



Young Readers Programme: Literacy Leaders

2016 Pilot Evaluation Findings – Cohort One

Words for life

Registered address: National Literacy Trust, 68 South Lambeth Road, London SW8 1RL
t: 020 7587 1842 f: 020 7587 1411 | contact@literacytrust.org.uk | www.literacytrust.org.uk

Registered charity no. 1116260 and company limited by guarantee no. 5836486 registered in England and Wales and registered charity in Scotland no. SCO 42944.
Patron: HRH The Duchess of Cornwall

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
INTRODUCTION.....	3
Evaluation methodology	5
Student led evaluations	5
FINDINGS	6
1. Impact over time	6
2. Differences between Literacy Leaders and other participants.....	7
3. Impact on Literacy Leaders.....	9
4. Teacher and practitioner outcomes.....	11
5. Feedback on project delivery and recommendations.....	12
CONCLUSION	14
Appendices	15
Appendix 1: Students' evaluation report 1	15
Appendix 2: Students' evaluation report 2	18
Appendix 3: Student survey.....	20

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Literacy Leaders project ran from September 2015 to June 2016 for the first time in five London secondary schools, reaching 1,170 students. The project is very flexible and non-prescriptive and allows schools to run various literacy activities based on students' interests and needs around the three central pillars of book ownership, designing a BookBench and a visit from an author, spoken word artist or performance poet. Coordinating teachers selected small groups of 'Literacy Leaders' to design and deliver activities appropriate for their school context and to mentor younger students.

The evaluation used a mixed methods approach with both a quantitative survey of students and qualitative group discussions, as well as a survey of teachers and likewise, some qualitative interviews conducted in two schools. Participating students were also given the opportunity to evaluate the project themselves and reports were submitted from two schools.

The qualitative data collected from students and teachers demonstrate that the project was very beneficial to the Literacy Leaders. Thanks to their active participation in the project, the young Literacy Leaders have become more aware of how important literacy is for themselves (and fellow students) to succeed at school and in life. They have also become more enthusiastic about literacy in its many forms, notably poetry which some of them have discovered more about during the project thanks to author, performance poet and spoken word artist visits to schools. The group discussions show that the Literacy Leaders are proud of their role in the school and the skills they are able to display, that they have grown in confidence through their participation in the project. They also seem particularly keen to help fellow students and to continue with the successful team work they have experienced via the project.

The survey was conducted over a very short period of time, with less than three months between the pre and post-surveys. The post-project survey notably showed that Literacy Leaders have more positive attitudes than their peers when it comes to the character development objectives of the project, such as increasing confidence, ambition or problem-solving skills. 61.2% of Literacy Leaders want to do more for their community now that they have taken part in the project, compared to 51.4% of other students. Likewise, 59.2% of Literacy Leaders feel they play an important role in their school whereas only 32.5% of the other students feel the same way.

Despite the very short time period between the pre and post-surveys (3 months), some positive findings emerged about reading attitudes in the pupils who were not literacy leaders. The percentage of pupils who rate themselves as good or very good readers went up from 61.7% to 76.2%. Additionally, 57.8% of post-survey respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement "I enjoy reading more".

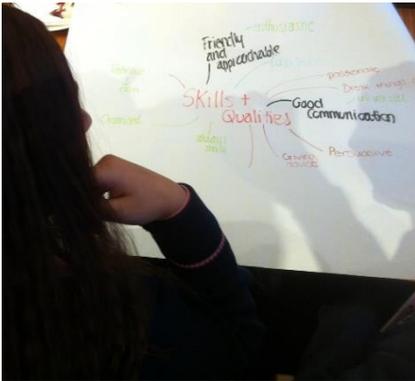
Anecdotally, the teachers have noticed positive changes in attitudes, confidence, and behaviours among their school's Literacy Leaders. Overall, teachers seem to find the project has been very beneficial, and plan to use the momentum they have now to engage students in a whole school approach to promoting literacy. In addition, more than half of teachers who responded to the survey said the project was valuable for their professional development.

This report also presents two small-scale evaluations conducted by the students themselves in their own schools about the project's outcomes. This element of students as co-researchers was an unusual and key element of the Literacy Leaders project. Both suggest that the literacy activities implemented in their schools have had a positive impact on participating students, and both also make suggestions on how to improve the design and delivery of such activities in the future.

INTRODUCTION

Children in primary school are far more likely to enjoy reading than those in secondary schools and this gap is widening¹. Literacy Leaders was developed to address this need and provides a framework for a whole-school approach to literacy, and particularly reading for enjoyment, in secondary schools.

Over the last twenty years, the National Literacy Trust has worked with primary schools to promote reading for enjoyment through teacher training and promoting book choice and ownership for pupils. However, our Annual Literacy Survey found that in 2015 only 24.1% of Key Stage 4 students agreed that “reading is cool” compared with 70.5% of children in Key Stage 2. This clearly highlighted that any intervention in secondary schools would need to challenge the majority of students’ attitudes to reading.



Students are trained to become Literacy Leaders

As a result of this, Literacy Leaders includes a character-building “social action” element which supports students to take ownership of promoting literacy in a way that will work for their schools. The aims of the project are therefore twofold as it hopes to improve attitudes and behaviours towards literacy within the schools we are working with and to provide increased opportunities for students to participate in their school community. A report for The Campaign for Youth Social Action states that “the benefits to young people will come from them having the chance to be valued, having opportunities to tackle difficult social challenges and being recognised for their positive contribution” (Cleverdon and Jordan 2013²).

At the beginning of the academic year 2015-16, 14 teachers and 3 school librarians from 5 schools in London received training on reading for enjoyment and engaging older students in promoting

literacy across the school. Students were then identified by their teachers and received training to enable them to deliver the project.

In each school the coordinating teachers liaised with the National Literacy Trust Project Manager to order the core elements of the project: a BookBench, books and to organise the author/spoken word artist/performance poet visit. The teachers provided self-evaluation forms each half term, using a red, amber or green rating to demonstrate the extent to which the aims of the project had been achieved. In addition, the teachers were invited to join a conference call each term to share their Literacy Leaders’ ideas, best practice and challenges.

The way the project was implemented varied between the schools taking part depending on their needs. For example, The Charter School face a particular challenge in encouraging boys to read and therefore invited male Year 12 students studying English Literature to mentor younger boys. The coordinating teacher reported that “the Year 12 boys were happy to become role models” and that the mentoring has increased the status of reading in the school. That is corroborated by findings from the group discussion with students, details of which can be found in section 3 of this report. Harris Academy Bermondsey already had an established reading mentors programme (known as Reader Leaders) and therefore engaged students in Years 7-9 to mark their peers’ work, checking for vocabulary, spelling and grammar. This is also a good example of the way schools were able to integrate the project with their existing whole school literacy strategy.



World Book Day event at The Charter School

This flexibility in the project model means that it can be adapted to meet the literacy needs of any school and is therefore more likely to be sustainable. A positive example of this was the extent to which each school took ownership of the project, with the group of Literacy Leaders at Harris Academy Bermondsey naming themselves ‘Literacy Lions’ and the group at St Thomas the Apostle College branding themselves ‘Literacy Legends’.

¹ *Children’s and Young People’s Reading in 2015, Findings from the National Literacy Trust’s annual survey 2015*, Christina Clark, National Literacy Trust 2016

² *A vision for youth social action by 2020*, Dame Julia Cleverdon and Amanda Jordan OBE, Cabinet Office 2013

All schools designed their own BookBench which was then positioned in the school. Eastlea Community School were particularly positive about this aspect of the project. They took it further than other schools by having a 'design a BookBench' competition and choosing a winner from each of their four 'communities' (school houses). They then positioned the benches together to create a reading garden which would provide a pleasant and relaxing environment for children to read.

Book ownership and choice is also a key element of Literacy Leaders. Each school was allocated a budget for choosing books for pupils and also encouraged to provide a range of new books for the school library so that the wider school community could benefit from the project. At the Pimlico Academy, the coordinating teacher flagged this as a particular success of the project because Literacy Leaders had supported younger students to choose a book in the library, therefore demonstrating improved literacy behaviours. Book ownership was promoted in a range of different ways. At Harris Academy Bermondsey reading was promoted by teachers in different departments throughout the school who each chose a new book for one of their students. This encouraged discussions about reading as students wanted to talk about their book with the teacher. The coordinator also reported the pride students felt at having been given a new book and described them reading in the corridors between lessons. More feedback on book ownership as a key aspect of the project can be found in section 4 of the report.

Four of the schools* hosted a visit from an author, spoken word artist or performance poet which was a memorable and enjoyable event for each of them. This is evident from the students' own words collected during group discussions. A few representative quotes are included in section 3 of the evaluation findings. All teachers would welcome a similar event next year. Feedback from the visitors was equally positive:

"The afternoon was excellently organised and set-up, with teachers and students engaged and enthusiastic about the visit. During my presentation, students asked some incredibly thoughtful - and thought-provoking – questions, and they came up with brilliantly imaginative story ideas in the writing workshop. It was especially heartening to listen to and read the work of those students who'd initially seemed less confident, and I was delighted to hear that they're completing their stories outside the workshop. It really was an incredibly inspirational experience all-round." (Joanne Owen)



Christian Foley's visit to STAC

"St Thomas the Apostle school was brimming with poetic minds, some students were aware they had one, some discovered theirs over the course of their session. The students learnt the importance of escapism, and its fundamental place in the writing world - before creating poetic universes of their own, each one, just like the students that created them, was completely unique from the next." (Christian Foley)

*Eastlea Community School were unable to organise an author visit due to the workload of the coordinating teachers. They have since recruited two colleagues to support them with delivering the project so that they are able to make more of an impact next year.

In total, 1,170 students across the 5 schools took part in at least one Literacy Leaders activity. Feedback from teachers and students has been very positive and the end of year discussion with teachers was particularly heartening as they focused on how they would use their learning from this year to support their Literacy Leaders to do even more next year. The teacher survey also reflects the very positive feedback, and likewise, the student survey reveals the value of the project on both literacy and wider social outcomes for participating students.

Finally, all schools took part in the formal outcomes evaluation conducted by the National Literacy Trust research team. The details of the evaluation can be found in the methodology section below.

The greatest success of the project this year has been the comments and feedback from the Literacy Leaders themselves, those students who are working to promote literacy within their schools. Their clear understanding of the challenge low literacy presents, their commitment to take action to address the problem and their innovative ideas and enthusiasm for the project have been thoroughly inspiring. During the final discussion with teachers from two of the participating schools, both made clear their intention to continue and develop Literacy Leaders next year which is a fantastic legacy for this pilot project.

Evaluation methodology

This evaluation used both qualitative and quantitative methods in order to capture impact on participating students as well as views of students and practitioners on the nature and delivery of the project.

A survey was administered to students in all participating schools before the beginning of the project between November 2015 and April 2016. The data collection period spread over several months as schools operated on different schedules to launch the project. We obtained 135 responses to the pre-survey from a variety of students: 55% were female and 45% were male, most were in Years 7 and 8 (47%), and about half of them were Literacy Leaders (47.4%).

A post-survey was administered in April/May 2016, again to suit delivery and reporting deadlines, but admittedly not at the most convenient time for students taking exams, and not providing much time to allow measurable impact to be captured for the students. The post-survey was the same as the pre-survey, with additional questions about the delivery of the project. We obtained 289 responses for the post-survey from four of the five participating schools. 60 of these matched the pre-survey respondents, so these were used to compare pre and post responses. In addition, all 289 responses to the project-specific questions in the post-survey were analysed. 65% of all post-survey respondents were girls, and 35% were boys. 76% of them were in Years 7 or 8, and only 22.3% were Literacy Leaders.

A survey was also made available to teachers and other school practitioners (such as school librarians) from April to May 2016 to gather their feedback about the project and its delivery from the training day onwards. We obtained 30 responses in total. 55% of respondents were class teachers and 58.6% have been teaching for more than three years.

Finally, interviews and group discussions were conducted in two schools to gather qualitative data about the project. Two groups of male students and two groups of female students were interviewed in two of the schools, with pupils from Years 7 to 9. In addition, two teachers and a school librarian were interviewed as well. All interviews and group discussions were recorded and transcribed before analysis.

Student led evaluations

In keeping with the project's objectives in relation to student participation and ownership, the evaluation included a component of student-led research. With support from their teachers and the use of evaluation guidelines created by the National Literacy Trust, the Literacy Leaders were encouraged to think critically about the project and to interview fellow students to find out about its outcomes. Two schools chose to take part in this students' evaluation. Their reports are included in Appendix 1 and 2.

FINDINGS

1. Impact over time

The first question the evaluation sought to answer was about the impact of the project on participants. More specifically, we wanted to know whether Literacy Leaders improved literacy attitudes, behaviours, awareness, and/or skills amongst students in participating schools. As Literacy Leaders is led by practitioners and selected students, we wanted to measure the impact on both Literacy Leaders and other students in the school. To do so, we looked at the matched respondents who did both the pre and post-survey.

We found that there was a significant³ difference in children's perceptions of their own reading skill over the course of the project, with more pupils rating themselves as good or very good readers (from 61.7% to 76.2%) and fewer seeing themselves as bad or average readers (from 15.0% to 6.8%).

Post survey data also showed that the project had an impact on children's reading enjoyment, with 57.8% of children either strongly agreeing or agreeing with the statement "I enjoy reading more".

Unfortunately the survey did not capture any other statistically significant changes from pre to post survey, on outcomes related to writing or to speaking and listening. There was no statistically significant difference between Literacy Leaders and other participants to the project when looking at changes over time. As explained in the methodology section, this could be due to the very short time between pre and post-surveys, and the difficulty in collecting matching data from pre to post.

During interviews, both students and teachers state that they have noticed an impact. Teachers notably acknowledge that the project has not been running for very long, and that it is early (at the time of the interviews) to speak of impact on all students in school. However, they have noticed some positive changes:

"The library is a busy place anyway, but I noticed the other day that there were more students sat in here just reading, which hasn't always been the case. There's a few students walking around nose in book. At lunchtime, they're sat reading books or talking to each other about books, which is really beautiful to see." (School librarian)

"Yeah, it's become ok to read books, hasn't it? And that we've done by a certain extent by being out and about reading." (Head of English)

"I think anecdotally, the library is getting a lot more use, certainly than it did at the start of the year. And although there are a lot of boys in there working, there's a lot of boys who go in there just to read. I think the librarian has noticed a number of boys whose reading habits are widening and broadening, and I think that's something that's not quite measurable, but it's one of the impacts of the Literacy Leaders. It's the kind of thing too where it's not necessarily an immediate impact but there's a gradual change towards a culture of reading and being involved with literacy, where it seeps in over time." (Literacy Coordinator)

Students (Literacy Leaders) were more likely to notice and report positive change among their fellow students.

"When at first I was telling them about the poetry club, people said oh I don't like poetry. But then I explained to them poetry is like rapping, but that's when the music is in your head. It's like that. And people understood what I was saying. They realised that we use literacy in almost everything from the music that we listen to, to anything we hear in this world, literacy is involved somehow. And by making it apparent to them, I think that's where a lot of people have started to become more fond of literacy." (Literacy Leader, boy, Year 9)

³ We used a significance level of $p = 0.05$. If a difference or relationship is statistically significant at this level then the likelihood is not more than 1 in 20 (5%, using the 0.05 p-value) that it would happen by chance. We can therefore be relatively confident that it is meaningful.

“Every time you go around and you mark people's books, it seems that every time I do it, there's less and less mistakes. So I think it's really helping. When we point it out to them, they say ok, I've got that wrong, and then they don't get it wrong next time.” (Literacy Leader, girl, Year 8)

“We started doing all these things to show that you need to love books because it will actually benefit you in the future and many things have been happening. And so for example, after World Book Day, it lasted for a week! People were talking about their characters, and why they came in this character.” (Literacy Leader, girl, Year 8)

“For me, it really shows when you're in lessons. When you're in a lesson and you see someone that doesn't normally talk and they say something that is... that you wouldn't expect them to say, something that clears up something for you that helps you understand something. And you look at maybe [what] that student's been doing and they've been attending some of the clubs and helping out around the school. So that shows that getting involved with things, it helps you not only as a person but in school as well. And it helps you to grow more as a better person.” (Literacy Leader, girl, Year 9)

“I think it's a slow and steady start. Because I noticed that at the beginning of literacy legends, we got people to join our activities, but they were just the regular people who would join anyway. But after World Book Day, we see much more people doing literacy based activities, which is good to see. And hopefully in the future it will expand more.” (Literacy Leader, boy, Year 8)

“Yeah, because before the Literacy Legends has started, er... there weren't that many people that loved, or that were into literacy. But then as we came along and put in more activities and events and stuff, that's when loads of people started getting interested in it and started enjoying it.” (Literacy Leader, boy, Year 8)

2. Differences between Literacy Leaders and other participants

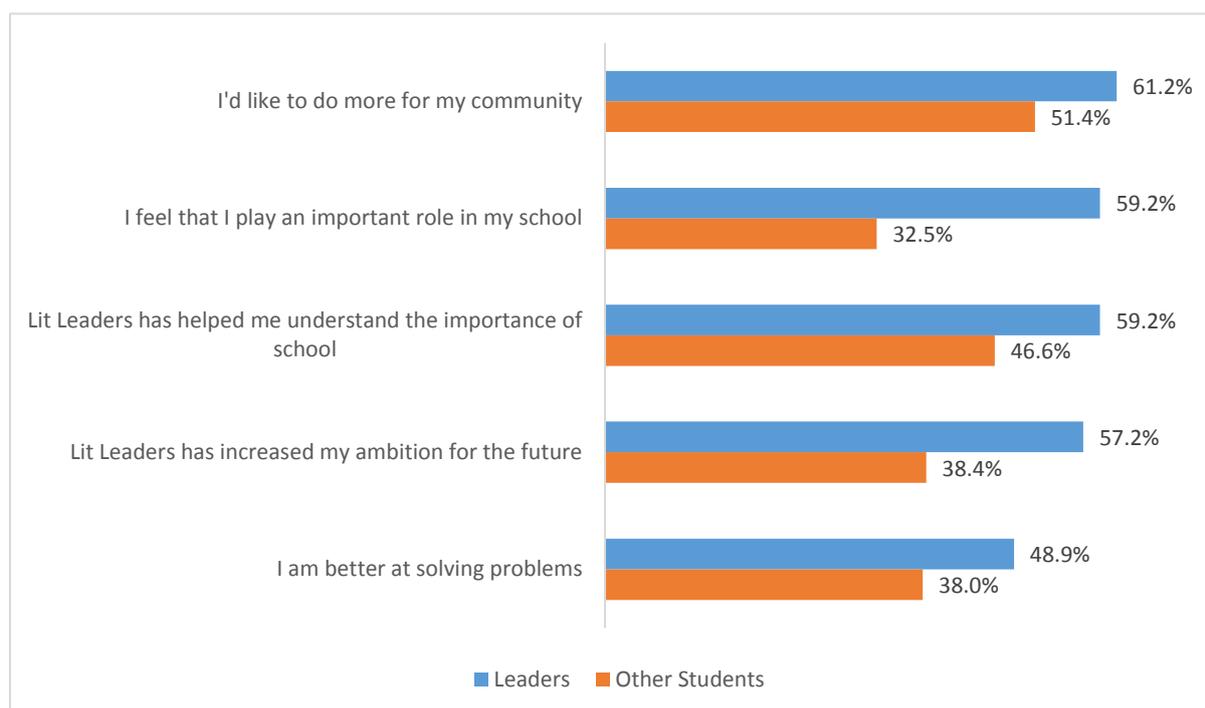
Besides looking at differences over time, the evaluation also investigated any differences between Literacy Leaders, who are more active participants to the project, and other students in school, who may have been less active recipients of interventions.

Some statistically significant differences between the two groups emerged when looking at the questions in the post-survey, which asked students to reflect on the project. Overall, Literacy Leaders seem to have more positive attitudes than their peers when it comes to the character development objectives of the project (increasing confidence, ambition, problem-solving skills⁴, etc)⁵. Figure 1 below outlines these differences in percentages and shows that 61.2% of Literacy Leaders want to do more for their community, compared to 51.4% of other students. Likewise, 59.2% of Literacy Leaders feel they play an important role in their school whereas 32.5% of other students feel the same way.

⁴ *The state of the service nation; youth social action in the UK*, Jonathan Birdwell, Rutger Birnie and Rishab Mehan, June 2013 (Demos)

⁵ “I am better at solving problems” Mann-Whitney U (N=60) = 2990.000, Z = -2.059, p = .040; “I feel that I play an important role in my school” Mann-Whitney U (N=60) = 2295.500, Z = -23.977, p = .000; “I'd like to do more for my community” Mann-Whitney U (N=60) = 2802.000, Z = -2.365, p = .018; “The Literacy Leader project has increased my ambition for the future” Mann-Whitney U (N=60) = 2650.500, Z = -2.844, p = .004; “Literacy Leaders has made me feel more confident” Mann-Whitney U (N=60) = 2360.000, Z = -3.801, p = .000; “Literacy Leaders has helped me understand the importance of school” Mann-Whitney U (N=60) = 2866.500, Z = -2.164, p = .030

Figure 1: Percentage agreement to character development statements between Literacy Leaders and other students



In the survey, several of the non-leader participants say that they did not take part in the Literacy Leaders project, or that they do not know what that project is. Despite the fact they might have noticed activities happening around World Book Day, or they may have received a free book (27.2% say they have) or that they attended a visit by an author, performance poet, or spoken word artist (22.3% say they have), the students who were not recruited and identified as Literacy Leaders or mentors may not have felt part of a project or may have been unaware of the name of the project. This might explain why they are less likely to respond positively to the above statements.

The Literacy Leaders are also more likely to have been a reading mentor in a paired reading scheme with younger students (58.6% vs 5.4%⁶), or to have organised an assembly event (19% vs 6.9%⁷) than other students.

The survey asked the Literacy Leaders one thing they would do differently as a result of the project. Ten of them (out of 58) said they wanted to read more, more often, or read a wider variety of texts. Five said they would promote the enjoyment of reading or writing around them, especially to younger students or siblings. Three said they wanted to be more confident, or speak more confidently. Three said they wanted to get involved into school and community activities more, and two said they would try to get their poetry published. Meanwhile, of the 202 other respondents who were not Literacy Leaders, 27 said they wanted to do more reading, 13 said they wanted to write more or write better, 5 said they wanted to be more confident, notably in speaking in front of a group or in class, and three said they wanted to help promote the enjoyment of reading to others. Table 1 below summarises these responses.

Table 1: One thing you will now do differently as a result of the project

	Literacy Leaders	Other participants
Read more	10/58 (17%)	27/202 (13%)
Promote love of reading	5/58 (9%)	3/202 (1%)
More confident	3/58 (5%)	5/202 (2%)
Get involved in school more	3/58 (5%)	0
Write more	0	13/202 (6%)

⁶ Chi² (1, N=260) = 89.026, p = .000, Phi = .585

⁷ Chi² (1, N=260) = 7.510, p = .006, Phi = .170

3. Impact on Literacy Leaders

From the findings above regarding the difference between Literacy Leaders and other participants, it is clear that the students engaged with delivering the project benefited more than their peers, and that the main outcomes of the project are the character-building components of the project which relate to soft skills such as confidence, team work, empathy, problem solving, etc.

The qualitative data collected as part of the evaluation provide more details about how the Literacy Leaders have been involved in the project, what they have done for it, and what it has done for them.

The Literacy Leaders are very aware of the importance of literacy for themselves and for fellow students both in school and in life.

“Our generation, they think that since we know how to talk the language, we're fully loaded for life. But literacy is like... it can make you excel and progress in life. (...) So I think literacy is underrated because literacy is literally what can make your life better. It can get you a good job, you need it, it's one of the basic steps of life.” (Literacy Leader, boy, Year 8)

“Because like, most jobs, you need to have a certain ability. Say you want to be an author, you have to know lots of words to make sure your book gets published. And sometimes I worry that I'll get a low mark and I won't get into a good college.” (Literacy Leader, girl, Year 8)

“English and literacy, it's a way of voicing your opinion through speech or text, or any medium you could find. To express how you feel, and there's no wrong answer with literacy. It's how you feel, and then if you can justify it.” (Literacy Leader, boy, Year 9)

“You need literacy to be able to continue on. Because if you don't understand it, or you don't get it... then we'd rather nip it in the bud while you don't... don't wait till you get all the way to Y11 and you still don't understand. So that's why we're trying to do it now when we're younger, right from the start.” (Literacy Leader, boy, Year 8)

“Literacy is very integral to every subject because in maths or science, you need good English, or your work won't be to high enough standards. So that's why we want to promote literacy. Because especially, once you get the GCSE level, if you don't have clear or good English, then your level will go down. And that's why we're doing it.” (Literacy Leader, boy, Year 9)

“You have to learn literacy because it's a fundamental skill that you have to learn to progress in life.” (Literacy Leader, boy, Year 7)

“I don't think they would have had lessons where they heard ‘this is what literacy is, this is what literacy does’, I think it's more that they're aware of that. And certainly, when we meet and when they're going around promoting things, they understand why they're doing it. It's not just something that they're told to do. So I think that's a benefit from it. Their awareness of it and their ability to speak about it. They're aware of the journey too.” (Literacy Coordinator)

They are enthusiastic and passionate about literacy, and have opened up to more forms of literacy, notably poetry, thanks to the project.

“It's because we developed a fondness of... a liking of literacy... That's why we go out and promote. Not because anybody told us to go out and promote it but that's just how we feel about literacy. And we want everybody to be involved and have that same fondness of literacy that we do.” (Literacy Leader, boy, Year 9)

“George the Poet came to our school. ...It was really good. He also did a performance for us of one of his poems, and he was really an inspiration for me, and for all the other boys.” (Literacy Leader, boy, Year 7)

“[George the Poet] tried to help us come up with poems. Like things that you wouldn't necessarily think oh I'm going to write a poem about that today, but you know, first thought, you put it on paper. That was quite strong for me personally, because it shows that you can build an emotion from just a thought of just... I'm not doing anything... but you can expand on that to make a poem.” (Literacy Leader, boy, Year 9)

“[Christian Foley] is quite a talented poet! Because towards the end, we gave him different

words, even words that didn't rhyme, but he still managed to fit them in. And he was very entertaining for people our age, because not many people our age like poetry that much, but he made it fun and we enjoyed it a lot." (Literacy Leader, boy, Year 8)

"People think that English is boring, but once they get in the depth of literacy, it's not all just writing in your books and stuff like that. It can be really fun, you can create stories, poetry, lots of things like that. That's the whole point of Literacy Legends, it's to make literacy more fun and more educative for us children." (Literacy Leader, boy, Year 8)

The Literacy Leaders are proud of their role and of their skills, and seem to have grown in confidence thanks to their involvement in the project.

"I just think that Literacy Lions is really helping with raising awareness about literacy in the school." (Literacy Leader, girl, Year 8)

"I think [reading] has definitely progressed because of what we've been doing, like, last year reading wasn't really taken as seriously as it is now." (Literacy Leader, boy, Year 8)

"And the whole idea of poetry inspired students to go do poetry out of school, as well. For example D, he wrote a poem and entered a poetry competition and then his poem was published in the Guardian. So, it's inspired a lot of children." (Literacy Leader, boy, Year 8)

"So I think it's helping them [other students] because like, they're getting higher grades. When you get higher grades, you're happy. So I think with us helping the school, we're kind of getting... We're not just making it more fun, but we're giving them a chance to learn and to get higher grades." (Literacy Leader, boy, Year 7)

"Reader Leaders, the leaders are lovely students anyway, but they are so super-duper proud, now!" (School Librarian)

"I think definitely, confidence and enthusiasm is there! Where some had skills anyway, that's as much as it was. But definitely confidence, willingness, and willingness to provide extra-curricular things has definitely improved." (Literacy Coordinator)

"I think especially the younger years where they don't get to be Prefects or things like that, there's no huge amount of opportunities to involve them, making them feel a bit special, so when that can happen for something productive and that's going to benefit them, that's really, really good, getting the badge and feeling special, doing something that the other kids aren't doing..." (Literacy Coordinator)

They are keen to help their fellow students and contribute to the life of the school.

"I think that being a Literacy Legend is like... it's not a very big responsibility, but it's something that we do because we want to see people succeed. Because that's what we do in this school, we strive for success." (Literacy Leader, boy, Year 8)

"I think it's less teaching and more helping." (Literacy Leader, boy, Year 8)

"Because if you don't have help, you can't move forward in life. You can't stay positive, be... be the person you want to be. Be good, and like getting along with other people. That's why all the time you need help." (Literacy Leader, boy, Year 7)

"We've also put in place the poetry club, which is every Friday lunchtime. It's a way for us to work on our literacy skills as well. We play word association games, we think creatively, and we help the other students as well, to get them into the habit of... to get them more used to literacy." (Literacy Leader, boy, Year 9)

Through the Literacy Leaders project, they've experienced successful team work

"I enjoy the responsibility. It's not a huge responsibility at all. Because there's quite a few of us, so we can share." (Literacy Leader, boy, Year 9)

"It's not really a big responsibility because there's a lot of support from the other members of Literacy Legends. So if you need help, they can help you." (Literacy Leader, boy, Year 8)

“Going back to what you asked about is it a huge responsibility or huge pressure, I don't really think it is because we're a team, so we can work together.” (Literacy Leader, boy, Year 8)

Anecdotally, teachers also report changes in attitudes, behaviour or literacy skills thanks to involvement of students in the Literacy Leaders project.

“There's one student who was getting in a lot of trouble last year. And she's now channelling her kind of frustration and is now a fantastic Reader Leader and writes poetry that is absolutely beautiful. So yeah, it does have an impact.” (School Librarian)

“And they are now able to use capital letters properly and they're checking and reinforcing it repeatedly so they're getting that right whereas a lot of them wouldn't have before. So what they're focusing on, they are now doing correctly.” (Head of English)

“And in terms of attitudes, there are certain students that we picked... if you'd asked them to go into the library of their own free will previously, they'd have just walked away from you. Now, we do have them coming in and saying “miss! Can I borrow a book!” and they're walking around talking about what they're reading...” (School Librarian)

“The ones who really got on board with it have really enjoyed it. And they're the boys who would definitely be staying on to do it next year, and they'd have a much more focused strong idea of what they're doing. So they'll be going from strength to strength.” (Literacy Coordinator)

4. Teacher and practitioner outcomes

All teachers and practitioners (School Librarians, Literacy Coordinators, Heads of Department, etc) who responded to the survey (N=30) consider literacy either important or very important in their professional capacity. Most define literacy as the ability to read (9 of them cited reading) and write (8 of the cited writing) and link it to enjoyment of reading and writing. Four mentioned speaking and listening, and another four described literacy as fundamental and cross-curricular. One described literacy in their school as *“A conscious effort to empower the students with more vocabulary and fluency so that they can be moulded into successful young adults”*.

In terms of barriers to improving literacy in school, 14 respondents identified lack of knowledge or skills among teachers on how to promote literacy, and lack of time for literacy promotion. 13 respondents found that the Literacy Leaders project had successfully addressed the issue of lack of time.

When it comes to assessing the impact of the project on practitioners and schools, the following positive outcomes were noted:

- 10 respondents say their school has integrated the project into their school's literacy approach, and four more say that thanks to their involvement in the project, the school is now considering a whole school approach to literacy.
- 12 respondents say they will, or hope to, continue with Literacy Leaders in school in future years.
- 17 respondents rate the project as valuable or very valuable for their professional development.

In interviews, some of the practitioners highlighted how the project gave them motivation and focus for activities they had in mind but were not quite putting into practice, or how it inspired them to try out new initiatives with their students:

“[The training] gave us that inspiration to adapt and use some of the activities. And it made us feel very positive about Reader Leader and about guided reading and the fact that everyone should be doing the same things and that we can build on what we're doing. It really made me feel that we can never do enough to support literacy, so let's just keep moving.” (School Librarian)

“It gave us the impetus to do it.” (Head of English)

"Sometimes when you present a project, [senior leadership] will say "hmm, we haven't really got time for it", but when you've got the NLT stamp on it, they just go... it's just approved." (School Librarian)

"I had done similar things in my previous school, but not quite so effective as it's been here." (Head of English)

5. Feedback on project delivery and recommendations

Feedback on the project delivery is overwhelmingly positive. Staff members were asked in the survey to share their thoughts about the project and how it was delivered. Here are the responses to the question "What did you think of the project overall?":

"A good step forward."

"A great way of ensuring students see the value of literacy from KS3 to KS5"

"An effective way of targeting unwilling students."

"Excellent"

"Fabulous"

"Full of good ideas for a structured approach to whole school literacy. We have learnt a lot and would manage the project much better in following years."

"Good"

"Good - a valuable endeavour"

"Helped motivate and focus us"

"I don't know, I haven't really worked on it"

"I have benefitted from the training day and it was great to see several of your projects becoming a reality in my school. "

"I think that it is an exciting initiative that is great at getting some students involved in literacy"

"Interesting idea, needs more time to develop and grow"

"It's a project with a lot of potential to change students and teachers' views on reading and literacy and [in] general it got the majority of the students involved and promoted collaboration between students and teachers"

"Very useful for students and teachers. Gave students a sense of responsibility over literacy and sharpened teacher's sense for identifying literacy errors. "

Teachers were asked to rate how well they found the project had addressed a number of issues related to literacy in their school. Table 2 below shows that 21 out of 22 respondents stated that the project has addressed the importance of reading enjoyment for increased student attainment either very well or quite well, and all 22 think the project has introduced new ways to promote literacy in school. We know that enjoyment of literacy decreases at Key Stages 3 and 4 compared to Key Stage 2⁸. The Literacy Leaders project seems to successfully address the issue, which is particularly important as research also demonstrates that literacy enjoyment is positively correlated to literacy skills, implying that students who have fun and enjoy literacy are more likely to succeed in school⁹.

Meanwhile, the aspects that were less well addressed were ways to engage parents with their children's literacy development, and ways to involve non-English teachers in literacy promotion. These approaches could be included in the project aims for the second cohort or it could be

⁸ *Children's and Young People's Reading in 2015, Findings from the National Literacy Trust's annual survey 2015*, Christina Clark, National Literacy Trust 2016

⁹ *Ibid.*

considered that involving both parents and non-English teachers in the project does not relate to the purpose of the project and might risk distracting from other objectives.

Table 2: How well has the project addressed the following areas?

	Very well	Quite well	Neither	Not very well	Not well at all
The importance of reading for enjoyment for increased students attainment	10	11	1	0	0
Ways to promote literacy in school	8	14	0	0	0
The importance of literacy for your students' career prospects	8	11	2	0	0
Ways to engage reluctant readers with literacy	8	10	3	1	0
The different aspects of literacy (beyond reading books)	6	14	1	1	0
Ways to engage parents with their children's literacy development	3	7	8	4	0
Engaging non English teachers with literacy promotion	5	8	4	5	0

Feedback on specific aspects of the project provided for teachers was also very positive:



8 of the 10 teachers who used it would rate the handbook either good or very good.



10 out of 11 teachers who attended would rate the training as likewise, good or very good.

Only three people who responded to the survey identified themselves as the coordinator for the project. All of them agree with the statements *“I had the information I needed to implement a successful project”*, *“The training made me more motivated to participate in Literacy Leaders”*, and *“I will integrate the learnings from this project into my teaching practice from now on.”*

Finally, one more point was raised when respondents were asked if there was anything else they'd like to say:

“Money for books made a huge difference! The book give away got students and teachers buzzing about books. Extra money for the library allowed me to buy multiple copies of books so that students can keep buzzing about the book instead of waiting for someone to finish with it.”

Likewise, in an interview, one of the teachers mentioned that the book funding was appreciated:

“Yes, so that was allocated, the kids got their books, there were also books for the library, all the literacy legends were able to choose a book, there were books that we could get for teachers as well. That was very beneficial, I mean, we'll always take more books!”

Through interviews, and with the final feedback session offered at the end of the project, practitioners were given the opportunity to share if there was anything that they would have done differently, or suggestions they could make to improve the project. Recommendations include:

- Holding the initial training in July to allow the project to start in September
- Replacing catch-up conference calls by an email chain
- Buddying up schools in a local area so a school who has run the project for a year can coach a new school
- Allowing more time for impact measurement
- Getting events in the diary early
- Finding a way to engage more students in Literacy Leaders activities so they feel involved in an event if they are not a mentor or Literacy Leader
- Continuing for a second year to embed the actions and provide more books and a further author visit
- Coming back together in person at the end of the year to share stories with all five schools (this had been planned but was cancelled due to the number of teachers who were unable to participate)

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, based on the qualitative feedback and testimonies from both teachers and students, the project has had a very positive effect. Literacy Leaders appear to have benefited more than other students, as shown by the post-survey results. The young leaders have notably increased their confidence, enthusiasm, engagement with social activities in school, pride and awareness of the importance of literacy. Some progress is also noticeable in reading enjoyment and reading confidence.

In terms of the quantitative data, there are no statistically significant differences in responses to the post-surveys when compared with the pre-surveys. This might be due to the fact that both surveys were administered too close to each other, not allowing enough time to capture change. Issues with obtaining responses from students may also have affected the results: the sample for the pre-survey is quite small (N=135) to capture attitudes and behaviours across the whole school, and while the post-survey sample is larger (N=289), the data correspond to different students. Only 60 students responded to both the pre and post-survey. With future cohorts, the evaluation could be implemented more effectively by making the process clear to teachers at the beginning of the year and allowing a greater period of time between the pre and post-surveys.

The qualitative data notably suggest that both teachers and students have noticed positive changes among the Literacy Leaders. Both also highlight that more time would be needed to see how these changes may be sustained or not, or how they may develop. Teachers are confident enough that the project is positively affecting literacy among their students that they intend to continue with the project in the future. The student leaders are also keen to carry on with the project and its various activities in future years, which indicates they are benefiting from it.

It should be noted that the National Literacy Trust's 2015 Annual Literacy Survey Report found that: *"KS2 pupils continue to enjoy reading more and to read more frequently outside class than KS3 and KS4 pupils. Between 2014 and 2015 the age gap in reading enjoyment has widened again, as more KS2 and fewer KS4 pupils said that they enjoy reading¹⁰".* The fact that the Literacy Leaders pilot project resulted in an improvement in students' attitudes towards reading for enjoyment, and enjoyment of literacy overall (notably poetry, and the use of talk to express oneself) are therefore particularly meaningful since they're addressing a current gap in literacy provision for KS3 and KS4 students in the UK. It is likely that a longer delivery time (over a full academic year or possibly over more than one year) would result in a deeper understanding of the project's impact on Literacy Leaders and their peers both in terms of literacy and wider social outcomes.

¹⁰ *Children's and Young People's Reading in 2015, Findings from the National Literacy Trust's annual survey 2015*, Christina Clark, National Literacy Trust 2016

Appendices

Appendix 1: Students' evaluation report 1

The Charter School Literacy Leaders Evaluation

Two of The Charter School's *Literacy Leaders* conducted an evaluation of the programme, in addition to the National Literacy Trust survey which was completed by around 50 students from the school. As Literacy Leaders, we interviewed both the Literacy Leaders and students who took part in the activities organised by the Literacy Leaders. This year, this was primarily made up of a twice weekly reading mentoring scheme, but a few Literacy Leaders also helped to organise World Book Day.

Our aim was to answer the question: 'did the project work?'

Our conclusion is that the project did work because students who participated, as both participants and leaders, felt they had gained positively from the programme. However we would conclude that next year three key things would need to happen to make the programme more successful:

- Making reading mentoring sessions more interactive – this is likely to involve more training for reading mentors to build their confidence with strategies they can use
- Students need to be supported more with literacy events as most now admit that they lacked the confidence to take part
- We need to recruit students from other year groups to be Literacy Leaders as sixth form students lack time to commit

Report 1 – the participating students

I conducted structured interviews with six Year Seven students – two boys and four girls – to determine exactly what impact mentoring has had on them and how useful they found it.

Among all six students, I had found that, since starting the mentoring programme, their reading skills and ability had improved. They found certain words easier to pronounce and they felt they could read more fluently. These improvements have gone on to benefit them in some of their school subjects – the most common ones being English and Humanities. Some of the girls mentioned that, since starting mentoring, they had a better understanding of the content of their English lessons and could engage with the books more. One of the girls said that “the books are easier to understand”. All of them also expressed that it would be beneficial to mentoring with every Year 7, every year, as it's a useful experience to have at the start of secondary school. They mentioned that “it definitely helps when starting Year Seven”. Everyone, except one boy, described the experience as having been enjoyable and useful.

One boy gave useful suggestions about how to make mentoring a more enjoyable experience. He suggested that playing games would make it more fun. To him, moving away from centring the experience about reading books and then ensuing discussion would make things livelier. For example, playing games of Scrabble and making events and trips out of mentoring, such as trips to bookstores. As well as this, giving them more freedom in terms of the choice of book.

In conclusion, essentially all surveyed students view mentoring as an advantageous and fun experience. It also benefits them in terms of their schoolwork and education. Making the experience a bit more abstract, in a sense, and entertaining were the only suggestions.

Report 2 – the Literacy Leaders

I conducted structured interviews with eight year twelve Literacy Leaders – four boys and four girls – to determine the impact they felt they had had on students and what impact the programme had had on them.

All eight students were of the view that they had been able to positively impact on the reading abilities of the students they had supported and mentored. This view was illustrated by comments such as:

*'I noticed a big improvement in the reading of most pupils participating'
'it has helped them to read more confidently as most [at the start] would not read out loud and some were not reading at all'
'discussing the text with someone else they have to think and consider what they are reading more'
'The child who I was mentoring became much more confident with their reading and was attempting more difficult words rather than just giving up. Their pronunciation of words also improved. From not reading in their own time, after the programme finished, they took a book out from the library under their own initiative'*

One Literacy Leader also comments that they thought the programme had positively impacted on the students' enjoyment of reading *'it showed younger students that there are interesting books'*

All eight students believed that the reading mentoring programme had been a positive experience and that it should be run again next year. All eight students also believed that they, as leaders, had gained from participating in the programme. This was shown through comments such as:

*'The feeling of giving back, particularly as my help had a positive effect and seeing such great improvement made it worthwhile'
'I think it has helped my communication with younger students'
'I think I've gained a sense of commitment'*

I also asked the Literacy Leaders whether they had been involved in other events, outside of the reading mentoring, and if not why not. One student had been involved in organising World Book Day but the others had not been involved in other events to raise the profile of literacy across the school (despite three of the other students having attended the PwC training event and a subsequent school session to plan events). The reasons given for this were twofold: time commitments as sixth form students and a lack of confidence.

Time

*'no, but only due to subject work'
'I am mostly short on time'
'no, due to exams'
'No, it's been a very busy time with exams as well as other commitments'*

Confidence

'no, I'm not confident in getting other students to commit to helping'

'I helped a bit with World Book Day. What's stopped me from helping more with literacy programmes is time and confidence'

This suggests that next year a different approach should be taken to organising other literacy events. Perhaps sixth form students are not the best students to do this and perhaps whoever takes up the role of Literacy Leader needs more training around confidence and leadership.

Similar to the improvements suggested by the students interviewed, the mentors were in consensus that the best way to improve the reading mentoring would be to make it more interactive and use more 'book talk' techniques. Mentors were trained in this at the start of the year, but perhaps training needs to happen more frequently to increase mentors/leaders confidence to actually implement these strategies.

'playing interactive games to broaden their knowledge of the stories'
'they could write a short book report'
'more group work'

Appendix 2: Students' evaluation report 2

Pimlico Academy 9HA and HB Reading Report

From November we had reading mentors come to our tutor group, there are 25 of us and were around 8 reading mentors. The reading mentors were year 12 students. The students who had a mentor were chosen by our head of year and the reading mentors came once a week for half hour. Not all turned up every week although they had to. We held interviews with students in our group who did and did not have a mentor as well as two focus groups, one with teachers and one with reading mentors.

Many female readers commented that they enjoyed reading with a reading mentor. These included comments such as 'I liked my reading mentor, she was nice', 'she spoke to me about things outside of the book and was a good mentor' and 'I enjoyed reading with an older mentor more than alone as it gave me a chance to discuss the book'. From our sample it was clear that all the girls were positive about having a reading mentor and the age difference between year 9 and year 12 seemed to give a positive image to reading. The girls questioned all said they enjoyed reading more after the scheme and were more confident choosing a book.

However, we noted a difference in Boys who were far more reluctant readers. These included comments such as 'I prefer to read alone, I don't like having to go out of the classroom with them', 'I feel a bit singled out', 'I like her, she's nice but I want to stay in the classroom'. One boy participant was really positive but overall boys were less enthusiastic than girls. When asked about whether the scheme helped with choosing books one student said 'my mentor took me to the library but I know what books I like and I just felt I had to pick one he liked' another was more positive saying 'it was nice to have someone take me to the library, they asked me questions so I thought about my book choice more than I do normally.'

Reading mentors were mixed in their response. Comments about enjoying working with students were common but some noted they were worried about teaching them wrong. One student said 'it is difficult to work with a student if they are reluctant, it makes me less likely to turn up' whereas another was very positive saying 'working with my student has given me confidence in explaining things to her and building up my social confidence'. Another was positive saying 'the two training sessions we had helped me feel prepared as a reading mentor, we were told how to support them in their reading, help them choose the book and help them discuss the book.' However, our results aren't reliable as they only include reading mentors who consistently attended in-space sessions. We estimate on average only half of reading mentors turn up to each session.

We asked some Teachers about their feeling toward silent reading and the scheme. One teacher noted 'I think students should have the opportunity to read in school and see their teachers read, it is good to model and normalise reading' others were less positive saying that it could lead to 'behaviour problems' as some students would refuse to read or others may 'pretend' to

read. One teacher noted that in each tutor room there was limited amount of books and students were unlikely to bring their own novel in. Teachers felt this was something they needed to focus on next year. Toward the students who specifically worked with the mentor they were more positive saying that this had 'increased student confidence' and that it helped them 'understand how to choose a book'.

Students who did not have a reading mentor in our tutor group were expected to stay in the classroom and read in silence as Drop Everything and Read session. They stated that they 'hated being forced to read in school' and didn't like the school books. Even students who said they read at home did not like the assigned reading sessions, with one exception. One student noted 'if I want to read alone I can do it at home- I would rather read in school in groups or pairs and discuss the book.' Others made similar comments. One group of boys had tried to set up a group of three of them reading but said it was too quiet in the classroom for them to be allowed to discuss the book without causing disruption.

Overall, we think the scheme worked to an extent. Some students really liked having a reading mentor and found it helpful to discuss the book. Some of these were more willing to read at home. Others felt a bit singled out and would rather stay in the classroom. It meant those who had to stay in the classroom and read silently felt it was unfair, suggesting more students wanted to read with a mentor. The students who said they were now more likely to read were the ones it worked for most effectively.

We have put our feedback on the session forward. It has now been decided that sixth formers will continue next year in this role but it is problematic that some children, especially boys feel forced to go outside and some year 12s did not turn up. Next year we also have some pupils from our tutor group reading with year 7s as a new idea so we can encourage these students to read and have more reading mentors. This way we also be able to select a group and encourage the idea of reading. Also, we have spoken to our head of year about reading socially and we will try out one session a week not being silent reading but 'social' reading so it is as a class with at least 5 minutes of discussion.

Appendix 3: Student survey

Hello, and thanks for taking part in this survey.

It should not take more than 20 minutes. You can ask your teacher or TA if you need help with any questions, but please give your own personal answers. We'd like to hear your views, and there are no right or wrong answers: this is not a test!

1. What is your full name, or unique identifier (please ask your teacher)

2. Are you a:

Boy Girl

3. Do you speak another language at home that isn't English?

Yes No

If yes, which one?

4. Which year group are you in?

Year 7

Year 8

Year 9

Year 10

Year 11

Year 12

Year 13

5. What is the full name of your school?

6. What is your role in the Reading for Your Future project?

Mentor

Other participant

7. In your opinion, what do you think the term "literacy" means? (tick as many as you like)

Reading

Writing

Speaking

Listening

Other (please specify)

8. How important is literacy to you?

Very important

Quite important

Not very important

Not important at all

Would you like to tell us why?

9. Do you think good literacy skills are useful for any of the following? (tick as many as you want)

Getting good marks in school

Getting a good job or career

Going to university

Making friends

Good health
Being successful
Other (please specify)

10. How good a writer do you think you are on a scale of 1-10 where 1 is very bad, and 10 is very good?

11. How good a reader do you think you are, on a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is very bad, and 10 is very good?

12. How good do you think you are at speaking and listening, on a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is very bad, and 10 is very good?

13. Here are some things that people have said about reading. How much do you agree or disagree with these statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Reading is cool.					
I would feel embarrassed if my friends saw me reading outside class.					
I'm proud that I'm a reader					

14. Here are some things people have said about writing. How much do you agree or disagree with these statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
If you can use a spellchecker, there is no point in learning spelling and grammar.					
If I'm good at writing, it means I'll get a better job when I grow up.					
I think we should be able to write in "txt" speak for school.					

15. And here are some things people have said about speaking. How much do you agree or disagree with these statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Good communication skills are important to get a job.					
Good communication skills are some of the most important					

skills to have.

I think we should be able to
write in "txt" speak for school.

People judge you by the words
and phrases you use.

I work well in a team

I am good at problem solving

16. How confident are you at the following?

	Very confident	Quite confident	Not very confident	Not confident at all
Reading				
Writing				
Speaking in public				

17. How often do you read outside class?

Every day or almost every day
A few times a week
About once a week
A few times a month
About once a month
Rarely
Never

18. Which of these do you read outside class at least once a month? (tick as many as you like)

non-fiction books
instant message
poems
fiction books or short stories
newspapers
eBooks
websites blogs
text messages
books or texts in a language other than English
social networking site messages
comics or graphic novels
twitter
magazines
manuals/instructions
song lyrics
emails
Other (please specify)

19. How often do you use the school library?

Often
Sometimes
Rarely
Never
We don't have a school library

20. How often do you write outside class? (including typing)

Every day or almost every day
 A few times a week
 About once a week
 A few times a month
 About once a month
 Rarely
 Never

21. Which of the following do you write at least once a month, outside of what you write for school? (writing includes texting or typing) (Please tick all that apply)

instant messages
 essays
 notes to other people
 in a diary/journal
 text messages
 poems
 on a blog
 reviews
 letters
 twitter
 on a social networking site
 short stories or fiction
 emails
 song lyrics
 Other (please specify)

22. Which of the following activities did you do as part of the Literacy Leaders projects, and which was your favourite?

	I did that	This one was my favourite
I attended an assembly event about literacy		
I received a free book		
I designed or decorated a book bench		
I took part in a group project with classmates		
I was a reading mentor		
I was a reading mentee		
I organised an assembly event		
I attended an author, poet, or spoken word artist visit		
None of the above		
Other		
<i>Tell us more about your favourite activity!</i>		

23. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

<i>Since taking part in the Literacy Leaders project...</i>	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Team work is easier for me now.					
I am better at solving problems					
I feel that I play an important role in my school					
I'd like to do more for my community					
I enjoy reading more					

I enjoy writing more

24. Here are some more statements. How much do you agree or disagree with them?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The Literacy Leaders project has increased my ambition for the future					
Literacy Leaders has made me feel more confident.					
Literacy Leaders has helped me understand the importance of school					

25. Please tell us one thing that you will do differently as a result of the Literacy Leaders project.

26. Is there anything else you'd like to say about that project? For example, what you think can be done better in the future?