

Love Reading- Suffolk: Evaluation report

November 2023

Aimee Cole

Introduction

“Thank you for getting my son to love reading” (Parent, Lowestoft)

Love Reading in Suffolk is a parent/carer and child-focused programme, aiming to encourage a love of reading as a family; to build confidence in children to read and in parents/carers to inspire them to read. A central aim of the programme is to also provide parents with the tools they need to get involved with their child's reading outside of the school environment and to support them to do so.

The programme consists of up to 6 sessions that are standalone and delivered in primary schools in three Suffolk towns, identified as National Literacy Trust priority areas with the most need in terms of literacy intervention and support. These areas are Lowestoft, Stowmarket, and Haverhill. Parents/carers and other relatives are encouraged to attend as many sessions as they can.

Primary schools that participate in the Love Reading programme are identified using several factors including having:

- Higher levels of Free School Meals (FSM) pupils than the national average,
- A whole school focus on raising standards in literacy,
- An isolated location,
- High levels of deprivation.

Other factors specific to individual schools such as reader reluctance, or issues with parental engagement, also influence school selection.

“My son has thoroughly enjoyed the sessions and looked forward to every week. He is very grateful for the new books and is sad the course has come to an end. BUT he has been inspired to read more which is a bonus!”

(Parent, Lowestoft)

Evaluation of the programme

This evaluation collected insight from parents, teachers, and children...

- **Parent/carer insight:** 58 parents from Lowestoft ($n = 33$), Stowmarket ($n = 21$) and Haverhill ($n = 4$) responded to a post-reflective survey at the end of the programme. Some parents also provided insight through short interviews which were recorded and transcribed.
- **Teacher insight:** 7 teachers responded to a survey at the start of the school year, and 5 responded to a survey at the end of the school year. We were able to match the pre- and post-responses of 4 teachers.
- **Child insight:** Children gave their insight through an activity which asked them to draw a book cover and write a blurb to summarise their experience of Love Reading. Some children also took part in video interviews with their parents.



Key Findings

- The delivery of the programme was well received by parents and carers, teachers and children.
 - 100% of parents and carers (n = 58) and 100% of teachers (n = 4) told us that they would recommend Love Reading to other parents and schools.
- There were changes in children's reading behaviours as a result of taking part in Suffolk Love Reading.
 - After taking part in Suffolk Love Reading, 2 in 3 (67.2%) parents and carers agreed that their child chooses books for themselves more than before, and more than 2 in 5 (43.1%) agreed that their child listens to stories more than before.
- Parent and carers' confidence in supporting their child's reading improved.
 - After taking part in Love Reading, the percentage of parents and carers who rated themselves as 'very confident' in supporting their child with reading doubled (from 35.7% to 73.7%)
- Parent and carers' understanding of their child's reading also improved.
 - 7 in 10 (69.0%) agreed that they understand the role of reading in supporting wellbeing more than before, while more than 3 in 5 (62.1%) know where to access engaging stories more than before.
- Parent/carer and child reading interactions became more frequent.
 - Nearly 3 in 5 (58.6%) parents agreed that they discuss books and book choices with their child more than before, while 2 in 5 (39.7%) read more with their child.
- Teachers also noticed positive improvements in parent/carers' confidence and understanding of how to support their child with reading.
 - Before taking part in Love Reading, all teachers felt that 'not very many' or 'nearly none' of the participating parents/carers were confident in taking practical steps to create physical spaces and routines to enjoy reading in the home. After taking part, all 4 teachers felt that 'most' or 'quite a few' of the participating parents/carers were confident with this.
 - Before taking part in Love Reading, all teachers said that 'not very many' or 'nearly none' of the participating parents understood the importance of their role in influencing their child's reading behaviours.

After taking part in Love Reading, all teachers felt that ‘most’ or ‘quite a lot’ of participating parents/carers understood this.

General feedback

100% of parents/carers ($n = 58$), and 100% of teachers ($n = 4$) told us that they would recommend Love Reading to other parents and schools. Explaining why, they told us:

**“We have loved the sessions. They have been a lot of fun and very informative.”
(Parent)**

“Children were excited about having books at home! Parents who attended now read with their children more frequently.” (Teacher)

“Parents have gained confidence. Parents and children spent valuable time together on a reading activity.” (Teacher)

“Yes. It’s a good experience, it’s great for the kids to learn, and a great time to interact with the children.” (Parent)

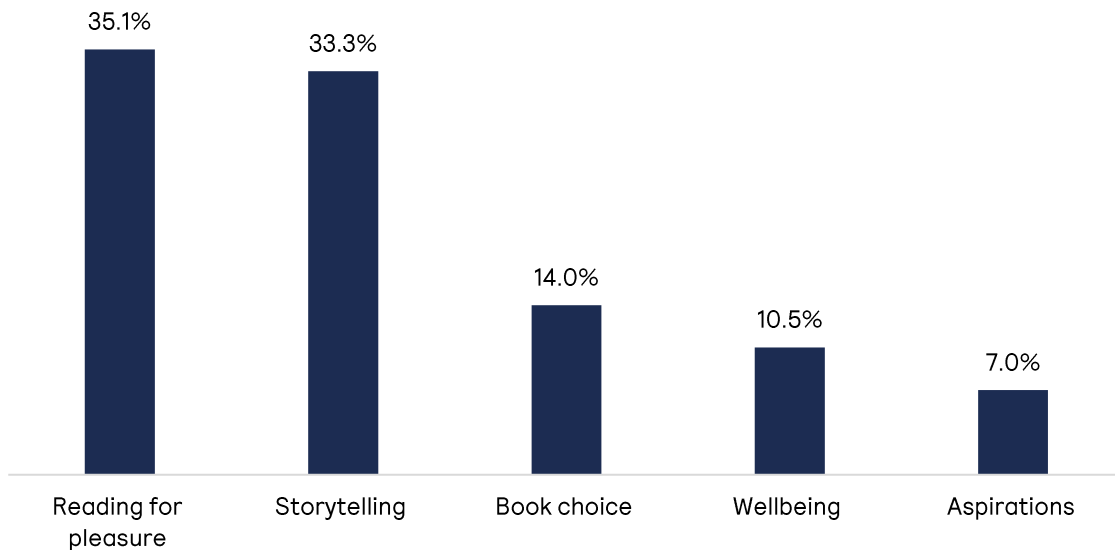
“Yes, definitely. It makes the kids feel at ease. I find sometimes they feel a bit pressured at school to be at a certain level. It’s eased my child into reading and he’s actually really enjoying it. He loves reading now.” (Parent)

“The families that did attend all showed an enthusiasm for reading for pleasure as the weeks went on. They grew in confidence, talking about what they enjoy reading and what they would like to read. Some children worked together to create their own stories and illustrations.” (Teacher)

We also asked parents/carers to tell us which session they found the most useful. As shown in Figure 1, the sessions rated as most useful were reading for pleasure (35.1%) and storytelling (33.3%), aligning closely with the overall goal of the

programme, which was to promote understanding of the importance of reading for pleasure, and engagement in reading for pleasure via storytelling.

Figure 1: Parent/carers' most useful session



Parent and carers told us in their own words what made the session useful:

“No pressure and the kids felt at ease and enjoyed the time reading.” (Reading for pleasure session)

“Storytelling was a challenge for my son, which was positive because it took him out of his comfort zone.” (Storytelling session)

“This was the only session I could attend. The children were so enthused I enjoyed listening to the story too!” (Book choice session)

“Information on outside resources and downloadable apps.” (Wellbeing session)

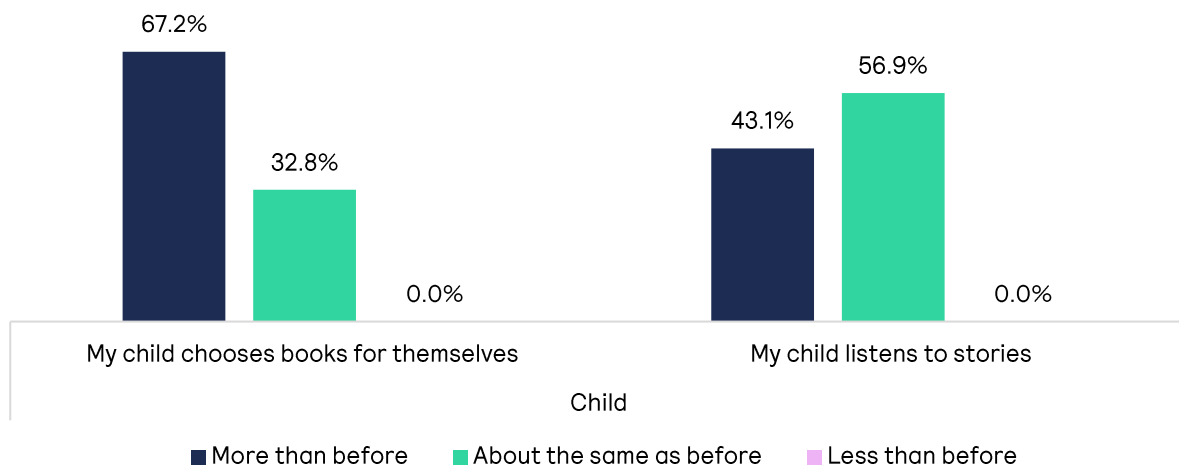
“My son really enjoyed the energy of the session.” (Aspiration session)

“It encouraged children to use their imagination.” (Aspiration session)

Impact on children

Parents and carers reflected on changes in their child’s reading behaviours, as a result of Love Reading (see Figure 2). 2 in 3 (67.2%) parents/carers agreed that their child now chooses books for themselves more than before, and more than 2 in 5 (43.1%) agreed that their child listens to stories more than before.

Figure 2: Parent/carer perceptions of changes in their child’s reading behaviours



Quotes from children themselves indicated that they clearly enjoyed and liked reading as part of Love Reading Suffolk:

“We love reading!”

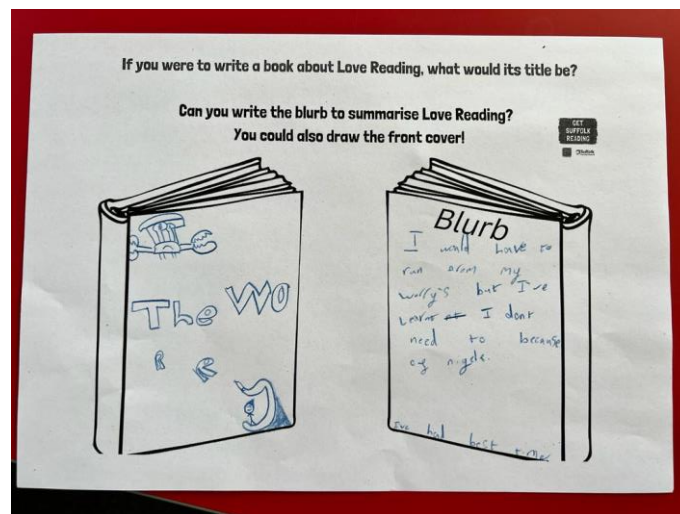
“My name is x and I have enjoyed 3 books, reading, and fun activities.”

“I enjoyed being with Nigel, the whole book club, and I’m starting to get into books, and I just love books.”

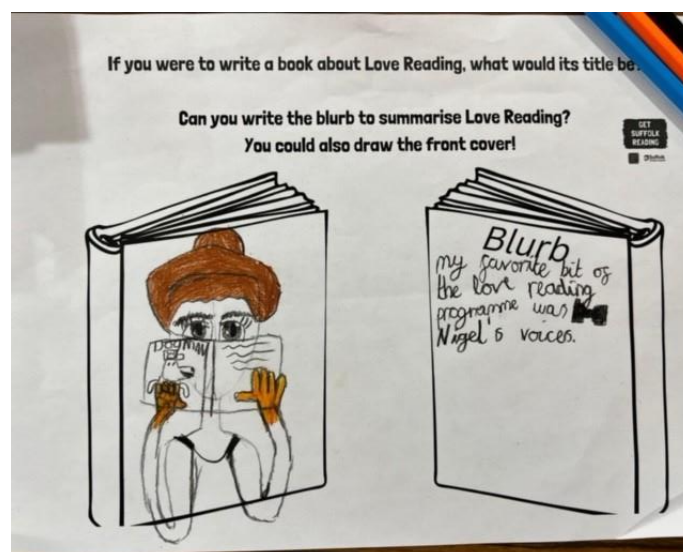
“I like getting free books, a free pillow, and free snacks!”

“I’ve had the best time here in the whole universe and I’ve learned that books are really fun to read.”

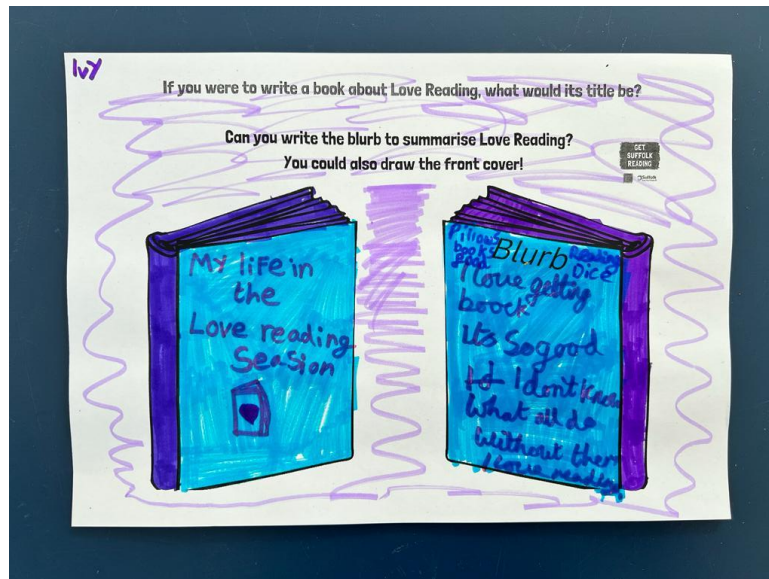
To collect further insight from children, they were asked to design a blurb for a book about Love Reading. As shown in the photos below, the children highly valued the session convenor, Nigel. Additionally, children enjoyed hearing different voices when the story was told, the books, and even the food.



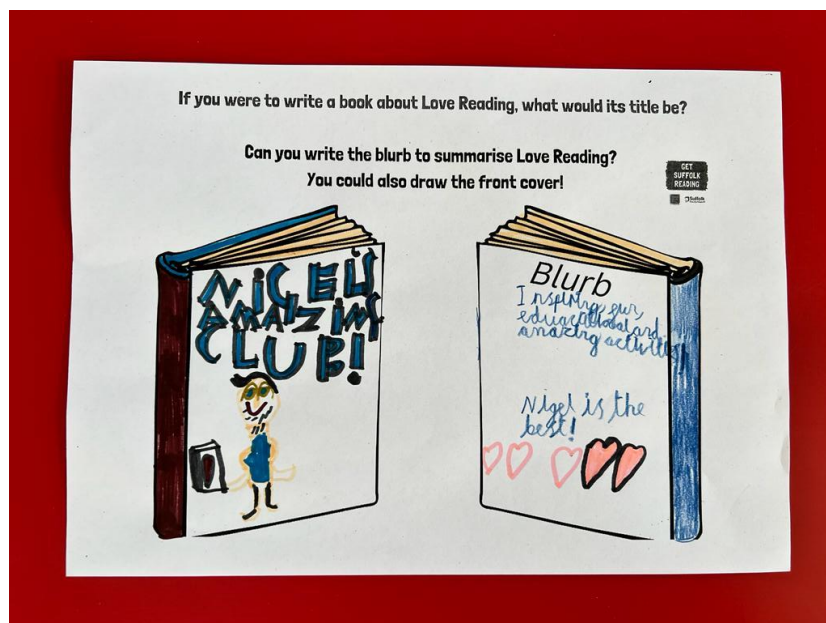
Description: The book is titled ‘The Worry’. The blurb reads “I would have to run from my worries, but I’ve learnt I don’t need to, because of Nigel (session convenor). I’ve had the best time.”



Description: The book shows a girl reading. The blurb reads “My favourite bit of the Love Reading programme was Nigel’s voices.”



Description: The book is titled 'My life in the Love Reading session'. The blurb reads "I love getting books. It's so good. I don't know what I'll do without them. I love reading."



Description: The book is titled 'Nigel's amazing club!'. The blurb reads "Inspiring, fun, educational and amazing activities! Nigel is the best!"

Parents and carers had also noticed changes in their child's reading. When asked what they felt was the biggest change for their child since taking part in Love Reading, many said their child's increased enjoyment of reading:

"My daughter loves reading and enjoys it more."

"He's enjoying reading more. He'll happily go to pick a book when we've got free time to read it, either by himself or with me. I've noticed that's been a massive improvement."

"My son enjoys reading more and when we have free time has chosen to read more and more."

"It has increased their enjoyment in looking for books to read."

"Enthusiasm and appetite to read more."

"My children have a new appreciation of stories."

And some noticed changes in their child's reading behaviours:

"Setting aside 10 minutes each day for reading."

"My child now is reading proper books independently in his free time. He has gone through a proper chapter book a week since."

"Talking and showing books to other members of the family."

"Selecting books."

"Wants to read more."

"My daughter has got more confident in reading, she loves storytelling, and we read a lot more than we used to."

“Making stories up in her head and telling them to others.”

Specifically, many parents/carers noticed their children accessing a greater variety of texts:

“[My child] has tried reading different books.”

“Broadening their imagination.”

“Reading different books.”

“But she chooses her own books now, whereas I used to choose the books more for her.”

“Enthusiasm to try new books and broaden his choices of books to read– even been reading child-friendly Shakespeare!”

“Introducing her to stories she hadn't heard before.”

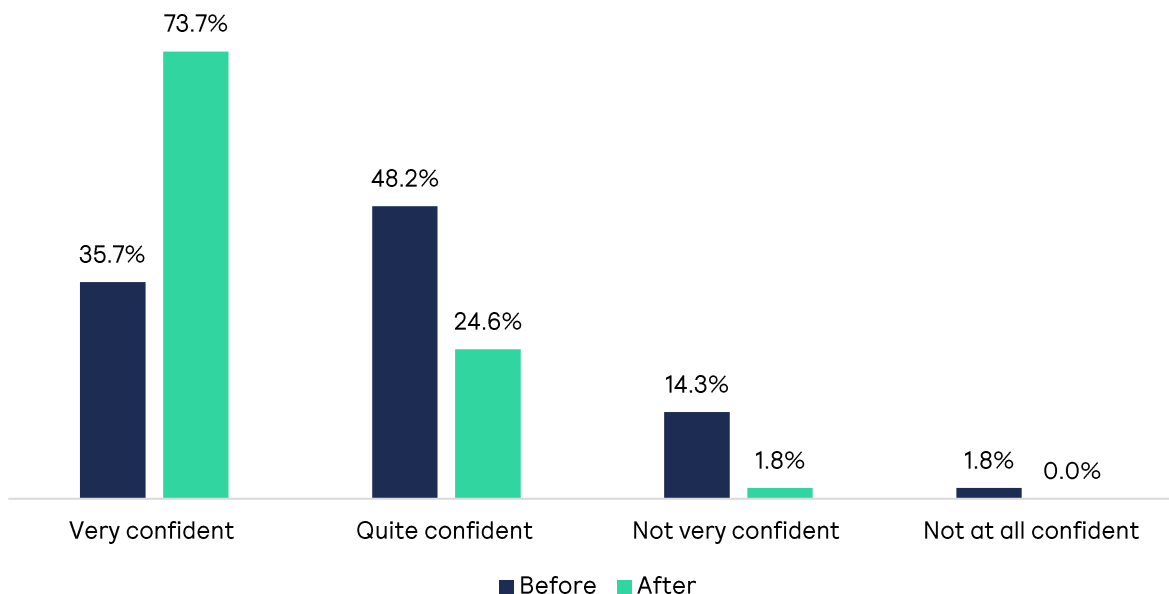
“These classes have helped me become closer with my children in reading and storytelling.” (Parent, Stowmarket)

Impact on parent/carer confidence and understanding

Parent and carers' responses also show that Love Reading improved their confidence to support their child's reading.

As shown in Figure 3, the percentage of parents and carers who rated themselves as 'very confident' in supporting their child with reading doubled over the course of the programme, from 35.7% before taking part in Love Reading, to 73.7% after taking part. At the same time, the percentage who described themselves as 'not very confident' or 'not at all confident' in supporting their child with reading decreased from 16.1% before taking part, to only 1.8% after taking part.

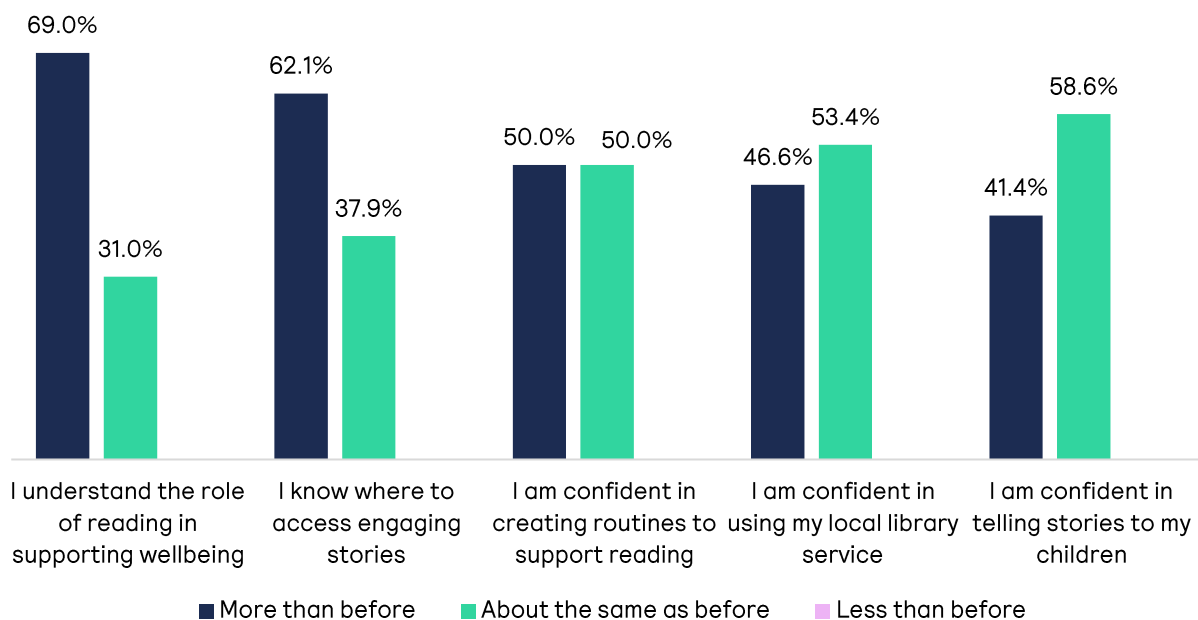
Figure 3: Parent/carers' confidence in reading with their child, before and after taking part in Love Reading



Looking at parent and carers' confidence and understanding of their child's reading in more detail, 7 in 10 (69.0%) agreed that they understand the role of reading in supporting wellbeing more than before, while more than 6 in 10 (62.1%)

know where to access engaging stories more than before (see Figure 4). Additionally, while most rated their confidence in using their local library service (53.4%) and telling stories to their children (58.6%) as ‘about the same as before’ (53.4%), around 2 in 5 told us that their confidence had improved in these areas (46.6% and 41.4%, respectively).

Figure 4: Changes in parent/carers’ confidence and understanding of child’s reading



Teachers were also asked to give their views on parent/carer confidence in supporting their children with reading, before and after taking part in Love Reading. As shown in Table 1, before taking part in Love Reading, teachers felt that ‘not very many’ or ‘nearly none’ of the participating parents/carers were confident in taking practical steps to create physical spaces and routines to enjoy reading in the home, choosing engaging titles to read with their child, supporting their child to read independently, or making up stories together with their child in any environment. After taking part, all 4 teachers felt that ‘most’ or ‘quite a few’ of the participating parents/carers were confident in each of these areas.

Table 1: Teacher’s perceptions of parent/carer confidence in supporting their child’s reading

Parent/carer confidence	Before		After	
	Most/quite a few of them	Not very many/nearly none of them	Most/quite a few of them	Not very many/nearly none of them
Parents/carers are confident in taking practical steps to create physical spaces and routines to enjoy reading in the home.	0	4	4	0
Parent/carers are confident in choosing engaging titles to read with their child.	0	4	4	0
Parents/carers are confident to support their child to choose books to read on their own.	0	4	4	0
Parents/carers are confident to make up stories together with their child in any environment.	0	4	4	0

Teachers also perceived key changes in parent/carer understanding of the importance of reading more generally, and how to support their child with their reading. As shown in Table 2, before taking part, all teachers said that ‘not very many’ or ‘nearly none’ of the participating parents understood the role of reading for pleasure in supporting wellbeing, the role of appropriate reading material in developing empathy, the common barriers to reading aloud with their child, the role of reading in achieving aspirations, and the importance of their role in influencing their child’s reading behaviours. However, after taking part in Love Reading, all teachers felt that ‘most’ or ‘quite a lot’ of participating parents/carers understood each of these concepts.

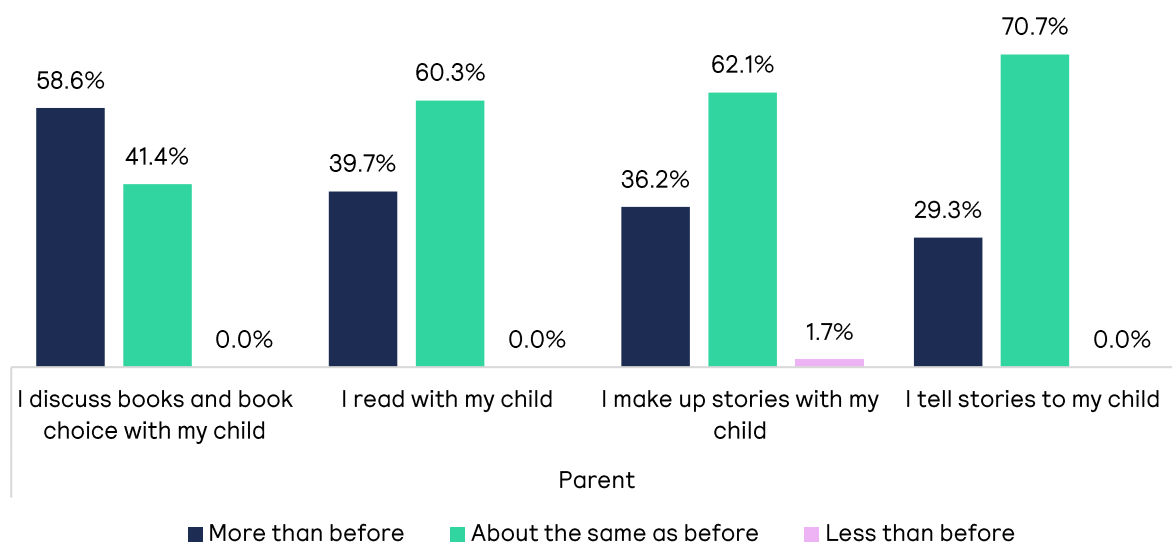
Table 2: Teacher’s perceptions of parent/carer understanding of their child’s reading

Parent/carer understanding	Before		After	
	Most/quite a few of them	Not very many/nearly none of them	Most/quite a few of them	Not very many/nearly none of them
Parents/carers understand the role of reading for pleasure in supporting wellbeing.	0	4	4	0
Parents/carers understand the role of appropriate reading material in developing empathy.	0	4	4	0
Parents/carers are aware of common barriers to reading aloud with their child.	0	4	4	0
Parents/carers are aware of the role of reading in achieving aspirations relating to school attainment and employability.	0	4	4	0
Parents/carers see the importance of their role in influencing their child's reading behaviours.	0	4	4	0

Impact on parent/carer and child reading interactions

Parents and carers were asked to reflect on any changes in their reading interactions with their child, as a result of Love Reading (see Figure 5). Nearly 3 in 5 (58.6%) parents/carers agreed that they discuss books and book choices with their child more than before, while 2 in 5 (39.7%) read more with their child than before. 1 in 3 (36.2%) parents/carers did agree that they make up stories with their child more than before, and 3 in 10 (29.3%) tell stories to their child more than before.

Figure 5: Changes in parent/carer and child reading interactions



Finally, parents and carers told us about the impact of Love Reading on themselves:

“It has reminded me about some of the books I read when I was young, and how much I loved reading as a child, which has inspired me to buy some of those books to read to my children.”

“Confidence in helping my child to be more engrossed in a story rather than just reading it.”

“Due to work commitments, I’m not able to normally attend sessions, it was nice doing something with my son together at school.”

“For me as a parent, it has inspired me to do more reading myself and even to start writing a novel.”

“I'm more patient with questions during a story than before.”

“More confidence to read and change voices throughout the book.”

Conclusion

“[Love Reading is] perfect in every way” (Parent, Haverhill)

Love Reading Suffolk aimed to inspire and nurture a love of reading among families in Suffolk. By exploring data collected from children, parents/carers and teachers, it is clear that Love Reading was a resounding success.

Feedback from parents/carers and teachers demonstrated that Love Reading supported parents' confidence and understanding around supporting their child with reading. Almost all parents left feeling confident in how to support their child with their reading, and many told us that they were more confident in creating routines to support reading than before taking part. Teachers also noticed these changes, sharing that more parents and carers are confident in supporting their children to choose books to read independently. Reading interactions also became more regular, with nearly 3 in 5 parents telling us that they discuss books and book choices with their child more than before taking part in Love Reading.

Feedback from parents/carers and children also indicated the positive impact of participating in Love Reading for children. 2 in 3 parents told us that their children now choose books for themselves more than before, demonstrating independence around book choice. Parents and carers also noticed improvements in their children's reading enjoyment, reading behaviours, and choice of reading materials. Lastly, children's drawings and comments highlighted just how exciting and engaging reading and books can be, made more exciting by the resources and staff that helped them along the way. One child even told us that they had had “the best time in the whole universe”.

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.

Copyright

© National Literacy Trust 2023. You may report on findings or statistics included in this report if you accredit them to the National Literacy Trust.

Suggested reference for this report is: Cole, A. (2023). Love Reading – Suffolk: Evaluation report. London: National Literacy Trust.

We will consider requests to use extracts or data from this publication provided that you:

- Acknowledge that the content is the work of the National Literacy Trust and provide appropriate references in any publications or accompanying publicity,
- State that any views expressed are yours and not necessarily those of the National Literacy Trust