P3 resources was perhaps slightly less compared to the P2 bag overall.

Again, the least used resource in class was the notebook – none of the schools who took part in the survey said that they used this as a Primary 3 in-class activity. In contrast, the storytelling cubes were used by one in five schools (20%) and Tropical Triumph/Dominoes Cards were used in class by 12% of schools.

Some of the 'other' activities that were reported for the P3 bag included:

- children being allowed to independently explore the resources in class;
- class topics/projects themed around the bags/books;
- family workshops/presentations to families and other community members;
- visits to the library/from the librarian to accompany the gifting; and
- homework activities linked to the contents.

**Table 2: How did you use the P3 Read, Write, Count bags in school?**

	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Read the books in class	245	41%
Pupils just took bag home	129	22%
Organised a gifting event with parents	125	21%
Used the storytelling cubes in class	116	20%
Did some of the suggested activities (from website or Parent Guide)	115	19%
Encouraged pupils to join the local library	100	17%
Sent letter home to parents with the bag	95	16%
Used the Tropical Triumph/Dominoes Cards in class	72	12%
Visited the local library with my class/school	51	9%
Set homework activities	41	7%
Created displays in the school	42	7%
Organised a gifting event without parents	33	6%
Ran a shared reading project	37	6%
Used the notebook in class	0	-
Other	78	13%

### Preparation and Awareness

Just over half of schools (52%) said that they had been provided with information about the bags before their arrival by their local authority. While nearly one in five schools had not (18%), the remaining 31% were unsure. In a small number of cases, teachers felt that additional information was not necessary because they had received information last year, had received information from other staff (including their Raising Attainment Teacher or Challenge Leaders of Learning), or received information through other routes (e.g. previous CPD activities). Mention was also made that, while the school may have received information, individual class teachers had not.

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 (78%). Almost one in five had not (19%) and 3% commented that they had either had some (but not enough) time to familiarise themselves, that it was not necessary/appropriate or that they attended CPD training:

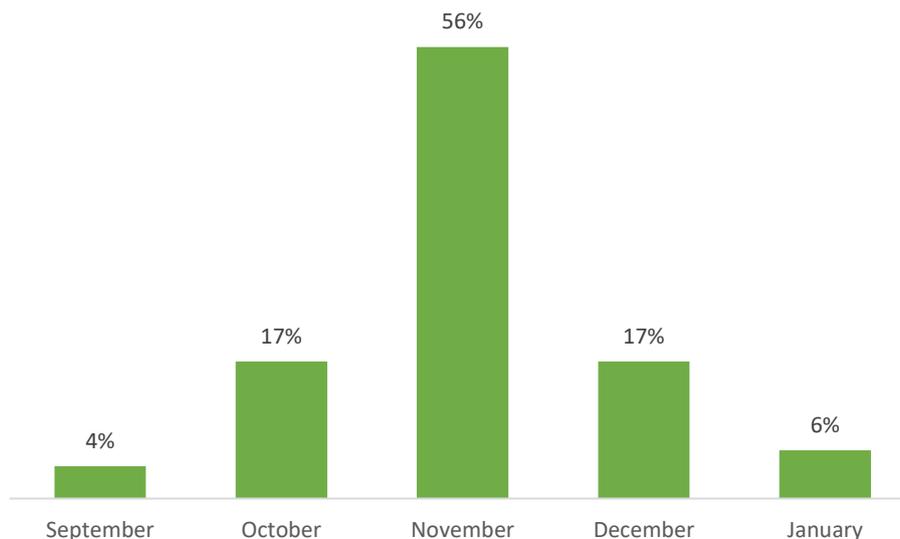
*“Could have done with having them longer or a sample copy sent earlier to work with the children.”*

Some also commented that the bags arrived at too short notice for them to carry out familiarisation activity ahead of the scheduled gifting and that it would have been beneficial to review the resources for longer. Annex B (Table 1) shows that, proportionately, schools in Dumfries and Galloway were more likely to say that they had not had sufficient time to familiarise themselves with the contents of the bags before gifting. Other areas where around a third of schools reported not having sufficient time for familiarisation included Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Dundee and Glasgow (i.e. mostly larger urban authorities). As a very small number of responses were received in some local authority areas, it is difficult to generalise too widely from these results.

#### When and How Bags were Gifted

Figure 1 shows that the majority of schools (56%) gifted their bags in November 2017, many of them during Book Week Scotland as recommended by Scottish Book Trust. An equal proportion distributed bags in October and December (17% respectively) with very few gifting the bags either earlier or later in the year. Annex B (Table 2) shows the month of distribution by schools in each local authority area.

**Figure1: When did you gift the bags to pupils?**



Very few schools said that they could not remember when the bags were gifted and only eight individual schools were still waiting to gift the bags at the time of the survey.

Table 3 below shows that a large proportion of bags were sent home with children as they were provided (37%) although nearly a third of all schools invited parents to attend an event or session at the school as part of the gifting process (31%).

**Table 3: How did you gift the Read, Write, Count bags this year?**

	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
I created an event around the gifting to get children excited	83	15%
I invited parents to an event or session at the school	167	31%
I sent them home with children alongside additional information for parents	63	12%
I sent them home with children as they were provided to me	199	37%
Other	28	5%

There was a wide range of gifting approaches, and many respondents provided details of the ‘other’ methods used. These included:

- school assemblies/get together sessions for the whole school;
- open days for parents/carers (including an ‘open breakfast’);
- parent/pupil workshop events;
- a member of staff from the local authority attending to gift the bags individually to children;
- gifted during a trip to the local library/library staff visiting the school;
- gifted at parents’ evenings/open days;
- sent home as part of a homework task;
- gifted by Reading Buddies; and
- as part of a storytelling event/visit from an author.

A number of schools commented that they gifted the bags as part of wider Book Week Scotland celebrations.

Across the survey responses, there was strong evidence of parental engagement in the gifting process:

*“Parents were invited to a special event at the school to share the gifting experience with their child and walk through how each item could be used. This encouraged families to spend time doing activities together. Any children who had parents that could not come had the same experience with me, the class teacher, in the reading corner.”*

*“Parents were invited to the gifting. The class put on a small play to tell the parents what the books were about. The children then completed activities at the event with their parents.”*

*“Parents/carers were invited into the school for a gifting event. They listened to a presentation about the aims of the Read, Write Count Bags then rotated round a variety of learning activities with their child. Each activity was linked to a book/resource contained within the bags. At the end of the event children and their parents/carers took the bags home.”*

There was also considerable evidence of older children in the school being encouraged to take part in the gifting and engage with the resources being given to their younger peers:

*“We held a reading cafe event. P5-7 pupils ran the cafe with comfy cushions, ice cream and hot chocolate. Parents were invited to come along. Teachers, parents and older pupils read to the P2/3 children.”*

*“We had a massive event. Classes were involved in various ways. Some classes focused on the literacy side, some numeracy and some both. Others had drama sections. Various activities were suggested to enable parents to see the various ways in which they can read/build number knowledge into their normal day to day activities.”*

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.

Reasons given for not coinciding the gifting of the resources included different arrival times, insufficient time to explore the resources for P2 and P3 at the same time as P1 and decisions to focus on the P1 Bookbug packs separately as a stand-alone resource.

### Other Scottish Book Trust Learning Resources

Most schools had used at least one of the other free Scottish Book Trust learning resources to support the Read, Write, Count gifting experience. Almost half of schools (47%) had accessed the Teacher Pack online, a quarter (25%) had used other online resources from the Scottish Book Trust website and one in five (21%) had used the printable worksheets. The Outreach Visit facility was the least well utilised overall (used by only 1% of schools who took part in the survey).

**Table 4: 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	279	47%
Used any other learning resources on the Scottish Book trust website	151	25%
Used online printable worksheets	125	21%
Contacted Scottish Book Trust for an outreach visit	6	1%
Other	60	10%

A wide range of other Scottish Book Trust resources had been used, including:

- Authors Live;
- First Minister's Reading Challenge resources; and
- general support resources/printable downloads.

A small number of schools (12) said that they were not aware of the online resources with some saying that they would look at them in the future now that they were aware of their availability. Several others said that, although they did not use them this year, they had done so in previous years/on previous occasions

The main 'other' resources that schools said would have been helpful included:

- a spare bag/bag for the classroom/class set – several teachers suggested that this would allow them to return to some of the activities/resources throughout the school year/run follow-up lessons. This was the most frequently requested addition;
- more information for parents and teachers on how to use the resources and how to introduce the resources to the children (including PowerPoint presentations or videos);
- a deck of playing cards for number activities;
- dice;
- more books for shared reading;
- CPD sessions for professionals to accompany the bags;
- a pre-written letter to parents to be included in the bags from Scottish Book Trust;
- active literacy activities/additional talking and listening activities to go along with the books;
- audio books;
- large class books;
- books that could be class projects;
- colouring or sequencing activities;
- common word activities;
- comprehension activities, flash cards with pictures, etc.
- Apps linked to the resources;
- linked web activities;
- early finisher differentiated tasks;
- games related to the books;
- more art/sensory activities to engage children with additional educational needs;
- more maths games/activities (such as 100 squares, number lines etc);
- phonics cards/activities;
- lesson plans and homework ideas for the bags;
- author talks/storytellers, live Skype events to accompany the stories (including authors reading the stories);
- posters to promote the bags; and
- whiteboards and pens.

*“A bag for the teacher, to use in class throughout the year, so if the bags are sent home, the children may emulate what was done in class at home.”*

*“A guide as to what is in the bag and what talking points parents could have with children at home, the genres and a blurb about the books.”*

*“A teachers’ pack with the activities and information would be helpful. We only received enough copies for one per child therefore to read the story to the class I had to use one of the child's packs.”*

*“Online resources for children to use in school or at home. A relevant follow up resource to add to the bag half way through the year would be a great way to encourage children to re-engage with the items.”*

Several respondents simply commented that they would like “more of the same” or “more bags”. Others simply requested more time/more notice of the bags being received to allow them great opportunities to prepare associated activities in class:

*“It would be useful to receive the pack sooner so as teachers can familiarise themselves and plan accordingly. We received our packs too late.”*

### Outreach Visits

Very few schools had received an outreach visit, and many were unaware of this available support. Where these had been taken up, activities included planned family learning sessions/open sessions where parents were able to use the resources in class before taking them home, a teacher focussed event where parents were invited to attend and one school who visited a library with parents to hand out books with teacher led activities.

### Impact on Pupils

There was positive feedback regarding the impact of the resources:

- nearly three quarters of schools (74%) said that pupils were more enthusiastic about books and reading since receiving the Read, Write, Count bags;
- over half (52%) said that pupils were more enthusiastic about writing since receiving the Read, Write, Count bags; and
- just under half (47%) said that pupils were more enthusiastic about numeracy and mathematics since receiving the Read, Write, Count bags.

Importantly, in a large number of schools where no impact was reported this was because it was felt that pupils were already very engaged in books, reading, writing and numeracy. While no direct learning impacts had been observed, therefore, it was felt that the resources helped to enhance the children’s love of these curriculum areas:

*“As a class they were already very enthusiastic about books. I feel that this enthusiasm has been enhanced by the experiences provided through the Read, Write, Count Bags.”*

Others commented that the bags did have an immediate impact on these areas in the short term, at the time they were gifted and immediately after but that interest in the bags had faded over time making it difficult to comment on impacts beyond the initial gift experience. It is worth noting that the storytelling cubes, in particular, were seen as impacting positively on children’s writing experiences, and the numeracy games were also particularly welcomed (i.e. snakes and ladder, etc.)

Table 5 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, reading, writing, numeracy and maths were all greater than where other gifting approaches had been used. Perceived impacts were particularly higher across all three areas compared to where bags had been sent home as they had been provided. Inviting parents to sessions in schools was also linked to higher perceived impact of the bags on enthusiasm for books and reading, in particular.

**Table 5: 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 = 68 (89%) No = 8 (11%)	Yes = 51 (67%) No = 25 (33%)	Yes = 42 (57%) No = 32 (43%)
I invited parents to an event or session at the school	Yes= 124 (80%) No = 31 (20%)	Yes = 89 (58%) No = 65 (42%)	Yes = 78 (52%) No = 72 (48%)
I sent them home with children alongside additional information for parents	Yes = 43 (77%) No = 13 (23%)	Yes = 29 (54%) No = 25 (46%)	Yes = 29 (54%) No = 25 (46%)
I sent them home with children as they were provided to me	Yes = 110 (61%) No = 69 (39%)	Yes = 72 (40%) No = 106 (60%)	Yes = 66 (37%) No = 111 (63%)

### Impact on Teaching Practice

A large proportion of respondents (79%) said that the Read, Write, Count bags and gifting had had a positive impact on their teaching practice. Comments included that the resources had been particularly helpful for encouraging home-schools links or allowing teachers to engage with parents. They had also provided a prompt or reminder to teachers of the importance of reading aloud, looking online for linked resources and learning for fun.

Several had noted that the bags helped foster relationships with the children and parents and gave teachers a chance to see children taking enjoyment from reading, writing and numeracy:

*“It provided a good opportunity to organise and implement an event with parents. It has helped strengthen relationships with parents which is always positive.”*

*“It was fantastic to have the resource create an opportunity to invite families into school and develop learning focused relationships.”*

*“It encourages an extra special focus on things we already do and the children have the pleasure of receiving a gift at the end.”*

Again, several commented that the storytelling cube and games had allowed them to engage with their class in different, fun ways:

*“I enjoyed using the story cube with the children and this has now become a feature of my teaching.”*

*“I saw the children’s reactions to the story cubes and I have bought a set of my own for class...out of my own pocket.”*

Other comments included that the resources had provided fresh enthusiasm for teachers and pupils, been a good ‘refresher’ for effective engagement strategies and built on other development activities that the staff and pupils were already undertaking.

Over half of teaching professionals (59%) said that they would be interested in attending a Read, Write, Count CLPL session. A further 24% were ‘unsure and only 17% said they were not (because some had already previously attended relevant training). Participants would welcome more advice on how to use the bags in class, how to engage parents and supporting links to ensure longevity of use with the resources, it seems. The timing and location of the training would also need to be suitable for those with teaching commitments, it was suggested and this may influence decisions to attend.

### Parental Engagement

Over half of respondents (57%) said that the Read, Write, Count bags had explicitly helped build better links with parents and carers.

Where gifting sessions had been organised, these had been well attended by parents/carers. The bags had provided an opportunity for many teachers to meet with parents ‘informally’ (which was welcomed) and had also provided a different or new focus for parental events that were already planned:

*“I felt the event held to gift the Read, Write, Count bags was one of the best attended by parents. The families were happy to come in and share the experience with their child.”*

While some schools said it was difficult to gauge impact on parental engagement and said that they had received no specific feedback from parents on the bags, others had received positive feedback direct to the school:

*“Parents were thrilled with the quantity and quality of the contents and children tell us that they use the materials at home – games and notebook and stories.”*

*“It creates a very positive experience for parents coming into the school and allows them to see how learning takes place in school and to see how it can be developed at home. Parents really value the resources and enjoy the experience and celebration of learning that the gifting event brings.”*

Some schools expressed that they had not engaged parents as fully as they could, partly because of lack of time to plan events/activities ahead of the books arriving to school, and also because they were not familiar with the full potential offered by the resources. Some suggested that, based on their experiences this year, and now that they had a greater awareness of what the resources entailed, they would be more likely to organise specific parental engagement activities/events in future years.

There were mixed views around whether the bags had helped parents to be more confident in being involved with their children's learning. While a third of schools said that they had (35%), over half were unsure (55%). This was mainly because of a lack of direct feedback from parents'/lack of evidence to support this claim. Only 3% said that they felt the bags had no impact in this regard and 7% said that it was difficult to gauge, mainly because they perceived that 'some' or 'most' parents were already confident and involved in their children's learning. Several commented that there would always be some parents/carers who were difficult to engage and that, although the bags may help with this, reaching the full spectrum of the parent population was a wider challenge that remained for many schools:

*“I think those parents who do read regularly to their children will have engaged with the bags and enjoyed them. Sadly, I think there are parents who do not value reading to their children and the bags would have had little impact.”*

Others commented that, even where families had failed to engage, the children had benefited nonetheless and had still loved receiving the books and gifts.

Some schools commented that they intended to specifically seek parental feedback on the resources in future years, and ideas for how to do this effectively were welcomed.

Overall, over half of schools (54%) said that the bags had been a helpful tool to use as part of their school's parental involvement work, with most others (33%) being 'unsure' (only 13% said they had not).

### Suggestions for Improvements

In addition to the suggested items that could be added to the bags (set out above), and calls for an allocated class bag which could be kept in school, the main suggestions for improvements included:

- an achievement 'tick list' that children could complete to evidence use of the different resources;
- more information on the purpose/ways to use the bag/contents;
- homework challenges;
- even more books;
- even more numeracy related activities/contents; and
- feedback forms for parents/carers.

Some comments were made that bags could be made available even earlier in the year and kept in school before going home, to maximise use.

Again, there were some views expressed that the bags were not perhaps well utilised by the pupils and parents who might most benefit from them, and suggestions that bags could be tailored to different pupils' needs, or gifting related to 'stages' instead of 'ages':

*"I don't think that every family/school/community have the same needs and children are not always at the same level. For my higher achievers, the contents in the bag was too basic and for the children who find engaging in the curriculum trickier, it was too hard and these are often the children who do not have engagement with parents at home and therefore the bag would not have been put to its best use perhaps."*

Some of the feedback focussed on internal communications within schools, and the need for Head Teachers or other managers to more clearly communicate how bags should be used, and help class teachers prepare for gifting, etc. Some expressed frustration that they had not been able to use the bags to full effect because of a lack of preparation time and lack of communication at the strategic level.

### Other Comments

The main 'other' comments received in relation to the bags were general expressions of thanks and support for what most perceived to be a fantastic resource:

*"A fabulous campaign well done."*

*"Extremely worthwhile resource for both pupils and parents."*

*"Such a wonderful campaign that I think teachers, parents and children love. Thank you!"*

*"I think this is a worthwhile and high standard campaign."*

Many commented on the great combination of resources included in 2017 and welcomed this:

*"I thought there was a really good variety of resources within the bag this year to inspire the children in reading AND writing! Well done!"*

*"I really liked the contents. The books were beautiful and the other resources were super, too. The parents I spoke to who used the bag really loved it. Thank you!"*

Several also commented that the bags were particularly important in terms of contributing to closing the attainment gap and ensuring that all children were given exposure to a wide variety of learning resources at home:

*"I think it's a great initiative. Many families cannot afford to buy new books and number games for their children so receiving this lovely gift is very exciting for the children. The guide on activities for parents/carers is also great as some parents are not sure how to support their children."*

*"The Bookbug and Read, Write, Count bags provide an essential way to provide books for the some of our most vulnerable learners. Please continue this initiative."*

Only a very small handful of respondents questioned the value of the resources and suggested that they were not welcomed, because they felt that budgets could be used elsewhere. One also questioned how decisions were made on the number of bags to allocate to each school and suggested that the numbers delivered sometimes were not adequate for the class sizes. The majority, however, stressed that they wanted to see the resources continued into the future:

*"Love them – keep them coming! Great resources!"*

*"Keep up the good work!"*

## Feedback from Parents and Carers

### Respondent Profiles

A total of 1027 usable responses were received<sup>2</sup>. At least one response was received from every local authority across Scotland, except Inverclyde.

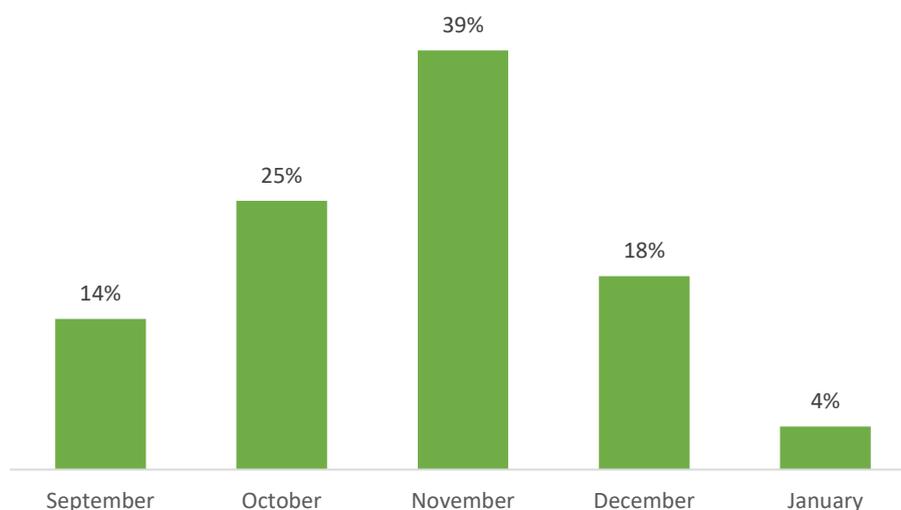
### Main Findings

Among those who responded, 584 (56%) had received the Primary 2 Read, Write, Count bag, 413 (40%) had received the Primary 3 Read, Write, Count bag and 47 (4%) had received both.

### When and How Bags were Gifted

Consistent with findings from the survey of professionals, most parents/carers reported that they had received their bags in November 2017 (39%). A large proportion (25%) had received them in October and nearly one in five (18%) in December. Again, very few had been received either before or after this time.

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



Again, consistent with the findings from the professional survey, most parents/carers said that schools had sent home bags with children (71%). Fewer than one in five said that additional information had been provided to accompany the bag (15%) and only 13% had attended an event or session at the school/library or other community centre to receive the bag. In two cases, events had been offered at the school but the respondent had been unable to attend/had not been made aware of the session.

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<sup>2</sup> Although 1196 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). Two respondents had not received a bag and one was 'unsure' and so provided no further feedback.

**Table 6: How was the bag given to you and your child?**

	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
The school sent my child home with it	728	71%
The school sent my child home with it and provided me with additional information about the bag and what it is for	153	15%
I attended an event or session (at school/library/community centre) where my child was given their bag	136	13%
I picked up my bag from the local authority or they sent it to me	1	<1%
Other	8	1%

### How the Resources were Used

The majority of parents/carers said that they had read the books gifted in the bags (83%) while nearly two thirds has used the numeracy items (60%). Around half had used the storytelling items (54%) and had read the parent guide (49%). A third had used the bag itself (35%). Only 2% of respondents said that the bag and its contents had not been used.

**Table 7: How have you used the bag with your child?**

	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Read the books with my child	856	83%
Used the numeracy items with my child	619	60%
Used the storytelling items with my child	558	54%
Read the parent guide	508	49%
Used the drawstring bag (e.g. as a school gym bag)	359	35%
None of the above – I have not used the bag with my child	19	2%

Other ways in which the resources had been used included:

- use with other siblings for play or family time/reading with other family members (e.g. grandparents and younger siblings);
- playing games with friends and family;
- using the contents to draw pictures/make up stories;
- using the notebook for role play (e.g. taking menu orders in pretend play);
- independent use by children (various);
- used as a prompt for discussion around specific topics/themes; and
- used for carrying library books/storing books or toys.

Overall, only a very small number of parents/carers said that they could not recall how they used the resources or said that they had not used them at all.

The majority of respondents said that they used the bag 'a fair bit' (55%) with a further 26% saying that they used it 'a little' and 18% saying that they used it 'a lot'. Only 1% of all respondents said that they either had not used the bag or did not intend to do so.

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 (76%), about a month (8%) or for a few more weeks (5%). The remaining 11% said that they had either already stopped using the bags or did not intend to use it any more.

### Favourite Items

The favourite items in the Primary 2 bags were the snakes and ladders game and the books. The least favourite resource was the parents' activity booklet.

**Table 8: What are your favourite items in the Primary 2 bags?**

	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Double sided snakes and ladders / maths maze with dice and counters	320	51%
Quick Quack Quentin – Kes Gray and Jim Field	290	46%
Mr Tiger Goes Wild – Peter Brown	260	41%
Finger Puppets	161	26%
Notebook	125	20%
Writing Pencil	120	19%
Parents Activity booklet	93	15%

The reasons given for rating these items as 'favourite' included that the books were engaging, interesting, fun, good quality and would last a long time, that the games were 'different' from normal resources and provided an alternative way of learning and that the resources collectively encouraged families to spend time together and play:

*"The snakes and ladders was a fun activity to do with boys who aren't into drawing or colouring."*

*"My son absolutely loves quick quack Quentin he has laughed his head off every time he has read it and really enjoys sounding out all the different ways of saying the animal sounds."*

*"Mr Tiger goes Wild is a beautiful book. Brilliant story with a great lesson to be learnt – be yourself. Not only is the story great the illustrations are beautiful!"*

*“My daughter loved naming the finger puppets and writing a play about them with her sister.”*

*“Items encourage more interaction and play with my child, making learning more fun!”*

Indeed, most respondents (510) said that they enjoyed everything in the bag. Only 50 respondents cited something that they did not like and this was mostly the finger puppets, which were perceived to be more appropriate for a younger audience and the snakes and ladders game, which was perceived to be confusing/printed incorrectly, poor quality and unnecessary when most families already had lots of similar board games. While the books seem to have been well liked, several parents/carers commented that they found the contents of the bag (and specifically the books) “too young” for their children (and some commented that the children also felt they were too “babyish” and so not engaged with the stories). These were, however, minority views.

The favourite items in the Primary 3 bags were the storytelling dice and Tropical Triumph card game with reversible dominoes. This supports comments from professionals which suggest that the storytelling dice was, in particular, popular with children. Again, the least favourite item was the parents’ activity booklet.

**Table 9: What are your favourite items in the Primary 3 bags?**

	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Storytelling Dice	206	45%
Tropical Triumph card game with reversible Dominoes	124	27%
A Beginner’s Guide to Bearspotting – Michelle Robinson and David Roberts	123	27%
Above and Below – Patricia Hegarty and Hanako Clulow	121	26%
Notebook	79	17%
Writing pencil	72	16%
Parents Activity booklet	64	14%

The reasons why these resources seem particularly well liked included that the dice was fun and encouraged imagination, that the dominos and card games were good for learning using non-traditional resources and that the books were well illustrated, engaging and a good mix of fiction/non-fiction. Again, several comments were made that the resources were good for engaging the whole family, and not just the child to whom they had been gifted:

*“The storytelling dice got everyone involved, we sat as a family and made up stories after our tea! It also encourages our P3 child who isn't confident about writing things down to realise he can tell a story in different ways. He has a great imagination.”*

*“...the tropical triumph cards are a hit with all the family. It is fun, full of facts and makes my kids think about what is on their card and which aspect might get them to win!”*

*“All my sons benefitted from the Bearspotting book. Also, it was a book my husband was interested in reading to the children, so it made the book more exciting to child.”*

*“The above and below book was great full of fun interested facts both my 7 and 4-year-old loved it.”*

Most recipients of the P3 bag said that they enjoyed most things in the bag, although some comments were again made that the books were not age appropriate (and perhaps too young) and the pencils and paper were superfluous (with a view that most households would already have plenty of these resources). It should be noted that those who said that they disliked any of the contents were in a minority.

There were several suggestions for ‘other’ items that parents/carers would like to see adding to the bags including:

- bookmarks;
- calendars;
- vouchers towards books;
- more activity sheets;
- rewards charts,
- poems/songs;
- more books;
- more maths resources;
- colouring materials;
- wipe clean activities;
- fridge magnets;
- audio books;
- card games;
- flash cards; and
- chapter books (or more advanced books in general).

Other suggested that it may be helpful to have information from libraries included in the bags, as well as more information for parents/carers on how to use the resources to encourage enjoyment of reading, writing and numeracy more generally.

### Overall Ratings

A large proportion (67%) of respondents said that their child liked the bag very much or that they quite liked it (28%), i.e. collectively, 95% of all respondents gave a positive rating for how their child perceived the bag.

Supporting positive comments included that children responded well because it was viewed as a gift, that it made children feel special, and that it could be used with the wider family. Some parents commented that children’s enjoyment could be maximised only if parents engaged well with the resources too.

**Table 10: Which of these bests describes how your child thinks about the bag?**

	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Likes it very much	605	67%
Quite likes it	251	28%
Neither likes nor dislikes it	41	5%
Doesn't like it much	5	<1%
Doesn't like it at all	3	<1%
Don't know	1	<1%

*“Excellent resource, kids excited as they see it as a present.”*

*“It was a lovely gift, encouraged positive family time whilst being educational.”*

*“It requires parent input to make the most of bag and make child appreciate it too.”*

Parental views of the resources were also positive, with 62% saying that they liked the bag very much, and 28% saying that they quite liked it (i.e. collectively, 90% of all respondents gave a positive view).

**Table 11: Which of these bests describes how you think about the bag?**

	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
I like it very much	557	62%
I quite like it	254	28%
I neither like nor dislike it	42	5%
I don't really like it	5	<1%
I don't like it at all	3	<1%
Don't know	-	-

The main supporting comments included that the resources were compact and presented well, had developed and improved over time, were accessible and a good way to interact with children and introduced parents to new ideas:

*“I'd never heard of storytelling dice and think they are wonderful! Many a bedtime story has been created using these!”*

*“This is a great initiative, particularly for those who don't have many books at home. Excellent choices of materials.”*

*“Look forward to sharing these bags with my daughter, gives me GREAT pleasure learning with her.”*

There were some suggestions from a small minority that money for the initiative might be better spent elsewhere and that the packs lacked longevity. Some parents reflected that not all parents would engage with the books to the same degree and that more hard-to-reach children may still not get maximum benefit from the resources at home.

Some comments were again made that, while the resources were liked, they may be too young for the targeted age groups. Often these families felt that they did not add significant value to their children's educational experience or home learning since parents were already committed to working with their children on attainment and already had many similar resources in the home:

*“As indicated previously, the bag is a great idea for those parents who need encouragement or fresh ideas on how to (and how important it is) to engage with their children but for us it wasn't very useful, the level was too young for my daughter and the games were sadly not new...we play a maths version of snakes and ladders, read most days (to each other), create creations out of recycled materials using our imaginations, bake and run around the garden splashing in puddles in all weathers!”*

*“A clever book, very original. Good illustrations. However, my son was at the time he received the bag moving on from picture books and is now well past that stage, reading for pleasure every night from Early Reader books. I feel this type of book would be better suited to slightly younger children.”*

*“My children were not interested in the double-sided snakes and ladders – already have similar games at home. Also have plenty of notebooks and pencils so those were nothing new for us either. They enjoyed the books the most although Mr Tiger Goes Wild seemed a little young for them.”*

It is not possible from the data collected to say whether those who viewed the books as being “too young” were exclusively those who were already actively engaged in their children's learning, but comments such as these would indicate that this may be the case.

## Perceived Impacts

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

**Table 12: 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=866)	60%	17%	20%	1%	2%
The bag has made me feel more confident about getting involved with my child's learning (n=866)	38%	23%	33%	3%	3%
It's given me lots of new ideas/new ways of doing things with my child (n=866)	33%	41%	19%	5%	2%
I spend more time doing things that will help with my child's learning since getting the bag (n=863)	19%	23%	40%	11%	7%
The things in the bag were not aimed at a parent like me (n=864)	5%	10%	30%	18%	37%
The bag hasn't change what I do or the way I do things with my child (n=868)	19%	25%	29%	18%	9%

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 (60% agreed and 17% slightly agreed).

Nearly two thirds of parents/carers also agreed with the sentiment that the bag had made them feel more confident about getting involved in their children's learning (38% agreed and 23% slightly agreed).

The bags were also considered to have given parents/carers new ideas/new ways of doing things with their child (33% agreed and 41% slightly agreed).

There were more mixed views in relation to the impact of the bags on the time that parents spent doing things to help with their children's learning and also mixed views on whether the bags were suitable for the parents who took time to respond to the survey. Indeed, around a third of parents strongly disagreed that the bags were not

aimed at parents/carers like themselves. Views around impact in the way that parents engage with their children more generally were also very dispersed.

### Confidence with Reading, Writing and Numeracy

While only one in five, or fewer, said that the bag had made them more confident with reading (20%), writing (15%) or numeracy (16%), over a third of parents/carers said that their confidence at engaging in their children’s learning had been impacted by the bag.

**Table 13: Would you agree that the bag has made you more confident?**

	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Reading	201	20%
Writing	155	15%
Mathematics/Numeracy	168	16%
Engaging with your child’s learning	392	38%

In addition, 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 (33%);
- doing things they used to do a little differently (24%)
- visiting the library or other resource centre for new ideas (20%);
- talking to friends and/or family about doing new things (10%);
- talking to the school/teacher about what parents/carers can do at home (11%);
- visiting the Read, Write, Count website (23%);
- looking for books by the same authors of the books in the bag (26%); and
- looking at other websites/going online to find out new ideas (12%);

Only 9% of parents/carers said that they had not yet done any such activities since receiving the bag or did not intend to (3%). Importantly, many other respondents also indicated that, although there had been no change in their behaviour, they were already doing many of the things listed above before receiving the bags (in particular, visiting libraries, engaging with the school/teachers and using online resources).

### Other Comments

As with the teaching professionals’ survey, the main ‘other’ comments received from parents and carers were that the bags were much appreciated, a great resource and should be continued in the future (as well as perhaps being extended across the upper school):

*“A hugely positive and valued resource which not only aids with learning but brings much fun.”*

*"I think it is an excellent resource for all children and families."*

*"They are fantastic, extremely grateful for them. Love that they make books a treat for kids!"*

As with teachers, comments were made that the resources were particularly useful for hard-to-reach families and those with limited financial means:

*"I believe these bags are ideal for children whose parents/carers don't have access to resources or maybe don't feel it is their responsibility to help with their learning."*

Some respondents also stressed that schools could do more to engage parents at the point of gifting, to encourage greater use of the resources provided.

Only a very small handful of parents/carers provided any negative feedback, and this was mostly around whether budgets could be spent elsewhere, whether the bags would be used by 'all' families (or just some) and making sure that the bags contained resources which were sufficiently challenging for more 'advanced' children.

## Discussion

### Main Findings

The survey data provides evidence of consistent messages between both teaching professionals and parents/carers – all perceive that the bags are an excellent resource and would like to see them continue to be distributed in future years. The main findings are that:

- the contents of the bags were all rated positively, with the numeracy games and storytelling cubes being particularly well liked this year;
- the quality of the selected books was praised, although some perceived that they may not have been entirely age appropriate and some more challenging texts could have been included;
- the resources are used in a variety of different ways, and many schools are using the bags as an in-class resource as well as for promoting home-school links;
- a large number of schools already engage parents in the gifting of bags, but there may be scope for more schools to directly engage parents with the bags;
- teachers are keen to learn more about ways that the resources can be used, and the other accompanying Scottish Book Trust resources, to allow them to maximise use and impact of the bags;
- the bags are considered to impact positively on children's enjoyment of literacy and numeracy, both at home and at school;
- the bags are being used as 'whole family' resources and encouraging families to spend time together on their children's learning. They are also reaching a wider pool of children than those who are directly gifted the bags (i.e. older and younger siblings);
- the bags give parents confidence to be more active in their children's learning, where this is not already the case;
- the bags are providing opportunities for schools and parents to link with their local libraries in a new way;
- the bags are seen as particularly welcomed for reaching 'all' pupils and providing access to resources for some families who may not otherwise be able to provide them for their children (i.e. helping vulnerable learners).

There were very few negative comments raised across the surveys and, where this was the case, comments related mostly to budgets being allocated to other areas of children's learning, resources being more age appropriate and linked to individual children's developmental progress, the longevity of the bags and timing issues around their distribution (i.e. ensuring that schools have sufficient time to familiarise themselves with the contents and plan community engagement activities to accompany the gifting process).

## Success against Outcomes

In addition to seeking general feedback on the resources, the evaluation sought to assess how far the programme has achieved the outcomes against this 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.

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

Outcome 1	Outcome 2	Outcome 3	Outcome 4
<p>1 – several professionals commented that the bags helped to engage the most vulnerable learners</p> <p>2 – professionals also noted that the resources provide a means of engaging parents/carers who are typically hard to engage</p> <p>3 – parents/carers commented that the resources provided ‘innovative’ and non-traditional ways of engaging children</p> <p>4 – uptake of the bags was implemented across all authorities, and feedback was also received from almost all areas, showing breadth of coverage for all</p> <p>5 – teachers and parents/carers commented that the books were a valuable resource for households who may otherwise lack resources of this kind (especially books)</p>	<p>1 – there was significant evidence of schools engaging parents/carers as part of the gifting process</p> <p>2 – several recipients commented that the bags had been used as a whole family resource, engaging older and younger generations alike</p> <p>3 – almost all parents had actively used the bags and used them to try new things</p> <p>4 – the numeracy games seem to be particularly well liked and many teachers and parents/carers showed an interest in expanding numeracy resource provision in future bags</p>	<p>1 – the strong levels of response to the survey act as an indicator that they were a familiar/recognisable and key resource</p> <p>2 – many respondents recognised the links and continuity of the bags with early years resources, such as Bookbug</p> <p>3 – several schools gifted the bags during Book Week Scotland and recognised their fit with wider strategic approaches to raising engagement in literacy and numeracy</p> <p>4 – schools often use social media to share children’s experiences of the bags</p> <p>5 – almost half of teachers had accessed the Read, Write, Count teacher pack on the Scottish Book Trust website</p> <p>6 – almost one in four parents/carers had visited the Read, Write, Count website</p>	<p>1 – there was considerable support for the programme across the board</p> <p>2 – several schools incorporate the bags into visits to the library, or visits to the school from library staff, with several using libraries to gift the resources</p> <p>3 – parents/carers evidence that they are more likely to seek out books by the same authors as the gifted books and are also likely to use the bags as a prompt for library visits</p> <p>4 – many staff showed an eagerness to learn more and encouraged the development of support materials for teachers, demonstrating their commitment to the programme</p>

## **Learning for the Future**

The main learning for future years appears to be that there is some scope for schools to engage parents even more through gifting events. In many cases this was not done in 2017 because schools felt unprepared with insufficient lead-in time to organise an event before the books arrived. There is evidence that perhaps more notice is needed for schools to allow them to utilise the bags to fuller effect.

The age appropriateness of the content needs to be carefully monitored to ensure that it continues to receive positive feedback and contributes to children's development, as well as their enjoyment.

A way of garnering feedback from harder to reach families may also be needed, with schools taking a more active role in gathering feedback from parents/carers and pupils, to allow a fuller picture of the resources and their impacts to be understood.

## **Conclusions**

The evaluation was very positive overall, with very few negative sentiments expressed by either teaching professionals or parents/carers. The main view appears to be that the Read, Write, Count bags are a useful addition to children's learning experiences and, even though many parents and carers are already actively engaged in their children's learning, the bags provide equality of opportunity for all children to try something new and learn in a variety of fun and exciting ways. Indeed, the bags seem to act as a useful reminder to teaching professionals and parents/carers alike that learning should be fun, and this is essential in helping children move towards positive educational outcomes.

## Annex A – Case Studies

### Parent 1 – Midlothian – Received the P2 Bag for Son

The parent had received the bag shortly before Christmas. Recalling the bag and its contents, the main item that was remembered was the finger puppets – these had been particularly valued as they made story-telling more visual and the child who received them had enjoyed interacting with the puppets to tell his own stories. The parent welcomed the fact that this resource really encouraged the creative side of literacy – *“I would like to see more suggestions for learning through art as it's a strong porthole for my son.”*

The books had also been welcomed and one of the favourite items was Mr Tiger Goes Wild. Although read repeatedly at the time that the bag was received, the novelty had perhaps worn off over time and the books were no longer the ‘favourite’ books or books of choice. Getting free books was described as *“always good”* but it was seen as inevitable that they would become less prized over time, perhaps.

The family had benefited from the gift as it encouraged them to spend more time together – *“we opened the bag together, which was quite exciting, and we looked at all of the things inside it together”*. The bag had not directly impacted on increasing parental engagement with learning, or interest in literacy or numeracy – *“Not really, but only because these are areas which I'm already working on with my child, so the bag complemented them.”*

The bag had been sent home directly from school, with no accompanying information on its use. An event or opportunity to introduce the bag, maybe through a storytelling event or poetry event may have allowed parents to understand the bag better and then subsequently make more use of it, it was suggested.

Similarly, a suggestion was made that resources could be sent out sporadically throughout the year instead of all at one time, as this may mean that individual items within the bag receive more attention, rather than just the favourite items being picked out and used while other items were overlooked.

The bag had encouraged the family to look for other books by the same author and the continued use of the bag itself acted as a reminder to visit the library and take out books! Overall, the resource was very welcomed and something which the family had *“really valued”*.

### **Parent 2 – Shetland – Received the P2 Bag for Daughter**

The resources are still being used nearly one year after being received – the puppets had recently been “*rediscovered*” in the toy box and had featured in their daughter’s recent play, while the books had been on the bookshelf since being received and were still “*read regularly as bedtime favourites*”. Over time, the daughter had become more confident at reading and was now able to read the books independently and to read them to her younger sibling.

The favourite items from the bags had been the books – indeed, it was mostly the reading and literacy materials that the parent could recall and there was some confusion about what the numeracy content had been. There was also a suggestion that schools already place a great focus on numeracy, and sent home a lot of maths related homework, and so numeracy related items were perhaps of less interest to the child or the parent and perhaps would not be considered as ‘gifts’.

The bag had been gifted via an event at the school – “*they created a real sense of occasion*” – and this had meant that most parents in the year group had engaged and were able to discuss the bags together. An alternative may have been to gift the books via libraries, as the local community library is good at engaging families and could also have organised an activity around the bag gifting, it was suggested. Small communities welcomed ‘community’ events and a chance to get together.

Receiving the bags from the school but without the need to use the resources as part of formal homework activities was seen as a really positive feature of the initiative – “*the kids have different motivations for using the books and games when they don’t feel that they have to, but they can just do it for fun. It seems more organic somehow.*”

In the future, the bag could maybe contain some activity cards for more interactive tasks, such as how to make your own book, or create your own puppet show – “*It’s always good to have suggestions on what else you can do.*” Overall, however, the bags were very much appreciated and very much still used within the home.

### Parent 3 – West Lothian – Received the P3 Pack for Daughter

As a family, a number of book bags have been received over the years, from the Scottish Book Trust and others, and so the parent reported that it is sometimes hard to remember one gift from another. That being said, the family did recall receiving a story-telling dice as part of one gift last year, which was excellent – *“My daughter loved that story-telling dice so much that I have tried to look for other ones, with different pictures and ideas, so that she can use that too. She is going into P4 now, but still loves it!”*

The numeracy resources were also seen as ‘something new’ last year – *“I don’t think my older children got them”* especially the dominos and tropical triumph card game – *“it’s good to have something that they haven’t already got and it makes you think differently about things like maths.”* During the period that the bags were received, and for some time after, it had engaged both the child who received the bag and their siblings in different types of literacy and numeracy activities and perhaps helped them with their learning, without even seeming like ‘real’ work.

The bag itself was also still being used – *“it came home before the school holidays with her stinky gym kit still inside”* – and was seen as a good visible reminder of the gifting programme. Having something for older children as they progress through the school would also be welcomed, if possible – *“I think these are a fantastic resource that should be given to every child every year if possible. I like the fact that the books are age appropriate. My son who is 9 loves reading and is always looking for new authors to read. Maybe a yearly leaflet to older children with recommended age appropriate books? We would find that useful.”*

The family considered that they were already well read and a family of book lovers and readers but still very much valued the Read, Write, Count and other Scottish Book Trust gifted bags – *“Who doesn’t love a bag of goodies?!”*

#### Parent 4 – North Ayrshire – Received the P2 Bag for Son

Although gifted for her son, this parent also worked as a childminder and so the resources had been well used by all of the children in her care. In particular, the snakes and ladders game had been very popular and was seen as having a significant impact on her child's understanding of multiples of ten and number bonds to ten – *“I think it just made more sense to him than other versions of the game that we have seen.”*

Quack Quack Quentin was also a favourite item – *“My little boy loves the fun words and nonsense in this book. It is perfectly suited to his age group.”* All of the books were now included on bookshelves and all toys were in the toybox – the bag itself was used by the family for transporting borrowed books to and from the local library. It was also used for *“playing schools and libraries”* by the minded children.

The bag had been gifted at an event held at the school which was well attended and had generated real enthusiasm for the bags. A follow-up event which had been organised some time after was not well attended, and this was seen not as a reflection of the bags, but more as a result of busy parents/carers and competing priorities within the school calendar.

The bag was described as *“exceptionally generous”* and the parents notes in particular were helpful for reminding parents how to spend quality time with their children in an increasingly busy world. The main criticism was that some of the books could have been more challenging and there was perhaps a missed opportunity to include books which might encourage independent reading. A suggestion was also made for items written in cursive print as an addition to the bag in future years or perhaps a wipe clean board to practise writing on.

Overall, feedback was very positive and the bags were greatly appreciated – *“We value books a lot in our home and are very grateful for the opportunity to help expand learning. It's a very positive way of encouraging families to learn together. Thank you.”*

### Parent 5 – Dundee City – Received P2 Bag for Son

The parent could not remember any specific details of the bag at first, but did remember that they received a *“great free gift, sometime around Christmas”* and that their child had enjoyed bringing it home to share what was inside. When reminded of the contents, the parent recalled that they had enjoyed everything in the bag, but particularly the double-sided snakes and ladders/maths maze with dice and counters which they described as *“Great family fun!”*

The family were already keen readers and were actively involved in their children’s learning – *“I am already greatly involved with my child’s homework and reading has been part of our routine for many years now.”* On this basis, it was hard to say that the bag impacted in any notable way on parental engagement, or interest and enthusiasm for maths or literacy. The parent was also heavily involved in most school events and extra-curricular activities and so needed little prompt to ‘do more’. That being said, the bag did provide something new to do at home, to reinforce other games and messages already being shared.

The parent was apologetic that they could not recall more – they thought that they perhaps had the bag at home somewhere, but this could have been confused with other free items that they had received – *“we do get quite a lot, which is great!”* Free ‘tote bags’ were usually used to take books to and from the library or to carry swimming kit to classes.

The bag had come home directly from school with little additional information – that was seen as fine, as the contents were self-explanatory, but raising the profile of Read, Write, Count as a specific initiative may be achieved with better or more communication from the school or Scottish Book Trust directly to parents and some follow-up activity.

In summary, the parent reported that the initiative was a *“Fantastic idea. My child was excited about receiving his bag. Fun activities for all the family. I look forward to receiving our next one.”*

### Parent 6 – Argyll and Bute – Received P2 Bag for Son

The bag was well remembered and the parent reported that they used the bag a lot, quite intensively for a short while – *“about 6-8 weeks, but then my son moved on”*. Using the maths games, in particular, was useful for encouraging and reminding the child that games can be good for learning too.

As a family living in a remote area, the bag was particularly welcomed – there are no local library facilities or bookshops and so it can be difficult for families to get inspiration for new books or new authors that their children might enjoy, it was suggested. The family would have really appreciated a list of suggested alternative texts for children in the age range, and a bit older so that they could be inspired to try new authors. The children in the small community have usually already read each of the books available in the school library and really need some new inspiration, it was felt.

Although the picture books were good quality and fun, the child was already reading chapter books such as those by David Walliams, as well as Harry Potter and Lord of the Rings – *“The books are excellent quality but my son is reading chapter books like David Walliams independently and we read him chapter books so these books will not hold his interest beyond one read. I would wish parents to be able to click online for a more suitable bag.”* The idea was raised of parents/carers being able to select from a wider selection of free books, either online in advance of books being distributed, or some variation in the bags delivered to schools so that more advanced or keener readers could select the more challenging books. An alternative may be a ‘book return’ or ‘book exchange’ option where children could return the books and receive alternatives, if they were not appropriate to their individual stage – *“There needs to be something in place to differentiate between the more and less able readers to make the gift exciting to all.”*

A suggestion was also made for follow-up texts or social media posts to remind parents/carers to use the bags, in the months following their gifting as well as social media posts throughout the year targeted at parents of children in different year groups to provide new ideas for new books as they progress on their reading journeys.

As a family, they were already very engaged in supporting their child’s learning and praised resources such as these bags in encouraging home-school links, which provide a much-needed boost in rural and often deprived communities – *“Children are excited to get the bags as gifts regardless of the content and the bags themselves always have longevity, so thanks.”*

### **School 1 – Dumfries and Galloway – Accessible Rural Area, SIMD Quintile 3 (Moderate Deprivation)**

Both the P2 and P3 bags were gifted and the Headteacher organised a prize giving type event in the school, using it to surprise the children with the bags, giving each their own – *“They were then allowed to take them back to the classrooms to explore the books and games, which they loved.”* Gifting the books as part of a special event made them seem even more important and created a buzz about what was inside – *“It was a great way to share the pleasure of reading with the children.”*

Teachers and pupils responded well to the resources – *“The children were thrilled and, as a small school with a whole school assembly, we could see that the older children seemed a little disappointed that they weren’t receiving them too!”* Indeed, there was agreement that a similar resource for older pupils would be welcomed – *“We would definitely encourage a senior version for older pupils, if that was ever possible”.*

The bags had an immediate impact on children’s reading – *“There was a real enthusiasm for the books – children desperately keen to read them before the vote.”* The only thing missing, perhaps, was a class set of the books so that the teachers did not have to use one of the children’s gifted packs. One of the strengths of the resources is that *“they each get their own set of games and they are all new and not spoiled before they get home – that’s a real treat”.* Having a class bag would mean that they could be explored even more in school and still allow all children to have a ‘pristine’ bag to take home.

Despite sending letters home to parents/carers to accompany the bags, there wasn’t much feedback received – *“maybe just two or three comments about the quality of the books and how pleased the children were to receive the bags.”* The school has considered the potential for organising a display of the bags at parents’ evenings in the future to showcase the resources and make parents/carers aware of the contents, which might encourage more parental engagement. Again, having a school or class set would allow them to do this.

The school has no local library and although they used to receive a visiting library van, this is no longer provided. As a small rural school, initiatives such as these are therefore much appreciated, providing opportunities for children to engage with new materials and those which are not directly associated with the school.

The communication from Scottish Book Trust surrounding the bag gifting was excellent and no further guidance or support was needed in ensuring that the pupils gained the most from the gift. The online resources were used by the school to complement teachers’ practice and delivery of the books – *“We really welcome these excellent resources – please keep them coming!”*

## School 2 – South Lanarkshire – Urban Area, SIMD Quintile 1 (Most Deprived)

The school received both the P2 and P3 resources and, based on experience of 'what works' from previous years, they always organise a launch event for the children, themed around the contents of the bag. In 2017/18, they created a reading river and the children all dressed as ducks, with cardboard beaks, etc. – *"We then read the book Quack Quack Quentin, as a big group reading of the book."* Back in the classrooms, teachers and support assistants looked through the bags with the children and allowed them to investigate and explore the contents of their individual bags. All books were gifted during Book Week Scotland and the wider school events included a 'cosy read' event to gift the P1 Bookbug Family Bag which all P1 families were invited to attend.

The books contributed to an already full annual calendar of events which seek to promote books and reading within the school – *"We've got a programme of events that we run throughout the year to raise the profile of reading in the school. Anything like this generates interest in books and children look forward to it."* The books are always really positively received by the children and by the parent group, who always seem genuinely excited to find out what is in the bag – *"Some of them knew what was happening because they got the bag last year and so really looked forward to getting another one."* Although P2 and P3 families were not involved in the gifting this year, this was only because the school already had a lot of other family learning initiatives going on at the same time, and the school did not feel it was appropriate to invite parents/carers back into school on this occasion. That being said, parents have, in the past, attended the school as part of the gifting, and this has worked well – *"it all depends what else is going on at the same time. Anything that encourages/reminds parents to read with their children is positive."* The school is also always exploring new ways of reaching parents and carers – *"Maybe putting something out in the school App and letting parents know that they are coming is something we would do next year."*

Feedback from staff is also always positive – *"they find them really helpful as an additional learning resource."* As a school, there is a tendency to focus more on the literacy side of the bag, but numeracy may become a bigger focus in the future. To date, the books have perhaps been used more than the other materials.

The school did not need any additional support from Scottish Book Trust – *"We now know each year that they are coming and so we plan our own events quite confidently around them now. We also already have good links with the library but, again, we didn't feel we needed their support with this particular project."* Sharing of good practice from other schools, however, might be useful going forward.

Overall, the bags were seen as a very welcomed resource for a school in an area experiencing quite high levels of deprivation – *"For some of our children, they will never be bought books and they will have very little access to literature so, for those children in particular, it is invaluable...these bags provide an essential way to provide books for the some of our most vulnerable learners."*

### **School 3 – Perth and Kinross – Urban Area, SIMD Quintile 2 (Deprived)**

The school recalled receiving only the P3 bags which were gifted to children as part of a family gifting event – *“Parents came in and opened the bags with the children and tried out some of the activities in class with the children. The activities had been previously explained to the children – the story cubes, for example.”* This open day approach had worked well and had really engaged the children with the resources – *“We have done a lot of different activities to try to build enthusiasm for reading. The bags helped supplement these, adding to the excitement!”*

Similarly, teachers commented that the books were absolutely beautiful and the children seemed to really enjoy the ‘number gadgets’ this year. As with other schools, a suggestion was made for a class copy of the bag, if possible – *“I would have liked one to have in class for the teacher which I could use to demonstrate and explain what the children could do, linking it to the learning in the class.”*

The school unfortunately did not receive a lot of feedback from parents following the event, but this was seen as not unusual or unique to this type of initiative, that seeks to encourage home-school links – *“We rarely get feedback from parents. I think Scottish Book Trust have done their best to reach families, but some families just aren’t interested in this kind of thing and it’s not a priority for them.”* Some of the children did report back directly to the school, however, about how they were using the games and books at home with their wider family – *“We hear from some of the children that they read the books to their little brothers and sisters, which is always nice.”*

The main challenge with the gifting in 2017/18 was that the school was unaware that the bags would be coming and there was also some confusion around when they should be gifted, and by whom – *“I would probably like to have spent more time playing with the games, but there was a slight hiccup as we didn’t know it was coming, and it sat for a while without us knowing it was there or when we were to gift them. We weren’t really sure how soon we should send them home, or if we should be using them with children in school.”* Indeed, it was suggested that more information from the Scottish Book Trust may have been helpful to guide the distribution, although the school did recognise that this information may have been received by someone else in the school, other than the P2 and P3 teachers. Similarly, the teacher interviewed was not aware of the online resources – *“I would certainly have looked had I known.”*

A suggestion was made to allow more time for teachers to plan how to use the resources both in and out of school, specifically different ideas for setting homework or using the items in the bags with the children before they go home – *“We maybe rushed things a bit this year, because we didn’t want to hold on to them for too long.”*

Overall, however, the bags were much appreciated – *“I thought the stuff that was in the bags was absolutely fantastic, absolutely class. Thank you!”*

#### **School 4 – West Lothian – Urban Area, SIMD Quintile 3 (Moderate Deprivation)**

The school received both the P2 and P3 bags and gifted them to children in class before sending them home to parents/carers with an accompanying letter. Much use of the bags was made in school before they went home, including reading the books, and using the story-telling cards/cubes, using the games/maths maze/dominos/cards and notebooks in class.

A display was created in the school based around the bags and homework tasks were set which linked to the bags to try and raise awareness among the wider school/parent community. Teachers also reported using some of the online resources and printable worksheets and gave positive feedback on the contents of the bag – *“The contents of the bags are fantastic!”* A suggestion was made that the children may engage even more if Live Skype sessions could be offered where the author reads the story to the children at the same time.

Although no feedback was given around parental engagement, the school perceived that they were a valuable resource to try and encourage parents to get involved in reading for pleasure and learning at home – *“We loved them and I really think they are an extremely valuable resource for the children but also for the parents – we look forward to using them each year and try to make a focus of them in the run up to issuing them out.”*

In 2017/18, the bags were gifted in school, without parents being invited in – *“This year we plan to invite parents in to school so that we can have a stay and share experience before sending them home so that the teachers can show the parents how to support their children with them and talk them through anything they are unsure of.”*

The school reported that pupils seemed more enthusiastic about books and reading after receiving the Read, Write, Count bags, as well as being more enthusiastic about writing, and mathematics. All feedback received was very positive – *“Thank you for the work you do to help us promote early Literacy and Numeracy at home! The books are always of an excellent quality and the children are always very excited to receive them...they only wish they could extend to P7!”*

## Annex B – Disaggregate Analysis by Local Authority Area

Table 1: Sufficient Time for Familiarisation by Local Authority

Local Authority	Yes	No	Other
Aberdeen	3 (75%)	1 (25%)	-
Aberdeenshire	17 (68%)	8 (32%)	-
Angus	24 (80%)	4 (13%)	2 (7%)
Argyll and Bute	11 (85%)	2 (15%)	-
Clackmannanshire	13 (81%)	3 (19%)	-
Dumfries and Galloway	6 (55%)	4 (36%)	1 (9%)
Dundee	19 (68%)	8 (29%)	1 (3%)
East Dunbartonshire	14 (100%)	-	-
East Lothian	20 (83%)	4 (17%)	-
East Renfrewshire	25 (76%)	7 (21%)	1 (3%)
Edinburgh	34 (79%)	8 (19%)	1 (2%)
Falkirk	10 (91%)	1 (9%)	-
Fife	22 (96%)	-	1 (4%)
Glasgow	22 (76%)	7 (24%)	-
Highland	14 (82%)	1 (6%)	2 (12%)
Inverclyde	1 (100%)	-	-
Midlothian	11 (92%)	-	1 (8%)
Moray	6 (75%)	2 (25%)	-
North Ayrshire	5 (71%)	2 (29%)	-
North Lanarkshire	8 (80%)	1 (10%)	1 (10%)
Orkney Islands	8 (89%)	1 (11%)	-
Perth and Kinross	17 (80%)	4 (20%)	-
Renfrewshire	5 (63%)	2 (25%)	1 (12%)
Scottish Borders	4 (57%)	2 (29%)	1 (14%)
Shetland Islands	6 (86%)	1 (14%)	-
South Ayrshire	15 (88%)	2 (12%)	-
South Lanarkshire	36 (82%)	7 (16%)	1 (2%)
Stirling	9 (82%)	2 (18%)	-
West Dunbartonshire	6 (75%)	1 (12.5%)	1 (12.5%)
West Lothian	19 (79%)	5 (21%)	-
Western Isles	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	-

**Note:** Due to small raw numbers of responses, percentages should be interpreted with caution

Table 2: Month of Distribution by Local Authority

Local Authority	Number of Responses	September	October	November	December	2018	Other/ Missing
Aberdeen	4	1 (25%)	-	2 (50%)	-	-	1 (25%)
Aberdeenshire	25	1 (4%)	5 (20%)	16 (64%)	2 (8%)	1 (4%)	-
Angus	30	-	3 (10%)	10 (33%)	11 (37%)	3 (10%)	3 (10%)
Argyll and Bute	13	-	2 (15%)	7 (55%)	2 (15%)	2 (15%)	-
Clackmannanshire	16	1 (6%)	2 (12.5%)	11 (69%)	2 (12.5%)	-	-
Dumfries and Galloway	11	-	2 (18%)	8 (73%)	1 (9%)	-	-
Dundee	29	1 (3%)	7 (24%)	8 (28%)	4 (14%)	5 (17%)	4 (14%)
East Dunbartonshire	14	1 (7%)	1 (7%)	11 (79%)	1 (7%)	-	-
East Lothian	24	2 (8%)	4 (17%)	12 (50%)	2 (8%)	4 (17%)	-
East Renfrewshire	33	1 (3%)	5 (15%)	20 (61%)	4 (12%)	1 (3%)	2 (6%)
Edinburgh	44	1 (2%)	6 (13%)	25 (57%)	8 (18%)	2 (5%)	2 (5%)
Falkirk	11	-	2 (18%)	7 (64%)	-	1 (9%)	1 (9%)
Fife	23	2 (9%)	5 (22%)	12 (52%)	3 (13%)	-	1 (4%)
Glasgow	29	3 (10%)	1 (3%)	16 (55%)	6 (22%)	3 (10%)	-
Highland	18	-	3 (17%)	12 (67%)	2 (11%)	1 (5%)	-
Inverclyde	1	-	-	-	1 (100%)	-	-
Midlothian	12	1 (8%)	5 (42%)	5 (42%)	1 (8%)	-	-
Moray	8	1 (12.5%)	2 (25%)	3 (38%)	1 (12.5%)	-	1 (12.5%)
North Ayrshire	7	-	1 (14%)	2 (29%)	-	3 (43%)	1 (14%)
North Lanarkshire	10	1 (10%)	2 (20%)	5 (50%)	1 (10%)	-	1 (10%)
Orkney Islands	9	-	-	5 (56%)	2 (22%)	1 (11%)	1 (11%)
Perth and Kinross	21	2 (10%)	3 (14%)	12 (57%)	3 (14%)	-	1 (5%)
Renfrewshire	8	-	1 (12.5%)	5 (63%)	1 (12.5%)	-	1 (12.5%)
Scottish Borders	7	-	-	2 (29%)	1 (14%)	-	4 (57%)
Shetland Islands	7	-	-	4 (57%)	3 (43%)	-	-
South Ayrshire	17	-	2 (12%)	10 (59%)	4 (23%)	1 (6%)	-
South Lanarkshire	44	1 (2%)	10 (23%)	18 (41%)	9 (20%)	3 (7%)	3 (7%)
Stirling	11	-	3 (27%)	6 (55%)	-	-	2 (18%)
West Dunbartonshire	8	-	2 (25%)	5 (63%)	1 (12%)	-	-
West Lothian	24	-	3 (12%)	12 (50%)	4 (17%)	1 (4%)	4 (17%)
Western Isles	2	-	-	2 (100%)	-	-	-

**Note:** Due to small raw numbers of responses, percentages should be interpreted with caution