

Implementation Report Lifelong Readers LiRe



Implementation Report from LiRe Partner:

Report Finalised on (dd/mm/yyyy):

Executive Summary (max. 400 words):

Reading for pleasure remains high priority for many schools especially in light of statutory guidance from the Government in this country. This report highlights results from an evaluation of a whole school reading promotion plan implemented by one school in England comprising data collated from pupils and staff immediately prior to and following the implementation of the programme.

The programme consisted of reading promotion activities from the Lifelong readers' Project website, trialled in school to evaluate effectiveness and suitability, together with planned whole school events in order to raise the profile of reading within the school and wider community, raise standards of attainment in reading, encourage a willingness to read for pleasure and to encourage confident, enthusiastic readers.

Three training workshops were carried out in school to develop the reading promotion plan and train teachers to use the reading promotion activities; trainee teachers from the University of Worcester were involved, working alongside teachers to trial these activities. A reading promotion audit was completed and a reading promotion plan produced by the school.

Whilst there were many strengths identified within the school, there were also areas to be addressed; most notably around pupils perceptions of teachers as readers, teachers perceptions of pupils' enjoyment of reading and encouraging reading for pleasure within the home environment.

Indications from data collected following implementation of the plan suggest that the reading promotion activities promoted across the school were successful in raising the profile of reading and led to increased discussion in classrooms around books and authors. Reading recommendations, reading cafes and teacher/pupil conferences contributed to building communities of readers and whole school events including dressing up as a book character, extreme reading and author of the term increased the visibility of reading. The most significant impact was upon children reading at home and choosing to read during their free time and in the school holidays with almost all pupils who were interviewed indicating that they like reading at home, during the holidays and in their spare time. In addition, more pupils were choosing to visit bookshops and libraries indicating an upsurge in the enjoyment of reading.

The key challenges for the school centered on the monitoring of the reading initiatives and ensuring sustainability. However all members of staff agreed that it was important to continue to foster this love of reading and continue the momentum that the project had generated.

Introduction(max. 300 words):

This report describes the implementation of a reading programme within a small church school and evaluates its impact on the reading habits of pupils aged between 4 and 11 years of age. The project was carried out in one school with 21 pupils and 14 members of staff over the course of an academic year and results were collated in the form of pupil questionnaires, surveys, interviews and focus group discussions.

The school had reported high SATs levels indicating good levels of reading attainment for Key stage 1 and Key stage 2 pupils in relation to other primary schools within the local authority. However, it had identified reading for pleasure as an area they wished to improve based on initial subject audits and in line with imminent statutory guidance from the government, placing increased importance upon this element of reading:

“The overarching aim for English in the national curriculum is to promote high standards of literacy by equipping pupils with a strong command of the written and spoken word, and to develop their love of literature through widespread reading for enjoyment.” (DfE 2013).

There was also a need to further improve standards of reading in Key Stage 1 and it was agreed that involvement in the Lifelong Readers’ Project would help to facilitate this by increasing the breadth and depth of reading engagement across the school. A whole school approach was seen as a necessary component of improving reading standards across the school.

Context of Implementation (max. 400 words):

The school is a small, one form entry Church of England (voluntary aided) primary school located in a fairly urban setting, close to a major city. There are approximately 210 pupils ranging from 4 years to 11 years drawn from the local community. There is a lower than average take up of free school meals and a lower than average proportion of children with special educational needs. The majority of children have English as a first language and are mostly from a white British background. Prior to implementation of the reading programme, the school were categorised as ‘good’ by OFSTED and were subsequently awarded a ‘good’ judgement with ‘outstanding’ for Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural education (SMSC).

The school employs a number of reading schemes to assist pupils in developing their reading ability and these are banded according to reading levels. All children from when they start school at the age of four have access to these books and they are sent home to parents and carers so that parents are able to read with their children. Parents and carers are encouraged to read with their children on a daily basis and record this in a reading record. In addition, pupils are able to borrow books from the school library to share with their parents or carers at home. Prior to implementation of the reading programme, the school library was in the process of being moved and revamped and so was closed to children for a short period of time. The children receive daily phonics lessons which are tailored to their level of ability in keeping with government policy on teaching early reading.

Description of Training Modules (max. 600 words):

The three workshops were conducted over a two month period and explained and explored the project and the training materials. The first workshop introduced the nine teachers and five Teaching Assistants to the aims of the project and the specific objectives in order to set out the contextual framework for the research. It also explored the staff's attitudes to reading and what they felt were the key traits that made a reader; these were listed as confidence, enthusiasm, interest, curiosity, pleasure and motivation. In addition, we examined recent research by The National Literacy Trust (2011) which claimed that more than a fifth of children and young people (22%) rarely or never read in their own. In addition, more than half (54%) prefer watching TV to reading and almost a fifth (17%) would be embarrassed if their friends saw them reading. These figures were examined in relation to the school context and initiated a conversation around what happens within school to promote a love of reading. Having discussed our own reading journeys and personal values about reading, the teachers described their ideal 'reading classroom' which included a welcoming environment, a variety of books and other reading materials, having displays upon the walls that actively promoted reading, books on the teacher's desk, a 'book/author of the week' display; referring to the invisible ethos of the school together with the physical environment. There was a general consensus amongst the staff that reading was held in high regard as part of the underlying ethos of the school and represented in all classrooms. From completion of the whole school reading promotion evaluation plan, having a whole school strategy to develop reading for pleasure was central to the school's culture and practice and judged to be at an enhanced stage. Areas for development were peer to peer recommendation and accessibility and display within the school library. This was because the library had recently been revamped and was due to be re-opened housing a number of new resources. Informal evaluations of the first workshop revealed that teachers were surprised by national statistics that revealed there were a significant number of children that did not engage in reading for pleasure as this was contrary to their own experiences and the experiences of the majority of their pupils. The whole school reading promotion evaluation plan encouraged staff to identify areas to develop as a school and areas that they could enhance within their own classrooms. It was agreed that this would be useful to inform the school Literacy development plan.

For the second workshop, teachers were asked to become familiar with the reading activities on the LiRe website and trial some of these in their classrooms and to ask pupils to recommend some books which they could share. In addition, six students from University of Worcester volunteered to carry out some of the activities with small groups of pupils and to offer feedback. This mainly involved pupils sharing books within these small groups and carrying out 'booktalk' and implementing some of the website activities in order to trial and select the most effective for the reading programme. Evaluation revealed that these activities were carried out during the course of a school day on a regular basis and contributed to the positive comments that were noted during the administration of the pupil questionnaire. One of the challenges faced at this point in the implementation programme was that not all of the activities were wholly suitable for those children between the ages of 4-7 years. There was also a demand for the activities to be differentiated so that they could be used with pupils of all ages and abilities.

The third workshop was adapted as a meeting with the Head teacher and Literacy manager in order to finalise the development plan and to co-ordinate how the actions would feed into the overall plan as the Head teacher did not feel that they could spare the time for a full three hour meeting with all staff; again one of the challenges faced during the implementation programme. As the school have a very comprehensive reading promotion agenda, this workshop was not judged as quite so effective on the evaluation sheet as the purpose and intention of the meeting was already embedded within the school ethos.

Description of Reading Promotion Plans (max. 300 words):

The school chose to implement a number of activities as part of the reading promotion plan based on trialling of activities and recommendations from case studies in order to address key priorities around reading.

The main areas to be addressed were: visibility of reading within school, teachers as readers, suitability and use of the school library and reading events to promote reading for pleasure. The Literacy co-ordinator for the school had responsibility for developing the reading plan and ensuring all staff were actively involved. As part of the school development plan, improving teaching of reading and encouraging reading for pleasure were identified as the two key priorities. From this a reading promotion plan was developed by the Literacy co-ordinator outlining actions and success criteria (please see school's reading promotion plan appendix 1).

Description of Data Collection Activities (max. 300 words):

The implementation programme took place during the academic year 2012/13 which begins in September and ends in July and was limited to staff and pupils (ages 4-11 years) from the identified school. I was able to collect and analyse the emerging data using a mixed methods approach of questionnaires, surveys and interviews. A mixed methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative research has not only allowed me to evaluate reading habits through a specific questionnaire but has also sought to put this into context with the more open ended questions employed during the administering of the reading habits tool so that the data can 'enhance the performance of the organisation and individuals through changes to ...procedures' (Denscombe 2002:27). In addition, the semi structured approach of the interviews and focus group discussion has enabled me to explore responses in depth thus eliciting a rich narrative from which to draw and inform conclusions which have informed recommendations as stipulated in the initial programme brief.

A reading promotion tool was administered to the 14 members of staff before and after implementation to assess the success of the reading promotion plan on a school based level, from the staff's perspective. Interviews with key members of staff (the literacy co-ordinator and the Head Teacher) and a small focus group comprising three teachers were also carried out separately with the purpose of gaining a deeper understanding of staff views on particular areas of success and to ascertain their evaluation of the programme. All questions posed during the semi structured interviews and focus group were closely aligned to the purposes of the study and used to evaluate the extent to which the programme was successful.

An initial questionnaire containing closed and open ended questions was carried out with 21 pupils ranging from 4 years to 11 years to assess current reading habits prior to implementation of the reading programme and again at the end of the reading promotion timescale as identified in the report so as to ensure informed conclusions were reached as to the appropriateness and success of the reading promotion plan.

Data Analysis (max. 200 words):

The data gathered from the reading promotion tool, the reading habits tool and the semi structured interviews and focus group discussion, were analysed by first sorting and listing the information and presenting the questionnaire data through graphical representation and through identifying key themes. Following on from this, trends and patterns were detected so as to establish meaningful links between the various forms of data collated before and after implementation of the programme. Initial evaluative statements collected prior to the implementation of the reading programme were examined and key themes were identified by collating and listing key words and phrases. The inclusion of the two open ended questions with prompts, included at the end of the questionnaire, provided an opportunity to collate some qualitative data which would provide a greater breadth and depth.

The interviews and small focus group discussion were recorded having first acquired consent in the form of written permission. Concepts and meanings were explored in order to identify any similarities or recurrent issues that arose during the discussion and connections were made with the emerging themes identified from other data sources. This was then mapped against the original purpose of the research project in order to inform conclusions and evaluate the success of the reading promotion plan in this particular context.

Findings (max. 700 words):

Key Themes

Prior assumptions

Findings derived from initial data collection tools prior to the implementation of the reading plan indicated fairly high levels of pupil engagement with reading with the majority of pupils indicating that they were good at reading (Q13) and that they liked reading at home and at school. Very few pupils indicated that they thought reading was boring (2 pupils) and so the reading promotion plan was being implemented in order to enhance reading for pleasure in the school rather than introduce it as a new concept. Discussions within the focus group debriefing reinforced this view as teachers stated that they felt the pupils were already reading widely and for pleasure on a regular basis and that they, the teachers, were successful in promoting this. When asked how they felt about participation in the project, one teacher stated that:

“I thought we were doing quite well...I think we are fine with this.”

Whilst another reported that she could see how the programme would be ‘an enhancement and a really useful tool’. One of the key themes that emerged from the interviews was that the teachers were making assumptions about pupils’ reading habits and how they promoted reading for pleasure across the school. One teacher stated:

“Our children read a lot anyway...so do we”. However from initial data analysis, it transpired that although pupils indicated positively to question 26 about their teacher liking reading, evaluative comments from the pupils indicated that they did not often see their teachers reading books in the context of the school day. The 2 key interviewees were surprised with this finding and it became one of the key priorities that fed into their reading promotion action plan.

Impact upon visibility of reading

There was an improvement in the variety of reading materials that children engaged with as

indicated in question 4 and an increase in the number of texts that pupils used online in their classrooms. The increased variety of books and different authors named following implementation may suggest that pupils are being exposed to a greater variety of books and authors through successful activities such as teachers' reading boards, author of the term initiatives and class discussions whereby teachers and pupils make recommendations to each other; one interviewee felt that a system of pupils recommending books on post it notes and displaying these within the class library was successful in increasing awareness of the variety of books and she explained how some of the children in her class had read a book that they may not normally have chosen based on these recommendations. There was a significant increase in the response to question 41, with nine more pupils indicating that they discuss what they have read in class with their teachers and peers. This seems to suggest that the heightened visibility of reading throughout the school has promoted and encouraged more conversations around books. One interviewee felt that 'children were more aware of books'. There were increases in questions 13, 14 and 15 which suggest that children feel more confident reading and enjoy reading both at home and school.

Impact upon reading at home

The impact upon reading at home is evident with an increase from 4 pupils to 12 pupils indicating that they have time to read at home. In addition, there was more than a 100% increase of pupils responding that they like reading in their free time, a view reinforced by one interviewee who alluded to the amount of children choosing to take books outside with them during break times. The number of pupils responding that they enjoyed going to book shops (Q20) has risen from 4 to 16 pupils which may indicate how the reading promotion programme has impacted upon home. Teachers in the focus group indicated that the planned reading events, including the extreme reading competition and celebration of book day had encouraged parents to become involved in the reading for pleasure ethos and that the 'dads reading in school' activity had also contributed to this result. One of the key members of staff explained how the extreme reading competition had inspired one usually very quiet pupil to seek her out and to talk enthusiastically about the book she had used for the competition.

Time to read at home (Q23) revealed a significant increase which would again suggest that reading for pleasure was being valued within the home environment and although no interviews with parents were undertaken, staff concluded that anecdotal comments from parents during consultation evenings indicated that this was as a result of the implementation programme within school.

Successes and Challenges

All staff that were interviewed concluded that the programme had been successful in enhancing current provision with the opening of the new school library being heralded as a key factor in this: 'children were missing their lunch because they were so excited to get to the library' and 'constantly ask me to get books by particular authors'. The opening of the new library may also have contributed to the rise in children indicating that they regularly go to the library (Q7). One key member of staff spoke about how reading had helped to develop confidence and self esteem with some children. One child who had previously struggled to finish a book had come to her and talked about how many pages she had read and how she would be finished very soon because she was eager to reach the end.

In addition, the reading cafe was popular with children and one interviewee talked about how the children 'were really enthused by it...it inspired them to read at home, perhaps if they didn't read with their parents at home before bedtime and it was nice the next day to see them come in with a couple of their favourite (books)'. The literacy co-ordinator felt inspired to 'start a reading club next year'.

The celebration of world book day event was also mentioned by all interviewees as successful in raising the profile of reading for pleasure as there was increased opportunities for discussion and pupils indicated that they enjoyed finding out teachers' favourite book characters.

The particular challenges were mainly articulated by the 2 key members of staff and included

technical issues with the LiRe website, the logistics of monitoring the process within the school and how they could sustain the impact of the programme in the future.

Recommendations (max. 600 words):

Recommendations are based on initial case studies, interviews with teachers and senior managers within the school and also based on recommendations from the six teacher trainees who helped to trial the various activities.

Recommendations for Practitioners:

- Involve pupils with the formulation of activities so as to build upon their interests
- Take time to explore the variety of activities on the website and adapt as necessary
- Trial activities with small groups of pupils so as to determine the most effective activities for reading promotion
- When adding reading promotion activities to the programme, share these with other members of staff to assess level of success and eradicate any difficulties that may arise (eg. Not entirely suitable for a particular age phase)
- Reading promotion activities need to be tailored to the needs of individual pupils and so may need adapting
- Consider developing lists of questions for each activity which can be used to stimulate discussion and encourage deeper engagement with the text. This could be particularly beneficial to use with trainee teachers or parent helpers
- Try to build in opportunities for older pupils to carry out reading promotion activities with younger pupils to enable them to be exposed to different texts and to share positive reading experiences
- The teacher needs to be seen as a reader within the context of the classroom and promote reading for pleasure within their spare time. Read every day with the children and allow them to see you as the teacher reading a book that you find interesting
- Invite 'dads' in to read to the children so that they can see that reading is for everyone. This may encourage boys to read more.
- Use the classroom library areas to display pupil recommendations so that all pupils can benefit from the views of others
- Make reading visible within each classroom so that pupils are exposed to a wide range of genres and authors
- Do not assume that all children enjoy reading

Recommendations for Policymakers:

- Invest time in discussing the value that individual staff members place on reading so that there is a shared vision and an informed action plan
- Use expertise of staff members to collectively develop a reading promotion programme
- Ensure that all staff are actively engaged in the reading promotion programme through systematic monitoring
- Complete an audit in order to pinpoint areas for development and compare views on the reading ethos within school as assumptions can sometimes be made rather than judgements being based on research
- Inform parents of the programme and encourage their support. Workshops for parents would be helpful
- Invest in a high quality school library that stocks books chosen by pupils and staff to increase

engagement

- Set up reading clubs for pupils based on the reading cafe model as a whole school policy
- Encourage and promote reading events for pupils, staff and parents. For example, world book day dressing up events, extreme reading competitions, wall of books, bedtime reading (where parents come in to school with their children on an evening, share a book with them and then children stay at school with staff for a 'sleepover' where they share their favourite bedtime books with friends and staff).

Conclusions (max. 500 words):

Conclusion:

The findings presented in this report provide some initial evidence that the reading promotion plan implemented in this particular school has been successful in enhancing a continually developing reading culture amongst staff, pupils and home. Analysis of the findings confirmed that the reading promotion plan was successful in further engaging pupils in reading for pleasure due to the raised visibility of reading within the school and gave a high profile to reading for pleasure.

Findings drawn from interviews with staff suggested that teachers were initially curious about the project and although there was a sense that the school 'did very well with reading', they were eager to implement activities that might further enhance reading for pleasure. Results from the reading promotion audit and data collected from initial pupil questionnaires were met with some degree of surprise for there was an underlying assumption amongst staff that all children enjoyed reading and that the pupils saw their teachers as avid readers. The findings indicated that not all pupils were eager readers and that pupils did not always perceive their teachers as readers themselves. There also appeared to be little opportunity to discuss books in the context of the classroom as reported by pupils responding to question 41. It was also evident through analysis of questionnaire data that the children were not always engaging in reading activities at home and did not always identify their parents or carers as enjoying reading. However, the majority of pupils who responded to the questionnaire indicated that they enjoyed reading and did not find it difficult.

Following the reading implementation programme, data revealed that the programme had been most successful in raising awareness of reading for pleasure, encouraging reading at home, widening children's reading experiences and increasing the breadth of texts read both in school and at home. In addition, pupils were more inclined to recognise that their teachers enjoyed reading as indicated in the questionnaire response and evaluative comments that were collated and analysed following the implementation of the programme. This was further reinforced through the increased opportunities for class discussion as perceived by pupils and staff within school.

There was an increased visibility of reading within the school, which was further supported through the opening and subsequent use of the school library. Each teacher had raised the profile of reading through use of the classroom environment and pupils were almost bombarded with positive messages associated with reading. The number of pupils requesting to work in the school library and the volume of books that are loaned pay testament to the success of the programme.

Although pupils were initially reported as having good levels of engagement with reading from the outset of the project, there is little doubt that the implementation programme served to further enhance reading for pleasure and raised the profile of reading within the school and home environment. All pupils and staff interviewed for the purpose of this research project agreed that reading was important; staff and pupils spoke highly of the reading promotion activities that they chose to implement and all staff interviewed agreed that this had contributed to the children's and their own enjoyment of reading. One interviewee summarised her reflections on the process and felt that it had increased her own awareness of reading within the classroom and how she realised that she needed to be a role model and enjoy reading alongside the children. She echoed the thoughts of other interviewees when she commented that she felt that the programme was successful because it had 'given (reading) its own time and space'.

References:

Denscombe, M. (2002) *Ground Rules for Good Research: A 10 Point Guide for Social Researchers*.
Buckingham, OUP.

Department for Education (DfE). (2013) *The national curriculum in England Framework document*.
London, DfE.

ANNEXES:

1. Ammedneded/final tools used
2. Final Reading promotion plan as it was implemented.