

# **Evaluation of the First Minister's Reading Challenge**

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Scottish Book Trust  
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# Contents

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|    |  |    |
|----|--|----|
| 1. | <a href="#">Introduction</a> .....   | 1  |
| 2. | <a href="#">Participation in the Reading Challenge</a> .....                       | 5  |
| 3. | <a href="#">Outcomes for young people, families, schools and communities</a> ..... | 17 |
| 4. | <a href="#">Process outcomes</a> .....   | 48 |
| 5. | <a href="#">Challenges and success factors</a> .....                               | 54 |
| 6. | <a href="#">Conclusions</a> .....  | 58 |

# 1. Introduction

## About this report

- 1.1 This is an impact focused evaluation of the First Minister’s Reading Challenge (the Reading Challenge), commissioned by Scottish Book Trust. This report explores the extent to which the Reading Challenge has delivered its intended outcomes. It draws on the views and experiences of pupils, parents, carers, school staff and community partners involved in the Reading Challenge.

## About the First Minister’s Reading Challenge

- 1.2 The First Minister’s Reading Challenge was launched in August 2016. In its first year, 2016/17, the Reading Challenge was open to pupils in P4 to P7. In 2017/18 this was expanded to include P1 to P3 as well.
- 1.3 The Reading Challenge aims to positively impact attainment by building reading cultures in schools, families and communities to support and nurture reading for pleasure. The Reading Challenge is intended to be inclusive and flexible, working alongside other reading programmes taking place in schools, libraries and at home.
- 1.4 The programme is built around a child-centred reading challenge, alongside training for teachers, print and online resources, a website, outreach support and opportunities for sharing of best practice.
- 1.5 A related grant, Inspiring Classrooms, also offers funding that allows schools to host a live author event and purchase supporting resources.
- 1.6 At the end of each school year, participating schools are encouraged to submit an entry for one of six ‘challenges’. The challenges demonstrate the progress that a class, group, whole school or individual pupil has made over the course of the year. The six ‘challenges’ that schools can enter are:
- School Reading Journey;
  - School Community Partnership Reading Journey;
  - Gaelic Medium Education Reading Journey;
  - Pupil Reading Journey;
  - School Reading the Most Books; and
  - Pupil Reading Most Books.
- 1.7 In June 2017 a Celebration Event was held in Edinburgh at which 17 prizes were awarded to pupils and schools. This event was also an opportunity to share practice, with 20 schools showcasing their work through stalls and displays.

## Intended outcomes

- 1.8 Overall, the Reading Challenge aims to support reading for pleasure. The main intended outcomes of the Reading Challenge are:

**Project design supports reading for pleasure by:**

- being broad and flexible (allowing all children in P1–7 to be involved in some way)
- providing the necessary support and resources for teachers to embed reading for pleasure into school life
- creating opportunities for libraries, parents and other community partners to support reading for pleasure within and beyond the school environment.

**Reading for pleasure is valued and encouraged.**

**Children read for pleasure.**

**Children are active readers, making reading choices and developing areas of interest which they pursue, as far as possible, independently.**

**Teachers feel empowered to deliver strategies to encourage reading for pleasure in the school environment.**

**Teachers and schools integrate reading for pleasure into the curriculum.**

**Schools and libraries make effective local partnerships to support reading for pleasure in the school and the wider community.**

**Parents understand the value of reading for pleasure and facilitate their children to do so.**

- 1.9 The Reading Challenge also aims to contribute more widely to broader outcomes, including:

**Reading for pleasure supports attainment in relation to literacy and English, as well as the wider curriculum.**

**Reading for pleasure supports closing of the attainment gap.**

## Delivery of the Reading Challenge

- 1.10 The First Minister's Reading Challenge is funded by the Scottish Government and delivered by Scottish Book Trust.
- 1.11 Scottish Book Trust is a national charity that believes books, reading and writing have the power to change lives. Scottish Book Trust works with people of all ages across Scotland, from very early years, through programmes including Bookbug, Read Write Count, What's Your Story?, Adult Learners, Writer Development and Book Week Scotland. Scottish Book Trust also undertakes targeted work – for example through supporting vulnerable people and young adult learners to develop literacy skills through graphic novels.
- 1.12 Scottish Book Trust undertakes a considerable amount of work with school children. For example, it is working to reduce the attainment gap between children living in the most and least deprived parts of Scotland through gifting books, games and activity bags to every family with children up to seven years old. It helps parents to support their child's education through the Read Write Count programme, and works with teachers to inspire children to develop a love of reading.
- 1.13 Scottish Book Trust is committed to using reading and writing to help work towards a Scotland where everyone, no matter what their background, has the same opportunities to thrive.
- 1.14 Delivery of the Reading Challenge is supported by an Advisory Group which includes representatives of teachers, writers, publishers, literary agencies, booksellers, Education Scotland, the Association of Directors of Education, Scottish Library and Information Council, Gaelic Books Council, Scottish Government and the National Parent Forum of Scotland.

## Evaluating the Reading Challenge

- 1.15 This evaluation involved a survey of schools and parents, six showcase school visits, and a desktop review of data collected by Scottish Book Trust.

### Survey of schools

- 1.16 The online survey was issued to over 2,000 primary schools, including special schools, through their office email accounts. The survey was also issued directly to approximately 1,000 key contacts from schools that had registered with the Reading Challenge. A total of 324 responses were received. The survey was designed to capture views from both schools that had registered and participated in the Reading Challenge, and those that had not.

## Survey of parents

1.17 We compiled a database of 75 parents' organisations in Scotland and issued the survey to these organisations. We also encouraged schools to raise awareness of the survey among their parent groups. A total of 88 responses were received.

## Showcase school visits

1.18 We visited six schools that had been involved in the Reading Challenge. We selected these schools from the list of schools that Scottish Book Trust invited to showcase their practice at the Celebration Event in June 2018. It is important to note that the schools we visited were very involved in the Reading Challenge.

1.19 At each school we conducted focus groups with pupils, interviewed key staff members and interviewed relevant community stakeholders. We engaged with 67 pupils through these visits. Of these 32 were male and 35 female. 23 were in lower primary (P1-3), 40 were in upper primary and four were in secondary (these were S1 pupils at a special school, who had been involved in the Reading Challenge during 2017/18).

1.20 We also engaged with 16 teachers and four community stakeholders. The community stakeholders included two librarians, a family link worker and a community storyteller.

1.21 In one special school, the pupils had significant and complex support needs. All pupils were non-verbal. At this school we observed storytelling sessions with two classes and spoke with school staff to understand the impact of the Reading Challenge. The sessions we attended were typical of the sessions that took place during 2017/18.

## Additional parent views

1.22 At four of the schools we visited, parents were keen to be involved in the research. In addition to the planned fieldwork in schools, we conducted individual or paired interviews with five parents. Another school assisted the evaluation by encouraging parents to complete a short survey, which was completed by seven parents.

## Previous evaluations

1.23 The Reading Challenge was also evaluated in 2016/17<sup>1</sup>. This evaluation found that the Reading Challenge had reached 75% of all primary schools in Scotland. It concluded that the Reading Challenge had met all of its primary outcomes, but that delivery towards secondary outcomes – which focus on contribution to attainment – was less clear, as it was harder to measure. This evaluation also set out a series of recommendations to support further development of the Reading Challenge.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.readingchallenge.scot/sites/default/files/2018-09/sbt\\_first\\_ministers\\_reading\\_challenge\\_final\\_report\\_210817.pdf](https://www.readingchallenge.scot/sites/default/files/2018-09/sbt_first_ministers_reading_challenge_final_report_210817.pdf)

## 2. Participation in the Reading Challenge

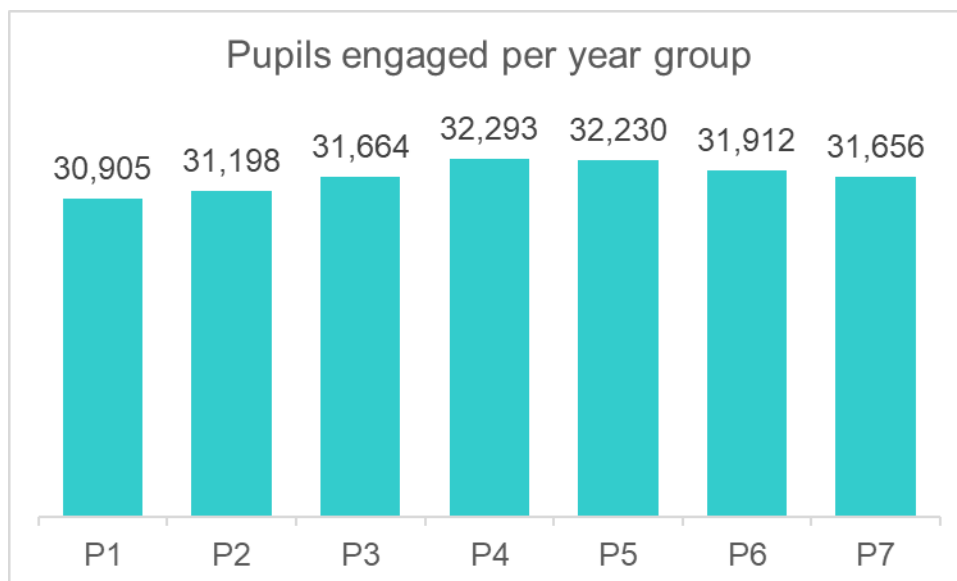
### Introduction

2.1 This chapter explores the number and type of schools participating in the Reading Challenge in 2017/18.

### Schools registered

2.2 In 2017/18, 995 schools registered to take part in the Reading Challenge, across all 32 local authority areas. This is almost half (47%) of all primary schools in Scotland.

2.3 Most schools involved pupils from P1 to P7 in the Reading Challenge. Overall, there were around 30,000 pupils involved in each year group. The year groups with highest levels of participation were P4 and P5. Generally, there were fewer pupils from lower primary engaging with the Reading Challenge, and a small proportion (3%) of schools did not involve any pupils from P1 or P2.



2.4 Schools are required to register for the Reading Challenge each year, in order to access online resources, Reading Passports and to enter the challenges. In 2016/17, three quarters of all primary schools registered for the Reading Challenge. There has been a clear decrease in the proportion of schools registered for the Reading Challenge between 2016/17 and 2017/18.

| Local Authority     | Number of schools that registered in 2017/18 | Proportion of schools in the LA that registered in 2017/18 | Change in proportion of schools registering from 2016/17 to 2017/18 [in percentage points] |
|---------------------|--|--|--|
| Aberdeen City       | 28   | 51%  | ↓14%   |
| Aberdeenshire       | 54   | 34%  | ↓21%   |
| Angus               | 17   | 33%  | ↓30%   |
| Argyll & Bute       | 34   | 44%  | ↓13%   |
| Clackmannanshire    | 10   | 45%  | ↓55%   |
| Dumfries & Galloway | 26   | 25%  | ↓41%   |
| Dundee City         | 21   | 60%  | ↓21%   |
| East Ayrshire       | 17   | 33%  | ↓44%   |
| East Dunbartonshire | 25   | 66%  | ↓15%   |
| East Lothian        | 7  | 19%  | ↓47%   |
| East Renfrewshire   | 25   | 100%   | ↑9%  |
| Edinburgh City      | 64   | 62%  | ↓14%   |
| Eilean Siar         | 8  | 38%  | ↓49%   |
| Falkirk             | 31   | 57%  | ↓18%   |
| Fife                | 50   | 34%  | ↓48%   |
| Glasgow City        | 84   | 50%  | ↓33%   |
| Highland            | 76   | 43%  | ↓29%   |
| Inverclyde          | 14   | 64%  | ↓18%   |
| Midlothian          | 20   | 59%  | ↓22%   |
| Moray               | 12   | 27%  | ↓6%  |
| North Ayrshire      | 31   | 57%  | ↓43%   |
| North Lanarkshire   | 30   | 22%  | ↓45%   |
| Orkney Islands      | 1  | 6%   | ↓59%   |
| Perth & Kinross     | 40   | 56%  | ↓20%   |
| Renfrewshire        | 34   | 61%  | ↓35%   |
| Scottish Borders    | 13   | 20%  | ↓51%   |
| Shetland Islands    | 13   | 59%  | ↓12%   |
| South Ayrshire      | 28   | 65%  | ↓16%   |
| South Lanarkshire   | 89   | 67%  | ↓27%   |
| Stirling            | 30   | 70%  | ↓18%   |
| West Dunbartonshire | 11   | 31%  | ↓36%   |
| West Lothian        | 52   | 70%  | ↓18%   |



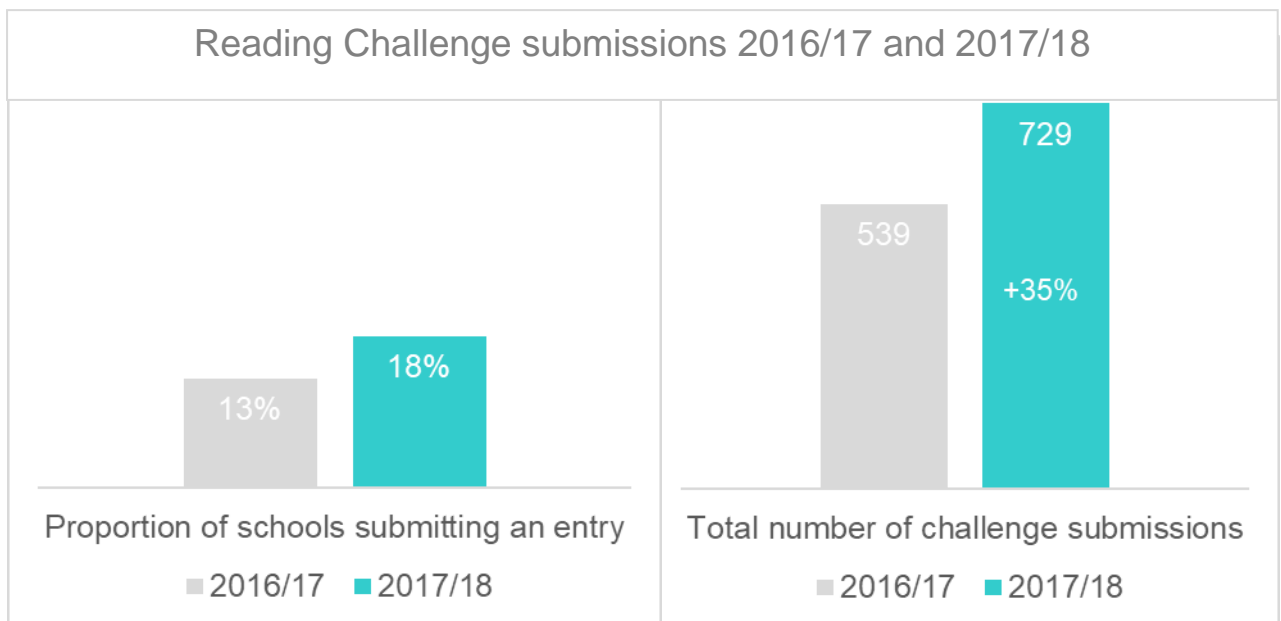
- 2.5 There was a decrease in registrations across almost all local authorities. The areas with the most significant decrease in school registrations were Orkney Islands, Clackmannanshire and Scottish Borders, where registrations fell by more than half. Only one local authority showed an increase in registrations, East Renfrewshire, in which all schools registered to take part in 2017/18.
- 2.6 There are a range of potential reasons for this reduction in registrations:
- schools may have registered in the first year but then not actively participated;
  - schools may not have been aware that they needed to re-register each year for the Reading Challenge;
  - schools may have continued with their Reading Challenge activities, using the resources they downloaded the previous year or Reading Passports left over from the previous year;
  - schools may have felt that reading for pleasure was already embedded within the school, and that further Reading Challenge activity did not need to take place through the Reading Challenge resources and formats;
  - awareness of the Reading Challenge may have fallen, after its launch;
  - a wider range of initiatives may have become available through the strong focus on attainment, which reduced the need or capacity of schools to participate in the Reading Challenge; and
  - there is evidence that a very small number of schools participated in the Reading Challenge in 2016/17, but did not want to continue to take part as they felt it did not help to encourage reading for pleasure among their pupils (explored later in this chapter).
- 2.7 Of the schools that were involved in 2016/17, just under half (46%) registered to take part again in 2017/18. During 2017/18, 83% of registered schools had been involved during 2016/17, and 17% were new schools that had not previously registered to take part in the Reading Challenge. Across the two years - 2016/17 and 2017/18 - the Reading Challenge has engaged 78% of all primary schools in Scotland.
- 2.8 In addition, the proportion of registered schools actively participating in the Reading Challenge through submitting to the challenges increased between 2016/17 and 2017/18 – as explored below.

## Participation in challenges

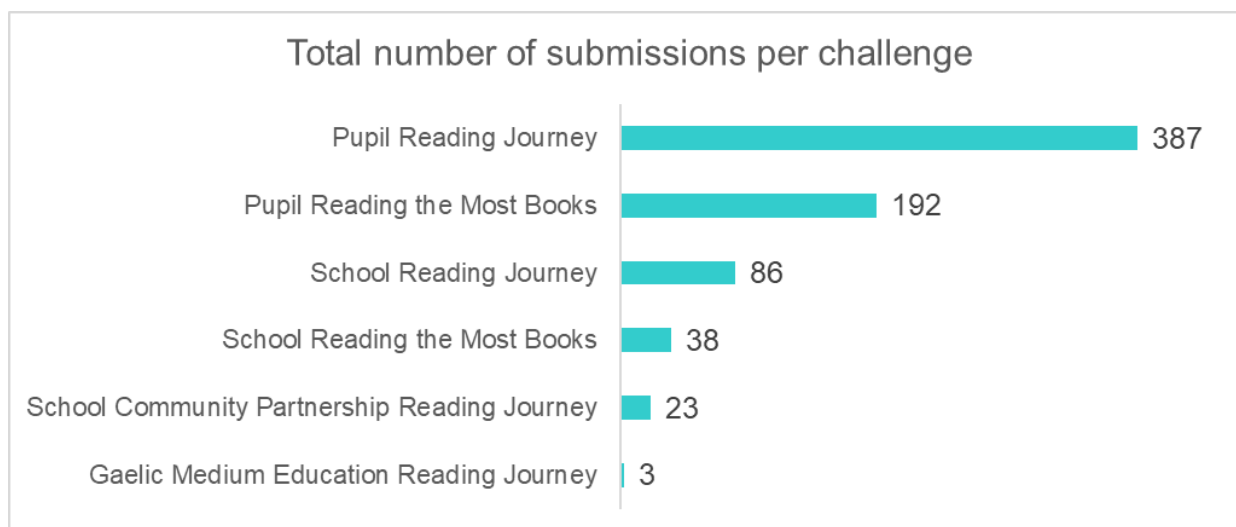
- 2.9 There are six challenges which schools can submit entries for, within the Reading Challenge. These are:
- **School Reading Journey** – this challenge recognises the progress of schools that have taken steps to develop a reading culture, and get pupils reading for pleasure more.

- **School Community Partnership Reading Journey** – this challenge recognises how schools have worked in partnership with libraries and community organisations to develop a reading culture in the wider community.
- **Gaelic Medium Education Reading Journey** – this challenge recognises the progress of Gaelic Medium schools to encourage reading for pleasure and to develop a reading culture.
- **Pupil Reading Journey** – this challenge recognises the progress made by individual pupils around reading for pleasure and becoming more active readers.
- **School Reading the Most Books** – this challenge recognises whole-school efforts to encourage reading for pleasure and reading widely. Schools send a total amount of books, which is used to calculate an average number of books read, per pupil.
- **Pupil Reading the Most Books** – this challenge recognises individual efforts to read more, and to read more widely.

2.10 Schools are also able to develop their own personalised challenges, outwith the categories listed above. These do not need to be submitted to the Reading Challenge, although they may fall within one of the broad challenge categories. Personalised challenges can also be used as examples and can be featured on the Reading Challenge website.



2.11 Most submissions to the challenges were for the Pupil Reading Journey or the Pupil Reading Most Books. The charts below show the number of entries into each category and the number of submissions from each local authority.



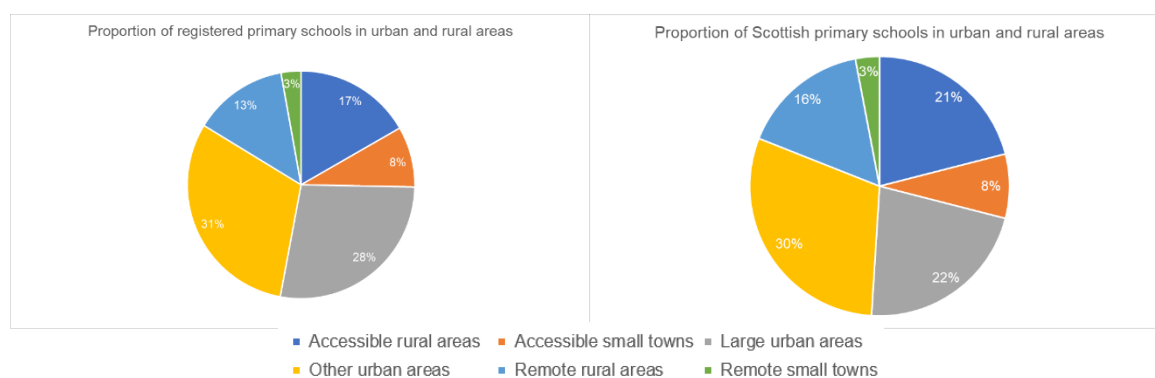
2.12 Not all schools that registered for the Reading Challenge submitted an entry. In a few areas, although there were a small number of schools registering, there was still a good proportion of submissions. And in others, despite a high proportion of schools registering, only a small proportion submitted an entry. For example, all schools in East Renfrewshire were registered to take part, however only 16% of schools submitted an entry. The table below details the number and proportion of schools submitting entries to the Reading Challenge in 2017/18.

| Local Authority     | Number of schools that registered in 2017/18 | Number of schools that submitted in 2017/18 | Proportion of registered schools that submitted an entry in 2017/18 | Total number of submissions in 2017/18 |
|---------------------|--|---|---|--|
| Aberdeen City       | 28   | 7   | 25%   | 50                                     |
| Aberdeenshire       | 54   | 3   | 6%  | 8                                      |
| Angus               | 17   | 2   | 12%   | 2                                      |
| Argyll & Bute       | 34   | 4   | 12%   | 22                                     |
| Clackmannanshire    | 10   | 4   | 40%   | 9                                      |
| Dumfries & Galloway | 26   | 3   | 12%   | 5                                      |
| Dundee City         | 21   | 6   | 29%   | 26                                     |
| East Ayrshire       | 17   | 6   | 35%   | 29                                     |
| East Dunbartonshire | 25   | 3   | 12%   | 5                                      |
| East Lothian        | 7  | 1   | 14%   | 1                                      |
| East Renfrewshire   | 25   | 4   | 16%   | 17                                     |
| Edinburgh City      | 64   | 11  | 17%   | 18                                     |
| Eilean Siar         | 8  | 2   | 25%   | 2                                      |

|                     |    |    |     |     |
|---------------------|----|----|-----|-----|
| Falkirk             | 31 | 8  | 26% | 83  |
| Fife                | 50 | 4  | 8%  | 5   |
| Glasgow City        | 84 | 23 | 27% | 106 |
| Highland            | 76 | 10 | 13% | 19  |
| Inverclyde          | 14 | 2  | 14% | 2   |
| Midlothian          | 20 | 3  | 15% | 10  |
| Moray               | 12 | 0  | 0%  | 0   |
| North Ayrshire      | 31 | 4  | 13% | 7   |
| North Lanarkshire   | 30 | 3  | 10% | 15  |
| Orkney Islands      | 1  | 0  | 0%  | 0   |
| Perth & Kinross     | 40 | 4  | 10% | 5   |
| Renfrewshire        | 34 | 6  | 18% | 26  |
| Scottish Borders    | 13 | 2  | 15% | 2   |
| Shetland Islands    | 13 | 0  | 0%  | 0   |
| South Ayrshire      | 28 | 7  | 25% | 42  |
| South Lanarkshire   | 89 | 19 | 21% | 55  |
| Stirling            | 30 | 11 | 37% | 28  |
| West Dunbartonshire | 11 | 2  | 18% | 5   |
| West Lothian        | 52 | 11 | 21% | 125 |

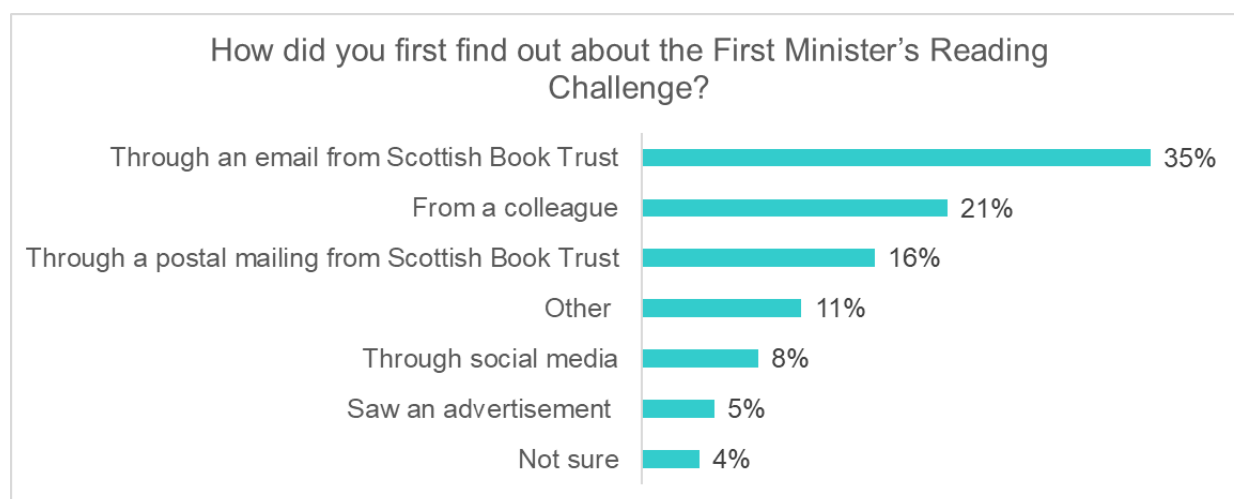
## Deprivation and demographic analysis

- 2.13 Of the schools that registered to take part in the Reading Challenge, 19% had a high proportion of pupils (more than 50%) living in the 20% most deprived datazones in Scotland. This is broadly in line with the overall proportion of schools in Scotland, that have this demographic of pupils (17%).
- 2.14 Similarly, 19% of schools registered with the Reading Challenge had a high proportion (at least 20%) of minority ethnic pupils. This is slightly higher than the national picture, at 15%.
- 2.15 Of the schools that registered with the Reading Challenge in 2017/18, most (59%) were in ‘large’ or ‘other’ urban areas, or in accessible rural towns. The chart below shows the full spread of registered schools across urban and rural geographies. This distribution is broadly in line with distribution of schools across Scotland.



## Awareness of the Reading Challenge

- 2.16 Our survey of schools explored how they had first found out about the Reading Challenge. Most had found out about the Reading Challenge through direct mail or email from Scottish Book Trust, or from a colleague.



2.17 Those choosing 'other' said that they found out about the Reading Challenge from their local authority, through the news or national media, or because they had been involved in it the previous year. A small number of respondents said that they found out through their local library, or when they attended specific training or local authority meetings focusing on improving literacy.

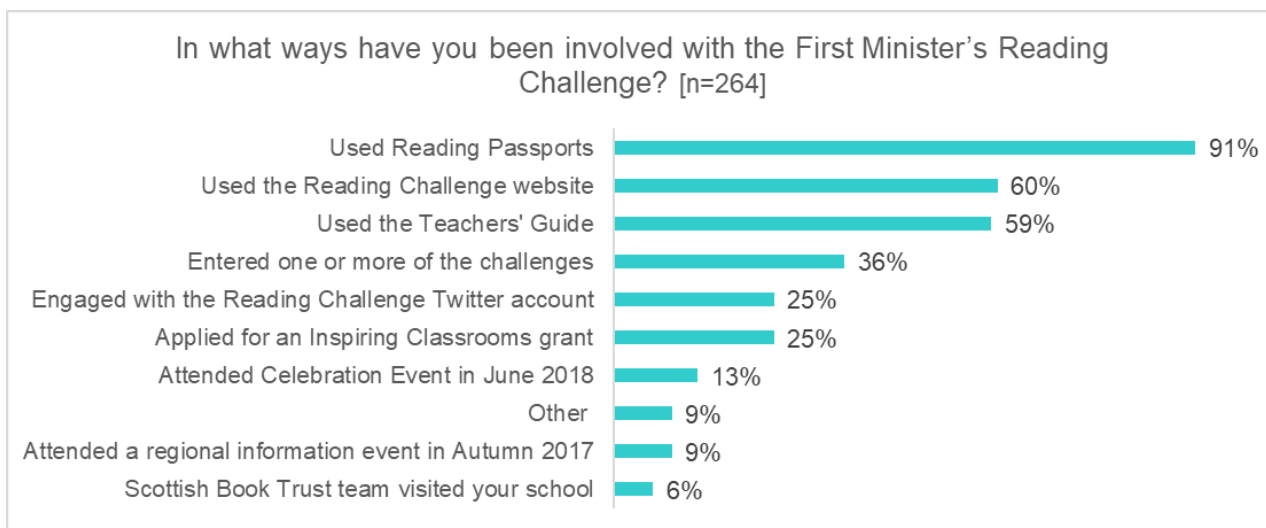
## Involvement in the Reading Challenge

2.18 Schools can be involved in the Reading Challenge in a variety of different ways:

- **Registering to be part of the Reading Challenge** – Schools were invited to register for the Reading Challenge from September 2017. Registering online gave schools access to a range of online resources, guides, tools and ideas on how to get started.
- **Using Reading Passports** – These booklets were designed to help pupils keep track of their individual reading journey. The Passports have sections for pupils to record their thoughts on what they have read, and were divided into areas of planning, recording and reflecting. Although use of the Reading Passports was encouraged, they were an optional resource for pupils and classes.
- **Using resources and guides** from the Reading Challenge website – The Reading Challenge website provided a range of resources for schools. The resources were categorised by theme and age group, and included a range of activity ideas, case studies, quizzes, guides and templates.
- **Engaging through social media** – The Reading Challenge had a dedicated Twitter account (@FMReadChallenge) and used the #FMReadChallenge to allow schools to share their progress online.
- **Attending training and information events** – Scottish Book Trust delivers training sessions for practitioners across Scotland. The sessions provided ideas on how to build a reading culture within the school, and what resources practitioners could use to get started.
- **Applying for and using an Inspiring Classrooms grant** – This grant provided £500 per school, to allow schools to host a live author event and purchase supporting resources, with 100 grants awarded in 2017/18.
- **Entering challenges** – All schools were encouraged to enter one or more of the Reading Challenges, selecting the category that was most applicable to their experiences. Schools were allowed to submit in any format, including written/illustrated submissions, power point presentations and videos.

2.19 The Reading Challenge was designed to be flexible, and schools were encouraged to find new and innovative ways to involve pupils and communities in their own local challenges, as well as the challenges detailed in 1.6.

2.20 Schools responding to the survey were asked how they were involved in the Reading Challenge in 2017/18. Almost all had used the Reading Passports.



2.21 Of the respondents that had used the Reading Challenge website (80%, 213), almost all had used the online resources available on the site (92%, 192), and most had also used the booklist (66%, 138). Respondents said that they found the information on authors, and the list of children's authors useful. Only around a fifth of respondents (22%, 46), who had used the website said that they had accessed the blog.

2.22 School staff selecting the 'Other' category said that their schools had participated through a range of school and community activities, including:

- author visits;
- book clubs;
- engagement with the local library;
- paired or 'buddy' reading;
- parent-child reading sessions;
- regular school-based reading challenges;
- school-based celebration events; and
- attending the First Minister's Reading Challenge Celebration event.

- 2.23 Other examples of activities that respondents mentioned included:
- Celebration events
  - Dedicated assemblies
  - Book fairs/book swaps
  - Book festivals
  - Book speed dating
  - Quizzes and competitions
  - Treasure hunts
  - Online books.
- 2.24 Many schools made use of national book and reading campaigns, such as World Book Day, Scottish Book Week and Roald Dahl Day to build momentum for their Reading Challenge work. These events often involved school-wide activities, such as dressing up as a favourite character or performances inspired by a book.
- 2.25 Author visits were an important element of the Reading Challenge in some schools. Pupils and teachers enjoyed having authors visit the school to read and interact with the pupils. Teachers felt that bringing in authors of books that children had read raised the profile of reading, encouraging pupils to read more, and to engage in literacy. In particular, inviting male authors to talk about their work and read from their stories helped engage boys that had not previously shown an interest in reading. For some pupils, meeting working authors inspired them to write their own books, and consider future careers in creative writing or journalism. Schools also made use of the 'Authors Live' resources, which they were able to access online through Scottish Book Trust.

### Reasons for not being involved

- 2.26 Fifty-nine respondents to the survey of schools indicated that they were not involved in the Reading Challenge in 2017/18. The main reasons given were that:
- there were already other initiatives in the school that aimed to encourage reading for pleasure (40%);
  - there was already a strong reading culture in the school (31%); and
  - school staff did not have enough time (24%) – with some saying that they did not have time to keep up with another school initiative.
- 2.27 Some staff indicated that their workload was already very high, and that staff shortages left them with very little capacity to incorporate new initiatives into the classroom. A few respondents said that they had registered to participate but had not been able to initiate any challenges, or that it was not possible to engage in the Reading Challenges due to all the other initiatives ongoing in the school.
- 2.28 A few respondents working with pupils with additional support needs said that they would need alternative resources in order to engage, including differentiated resources.



- 2.29 A few respondents felt that the Reading Challenge took a competitive approach which rewarded pupils for the number of books they had read. These respondents felt that this approach did not align with their school ethos. These respondents would have preferred more options within the Reading Challenge to recognise and reward the quality of reading, rather than quantity.
- 2.30 Finally, a very small number of respondents said that they had participated in the Reading Challenge the previous year but had decided not to engage again. They said that they had not re-engaged because of a poor response from pupils, or because they felt that the Reading Challenge had only engaged those that were already keen readers.

**“The children who already enjoy reading achieve, the children who find reading difficult become demoralised.”**

Teacher survey

- 2.31 When asked what would help them to engage in the Reading Challenge, the main ideas were:
- more resources for pupils with complex additional support needs;
  - a separate strand of the Reading Challenge for pupils with additional support needs;
  - more user-friendly resources;
  - to be able to register for the challenge earlier in the year, in order to access online resources as soon as the school term begins; and
  - funding for books.

## Using the Inspiring Classrooms grant

- 2.32 In total, 100 schools received an Inspiring Classrooms grant during 2017/18. This grant provided £500 per school to allow them to host an author/illustrator visit. The grant could be used to cover the cost of the visit, and any supporting resources required.
- 2.33 After the visit, schools provided evaluations detailing how they had used the grant, and the difference that it had made.
- 2.34 Authors and illustrators visited schools to deliver a range of activities to pupils, including:
- talks on writing and illustrating as a career;
  - talks on how to work in the creative industries;
  - readings and demonstrations; and
  - practical workshops on writing and illustrating.

- 2.35 In some schools, pupils prepared questions, activities or performances to deliver to the author, using the author's books as inspiration.
- 2.36 As well as the cost of the visits some schools used the funds to enhance the school library, or to provide a book for each pupil attending the visit.
- 2.37 Most schools reported that pupils were enthused and inspired by having living authors and illustrators visiting the school. They said that pupils were extremely excited in the days and weeks preceding the visit and that many were inspired to read new books or start writing their own stories afterwards.

**“Pupils loved the idea of meeting a real author whose books they actually knew.”**

Inspiring Classrooms evaluation

**“Not only did he inspire them to read more, he gave them confidence to believe in their dreams, and that their background should not stop them being whatever they want to be!”**

Inspiring Classrooms evaluation

- 2.38 Some schools reported that the author visit was particularly beneficial for pupils with additional support needs, behavioural issues or those who lived in disadvantaged areas. Teachers reported that some of these pupils would not normally have had access to this type of activity, and that the authors engaged well.

**“...this enables the pupils to take part in activities that would not otherwise have been available to them.”**

Inspiring Classrooms evaluation

- 2.39 More widely, the Inspiring Classrooms grant acted a stepping stone for a few schools to promote active reading, provide leadership opportunities for pupils and to engage parents. For example, one school used part of the fund to redecorate and re-stock the school library. Alongside this, one P7 pupil and one parent were nominated to act as the school librarians.

### 3. Outcomes for young people, families, schools and communities

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#### Introduction

3.1 This chapter explores the extent to which the Reading Challenge has achieved its outcomes in relation to impact on young people, families, schools and communities.

3.2 The intended outcomes were:

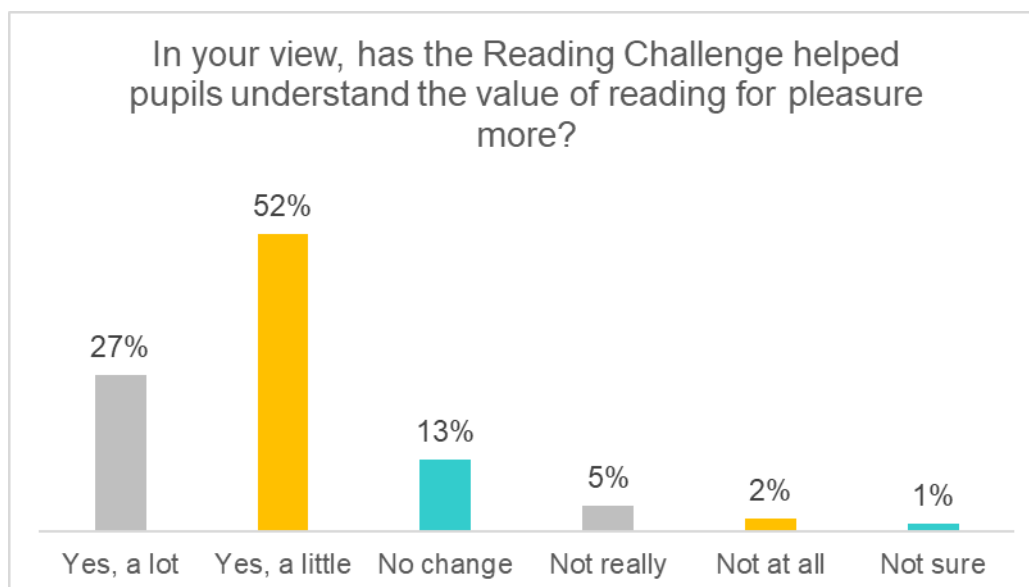
|   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | <b>Reading for pleasure is valued and encouraged.</b>   |
| 2 | <b>Children read for pleasure.</b>  |
| 3 | <b>Children are active readers, making reading choices and developing areas of interest which they pursue, as far as possible, independently.</b> |
| 4 | <b>Teachers feel empowered to deliver strategies to encourage reading for pleasure in the school environment.</b>                                 |
| 5 | <b>Teachers and schools integrate reading for pleasure into the curriculum.</b>   |
| 6 | <b>Schools and libraries make effective local partnerships to support reading for pleasure in the school and the wider community.</b>             |
| 7 | <b>Parents understand the value of reading for pleasure and facilitate their children to do so.</b>   |
| 8 | <b>Reading for pleasure supports attainment in relation to literacy and English, as well as the wider curriculum.</b>                             |
| 9 | <b>Reading for pleasure supports closing of the attainment gap.</b>   |

#### Outcome One: Reading for pleasure is valued and encouraged

3.3 The Reading Challenge aims to encourage pupils to read for pleasure, and to help develop a culture of reading in schools and communities across Scotland.

### Impact on value of reading

3.4 Most school staff responding to the survey (79%) felt that the Reading Challenge had helped pupils to better understand the value of reading for pleasure, 'a little' or 'a lot'.



**“I think people are more aware of the benefits, and there are more positive reactions to pupils with their nose in a book. It’s not seen as an isolating activity, more as a positive choice.”**

Teacher interview

**“I think there was definitely a noticeable attitude shift towards reading.”**

Teacher interview

3.5 Many of the schools responding to the survey reported that they already had a strong focus on literacy, with teachers already working on encouraging reading for pleasure. The Reading Challenge enabled them to enhance this work, and to try new approaches to engage pupils in reading and literacy.

3.6 In most of the six schools that we visited, staff felt that the Reading Challenge had helped raise staff awareness of the value of reading for pleasure. In some schools, teachers felt that there had been a marked shift in attitude amongst their colleagues – particularly around appreciating how small bursts of reading throughout the day could have a real impact on pupils.

3.7 Teachers that we spoke to said that they had seen a change in attitude towards reading amongst pupils since the school had engaged in the Reading Challenge. As well as more interest in reading, teachers noticed that pupils showed pride in their reading spaces and took care to look after new books.

3.8 For one Gaelic-medium school, it was important that the pupils saw Gaelic literature celebrated alongside English language books, and to feel part of a wider school environment. The school felt that the Reading Challenge activities put Gaelic literature alongside English literature, and pupils recognised that there was equal value to both.

**“It’s really lovely for Gaelic medium children to see that Gaelic literature is on a par with English literature...”**

Teacher interview

3.9 However, a fifth of teachers (20%, 46) felt that there had been no change or no improvement in pupils’ understanding of the value of reading. Some teachers noted that their pupils already had a good understanding of the value of reading, due to wider school initiatives. A very small number were concerned that the Reading Challenge activities unfairly advantaged pupils who already had access to books at home, and were well supported – and therefore pupils that did not have this support were at a further disadvantage, and would be further discouraged to participate.

**“...no change to how much pupils are reading at home. Those who were reading for pleasure widely still do and there has been little impact on those who didn’t.”**

Teacher survey

3.10 Pupils we spoke with understood the importance of reading and expressed that they thought it was a valuable skill. Pupils felt that it was important to read so that they could learn, access the curriculum and access the world around them.

**“Because you’ll never learn if you never read.”**

Pupil

**“We were taught that ‘the more you read, the more you know and the more you know, the more you grow!’”**

Pupil

**“It makes you aware of what’s happening in the real world...it’s like exercise for the brain.”**

Pupil

3.11 Pupils also said that they thought it was important to read for fun, as it was a useful activity for relaxing. A few pupils commented that because they enjoyed reading in general, it never felt like hard work, even in a learning context.

**“It’s nice to read just for fun as well, because when you read a book your mind just gets lost in the journey...and it relaxes me.”**

Pupil

**“Before I started reading, I thought it was more for geeks and stuff, but now I really like it because there are books that I’m really into.”**

Pupil

3.12 Pupils who spoke English as an additional language felt that it was important to read for pleasure, because it helped them learn English. They felt this was an important skill. Similarly, pupils we spoke with at a Gaelic medium school felt that it was important to read because it helped them learn more Gaelic vocabulary, and Gaelic spelling.

3.13 Pupils within the six schools we visited also felt that there were doing more reading based activities in their school, and that reading was important and valued.

**“I feel like the teachers are encouraging us to read more.”**

Pupil

3.14 Some parents felt that schools had put in significant effort to prioritise reading and develop a reading culture in the school. In particular, parents appreciated that reading became a fun, acceptable and ‘cool’ activity.

**“Reading does not have such an ‘uncool’ stigma.”**

Parent survey

**“It makes reading more trendy and funky...it made books cool.”**

Parent interview

### **Activities to encourage reading for pleasure**

3.15 Schools responding to the survey mentioned a range of ways in which they used the Reading Challenge to raise the status of reading within their school. These included:

- using visual displays, posters, and art work to make books prominent within the school environment;
- using large, colourful charts and posters to document pupils and class achievements towards their reading targets;
- speaking about books and reading more - during class, at assemblies and throughout the school day;
- targeted activities and challenges;
- adding more time to read in class or more frequent reading events;
- author links – including visits, social media engagement and letters or books being sent to the school; and
- wider celebrity links – for example one school engaged a number of well known sportspeople in its social media Reading Challenge to portray a diverse range of role models.

**“We got lots of letters from authors and famous people. Some of them sent in videos. It really encouraged us all to read more.”**

Pupil

**“Role models were really important for the boys.”**

Teacher interview

- 3.16 A number of schools reported that they had undertaken specific work to improve the school library, or to create classroom libraries – which linked to and complemented the Reading Challenge activities. In some schools this was a large-scale effort using school funds or Pupil Equity funding. Teachers felt that taking time and effort to improve school library facilities showed pupils that reading was important, and that books were a valuable commodity.

## **Outcome Two: Children read for pleasure**

### **Pupil views on impact of the Reading Challenge on reading for pleasure**

- 3.17 Almost all of the pupils we spoke with said that they were reading more books, and reading more often, because of the Reading Challenge. The few pupils we spoke with who said that they were not reading more were already avid readers. They felt that they had already been reading a lot and couldn't read any more.
- 3.18 A few pupils said that they had previously been uninterested in reading, but because of the Reading Challenge they now enjoyed reading and chose to read for pleasure. And most pupils felt that they were reading more at school because there were more opportunities in the school day to read, and more places to read – such as reading corners or dedicated library spaces.

**“I used to just read one book a month, now I'm reading like two books a week!”**

Pupil

**“I wasn't reading a lot but now I'm reading all the time.”**

Pupil

**“See in P1, P2 and P3, I wasn't really into books, but now I really enjoy reading.”**

Pupil

- 3.19 Many pupils were encouraged to read through the element of challenge, certificates, prizes and competition within the Reading Challenge.

**“I used to despise reading and now I like it a lot...because we started getting certificates for it.”**

Pupil

**“Before, I didn't really like reading books, but the competition really helped get me into reading.”**

Pupil

**“As soon as I heard there were prizes, I was really into it.”**

Pupil

**“I read more since we started the Reading Challenge because it’s a challenge, and you’re trying to achieve something.”**

Pupil

- 3.20 Pupils said that as well as reading more often, they were also reading in more places than before. They said they were reading more at school and at home, but also in other places such as out in the playground, in the car, on journeys and in bed. And a few pupils said that they enjoyed reading stories online, through reading programmes on the school computers.
- 3.21 Some pupils said that their school had encouraged them to share pictures of themselves reading in unusual places, and this had encouraged them to take their books with them wherever they went. A few pupils told us they took books on holidays and sent in pictures of themselves reading on mountains, up trees and in a swimming pool.
- 3.22 Some pupils told us that they were now choosing to read a book, instead of other activities, such as watching television or playing video games. A few pupils had even noticed this change in behaviour amongst their own peer group.

**“Now, when I’m bored, I just go and read a book.”**

Pupil

**“I think that a lot of people that would have gone off and played with their friends [during golden time at school] are now choosing to read.”**

Pupil

**“If it was a book that I wanted to read then I probably would read rather than have computer time.”**

Pupil

**“I like books because books can’t run out of charge!”**

Pupil

- 3.23 Pupils we spoke with had a wide range of interests, from fiction and non-fiction, to graphic novels, audio books, newspapers and magazines. Pupils also reported interests in a wide range of genres, from traditional and classic children’s literature, to historic fiction, auto-biographies and natural history. Some pupils greatly appreciated that the types of material they enjoyed reading were recognised within the Reading Challenge, even when they were not traditional fiction books.
- 3.24 A few pupils that we met had attended the First Minister’s Challenge Celebration event in Edinburgh, having won or been commended for their work on the Reading Challenge. These pupils greatly enjoyed attending, and felt privileged to have been able to meet the First Minister. They felt that going to this event had encouraged them to read even more.



### **Pupil views on reading for pleasure generally**

3.25 All of the pupils we spoke with said that they now enjoyed reading and that reading was a fun thing to do. Pupils said that they enjoyed reading because it made them feel happy, because they like reading about things that interested them and because they liked learning about new things.

**“The only thing that’s wrong with reading is that when you start reading a chapter, you can’t stop!”**

Pupil

3.26 A large proportion of pupils we spoke with equated reading with relaxing or de-stressing. Many said that they chose to read when they were feeling stressed, sad or angry, because reading helped them feel calm.

**“When I’m sad, I go to my room and read a book.”**

Pupil

**“At night, it makes me feel sleepy.”**

Pupil

**“Reading makes me feel calm. But it depends on the book, sometimes it makes you feel excited.”**

Pupil

**“It helps me calm down. If my little sister’s annoying me, I just go to my room and read a book.”**

Pupil

3.27 Pupils said that they enjoyed the feeling of being absorbed into a story, and using their imagination. In particular, older pupils said that they enjoyed reading stories that took them somewhere unusual or out of the ordinary.

**“Every time I open a book, I’m going on a journey.”**

Pupil

**“Reading makes me feel like I’m part of the story.”**

Pupil

**“You can let your imagination run wild.”**

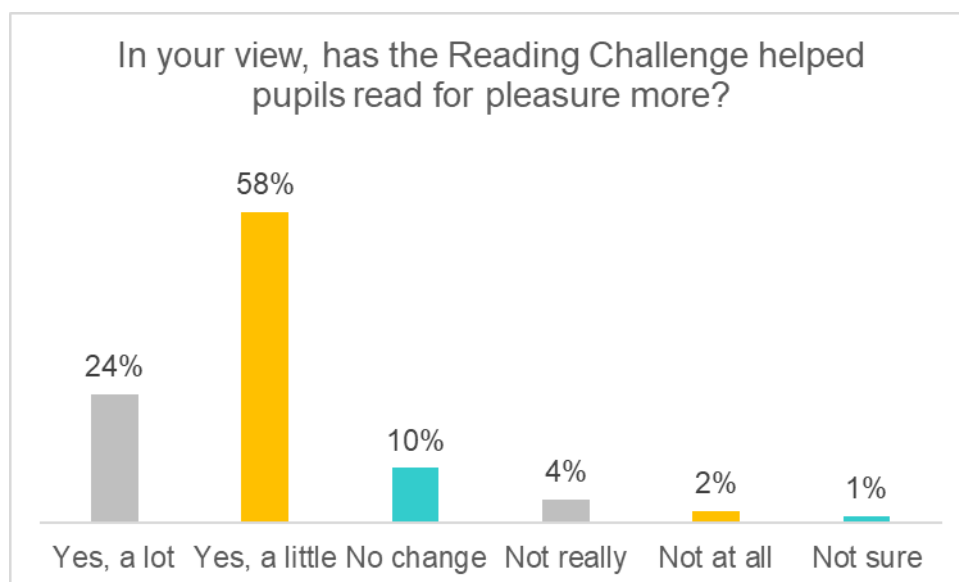
Pupil

**“It feels like you’re in your own space of mind, like you’re in your own personal bubble.”**

Pupil

## Teacher views

3.28 Overall, 82% of respondents felt that the Reading Challenge had helped their pupils read for pleasure 'a little' or a lot' more. Nearly a quarter of teachers (24%) felt that children were reading for pleasure 'a lot' more due their involvement in the reading challenge, with a further 58% feeling children were reading for pleasure a little more.



3.29 Teachers that we spoke with at the six schools we visited also noticed a marked increase in how much children were reading and the extent to which they enjoyed reading. Some schools noticed a measurable increase in the number of books borrowed from the school library, or the turnover of books in the school library. And some schools reported increased participation in school book clubs or reading clubs. Schools did not normally formally measure these changes.

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### Example: School gathering wider views

One school that we visited conducted a survey with 31 parents. The survey found that 90% of parents said their children had enjoyed the Reading Challenge 'a lot' or 'a great deal'. 90% of parents also agreed or strongly agreed that the Reading Challenge had increased their involvement in school life. Parents responding to the survey felt that the author visits and the school's Book Week Scotland activities had the greatest impact on their children.

This school also conducted a survey with nine staff members. It found that teachers felt the Reading Challenge was a valuable initiative and that the Reading Challenge had a positive impact on pupils, and their motivation to read.

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3.30 Overall, teachers felt that the Reading Challenge enabled them to increase pupils' access to reading material and to reduce barriers to reading.

**“The kids are getting really genuinely excited about new books...and so are we!”**

Teacher interview

**“We completed surveys with all pupils relating to their enjoyment of reading. Over the year an increase was seen in the number of children wanting to read for pleasure and an increase in the amount of time spent reading for those who did read for pleasure.”**

Teacher interview

3.31 School staff reported that pupils were visiting the school library more frequently than before and that they were borrowing more books. One school also reported that there was an increased turnover in borrowing, indicating that pupils were reading at a faster pace than they had previously.

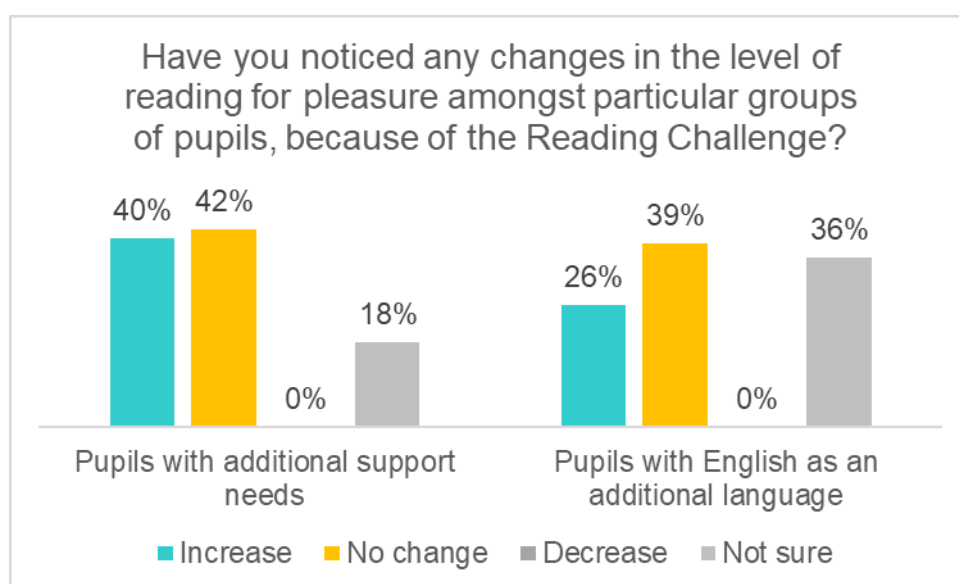
**“The pace of reading has increased and the rate of books that are changed for new ones is dramatically more than before. More books will be ordered this year as a result of the speed at which pupils are now completing the recently purchased range of books.”**

School survey

3.32 Schools also reported that they had noticed particular increases in reading for pleasure among pupils who may not previously have been keen readers, including some:

- pupils with additional support needs (including learning difficulties and dyslexia);
- pupils with English as a second language;
- boys; and
- pupils from disadvantaged areas.

3.33 Around 40% (89) of school survey respondents felt that pupils with additional support needs were reading for pleasure more than before, because of the Reading Challenge. And around a quarter (26%, 55) felt that pupils who had English as a second language were reading for pleasure more than before.



- 3.34 Across the schools that we visited, pupils spoke a range of languages including, Arabic, French, Gaelic, Punjabi, Romanian, Slovak, Spanish and Urdu. In one school, all of the pupils we met were bi-lingual and/or spoke English as an additional language. These pupils had been supported to engage in reading in all of the languages that they spoke, although the focus at school had predominantly been on English, or Gaelic, in Gaelic medium schools. One school had worked with a community volunteer, who came to the school and supported a group of pupils to read in Romanian, (their first language).
- 3.35 Many school survey respondents and teachers that we spoke with commented that the Reading Challenge had particularly encouraged boys and reluctant readers to start reading, and to start enjoying reading. They felt that this was because the Reading Challenge supported teachers to access a wider range of books, with genres that these pupils were interested in and could relate to.

**“Previously reluctant readers are now much more interested in engaging with books, particularly as we have investigated which type and genre of book suits them best. e.g graphic novels.”**

School survey

**“A lot of the boys were reluctant to read, and we had to get them to understand that non-fiction counts, too. This [Reading Challenge] has really helped with that, and they’re more confident readers now.”**

Teacher interview

- 3.36 A few respondents to our school survey also noted that some of their male pupils were motivated by the competitive nature of the Reading Challenge. This was reiterated by some of the pupils we met who enjoyed competing for prizes and certificates.

### Parental views

- 3.37 Most parents felt that the Reading Challenge at school had encouraged children to read for pleasure at school and at home. They spoke positively of the reading groups, clubs and events that schools had initiated as part of their Reading Challenge activities. In particular, some parents said that they liked the ‘drop everything and read’ time that had been incorporated into classes as part of the school’s approach to incorporating reading into the curriculum.

**“My children are encouraged to read at home, but the message that reading is important is being reinforced at school and that is a very positive thing.”**

Parent survey

**“It made reading a more pleasurable thing. Something to do when you want to relax, not something you do because the school has told you to do it.”**

Parent interview

- 3.38 Parents we spoke with reported that children were engaging with the school library and the community library, and that overall, they were reading a lot more than before.

**“We ended up taking a book everywhere.”**

Parent interview

**“Rather than taking an iPad in the car they now take a book.”**

Parent survey

### Not supporting reading for pleasure

- 3.39 A small number of teachers (6%,15) responding to our survey felt that the Reading Challenge did not encourage children to read for pleasure. They indicated that children who were already avid readers continued to read, and were recognised for their achievements. But some felt that less able or less confident readers were discouraged, or even put off reading due to the Reading Challenge.

- 3.40 Some parents (18%, 8) responding to the survey said that the Reading Challenge did not encourage their child(ren) to read for pleasure. Three said that this was because their children were already reading for pleasure a lot, and the Reading Challenge had not impacted on this. One parent said that their child had additional support needs, and was put off reading due to the Reading Challenge.

**“My daughter has a language difficulty, reading and remembering takes a lot of effort. The Reading Challenge was something else to fail at as far as she was concerned. Younger children were getting praised for things she couldn't do. It raised her anxiety and made her hate reading even more.”**

Parent survey

## Outcome 3: Children are active readers

- 3.41 The Reading Challenge aimed to support children to be active readers, making their own choices and pursuing their own interests through reading.

### Pupil views

- 3.42 Pupils we spoke with said that they had started reading much more widely than before, since their school started participating the Reading Challenge. In particular, some boys said that they had started reading books or series that they would never have considered prior to the Reading Challenge. School based activities, such as themed days, book swaps and book fairs helped pupils to access different types of books, or new genres that they would not have previously considered.

**“I didn't normally read a lot of non-fiction books, but now I've started to read more.”**

Pupil

**“I hated Harry Potter. But then we had a Harry Potter day at school and it changed everything. Now I’ve read them all.”**

Pupil

**“I used to read short books, but now I read long books.”**

Pupil

**“I’ve started reading Goosebumps now because I saw them in the library.”**

Pupil

**“Before I started wanting to read, I thought there was only a small variety of books. But when we did the Reading Challenge and we went to the library I saw all the varieties and I was like ‘Aaah! This is amazing!’”**

Pupil

3.43 Pupils told us that they were finding ways to enjoy reading as much as possible using everything around them. Pupils reported reading road signs (in English and Gaelic), reading CD and DVD covers and reading subtitles when watching television. Pupils also said that their teachers had used a variety of ways to engage them, using topics or themes that they were already interested in, for example, sourcing books relating to football, or books of popular films.

3.44 For the most part, pupils felt that they had a good amount of choice in what they read, particularly at home. Most pupils said that they enjoyed choosing for themselves, although some said that they often ended up reading books passed on from older siblings or friends. Pupils said that they enjoyed sharing book recommendations with each other and discovering new authors and new series of books to read.

**“In our Reading Passports there’s a space where you can put a recommendation. I really like doing that, I get excited about it.”**

Pupil

3.45 When asked how they would choose a book, pupils gave a range of responses, including:

- looking at the blurb;
- getting recommendations from friends;
- getting recommendations from teachers, family members or the librarian;
- finding new books by authors they already liked; and
- picking something at random.

3.46 A number of pupils also explained that they used the ‘Five Finger Rule<sup>2</sup>’ to help them choose appropriate material to read.

3.47 Pupils we spoke with at a Gaelic school said that although they mostly enjoyed reading in Gaelic, they struggled to find appropriate books, and so they often turned to English books.

**“I do enjoy reading in Gaelic, but my problem is that I can’t find many big books in Gaelic. So, I prefer English books, because they’re more interesting.”**  
Pupil

### Teacher views

3.48 Teachers we spoke with reported that the Reading Challenge helped them expose pupils to a variety of different genres and media. Teachers we spoke with said that they had noticed a marked improvement in some pupils, who were not only choosing their own books, but also becoming more aware of their own identity as a reader. Pupils were able to identify which authors they liked, and why, and were able to speak about this confidently.

**“They’ve definitely become more active readers, they can speak about books quite confidently.”**

Teacher interview

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#### **Example: Introducing pupils to new books**

One school implemented a ‘Chapter One book study’ programme. Each week, pupils engaged in a range of activities around the craft of writing, mind mapping and story prediction, based on the first chapter a book. This approach allowed pupils to engage in literacy, whilst exposing them to a new book every week.

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3.49 Teachers said that they had noticed an increase in pupils taking books home, or swapping books amongst themselves. This was particularly significant for pupils who didn’t have access to books at home.

3.50 Some schools said that they had developed mini-class libraries and class recommendation lists, encouraging pupils to read widely and share their favourite books with each other. For upper primary pupils, some teachers encouraged them to think about why they preferred some books to others, to help them think more deeply about the books that they read, and to clarify their areas of interest.

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<sup>2</sup> This rule is a quick test that pupils can do on their own, to ascertain if a book is at the right level. Pupils pick a random page of the book and count how many words on the page they are unsure of or cannot understand. If there are none, or one or two, the book is probably too easy, and won’t be challenging enough, and if there are more than five words the pupil cannot understand, it is probably too difficult, and the pupil should choose something else.

3.51 However, one of the key challenges for teachers across the six schools we visited, was finding age and stage appropriate books for older pupils with additional support needs, less confident readers and books in Gaelic language (particularly for young adult level readers).

### Parent views

3.52 Most parents responding to our survey (74%, 32) felt that the Reading Challenge had helped their children to become more active readers, or more independent readers. Parents said that their children were developing clear tastes, and were interested in doing practical activities based on the books that they had read.

**“She actually reads on her own now.”**

Parent interview

**“She chooses what to read, and where, and when. I think she feels quite responsible for that.”**

Parent interview

**“I liked how the school has introduced them to new books that I wouldn’t choose.”**

Parent interview

**“He is choosing to read books which I feel are quite challenging for his age - but he loves them. He has read all Harry Potter books this calendar year and has moved onto Tolkien. Next on his list is Hunger Games. All his own choice - which delights me!”**

Parent survey

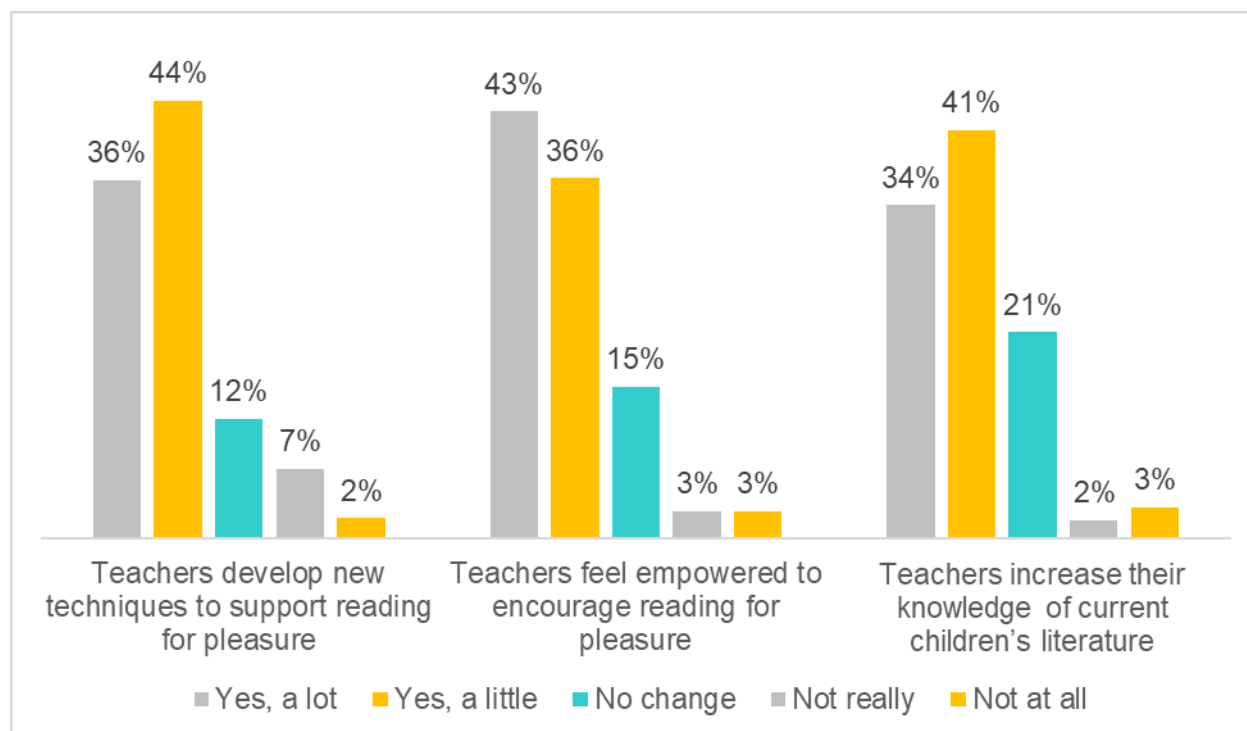
3.53 One parent we spoke with commented that her child had previously only shown interest in non-fiction books, predominantly about animals. Since the school engaged in the Reading Challenge, her child was reading more widely and had started choosing to read fiction as well as non-fiction.

3.54 However, a small proportion of parents (14%, 6) felt that the Reading Challenge had not helped, as their children were already very active readers. And one parent felt that the Reading Challenge had discouraged their child from reading, as it had begun to feel like a chore.



## Outcome Four: Teachers feel empowered

3.55 The Reading Challenge aimed to support teachers to feel empowered to deliver strategies to encourage reading for pleasure in the school environment.



3.56 Most school staff (80%) responding to the survey felt that the Reading Challenge had helped them to develop new techniques to support pupils to read for pleasure.

3.57 Since getting involved in the Reading Challenge, most school staff (79%) felt more empowered to encourage pupils to read for pleasure.

3.58 Most school staff (75%) felt that the Reading Challenge increased their awareness of current children's literature, with just over a third (34%) stating that they felt it had increased their knowledge 'a lot'.

3.59 Teachers that we spoke with said that being part of a high profile, national programme such as the Reading Challenge, helped them drive forward their strategies to encourage reading and improve literacy, and provided focus for their activities.

**“It's had an impact and has pushed us forward.”**

Teacher interview

**“It provided a bit of a template to get the whole class reading.”**

Teacher interview

3.60 Teachers said that working within the context of the Reading Challenge helped them think more about their practice and how they were engaging pupils in literacy work. In some schools, teachers overhauled school and class libraries to ensure that pupils had access to books that were interesting and relevant to them.

**“Because you had the Challenge in your mind, it gave you a particular focus.”**

Teacher interview

**“We really thought about what the class novels were, to make sure that they were relevant and modern. We spent a lot of time, and money buying full sets of new books.”**

Teacher interview

3.61 Many teachers and some parents liked the focus on reading for pleasure and children making their own choices. Although there was an element of challenge, it could be highly personalised, so that each pupil or class worked towards an attainable goal. Some teachers felt that the Reading Challenge presented reading on a level playing field for all pupils, regardless of their prior interests or abilities.

**“The focus was on making it fun, and exciting and non-judgemental.”**

Teacher interview

**“I think the confidence aspect is a massive part of it. No matter what they’re reading or what level they’re reading at, it’s all valuable...it doesn’t matter what the person next to you is reading, it’s just about reading for pleasure.”**

Teacher interview

**“The good thing about it was that it didn’t feel that they were given extra work. It made my boys feel like it could be fun, because it wasn’t something that they were being told to do.”**

Parent interview

3.62 A few teachers highlighted the value of an activity which is not linked to an assessment or test.

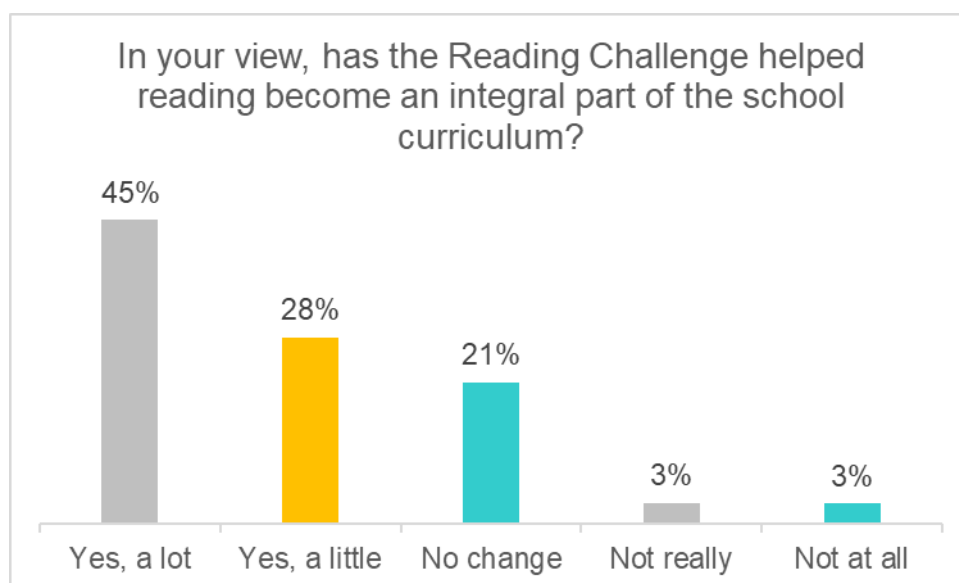
**“For older, more reluctant readers it was helpful for them to have an opportunity to read with nothing coming after it – no test, no comprehension.”**

Teacher interview

## Outcome Five: Teachers and schools integrate reading for pleasure into the curriculum

3.63 The Reading Challenge aimed to help teachers and schools to integrate reading for pleasure into the curriculum.

3.64 Most staff (73%, 166) responding to the survey felt that the Reading Challenge had helped them to integrate reading into the school curriculum, 'a lot' or 'a little'.



3.65 Most felt that they achieved this by providing new reading materials for pupils and by changing the school's approach to reading for pleasure.

**“New books have been bought for the school which allows disadvantaged children to access books and use as a home reader.”**

Teacher interview

**“Our class approach to reading has changed - reading has its own important place in our school day.”**

Teacher interview

**“As a result of our school being awarded an Inspiring Classrooms grant, we were able to buy new fiction books, chosen by the children, which have appealed to many of the children who previously had only been interested in non-fiction books.”**

Teacher survey

3.66 Just over a quarter of staff responding to the survey said that they had also changed the format of the school day or school week to integrate reading for pleasure. In a small number of cases, teachers mentioned that the Reading Challenge had been integrated within the School Improvement Plan.

**“We always did read a lot of stories but FMRC has made it be more integrated (daily) into what we do - the books have also been the basis for a lot of our literacy work.”**

Teacher survey

**“I’m building in more reading in class...when you’re reading more in class you get to know what they like and you can build that into the class and plan topics based on what they enjoy.”**

Teacher interview

**“Has allowed us to have reading for pleasure as an essential part of the curriculum.”**

Teacher survey

3.67 Many teachers commented on how they had incorporated reading into day to day activities. In some schools, pupils were encouraged to keep a book at their desk, and to read whenever they had time e.g. when they had finished their work, at registration and during breaks. Others chose to use more direct methods, such as ‘Drop Everything and Read (DEAR)’, ‘The Daily Five’ and ‘Everyone Reading in Class (ERIC)’ approaches, or by timetabling in whole class reading sessions. And some schools said that they had dedicated ‘library time’ built in to the school week, either at the school-based library or having regular visits to the local public library.

**“Reading has been given much more importance across the whole school.”**

Teacher interview

**“We have loved FMRC and it has enabled us to have books as an integral and now vital part of our day - if we do not have a story the children are disappointed and ask when we are going to have the story. They have a confidence and excitement about books...”**

Teacher survey

3.68 Other teachers said that they tried to engage pupils through graphic novels, sensory stories, key words or looking at the illustrations within the books – to build confidence and engage pupils with additional support needs.

**“Not all reading had to be sitting and reading a novel.”**

Teacher interview

**“It’s increased their awareness of the range of reading materials, and that there’s equal value to reading magazines and graphic novels.”**

Teacher interview

3.69 Teachers said that they implemented various reward systems, such as a ‘Star Reader’ or ‘Star Writer’ award to encourage reading across the curriculum. They also felt that their own interest and excitement for books filtered through to the class and helped enthuse pupils. Teachers noted that modelling behaviour was an important aspect of integrating reading for pleasure into the curriculum, and they read their own books alongside the pupils.

**“We have read a story every day and it has become part of what we do. The pupils (and I) love it when we have a new book that we've not read before - the excitement of the first read and then developing pleasure in the repeated read.”**

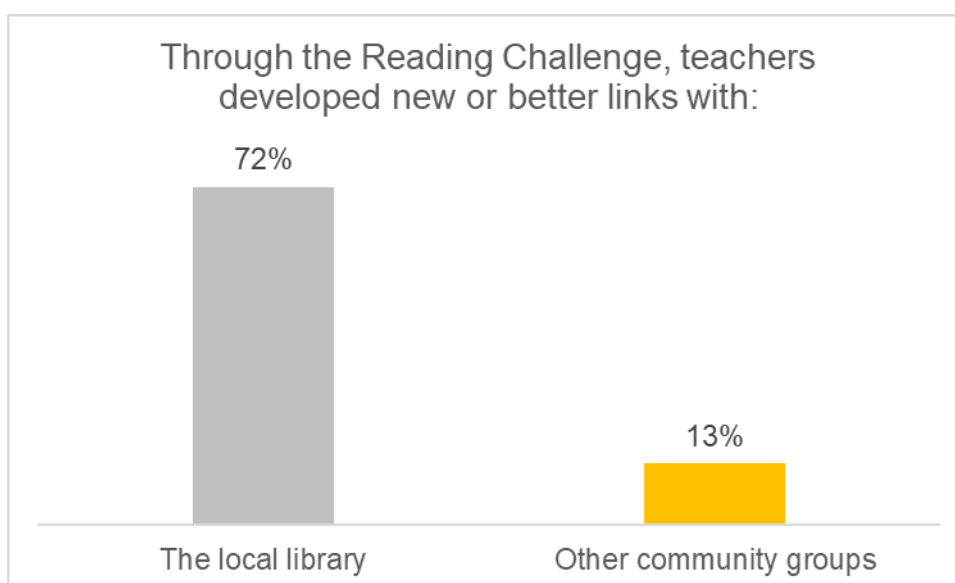
Teacher survey

- 3.70 As well as encouraging pupils to read more, some teachers found that a shared class story or paired reading was a useful way to engage pupils in reading activities. Particularly for younger pupils, teachers said that being read to, rather than asking the pupil to engage with the book themselves, was a useful technique to introduce them to stories. A few teachers we spoke with found that once pupils were familiar with a story, they were more confident to choose the book for themselves.
- 3.71 In some schools, reading for pleasure was part of pupils' homework schedule, encouraging them to read at home as well as at school. Some schools also tried whole school approaches through inter-class challenges and school assemblies. A few schools said that they had created dedicated reading spaces within the classroom, and had found that pupils were choosing to use this space during their free time or 'golden time'.
- 3.72 In a few schools, teachers said that they focused on reading across the whole curriculum, and showed pupils how reading was relevant in every subject, and across many different parts of their lives. For example, pupils in one school had an afterschool cooking club. Pupils were supported to recognise how reading was involved at every stage of the cooking process – from choosing recipes, creating a shopping list, selecting ingredients in a shop and following the recipe.
- 3.73 A few teachers reported that although they enjoyed having dedicated reading time in the day, they sometimes struggled to fit this into their schedule, which was already full. One respondent said that teachers sometimes felt “guilty” for spending class time reading for pleasure, as they were concerned it would be seen as an unproductive use of time. A few other teachers said that reading was already well integrated into their school curriculum and they did not feel that the Reading Challenge had significant impact on this.

## **Outcome Six: Schools and library partnerships**

- 3.74 The Reading Challenge aimed to support schools and libraries to make effective local partnerships to support reading for pleasure in the school and wider community.

- 3.75 Most school staff responding to survey (72%) said that the Reading Challenge had helped them to develop new or better links with the local library, and some (13%) felt that it had helped them better engage with other community groups.



- 3.76 A number of schools said that they had made links with the local library to encourage pupils to read more outwith the classroom. For most schools, this involved more regular visits to the local library (ranging from weekly to monthly) and ensuring that all pupils were registered with a valid library card. In some cases, schools now had better links with wider community activities, through the library. Some schools felt that this relationship was still in its early stages, although they were keen to develop and strengthen these links in the coming year.
- 3.77 Some schools worked closely with the local library and wider community to run book fairs, book swapping events, storytelling sessions, book clubs and family nights. Some schools had received book donations from their local library.

**“There are children going to the library on a regular basis in their own time as well as with their class. There were some children who had never set foot in the local library so it has opened up a whole new world to them.”**

Teacher survey

**“All pupils are now members of our local library, we visit twice a term to borrow books and the library has reported an increase in visits during school holidays.”**

Teacher survey

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#### **Example: School and library links**

One school has established a strong link with their Outreach Librarian. The librarian comes into the school once a week to develop the use of the school library. The librarian encourages the pupils to take ownership of the library

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themselves, and encourages reading for pleasure throughout the school. Pupils are nominated as Library Monitors, and share their ideas at school assemblies.

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- 3.78 Some teachers and parents told us that since getting involved with the Reading Challenge, pupils were much more interested in going to the library – both the school library and the local library.

**“They’re always very excited to go to the library. They all want to go when they’re offered.”**

Teacher interview

**“The kids were excited about using books and the librarian told me that the library was busier because more families were coming in and using it.”**

Parent interview

- 3.79 A few parents that we spoke with felt that more could have been done to establish links with local libraries, especially for families that may not be able to purchase books for the home.

**“Not everyone can afford to buy books, so you need to raise awareness of how to use the library.”**

Parent interview

- 3.80 Where schools did not have access to a community library, they found alternative ways to develop relevant local partnerships. A few schools reported using a mobile library service, and another reported engaging a parent who works as a librarian.

- 3.81 Staff responding to the school survey, and teachers that we spoke with felt that visiting the library gave pupils exposure to a wider range of reading material and gave them confidence to choose from a wider range of books. They also appreciated having access to the expert knowledge of the librarians, particularly their wide and current knowledge of the range of children’s literature.

**“Children feel more confident about visiting the library and how to access books as well as learning about other workshops that the library provides.”**

Teacher survey

- 3.82 More broadly, schools engaged with local business and organisations to take reading out into the community. Schools provided examples of working with the local authority, other primary schools, early years centres and high schools to provide paired or group reading opportunities. Some schools also engaged local supermarkets, cafés and book shops.

- 3.83 Some schools reported engaging with local bookshops, such as Waterstones, WH Smith and independent retailers. These visits gave pupils access to a wider range of books, and helped to develop stronger community links. One school worked with a local independent bookshop to create a window display highlighting their work on the Reading Challenge.

- 3.84 One school worked closely with a care home for elderly people. The school is developing a mobile library to allow pupils to share their favourite stories with the care home residents. Another school reported that community members who were already involved with the school (e.g. chaplain, police officer, support staff) acted as reading role models by reading with pupils during their time at school.

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### **Example: Community links**

One school managed to engage the wider community, by creating a community-wide book sharing scheme. The books were hidden by pupils posing as ‘book fairies’ throughout the community, in the school, public spaces and in local business. Members of the community were encouraged to search for books and hide them again, for others to find and enjoy. Parents and families were heavily involved in this activity, and the school deliberately hid books suitable for all ages to ensure that everyone in the community could find something to read.

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## **Outcome Seven: Parents understand the value of reading for pleasure and facilitate their children to do so**

- 3.85 The Reading Challenge aimed to support parents to understand the value of reading for pleasure, so that they can work with their children to encourage reading.

### **Views of parents**

- 3.86 Some parents (37% of those responding to the survey) felt that the Reading Challenge had helped them develop better links with their child’s school. Some felt that the use of websites, social media and ‘Twitter Challenges’ were a useful way to keep informed, and to be involved in school activities.
- 3.87 One parent we spoke with felt that the Reading Challenge had brought her family closer together, through paired reading activities. These activities were fun and provided a structured activity for her to do with her children. The Reading Challenge activities particularly helped her to engage with and support one of her children, who sometimes displayed challenging behaviour.

**“Doing the Reading Challenge in school and out of school has really helped with his behaviour.”**

Parent interview

- 3.88 However, some parents did not feel that there had been any significant changes in their involvement with the school, as they were already well connected. Although some parents felt they were already involved with their children’s school, some appreciated the context of the Reading Challenge, and the type of engagement that it offered, which was relaxed and based around having fun.

**“I like to be involved, but I feel more involved because they have given us the opportunity to come.”**

Parent interview



## Teacher views

3.89 Most schools responding to the survey (68%) said that they had used the Reading Challenge to engage parents in learning with their children. Schools used a range of techniques to engage parents, including:

- simple social media challenges – such as take a picture of yourself reading somewhere;
- events for parents at school focusing on supporting parents to read with children at home;
- family reading initiatives based around cooking or art;
- family reading clubs;
- inviting parents or grandparents into class to read; and
- asking parents to help to develop their Reading Challenge materials.

3.90 Teachers indicated some positive achievements in relation to parental engagement. Some felt the Reading Passports helped to better link home and school activity; some had seen parents getting involved in social media challenges or book events such as book fairs; and some had noted that parents had started asking for book recommendations so that they could read more at home with their children.

**“The Reading Passports were a super resource, providing a link between home and school and we used them in the classroom in a variety of ways.”**

Teacher survey

**“We now have parents asking if they can borrow books to read at home and the level of engagement has increased dramatically over the last year.”**

Teacher survey

**“Parents were so motivated. They had ownership of it too – it was a whole community thing.”**

Teacher interview

3.91 Parents that we spoke with were mainly aware of the school and community based Reading Challenge activities. A few parents had supported their children to enter their own Reading Journey project. One parent supported her child to create a board game based on her favourite Roald Dahl books, and another child created a three-dimensional castle in which every room was based on a book.

3.92 Generally, parents and teachers that we spoke with liked the support and resources that were available to them. They appreciated the broad categories of the Reading Challenge, and felt that this made it accessible to everyone.

**“I liked how open it was, you could do anything.”**

Parent interview

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**Example: parental involvement**

In one school, parents ran a lending library and delivered regular storytelling sessions for younger pupils. This activity was encouraged by the teacher, who provided appropriate training for parents and grandparents to become Scotland Reads tutors.

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**Example: parental involvement**

In one special school, where pupils have complex additional support needs, parents have been encouraged to engage in storytelling with their children at home. The Reading Challenge has complemented the development of a sensory lending library, which aims to engage all family members in reading. The Reading Challenge helped provide the impetus for this approach to be rolled out across the school.

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- 3.93 However, in some areas, parental engagement was a challenge, and teachers reported that parents from the most disadvantaged areas were still less likely to engage. A small number of schools said that their links with parents were already very strong, and that the Reading Challenge had not changed this.

**Pupil views**

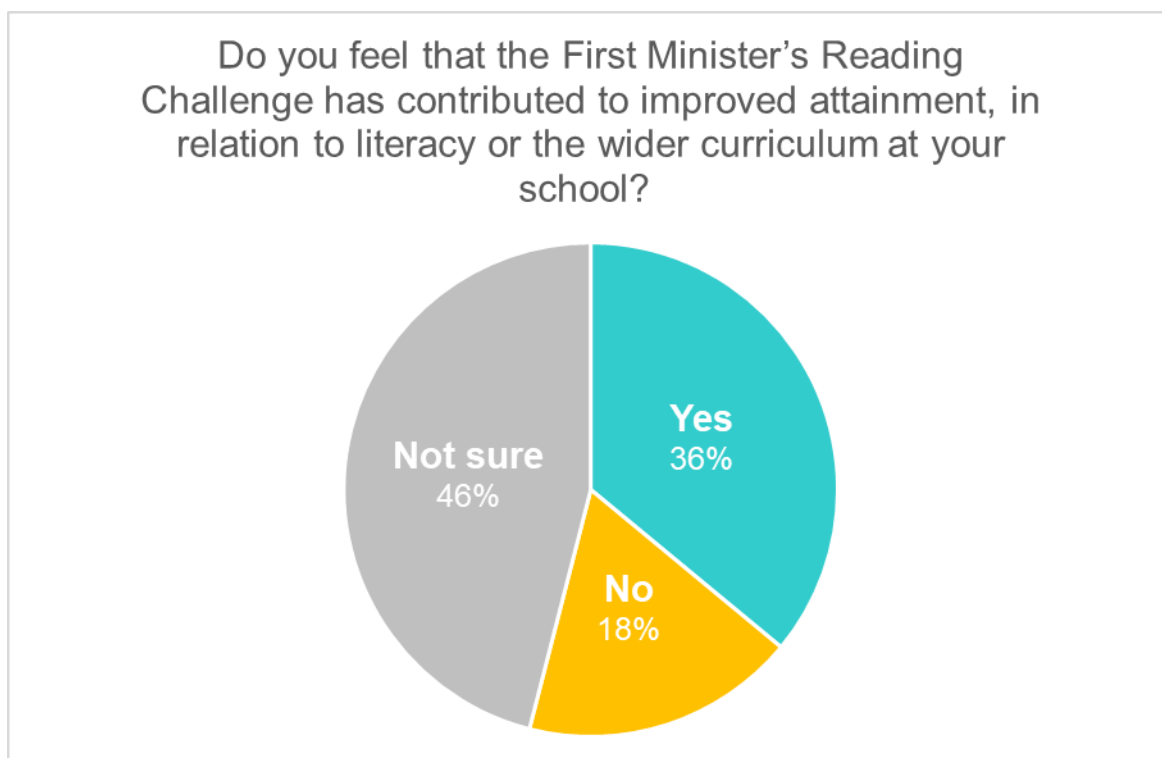
- 3.94 Pupils we spoke with were pleased that the Reading Challenge had involved their families. Some pupils said that their favourite Reading Challenge event was when their parents came into the school and read with them, or read their favourite book to the class. Others enjoyed doing more reading based activities at home or in the community with their families – particularly engaging their families in social media challenges to take pictures reading in unusual places.

**Wider outcome: Reading for pleasure supports attainment in relation to literacy and English, as well as the wider curriculum**

- 3.95 This is a secondary intended outcome for the First Minister's Reading Challenge, aiming to support attainment – alongside the wide range of other initiatives taking place within schools across Scotland.

**Supporting attainment generally**

- 3.96 Many respondents (46%) were unsure if the Reading Challenge had contributed to attainment in their school. Over a third (36%) of staff responding to the survey felt that it had contributed, and some (18%) felt that it had not.



3.97 Staff felt that improvement around attainment were hard to attribute solely to the Reading Challenge, as there were often multiple interventions around literacy and attainment within schools. Although many felt that they could not attribute specific improvements to the Reading Challenge alone, most people responding to the survey and all of the staff we interviewed felt that the Reading Challenge supported and complemented school led interventions.

**“Due to the focus on reading within our school, attainment figures have risen.”**  
Teacher survey

**“The FMRC has been a successful element of our efforts in raising attainment and has encouraged us to work with our local partners and groups.”**  
Teacher survey

**“Obtaining data to directly link increase in attainment to FMRC is difficult but the FMRC has definitely played a part in raising the profile of reading.”**  
Teacher survey

### Supporting attainment in literacy

3.98 Teachers we spoke with felt that the Reading Challenge fitted in well with other work around reading and literacy, and linked to their School Improvement Plan. Some indicated that enjoyment of reading for pleasure, and confidence in reading helped children be more engaged and enthused in reading across the curriculum. School staff reported that they had seen improvements in a range of areas, including:

- improved engagement during class;

- improved spelling;
- better storytelling skills;
- improved use of reading strategies;
- better creative writing skills;
- broader vocabulary;
- improved comprehension skills;
- increased motivation; and
- increased confidence.

3.99 In a few of the six schools that we visited, teachers felt that incorporating daily reading had completely changed the reading behaviours and attitudes of some pupils. They noted that, to begin with, some pupils might only look at a book and flick through the pages. However, with time and a consistent approach, they saw pupils beginning to engage, and eventually choosing to read, and enjoying their reading time.

**“You can change a class of non-readers into readers.”**

Teacher interview

3.100 Many of the pupils we spoke with felt that reading through the Reading Challenge had helped them with their school work. Predominantly they felt that this was around their literacy skills – reading, writing, spelling and vocabulary. More broadly, some pupils felt that getting involved in the Reading Challenge had improved their confidence in reading in general. With some saying that they felt much better about reading aloud in class, or reading with others.

**“It’s helped me with my spelling.”**

Pupil

**“I think it’s helped me to learn more words.”**

Pupil

**“I used to really struggle with story writing, but I think I’ve really improved.”**

Pupil

**“The teachers were always telling me I needed to improve my writing and this year I just won ‘Star Writer!’”**

Pupil

3.101 Pupils themselves also noticed similar improvements, with many commenting that they had become better at reading, writing and spelling because of the Reading Challenge activities. A few pupils who learn in Gaelic commented that they felt their Gaelic writing had improved, because they were seeing more Gaelic words and because teachers were encouraging them to read and write in Gaelic through the Reading Challenge.

**“Just seeing all the words helped me a lot, because I have a hard time with my spelling.”**

Pupil

**“I feel that it’s helped me in my writing – in how I write.”**

Pupil

**“It helps your brain, I think it makes you smarter.”**

Pupil

**“It helps us understand how sentences work.”**

Pupil

3.102 A small number of teachers reported that they felt reading attainment or reading age had improved because of the Reading Challenge, and that they have evidenced this improvement. This was particularly evident for pupils that had previously not engaged in reading, but had engaged in Reading Challenge activities and discovered a love for a particular series of books.

**“We saw an improvement in INCAS reading results over the first year we took part.”**

Teacher survey

**“Attainment in reading has improved which results in improved attainment across many other curricular areas.”**

Teacher survey

**“Children's reading age has improved significantly over the year. Some pupils have improved by up to 2 years in comparison to their chronological age.”**

Teacher survey

### **Wider curricular areas**

3.103 Both pupils and teachers that we spoke with commented that pupils engaged with the wider curriculum better once they engaged with reading. Some noted that once reading became manageable and enjoyable, the curriculum was more accessible. Some teachers also noted that basing class work on stories that pupils were familiar with helped to engage them, as it did not feel like work and was based on something that they were interested in.

**“Everything is easier if the kids are interested.”**

Teacher interview

**“I think it’s been really lovely and it’s got her really excited about school.”**

Parent interview

3.104 Some school staff we spoke with also felt that the Reading Challenge activities helped pupils develop a sense of pride in themselves and their school. Achieving their own reading targets or challenges helped individual pupils to feel more confident in themselves, and whole-class or whole-school activities gave them a collective sense of achievement.

**“It was good to see children who do struggle with reading in the upper classes sitting with younger pupils and feeling good about reading. That’s an experience they wouldn’t have had before.”**

Teacher interview

3.105 A small number of pupils spoke about how reading had helped them in other areas, or to access specific information, which had helped them with particular issues. One pupil we spoke with felt that reading had helped her with numeracy, because she felt more able to understand the questions in her maths books. And another pupil said that she had read a book about bullying, which had helped her stand up to bullies.

### **Wider engagement with school and learning**

3.106 Pupils spoke very positively about the Reading Challenge events that took place at school, such as dressing up as their favourite character, holding book fairs/book swaps, games and treasure hunts or having food themed around a favourite story. For most pupils, these events were the highlight of their Reading Challenge experience. These events made them excited to come to school, and were activities that they were keen to engage in.

**“I used to think that school was so boring because there was so much reading. But then it pushed me to read more and its really helped me to enjoy school more.”**

Pupil

3.107 A few pupils mentioned that they felt happier about coming to school because there was more reading time in the day. And one parent mentioned that her child had a lot of anxiety around coming to school. Being able to pick up a book at any point in the day made her child feel a lot more comfortable, and gave her something to focus on when she was feeling anxious or uncomfortable.

**“She’s quite nervous, so it gave her something to do.”**

Parent interview

**“When I’m feeling cross, I take a reading book and it calms me down.”**

Pupil

3.108 In one school we visited, reading was an important tool to manage the class and pupil behaviour. At transition points during the day, for example when pupils return from lunch break, the whole class will sit and read for a few minutes to bring the pupils into a state of readiness to learn.

**“I had quite a difficult class and they needed a lot of ‘calming down’ time between classes and breaks. I’ve been using reading to help this.”**

Teacher interview

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#### **Example: Supporting pupil improvement**

At one Gaelic medium school, the teacher said that a pupil had joined at the beginning of the school year, four years behind her reading age, and over the course of the year had caught up to her peers. The teacher felt that some of this

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improvement was attributable to the Reading Challenge, as it created a good environment for learning and encouragement, where otherwise, the pupil might have become demoralised.

**“She is our most improved Gaelic pupil.”**

Teacher interview

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**Example: Supporting wider development**

Teachers at one special school felt that their use of sensory stories had helped pupils to attain their wider goals at school, around communication and physical development. For example, pupils with complex physical needs that were learning to use walkers would practice this during story time. Engaging with the story helped to distract them from the challenge of using the walker, and encouraged them to raise their heads and use their limbs. In a few cases, teachers also noticed that pupils were vocalising more during story sessions.

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**Reading for pleasure supports closing of the attainment gap**

3.109 The Reading Challenge also aimed to support closing of the attainment gap between pupils who are the most and least deprived.

3.110 Half of the school staff responding to the survey (50%) reported that socio-economically disadvantaged pupils were reading for pleasure more than they used to, because of their engagement with the Reading Challenge. However, just over a fifth (21%) felt that the Reading Challenge had specifically contributed to reducing or closing the attainment gap in their school. They felt it was too early and too difficult to determine whether or not the Reading Challenge had any direct impact on reducing or closing the attainment gap.

3.111 However, schools were positive that reading activities should have a positive impact on closing the poverty related attainment gap, alongside other initiatives and activities including Pupil Equity Funding. A few felt that early indications were positive.

**“Their attitude towards language is so much more positive...they’re seeing themselves as authors and writers and storytellers.”**

Teacher interview

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**Example: Improving attainment in literacy**

In one school teachers saw measurable improvements across phonics, spelling and accuracy for pupils identified as disadvantaged. Although staff felt that the Reading Challenge has contributed to these improvements, they felt it was important to note the wider context of literacy and attainment work in the school.

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3.112 Some teachers felt that the Reading Challenge helped to change attitudes and perceptions around reading for disadvantaged pupils, particularly those who did not identify as ‘readers’.

**“More and more pupils are accessing the library and have changed the negative mindset within certain groups of pupils thinking that they can't read.”**

Teacher survey

3.113 Teachers reported that for the most disadvantaged pupils, the Reading Challenge activities provided access to previously inaccessible books, genres and opportunities. Some schools used relatively simple initiatives, such as free book swaps and free book fairs to ensure that all pupils had access to books at home, as well as at school. Similarly, schools actively took pupils out to libraries and book shops, to help make these venues recognisable and accessible to pupils who wouldn't normally access them.

**“The children who wouldn't normally access the Local Library have benefitted from joining as they are able to take out books on a regular basis.”**

Teacher survey

**“It has allowed pupils more access to books than would otherwise have been possible. They have become aware that 'reading can be fun and is for everyone...not just for the 'brainy' ones who bring in their own books!' pupil quote!”**

Teacher survey

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#### **Example: Access to books**

At one school, in a significantly disadvantaged area, pupils were taken to Waterstones to view and purchase books for their school. Some of these pupils had never been to a book shop before, and some did not have their own books at home, and they greatly appreciated the opportunity.

**“I had never been to a book shop before, I was so excited. I just wanted to stay there.”**

Pupil

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3.114 In schools that we visited in disadvantaged areas, teachers felt that any improvements helped to close the attainment gap. In these schools, whole class and whole school approaches worked well to encourage pupils and improve the overall reading culture. In addition, some schools did targeted work with the most disadvantaged pupils, to ensure that pupils who did not have access to reading at home were encouraged to read, and were provided with books of their own.

3.115 For some schools, although there were definite improvements among some pupils, teachers felt that real, sustained improvement would take longer, and that these would hopefully become evident over the next few years.

#### **Wider outcomes**

3.116 In some schools, the Reading Challenge provided pupils with an opportunity to take on leadership and to be involved in decision making processes. Pupils were encouraged to come up with ideas for their own reading challenges, and to set their own targets.



**“They felt they actually had a real voice, and now they’re proud of their school.”**

Teacher interview

3.117 Some schools developed ‘Reading Ambassador’ programmes, pupil librarians, reading councils or pupil-led book clubs, where pupils were encouraged to take the lead and encourage reading within their peer group. Other schools introduced ‘buddy reading’ systems to support engagement in reading across both lower and upper primary.

**“We used a large amount of money, donated from our Parent Council, to set up a central school library. This has involved our pupils as Junior Librarians, rejuvenated an interest in reading among our pupils, and put reading for pleasure at the centre of learning.”**

Teacher survey

**“Two P7 pupils took ownership and ran our story writing competition. They even contacted an author to judge the competition.”**

Teacher interview

3.118 Since developing Reading Challenge activities in the school, some teachers had noticed that more pupils were keen to be part of these activities.

**“We’ve had more people signing up to be reading reps this year, because of the First Minister’s Reading Challenge, and because they saw the others going to Edinburgh and meeting the First Minister.”**

Teacher interview

## 4. Process outcomes

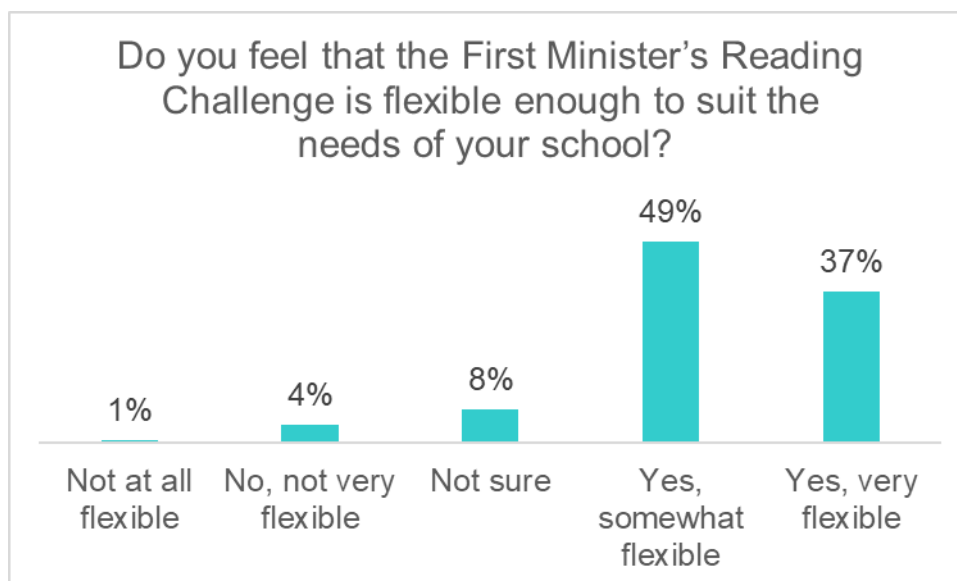
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### Introduction

- 4.1 This chapter will explore the extent to which the First Minister’s Reading Challenge has achieved its outcomes around the process of delivering the Reading Challenge. The intended outcome was that the design of the Reading Challenge supports reading for pleasure by:
- being broad and flexible;
  - providing the necessary support and resources for teachers; and
  - creating opportunities for libraries, parents and other community partners to support reading for pleasure.
- 4.2 Information on how the Reading Challenge has created opportunities for libraries, parents and other community partners to support reading for pleasure beyond the school environment is covered in Chapter Three.

### A broad and flexible approach

- 4.3 The Reading Challenge is delivered and supported by the Scottish Book Trust.
- 4.4 In general, school staff involved in this research were happy with the overall approach of the Reading Challenge. Many appreciated the flexible format which allowed them to interpret the challenges their own way, to suit the needs of their pupils. Teachers appreciated that the Reading Challenge activities were relatable in a range of different contexts, and could be creatively used across the curriculum.
- 4.5 Teachers responding to the school survey predominantly felt that the Reading Challenge was flexible enough to suit their needs, and was accessible to all of the pupils in their school. Almost all school survey respondents (89%, 230), felt that the Reading Challenge was somewhat or very accessible and most (87%, 221) felt that it was flexible enough to meet the needs of their school.



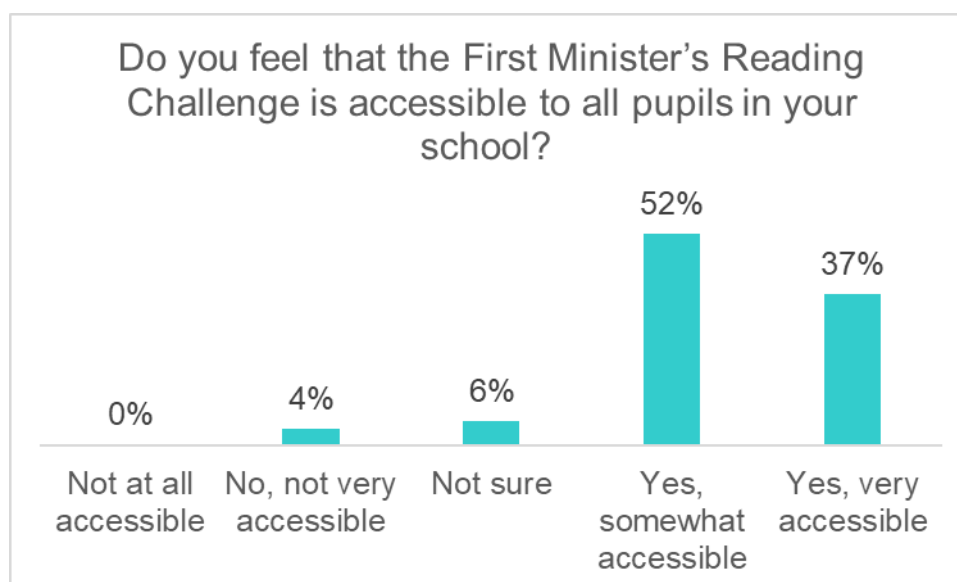
**“You could link it to any type of work that you were doing.”**

Teacher interview

**“We used some of the activities on the website, but mostly we tailored them to our own school.”**

Teacher interview

4.6 Teachers told us that they felt the breadth of the Reading Challenge made it very accessible and allowed them to take different approaches depending on the needs of the individual, the whole class or the whole school. Teachers felt that the level of flexibility within the Reading Challenge allowed them to use it in such a way that it complemented and enhanced other school activities.



4.7 Some schools made special efforts to ensure that the Reading Challenge activities were accessible to all pupils, not just those who were already keen readers. And some chose to take a targeted approach, to engage pupils that

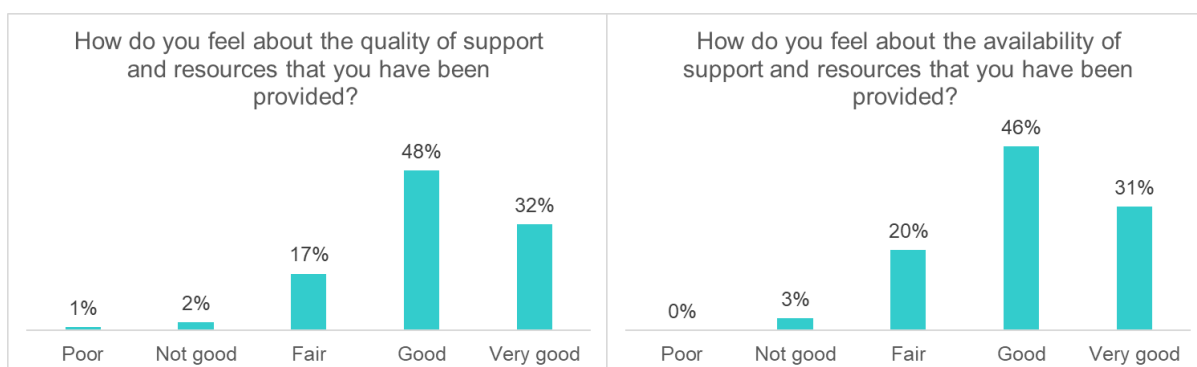
had previously shown little interest in reading, or who did not have access to reading outwith school.

**“The children realised that it wasn’t for the best readers in class, it was for effort and for endeavour.”**

Teacher interview

## Support and resources for teachers

4.8 Overall, most respondents to the school survey (80%, 203) were happy with the quality and accessibility of support and the resources provided.



4.9 Teachers liked that there were a wide range of resources, that were pitched at different age groups. They felt that having a wide selection allowed them to pick and choose the most appropriate tools for the pupils they worked with.

**“All classes have used and valued different resources.”**

Teacher survey

**“I like that it’s about your own interpretation and how it fits local needs.”**

Teacher interview

4.10 Broadly, respondents felt that they had received good support and guidance from staff at Scottish Book Trust. They found staff helpful and easily accessible.

**“Very helpful staff to provide support as and when needed to clarify certain points.”**

Teacher survey

**“Staff at Scottish Book Trust have been fantastic any time I have been in contact. They are always enthusiastic, encouraging and supportive of the work that we've been doing. They get excited and are passionate about reading and cannot do enough to help.”**

Teacher survey

- 4.11 However, not all schools were aware of the Reading Challenge when it launched early in the academic year. And some teachers said that they would have liked to have been made aware sooner, to help them plan activities and compile evidence for their submissions.
- 4.12 Some schools felt that there could have been more tailored support to help them fully engage with the Reading Challenge, and to be recognised for their efforts. For example, one rural school which had a small number of pupils had limited access to books. This limited the scope they felt they had to participate and compete in the challenges.

**“Unfortunately, due to the rural location we have a limited number of books available through the service. It is difficult to take part in big competitions when you are a small rural school...”**

Teacher survey

- 4.13 A small number of respondents said that they did not receive any support to engage with the Reading Challenge, beyond their initial registration and Reading Passports. Of these respondents, a few were unaware of the website or wider resources, but said that they would have used them if they had known about them. And a few respondents noted that, although they themselves had used the resources available, they did not feel that all classes in their school used the resources to the same extent.

## Views on Reading Challenge Resources

### Online resources

- 4.14 Respondents felt that the website provided a range of helpful resources that could be used at all levels. In particular, respondents mentioned the PowerPoint presentation, the book lists and author lists. Many teachers felt that the book and author lists helped them prompt pupils towards new authors and new genres. They also appreciated having access to a range of different challenge ideas, which acted as a useful prompt as they started their reading journey.

**“I found the booklists useful too in providing recommendations for avid readers and interested parents.”**

Teacher survey

- 4.15 Teachers also mentioned the reading dares and challenges and Treasure Hunt resources. Some said the case studies and blogs were very helpful and provided useful good practice examples, which helped them develop their own ideas.

### Reading Passports

- 4.16 There were mixed views on the Reading Passports. Some schools enjoyed using them and found them to be a useful and flexible way to engage pupils and parents to read more, providing a link between home and school. Some

schools said that the element of competition involved in completing Reading Passports helped engage pupils. And one respondent noted that it was useful to have the Reading Passports available in English and in Gaelic.

**“The Reading passports were helpful in motivating many pupils and involving parents.”**

Teacher survey

**“I found the passports useful, the pupils used them as a record of books they had read, I liked that they were not in a book review form.”**

Teacher survey

**“The Reading Passports were a super resource, providing a link between home and school and we used them in the classroom in a variety of ways.”**

Teacher survey

4.17 Others felt that the Reading Passports were suitable for older pupils, but less accessible to lower primary pupils. A few respondents suggested that a picture based Passport would be better for lower primary pupils. And a few respondents did not feel that the Passports were the right way to engage pupils, believing that it could put them off reading for pleasure.

**“A more infant friendly reading diary would be good.... less text, more pictures etc.”**

Teacher survey

**“Asking children to write a review of every book they read puts them off reading for enjoyment.”**

Teacher survey

4.18 Similarly, pupils had mixed views on the Reading Passports. Some enjoyed keeping a record of their books and achievements, whilst others felt it was a burden to complete an entry for every book that they read. Younger pupils told us that they preferred using a Reading Sheet, rather than a Passport, as they were easier to use.

**“I liked it because it helps you keep track of what books you’re reading. And then you can see if you’re just reading the same things and try to look for different things, so you’re not just reading all the same books.”**

Pupil

**“I didn’t really like the Reading Passport because I was always losing it. I think it would better if it was optional.”**

Pupil

4.19 A few pupils suggested alternative options, such as making Reading Passports part of their regular homework, or having Reading Passport posters for the whole class to use. Class posters of this kind were available for lower primary classes, but it is possible that not all schools were aware of them.

### Badges and certificates

4.20 A number of schools commented on the value of using the Reading Challenge certificates and badges. They felt that these provided important recognition of pupils' efforts and motivated them to keep reading.

### Social media

4.21 A few respondents said that they had used social media as part of their Reading Challenge activities. They felt that the Twitter account and hashtag were useful, as it allowed them to see how other schools were engaging with the Reading Challenge and gave pupils the chance to be recognised on a public forum.

### Resources for pupils with additional support needs

4.22 Most teachers felt that the resources were flexible, and could be adapted to suit the needs of a wide range of pupils, including those with additional support needs.

**“I am a support for learning teacher, so work with children who have a range of difficulties with accessing books through reading. The resources and ideas helped us create a more inclusive school. The challenges suited the needs and abilities of the children I work with as well as their peers.”**

Teacher survey

4.23 One special school, which works with pupils who have complex additional support needs, felt that the resources, in their current format, were not accessible to their pupils. Teachers at the schools said that they were used to adapting materials for their pupils and had taken this approach when using the Reading Challenge resources – for example, adapting the Reading Passports to be used per class, rather than per pupil.

**“The resources are good for mainstream pupils. They, in their current form, do not suit us. We would like to work with the FMRC to modify the passports as well as the reading materials so that our pupils can take part...Taking part in the Challenge is a part of a school-wide effort to build on the literacy and communication experiences of our pupils.”**

Teacher survey

4.24 This echoes the views of some teachers and parents responding to our surveys, who felt that the Reading Challenge and resources were not always suitable for pupils who had additional support needs. They felt that there was a need for more differentiated resources, or more adaptable resources to use with these pupils.

## 5. Challenges and success factors

### Introduction

5.1 This chapter explores the key challenges and success factors of the Reading Challenge. This chapter draws on the experiences and perceptions of the people that we engaged in this research.

### What worked well

5.2 The key success factors for the Reading Challenge were around:

- alignment with other initiatives;
- the flexibility of the Reading Challenge;
- the element of competition; and
- having clear leadership for the Reading Challenge within the school.

#### Alignment with other initiatives

5.3 Schools felt that the Reading Challenge linked well with other activities focusing on literacy and reading. This was particularly evident where schools had a focus on literacy and attainment, for example through using Pupil Equity Funding to improve literacy.

**“It tied in beautifully with everything we wanted to do.”**

Teacher interview

**“It worked naturally, it was just another opportunity to do what we were doing.”**

Teacher interview

#### Flexibility

5.4 Teachers were positive about the flexible nature of the Reading Challenge. They felt that it was broad enough to be interpreted in many different ways. In particular, they appreciated that individuals, classes and schools could engage to any extent, depending on their level of interest and capacity.

#### Element of competition

5.5 Some schools commented that the competitive nature of the Challenge engaged pupils that would otherwise have been reluctant to get involved in a reading based activity. In particular, some schools felt that the element of competition helped to engage reluctant male readers and helped them learn to enjoy reading purely for pleasure.



## Leadership within the school

5.6 In all six of the schools that we visited, the Reading Challenge had been led by one or two class teachers who had a specific remit around improving literacy. Other school staff commented that had it not been for the dedication and leadership of these Reading Challenge leads, the initiative would not have had the same level of impact, and may not have been implemented at all. It was clear from all of the school staff that we spoke with, that schools needed clear leadership, active buy-in and support from senior management, in order to make the most of the Reading Challenge.

**“It worked because we had [Literacy Coordinator] leading and being the driving force. It wouldn’t have been as easy if we were all doing it individually.”**

Teacher interview

## Challenges

5.7 The key challenges for schools were around:

- achieving a good level of buy-in from senior management and the wider school;
- finding appropriate reading materials for all pupils;
- having enough time and resources to fully engage; and
- some of the Reading Challenge resources.

## Buy-in

5.8 A number of teachers we spoke with, and some of those responding to the school survey, said that they struggled to achieve whole-school buy-in. Without backing from whole school and senior leadership some found it difficult to engage pupils and create a school-wide shift in culture around reading.

5.9 Where staff reported that the Reading Challenge had been a success, they often mentioned that this was because they felt well supported by their colleagues and senior management. A number of teachers we spoke with felt that their class had made a significant effort to engage in the Reading Challenge, but that it was not a whole school effort.

**“The aim is for whole schools to enter, but sometimes it’s just one class. It needs to be about whole school culture.”**

Teacher interview

**“This scheme should be continued but authorities should ensure that one member of the school management team launches this each year and promotes it among staff and pupils.”**

Teacher survey

## Finding appropriate reading materials

5.10 Teachers from most of the six schools we spoke with said that they had challenges finding appropriate reading material for their pupils. This message came from a range of teachers, including those working with pupils with

additional support needs, in Gaelic-medium classes and in disadvantaged areas.

- 5.11 Most often, the challenge was around engaging pupils who, for any reason, did not meet traditional age and stage levels of reading. Teachers felt that stage appropriate materials were too simple in terms of the story and did not engage pupils enough – or were patronising to pupils who felt they were being given ‘baby books’. However, age appropriate books were often too advanced for their reading abilities, and pupils became discouraged if they were unable to make good progress.
- 5.12 Many teachers we spoke with felt that there was a gap in children’s literature in this area. Some said they would welcome more books that were for early stage readers, but with content suitably engaging for older pupils.

**“We often have to dismiss the age banding on books.”**

Teacher interview

**“We need books with complicated ideas, but simple language.”**

Teacher interview

- 5.13 Pupils and teachers working in Gaelic felt that there was not enough children’s literature available, and so pupils who would have continued to read in Gaelic were turning to English books to satisfy their reading appetites.

### Time and resources

- 5.14 Many teachers responding to our school survey said that they did not have time to engage with the Reading Challenge as much as they wanted to, as they already had a full curriculum or other initiatives to focus on. Not having enough time was one of the main reasons why teachers indicated they had not taken part in the Reading Challenge.
- 5.15 Similarly, a few teachers felt that there were limitations on how much their Reading Challenge efforts could achieve, without wider support from the school, families and communities.
- 5.16 Most teachers we spoke with, and some people responding to the school survey said that they would have appreciated more financial support, to help them acquire appropriate resources for the school. And a few of the schools we spoke with were not familiar with the Inspiring Classrooms grant, and therefore had not applied for it.

### Reading Challenge materials

- 5.17 As discussed in Chapter 4, there were mixed views on the Reading Passports. Some teachers felt strongly that it was not a useful resource, and that the process of reviewing books may even discourage pupils from reading for pleasure. Others felt that the Passports were only beneficial for pupils that were already keen readers, and that this had the potential to make less confident readers concerned about their progress.

5.18 A few respondents to the school survey said that they did not find the website easy to navigate and for some, the website did not always function as intended. These teachers struggled to access all of the support that was available online.

## 6. Conclusions

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### Introduction

- 6.1 Overall, the Reading Challenge was well received by the schools, pupils and parents that engaged in this research. It was felt to be a positive addition to the wide array of initiatives taking place in schools to improve engagement and attainment in literacy.
- 6.2 The Reading Challenge has shown good progress towards all of its intended outcomes, particularly around the primary outcomes focused on reading for pleasure and integrating reading into school activity.

### What works well

- 6.3 In general, schools felt that the Reading Challenge was broad, flexible and accessible to most pupils. Teachers appreciated that they could tailor the activities and resources, and that these could be used across the curriculum. Teachers felt that the Reading Challenge aligned with other school initiatives around reading and literacy, as well as with wider school and local authority priorities.
- 6.4 Teachers appreciated that the Reading Challenge was accompanied by a range of support and resources. For the most part, they felt that these were useful, accessible and adaptable.
- 6.5 Teachers spoke highly of the direct support they had received from Scottish Book Trust, where this had been requested.
- 6.6 Schools took different approaches to delivering Reading Challenge activities. Some schools found that the element of competition associated with the Reading Challenge helped to engage pupils who previously would not have been involved in reading-based activities.

### Outcomes around reading for pleasure

- 6.7 The Reading Challenge is supporting schools to develop a culture where reading for pleasure is valued and encouraged. Most teachers (79%) felt the Reading Challenge helped pupils to better understand the value of reading for pleasure. It helped schools to enhance their focus on literacy, even if it was already strong, raised staff awareness of the value of reading for pleasure and encouraged them to try new approaches. It helped pupils, parents and teachers to understand the value of reading in any form – whether English or Gaelic, fiction or non-fiction, paper or screen, and including graphic novels, newspapers and magazines.

- 6.8 Teachers, pupils and parents largely felt that the culture of reading for pleasure in their school had changed positively, because of the Reading Challenge. Almost all of the pupils we spoke with said they were reading more, and more often, because of the Reading Challenge. Almost all teachers (82%) also felt pupils were reading more. It has stimulated interest because:
- there were opportunities to read at school;
  - reading for pleasure was recognised and rewarded; and
  - pupils were inspired by role models – including authors and celebrities.
- 6.9 All of the pupils said that they now enjoyed reading, because it made them feel happy, relaxed and they could learn about new things. Use of school libraries had also increased in some schools, with book and reading clubs also seeing increased membership. Pupils said they had become active readers – reading more widely, trying new books or series, talking about books and recommending books to their friends.
- 6.10 Teachers reported particular increases in reading for pleasure among pupils with additional support needs, pupils with English as a second language, boys and pupils from disadvantaged areas. However, there were some concerns that:
- the Reading Challenge may be easier for pupils who already had access to books at home and had support at home;
  - the focus on reading a lot of books could make some pupils feel anxious or put off reading because they read at a different pace or stage than other pupils; and
  - it could be hard to find books in Gaelic and books that were age and stage appropriate for children with additional support needs or less confident readers.

## **Outcomes around empowering teachers to integrate reading into the curriculum**

- 6.11 Most teachers felt that the Reading Challenge helped them to:
- develop new techniques to support reading for pleasure;
  - feel empowered to encourage reading for pleasure;
  - increase their knowledge of children’s literature; and
  - integrate reading for pleasure into the school curriculum.
- 6.12 For teachers, it provided:
- impetus and focus, complementing existing work within schools;
  - confidence to spend class time on reading for pleasure;
  - techniques and methods to schedule in reading time with pupils;
  - new reading materials for pupils;
  - increased awareness of the value of a range of reading materials;
  - opportunities to recognise and reward reading for pleasure; and
  - a sense of excitement around reading for pleasure within the class.

## **Outcomes around school and library partnerships**

- 6.13 Most teachers (72%) felt that the Reading Challenge had helped them to develop new or better links with local libraries. This included more visits to the local library, librarian visits to the school and supporting pupils to register with the library. Some teachers and parents felt that pupils had become more interested in going to the school and community library since being involved in the Reading Challenge. However, a few parents felt that more could be done to establish links with local libraries, particularly for families who may not be able to purchase books for home. Schools also indicated that their links with libraries could be further developed.
- 6.14 Just some (13%) felt that the Reading Challenge helped with developing new or better links with other community groups.

## **Outcomes around parental understanding of the value of reading**

- 6.15 Most schools had used the Reading Challenge to engage parents in learning with their children. Some teachers and parents felt that the Reading Challenge helped to link home and school activity. Some schools had seen parents becoming more involved in challenges and activities around the Reading Challenge. Pupils we spoke with were pleased that the Reading Challenge included activities with their families, and they enjoyed this element. However, in some areas parental engagement was a challenge, particularly in disadvantaged areas.

## **Outcomes around attainment**

- 6.16 Teachers felt that it was difficult to attribute any outcomes around attainment specifically to the Reading Challenge, and also too early to determine whether it had a direct impact on closing the attainment gap. However, most felt that the Reading Challenge supported and complemented school led interventions, and should have a positive impact on attainment and the attainment gap.
- 6.17 Half of teachers (50%) said that socio-economically disadvantaged pupils were reading for pleasure more than they used to. Some teachers felt that the Reading Challenge helped to change attitudes and perceptions of reading for disadvantaged pupils, particularly those who did not identify as 'readers'.
- 6.18 In terms of attainment in literacy, teachers felt that it helped children to be more engaged in reading, with improvement around spelling, vocabulary, comprehension, use of reading strategies and storytelling skills. A few teachers said that reading age had improved for some pupils, by up to two years, since taking part in the Reading Challenge. Pupils said that they had learned more words, got better at spelling, sentence structure and reading aloud, and improved their writing and storytelling.

- 6.19 In terms of engagement with learning, teachers felt that through reading for pleasure pupils engaged better in the class, and had increased motivation and confidence around learning. Teachers felt that pupils engaged with the wider curriculum better once they engaged with reading. A few pupils felt more confidence in other subjects, because they could better understand instructions and questions. A few pupils said they felt happier coming to school and were less anxious or angry.

## Wider outcomes

- 6.20 In some schools, the Reading Challenge provided pupils with an opportunity to take on leadership roles and be involved in decision making processes – being buddies, ambassadors, librarians and leading book clubs and reading groups.

## Areas for consideration

### Registration

- 6.21 Given the decrease in the number of schools registering for the Reading Challenge in 2017/18 compared to 2016/17, it may be useful to explore how to raise awareness of this and ensure that schools continue to register and take part, year after year. Some schools commented on the registration process and wanted to be able to register for the Reading Challenge earlier in the academic year, in order to access the online resources.
- 6.22 We recognise that the Scottish Book Trust is already working to ensure that schools are aware of how to register and encouraged to re-register each year.

### Encouraging uptake across schools

- 6.23 One of the key reasons that teachers stated for not being involved in the Reading Challenge was that they felt they did not have enough time. It may be useful to raise awareness of the range and depth to which schools can participate in the Reading Challenge, to reassure teachers that it does not need to take up a lot of time, and that it can be used in conjunction with other school activities.
- 6.24 To further encourage participation and engagement in the Reading Challenge, it is important to ensure that there is strong leadership within the school and buy-in from staff at all levels. It may be useful for the Reading Challenge to support and recognise whole-class efforts, as a stepping stone towards improving the reading culture across a school. Currently, schools can submit a whole-class project for the Pupil Reading Journey Award, but this option may not have been clear to all schools.

### Resources

- 6.25 Most were very happy with the resources they had used. However, it may be useful to:
- continue to raise awareness that the Reading Passports are optional;

- consider resources available to support pupils with additional support needs through the Reading Challenge;
- continue to raise awareness of the website and develop the site to ensure it is easy to use; and
- continue to raise awareness among schools of the range of different ways in which they can be involved in the Reading Challenge – including many options which are about individual progression rather than competition.

### Access to books

6.26 There is also room for further development of school-library partnerships, to increase pupils' access to a wide range of books. This was an area of development that was important to parents and schools. As funding for libraries continues to be limited, it is important that schools and libraries work closely together to maximise resources and opportunities for pupils.