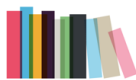


Changing the Story Reading Programme: 2023 evaluation

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November 2023



Preface

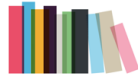
We would like to thank Hachette UK and Hodder Education for their generous support in funding this programme, gifting over 22,000 books to the most disadvantaged children and schools and providing support in kind from their brilliant team to co-create and co-deliver the training and provide technical support. We look forward to the continuing success of the Changing the Story Reading Programme this year and working in partnership to ensure more young children improve their early reading skills and develop a love of reading.

Introduction

The Changing the Story Reading Programme began as a programme for pupils in Key Stage 1 created in partnership with Hachette UK. As the programme has evolved, it is now also being used with children in lower Key Stage 2 who require additional support with early reading. The programme brings together Hodder Education's [Reading Planet scheme](#), additional Hachette UK Children's reading for pleasure books, and the National Literacy Trust's expertise, and trusted reputation to support the schools and pupils in most need.

In 2022-23, the programme engaged fifteen schools with high percentages of children in receipt of Free School Meals in areas with high literacy vulnerability. Pupils at risk of falling behind in their reading development were identified to take part in the programme. Initial training for teachers and teaching assistants took place in September 2022, with baseline assessments and the Changing the Story Reading Programme reading sessions commencing in October 2022. Continuing support through network meetings, email communication and additional reading for pleasure training took place throughout the 22-23 school year, and end-of-year assessments took place in June and July 2023. The programme ran for a total of 9 months.

Additional books from Hodder Education for participating children in Key Stage 2, were gifted to schools working with children in years three and four. These are the Astro series which are high-interest books, aimed at early readers in Key Stage 2. These books have been successful at engaging older children, whilst still providing the opportunity to apply phonics learning at the child's phase/stage of phonics.



Key Findings

Pupils' reading ability:

Data from Progress in Reading Assessment (PiRA) tests indicated significant improvements in pupils' reading ability throughout the Changing the Story Reading Programme:

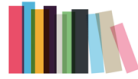
- Before taking part in the programme, on average, pupils' standardised score was 87.3. After taking part in the programme, this had increased to 96.7 for these pupils.
- The percentage of pupils who were below the national average decreased from half (48.9%) at the start of the programme to 1 in 4 (23.0%) at the end.
- At the same time, the percentage of pupils reading at the national average level increased from half (49.6%) to 2 in 3 (66.7%).
- The percentage of pupils reading above the national average increased almost seven-fold, from 1.5% to 10.4%.
- Alongside assessment data, teachers also observed broader changes in pupils' reading ability. 9 out of 10 teachers agreed that pupils showed greater resilience when it came to applying their phonics knowledge and skills and decoding unfamiliar words.

Pupils' reading enjoyment and confidence:

- The percentage of pupils who said they enjoyed reading 'very much' doubled from 21.9% before taking part to almost half (46.9%) after taking part.
- The percentage of pupils who said they didn't enjoy reading at all decreased seven-fold from 10.9% before taking part to 1.6% after taking part.
- The number of pupils who rated themselves as 'very good' readers nearly doubled over the course of the programme rising, from 21.9% before to 42.2% at the end of the programme.

These changes are also evident from data collected from 10 teachers:

- 9 out of 10 teachers agreed that pupil's level of engagement with reading improved, and that pupils are now more confident in their reading.
- 8 out of 10 teachers agreed that pupils enjoy reading more and read more often.



Benefits for the school:

- 6 out of 10 teachers agreed that their school has put more emphasis on developing higher-order reading skills, since taking part in Changing the Story.
- Half of the teachers agreed that they have been able to make links between the Changing the Story Reading Programme resources and their wider curriculum.
- Half of the teachers agreed that pupils with SEN have engaged in reading more.
- Half of the teachers agreed that parental engagement has improved, since taking part in Changing the Story.

Feedback from the programme:

- 8 out of 9 teachers rated the training as either 'excellent' or 'good'.
 - 9 out of 10 teachers rated the programme as 'excellent' or 'good'.
 - 6 out of 10 teachers rated the Hachette UK children's books as 'excellent'.
 - All 10 teachers rated the Rising Stars Reading Planet Scheme as either 'excellent' or 'good'.
 - All 10 teachers agreed that the books provided had a range of illustrations depicting different cultures and ethnicities.
 - All 10 teachers agreed that the book banding made it easy to match pupils to texts at the right level of challenge.
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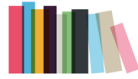
Methodology

We used several approaches to evaluate the outcomes of Changing the Story:

Pupil data

Firstly, we gathered pupils' views on reading using pre- and post-attitudinal surveys. The post-survey also included questions that asked them to provide feedback on the programme. In 2022/2023, 129 pupils completed the pre-Changing the Story Reading Programme survey, while 46 completed the post-survey. We were able to match 25 pre- and post-survey results for pupils. We combined this year's responses with those from last year ($n = 39$), overall resulting in data from 64 pupils.

Finally, we collected pupil data from Hodder Education's standardised reading test called Progress in Reading Assessment ([PIRA](#)), which provided us with participants'



reading age as well as their standardised test scores¹. We were able to match 55 pupils' results from the Autumn and Summer terms. Additionally, we included test scores of the pupils who participated in last year's delivery of the Changing the Story Reading Programme (n = 80). As such, this report includes attainment data from 135 pupils whose pre- and post-scores have been matched.

Teacher data

In 2023, 10 teachers responded to questions about the impact they perceived the programme to have had on the pupils they worked with, as well as their general feedback about the programme. Additionally, 9 teachers completed a feedback survey about the teacher training.

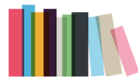
Delivery overview

Aims of the programme:

The programme was designed to achieve the following aims in schools where high numbers of children experience socioeconomic disadvantage:

- Children improve their reading skills and catch up.
- Children improve their attitude to, and enjoyment of reading, through seeing themselves represented in books and stories.
- Children improve their behaviours around reading, by reading more frequently and more widely, from a variety of genres.
- Teachers and teaching assistants improve their knowledge and expertise around teaching early reading skills and how to help children make accelerated progress and catch up.

¹ PIRA standardised scores are age standardised scores. The average score is 100. The scores are curriculum matched and taken in the first and last school term. The underlying principle behind standardised scores is that the test score follows a normal distribution, meaning that the mean score would be 100, and the standard deviation would be 15. Producing standardised scores enables schools to build a comprehensive profile of each pupil's attainment and progress in reading over the school year.



- Teachers and teaching assistants increase their knowledge of the Reading Planet resources and the importance of diversity and representation in children's books.
- Parents gain confidence in supporting their children's reading at home.

Initial training

Teachers and teaching assistants from 15 schools across areas of disadvantage in Manchester, Leicester, South Shields, Darlington, Norfolk, Stoke and London attended online training in two parts, jointly delivered by National Literacy Trust and Hodder Education staff. The training introduced the Reading Planet resources, including the online library, showcasing books which celebrate diversity and individuality through stories, characters and themes that reflect the world we live in today. Participants explored what makes a successful reader and learned how to develop a range of reading strategies with young children, with an understanding of the central importance of phonics in the early reading journey. Support for the programme and ongoing reading assessment was explained.

In 2022-23, an additional, practical training session was introduced with colleagues from Hodder Education to support schools in using MARK, Hodder Education's online assessment platform. The session supported colleagues from schools with uploading their groups of children and showed them how to access the tests. Based on the success of this session, it has been repeated in the 2023-24 programme.

Based on teacher evaluations from 2022-23, pre-recorded training has also been made available for participating schools in 2023-2024. This gives the participants additional flexibility to engage with the training materials at a time convenient to them. Other changes for the 2023-24 programme include a truncated training session for schools repeating the programme.

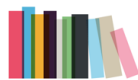
The Changing the Story Reading Programme reading session

The core of the Changing the Story Reading Programme is the three-part reading session. Each 1:1 session lasts around 20 minutes and takes place three times a week, for 9 months.

Schools received the full package of books included in Hodder Education's Reading Planet scheme, plus an online library subscription for free. Over 22,000 Reading

Planet books were gifted in total, with each school also receiving 150 reading for pleasure books donated by the Hachette UK Children’s Group.

Section	Detail
<p>Part one (5 minutes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome the child. • Talk about the Reading Planet book that they have in their book bag, which should be the book that they read in the last session. Look to see if there are any comments from home. Ask: what did you think about this book? Did you enjoy it? Why/why not? • If the child did enjoy it, ask them to reread the book or some of the book, then ask some open-ended comprehension questions. If the child struggles, model your thinking by explaining how you reached your answer.
<p>Part two (10 minutes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the new Reading Planet book that they will be taking home. • Discuss what type of book it is, as well as who the characters are, or what the book will be about. • Give the child time to read the book, supporting where necessary. • Ask some open-ended questions to assess comprehension and enjoyment. • Ensure that the child takes that book home to read.
<p>Part three (5-10 minutes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From a selection of reading for pleasure books that may be of interest to the child, ask them to choose a book they want to look at. Talk to the child about it and begin reading it to them. Continue with the book in the third part of the next session, unless the child wants to choose another book.



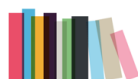
Further support and training

Throughout the academic year, opportunities for further support and training were offered. In January 2022, Martin Galway, Head of School Programmes at the National Literacy Trust, led two sessions on Reading for Pleasure which walked through some picture books and focused on empathy and reading.

Throughout 2022-23, a series of network meetings were held to enable participating schools to discuss successes and challenges, and to discuss what further support, training or resources would be helpful. As a result of these meetings, further changes were made to the initial training and pre-recorded training sessions based around phonics and comprehension were made available.

Learnings

Learnings from the first two years of the programme have informed the delivery going forward. Challenges around using technology, administering PiRA and sharing data through MARK were addressed via training, which was put in place to support the appropriate staff to feel confident with these aspects. Schools' concerns around fidelity to phonics programmes and alignment of the Reading Planet books have been addressed as schools are recruited and on-boarded for the new academic year. Individual and tailored support for schools to implement all the elements of the programme is essential, with support visits and session observations proving invaluable to continuing engagement in the programme, with the quality assurance involved leading to successful delivery and improved outcomes for children. Given the success of the programme in 2022-2023, we have recruited 23 schools for the final year of this project.



Pupils' reading ability

Pupils completed a PiRA test in the first and last term of the academic year, which tests several aspects of reading, including decoding and reading comprehension.

The findings show that before taking part in the programme, on average, pupils' average standardised score was 87.3², which shows that their reading ability then was towards the lower end of normal for their age, nationally. After taking part in the programme, this increased to 96.7³. The difference in these scores was statistically significant.

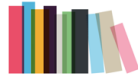
Table 1 indicates the range of improvement in the reading age of the participants from this year and last year's delivery.

Table 1: Pupil's improvement across the 9 months of Changing the Story, across the last two years.

Improvement in months	Number of pupils in 2022	Number of pupils in 2023	Total number of pupils
1-6 months	8	3	11
7-12 months	39	36	75
13-18 months	5	6	11

² Standard Deviation = 12.7

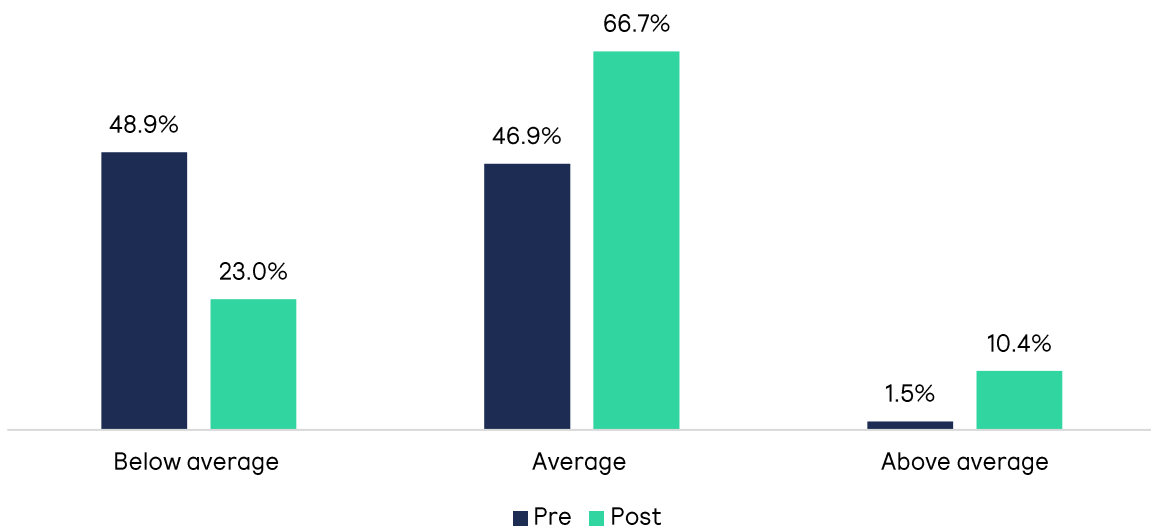
³ Standard Deviation = 14.1

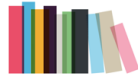


19-24 months	14	7	21
25-30 months	6	3	9
31-36 months	3	0	3
37 months+	2	0	2

We were also able to use this information to determine whether there had been improvements in the percentage of children whose reading skills were below, at, or above the national average for their age. As shown in Figure 1, while half (48.9%) of pupils were reading below the national average before taking part, this more than halved to 1 in 4 (23.0%) at the end of the programme. At the same time, the percentage of pupils reading at the average level increased from half (49.6%) to 2 in 3 (66.7%). Finally, the percentage of pupils who were reading at a level above the national average saw an almost seven-fold increase, rising from 1.5% to 10.4% at the end of the programme.

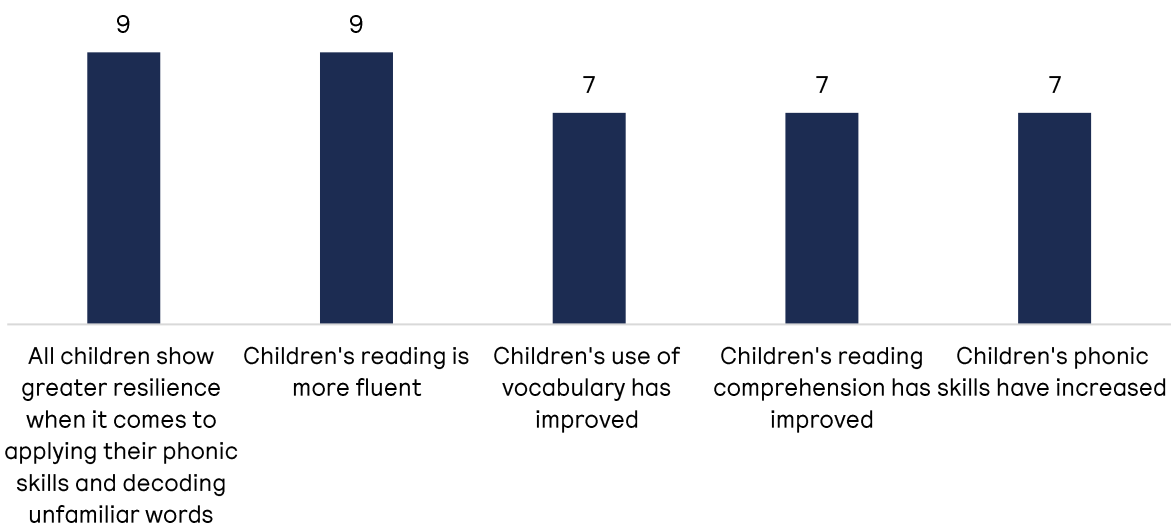
Figure 1: Pupil's reading level before and after taking part in Changing the Story





As well as standardised testing, improvements in pupil’s reading skills were also noticed by teachers. As shown in Figure 2, most (9 out of 10) teachers agreed that after taking part in the programme, all children showed greater resilience and were more fluent in their reading. 7 out of 10 teachers agreed that children’s vocabulary and reading comprehension had improved. Finally, 7 out of 10 teachers agreed that children’s phonics skills had improved after taking part in Changing the Story.

Figure 2: Teacher’s agreement about changes in pupils’ reading skills



The benefits of the programme for pupils’ reading skills were also evident when we asked teachers to tell us about benefits for specific pupils:

“One child has made significant progress in her reading. She has improved on her comprehension skills which was an area where she struggled. Having the time to be read to and ask/answer questions related to the text has helped with improving her comprehension.”

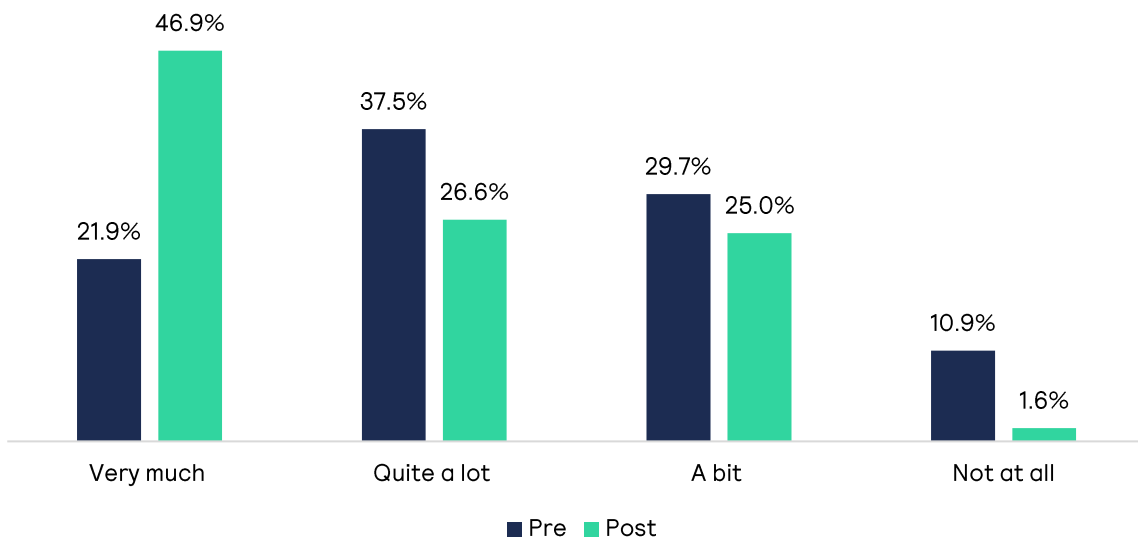
“One child read at the age of 6 years at the start of this programme and daily reading of these easily decodable books at school has built his confidence and adjusted his attitude to reading that now he scored age 10 years on the last assessment”.

“This programme helped a child with their focus/ concentration and confidence, and it also showed in their class work.”

Pupils' reading enjoyment and confidence

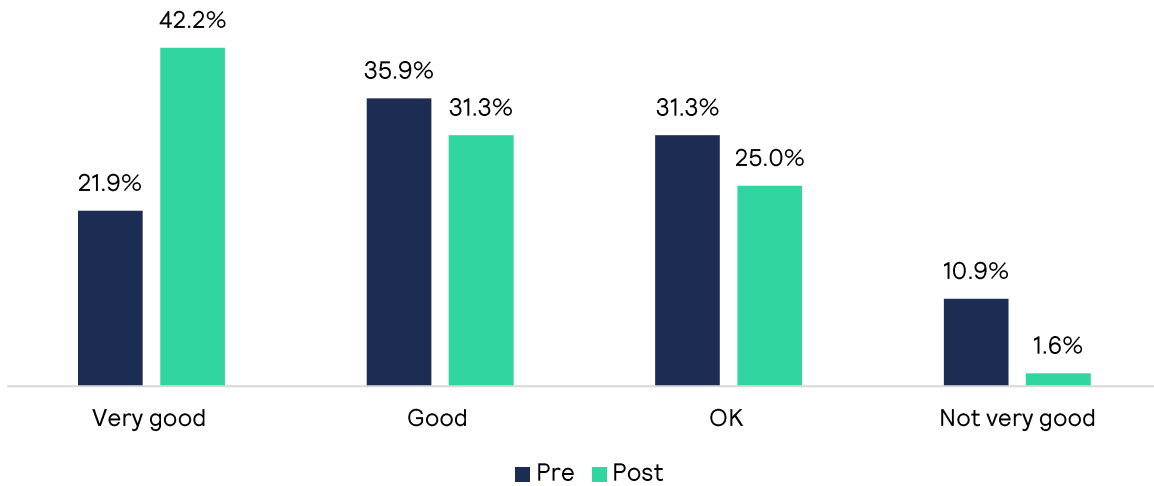
Alongside supporting reading skills, an important objective of the programme was to promote children's reading enjoyment and confidence. As shown in Figure 3, the percentage of pupils who said they enjoy reading 'very much' increased from 1 in 5 (21.9%) to almost half (46.9%) over the course of the programme. At the same time, the percentage who said they don't enjoy reading 'at all' decreased from more than 1 in 10 (10.9%) to 1.6%.

Figure 3: Pupils' reading enjoyment before and after the programme



We also saw improvements in how pupils rated themselves as readers over the course of the programme (see Figure 4). Indeed, the number of pupils who rated themselves as 'very good' readers almost doubled over the course of the programme, increasing from 21.9% at the beginning to 42.2% at the end of the programme. At the same time, the percentage of those who rated themselves as 'OK' or 'not very good' at reading decreased from 42.2% to 26.6%. After taking part in Changing the Story, only one pupil (1.6%) referred to themselves as a 'not very good' reader.

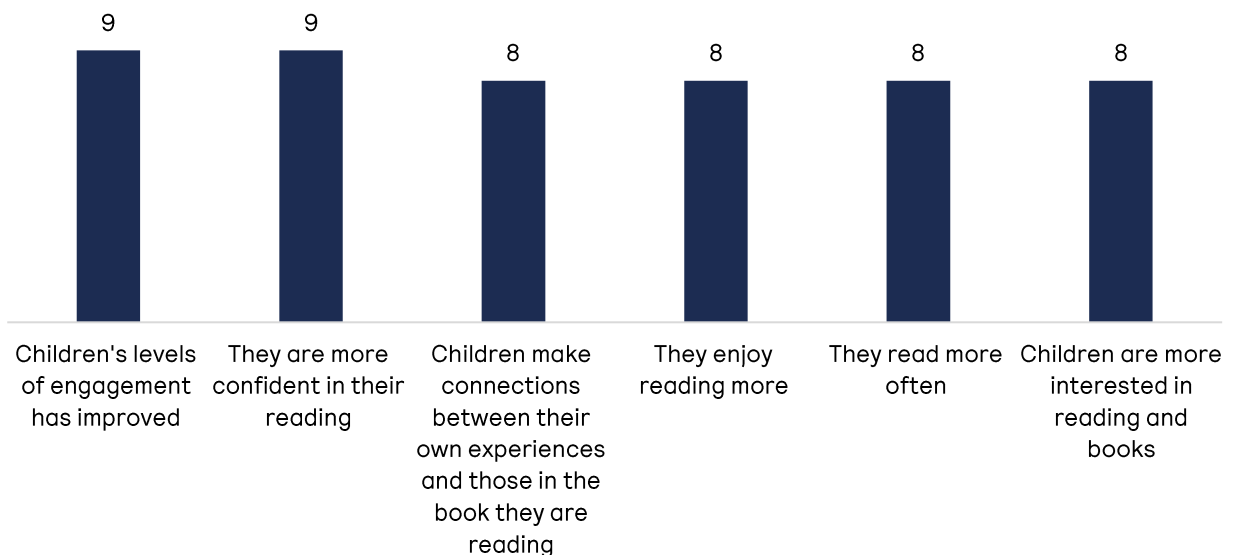
Figure 4: Pupils' rating of reading confidence before and after the programme



Additionally, we asked teachers how they perceived changes in pupils' reading enjoyment, behaviours, and confidence. As shown in Figure 5, 9 out of 10 teachers agreed that children's levels of engagement have improved and that children are more confident in their reading, since taking part in Changing the Story.

8 out of 10 teachers agreed that children now make more connections between their own experiences and those in the book they are reading, are more interested in reading and books, enjoy reading more, and read more often, compared with before they took part in Changing the Story.

Figure 5: Teacher's agreement about changes in pupils' reading enjoyment, behaviour and confidence



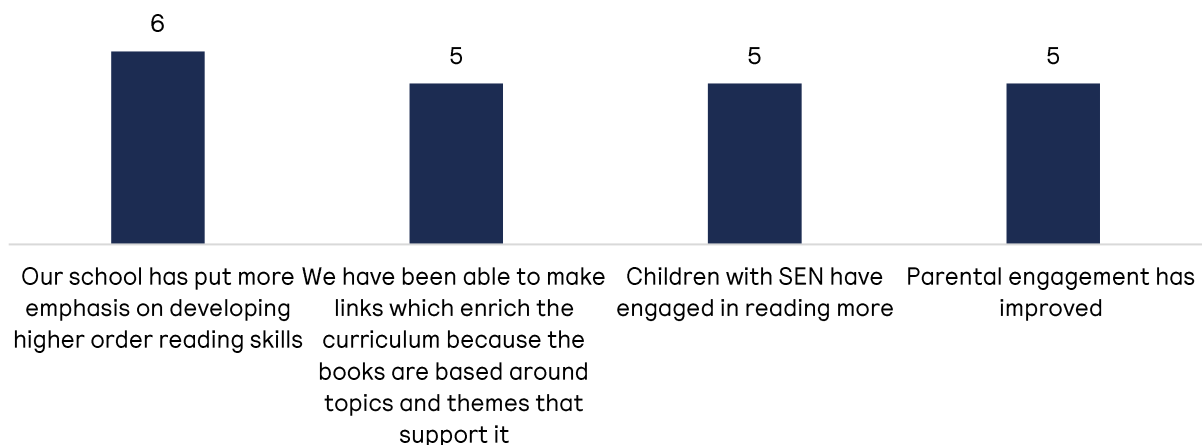
One teacher’s comment similarly reflected the benefit of the programme on pupils’ reading enjoyment and confidence:

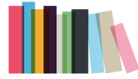
“A child has enjoyed reading with me. After a few months, it was evident that she had fun reading and looked forward to her reading session with me.”

Benefits for the school

In addition to benefits for the pupils, teachers indicated that the programme has supported the school overall, and specifically, the reading culture. As shown in Figure 6, since taking part in Changing the Story, 6 out of 10 teachers agreed that their school puts greater emphasis on developing higher-order reading skills, while half of teachers said they have been able to make links which enrich their curriculum, from the resources of the programme. Additionally, half of the teachers agreed that children with SEN have engaged in reading more and that parental engagement has improved since Changing the Story.

Figure 6: Impact of the Changing the Story Reading Programme on school ethos





In addition to the teachers who indicated that the programme improved parental engagement in the school, many told us how they have engaged parents through the programme, for example through face-to-face meetings, workshops, and letters:

“We held a small meeting with 3 of the adults whose children took part in the programme from the beginning. We talked about the programme and showed them the books the children would be reading”.

“[We have engaged] four parents- a workshop was set up for parents to come into school and see the setup of the reading area and all the selection of books.”

“[We have provided] a letter with screenshots explaining the programme and demonstrating to the children within school how to access it. 28 parents informed and a handful engaged at home”.

Feedback from the programme

Pupil Feedback

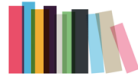
The Changing the Story Reading Programme was well received by pupils, with nearly all (97.4%) pupils telling us that they liked the reading sessions they took part in. When asked why they liked the sessions, pupils told us a variety of reasons, including because they enjoyed reading with their teacher and parents, because it was fun, or because it helped them to get better at reading:

“I liked reading every day.”

“They got me reading because I don’t read much.”

“It was fun, and I liked the books.”

“Because it makes me smarter and I get ideas for stories and different books.”



Teacher Feedback

Teacher training

We received feedback on the training from 9 teachers. Overall, 8 of the 10 teachers rated the training as either 'excellent' or 'good', while one teacher rated it as 'average'. 8 of the 9 teachers said that they would recommend this training to their colleagues and that the training met the needs of the groups.

All 9 teachers agreed that the training improved their understanding of the programme, and that the resources provided as part of the training would be useful to them. Additionally, they all agreed that they felt confident about the next steps and putting what they learned in the training into practice.

Teachers were asked which parts of the sessions they found most useful and why. Responses included information about the sessions and key dates, as well as ways to engage parents with the programme:

“This is all new to me, so I have found the whole training very helpful especially tips on reading with the children and questions to ask after and during.”

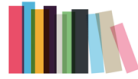
“The information about the parent workshops because we're always trying to find ways to improve parental engagement and to help them learn the best ways to help their children to succeed.”

“Questions to dig into comprehension.”

Teacher feedback on the programme overall

The overall feedback from the teacher surveys indicates that teachers had a positive experience with the programme (10 responded in total). Indeed, 9 of the 10 teachers rated the programme as either 'excellent' or 'good'. Additionally, all 10 teachers described the Changing the Story Reading Programme as 'beneficial' for the pupils who took part, and 9 of the 10 told us that they would recommend the programme to other schools. When asked what they would say when recommending the programme to another school, teachers told us:

“Great to focus on a little group of Year 1s with their reading, lovely resources, fantastic books.”



“This intervention has helped children develop their fluency in reading and has promoted reading for pleasure. Children really enjoyed choosing their own book to be read to by an adult and enjoyed talking about different elements of each storybook.”

“The books are great and there is a nice selection for different abilities. It has lots of questions at the end that you can use or make up your own questions depending on the child.”

“The access to eBooks is a useful resource and that ability to track individual reading, reports and progress is really good. I like that I can teach and read with the children in a small group interactively which I find engages them.”

“This programme was really good for children lacking in confidence. The children really enjoyed reading these books and being able to take a book home to read with family really helped.”

“The planning is easy and does not increase your workload. The resources are superb, and the children enjoy their sessions.”

In addition to the changes in pupils’ reading skills, enjoyment, confidence, and attitudes, teachers also told us about their thoughts on the benefits of the programme that were not initially expected. These included improvements for pupils with additional needs and even the cascading impact for those who weren’t directly involved in the programme. Additionally, parental engagement was found to improve:

“Children who were not involved in the programme wanted to talk to me about books and share their favourite stories.”

“We use this programme with some children that needed help with their reading and phonics before their phonics screening test and it really helped give them a boost.”

“The easy decodable books allowed a group of children to read with more positivity and changed their attitudes towards reading.”

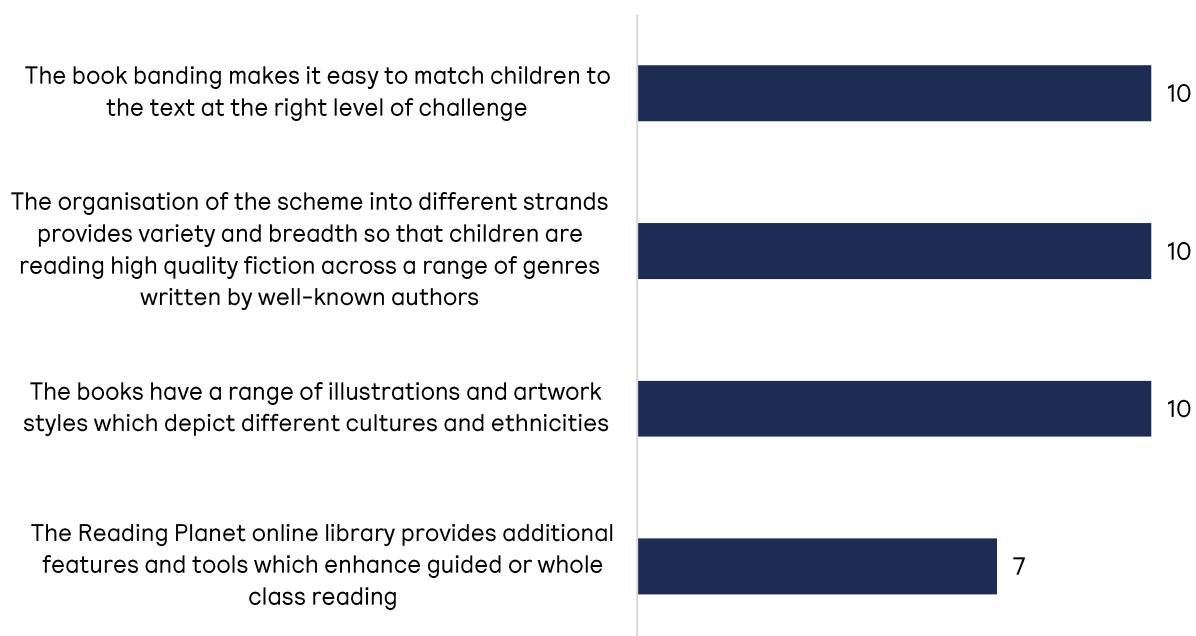
“Love of reading and parental engagement at home has improved massively.”

Teacher feedback on the resources and books

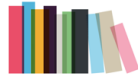
We also asked teachers to tell us about their views on the books and resources provided as part of the programme. All teachers who responded to this question rated the online resources as either ‘excellent’ or ‘good’. 6 teachers rated the Hachette UK children’s books as ‘excellent’, while 3 rated them as ‘good’⁴. Additionally, 4 teachers rated the Rising Stars Planet as ‘excellent’ while 6 rated it ‘good’.

Finally, all 10 teachers agreed that the book banding made it easy to match children to texts at the right level of challenge for them. As shown in Figure 7, all 10 teachers also agreed that the organisation of the scheme provided variety and breadth so that children had the opportunity to read fiction across a range of genres, and that the books had a range of illustrations/styles which depicted different cultures and ethnicities. 7 out of 10 teachers agreed that the Reading Planet provided additional features and tools to enhance class reading.

Figure 7: Number of teachers who agreed with statements relating to the programme



⁴ 1 teacher skipped this question.



Conclusion

This report found that the Changing the Story Reading Programme had a positive impact on the pupils who took part. Pupils' reading levels improved at the end of the school year, as measured by standardised tests and teacher observations. Pupils also reported feeling more confident in their reading ability, and enjoyed reading more, at the end of the school year.

The report also found that teachers had a positive experience with the programme. They felt that the programme encouraged pupils to be more engaged in reading and that the resources were well-aligned with the curriculum. Teachers also rated the use of Reading Planet and the books provided by Hachette UK highly.

The findings of this report suggest that the Changing the Story Reading Programme is an effective way to improve pupils' reading levels and confidence. The programme's use of a variety of resources, including online platforms, physical books, and teacher training, was a successful approach to engaging pupils with reading.

Our sincere thanks to all of the Changing the Story Reading Programme schools that participated in our evaluation surveys this year. We couldn't do it without you!

About the National Literacy Trust

Our charity is dedicated to improving the reading, writing, speaking and listening skills of those who need it most, giving them the best possible chance of success in school, work and life. We run Literacy Hubs and campaigns in communities where low levels of literacy and social mobility are seriously impacting people's lives. We support schools and early years settings to deliver outstanding literacy provision, and we campaign to make literacy a priority for politicians, businesses and parents. Our research and analysis make us the leading authority on literacy and drive our interventions.

Literacy is a vital element of action against poverty and our work changes life stories.

Visit www.literacytrust.org.uk to find out more, donate or sign up for a free email newsletter. You can also find us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter.

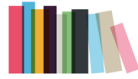
About Hachette UK

Our mission at Hachette UK is to make it easy for everyone to discover new worlds of ideas, learning, entertainment and opportunity.

We are one of the UK's largest publishing groups, with 12 autonomous divisions and over 50 imprints with a rich and diverse history. We are the market leader in e-books and publish a range of bestsellers in audio format, the fastest growing part of our business.

We publish thousands of new books across the group every year and our authors include Michael Connelly, Alice Oseman, John Grisham, Val McDermid, Stephen King, Stieg Larsson, Nelson Mandela, Stephenie Meyer, Ian Rankin, J.K. Rowling and Malala Yousafzai.

Our award-winning adult publishing divisions are Little, Brown, Orion, John Murray Press, Dialogue Books, Hodder & Stoughton, Headline, Quercus, Bookouture and



Octopus. Hachette Children's Group publishes a diverse range of books for children of all ages and Hodder Education is a market leader in resources and solutions for schools. In 2022, we welcomed Paperblanks, the second-largest premium stationery brand in the world, to our group.

We have offices around the UK, including our headquarters in London and the Hely Hutchinson Centre (HHC) for distribution in Didcot. We have subsidiaries in several other regions, including Australia, India, Ireland, Jamaica and New Zealand.

About Reading Planet

Reading Planet is used by schools in the UK and around the world to help children learn to read and truly enjoy reading for pleasure. We work alongside a diverse team of authors, experts, partners and schools to create a reading scheme that *all* children will benefit from. Our books and eBooks are focused on the world today, ensuring that every child can see themselves, and their life, reflected in our extensive range of fiction and non-fiction. **Reading Planet** includes almost 800 books from the 'Lift-off' series, starting your reading journey, through to 'Comet Street Kids' inspiring a true love of reading, 'Astro' engaging reluctant readers, and so much more. **Rocket Phonics** is our proven DFE-approved phonics programme with 230 fully decodable books. For more information, visit us at: <http://www.risingstars-uk.com/readingplanet>

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