

# Reading for Pleasure 2021-22

Learning about the teaching  
of reading in primary schools  
in January 2022



  
**CLPE**

CENTRE FOR LITERACY  
IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

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## What teachers told us about the importance of reading for pleasure in 2021



*"Reading, and allowing children space to respond to their reading, feels more vital now."*



*"We are placing a huge focus on Reading for Pleasure across the school as a way to bridge the vocabulary gap and enthuse pupils to become lifelong readers."*



*"It's more important than ever before. It's the cornerstone of their education as well as being a release from the negativity they face in the world around them."*



*"I feel more supported across the school now as there is real data to show that reading for pleasure affects all academic subjects as well as well-being. And whilst the pressure is now on to improve students reading levels, it feels more of a priority and group effort rather than just the teachers directly involved."*

## Learning about the teaching of reading in primary schools in January 2022.

At CLPE we work with thousands of primary schools each year who show and tell us the power that reading has in their classrooms. We know, and the research tells us, that encouraging reading for pleasure and putting creative, well evidenced practice at the heart of literacy learning, is transformative for children's futures.

Last year we published the outcomes of a survey that asked teachers to share their experiences of teaching reading during lockdown and the pandemic restrictions. We learnt a great deal about how schools were working within the confines of the pandemic and how teachers were still striving to put reading for pleasure at the heart of their teaching.

We decided to repeat the survey in January 2022 so that we could find out what were the pressing issues for schools as they emerge from lockdown and return to full class teaching. Our report shares the outcomes of that survey and includes valuable insights into how teachers are working to develop reading for pleasure cultures in their schools and classrooms.

Last year teachers told us that they were worried about children's access to books. Schools were working incredibly hard to get books to children in their homes. We were interested to find out what the access to books and what the level of book stock was like one year on.

The questions in the survey were guided by our own research into Reading for Pleasure which identifies factors which will be present in a school with a successful 'Reading for Pleasure' culture.

These include:

- Teachers who are knowledgeable about children's literature;
- Developing an ethos and an environment that excites, enthuses, inspires and values and which creates a community of readers who can share their responses and opinions;
- High quality texts with depth and interest in story, character, illustration, vocabulary, structure and subject matter;
- A read aloud programme and planning for talking about books and stories.

## What teachers told us about the importance of books and book stock



*"Some children have flourished in their reading, but some that have regressed. Some children do not have access to books that are appropriate for them and their level outside of school, which can affect their level of progress."*



*"There's hardly any books – children were sent home with multiple books to read when we initially thought schools would only be shut for a month and they never came back."*



*"It has become more of a priority whole school, but the lack of funding over the years means we haven't got the resources to really push reading for pleasure anymore and current budgets are stretched so there is little funding for a range of texts."*



*"ICT received huge investment understandably during the pandemic, I wish this money had been earmarked for reading – library bookstock, Literacy sequence subscriptions, class story books."*

## Access to books and levels of book stock in Primary Schools

To encourage reading for pleasure, schools need to be able to provide children with a range of books, books are the foundation of any reading curriculum and the most important aspect of any reading classroom.

**73% of teachers told us that they had more or about the same number of books** in school as they had before the pandemic. This is great as it means that the majority of schools have maintained their book stock. However, this also means that **more than 25% of schools (1 in 4) have fewer books in school than they did before the pandemic.**

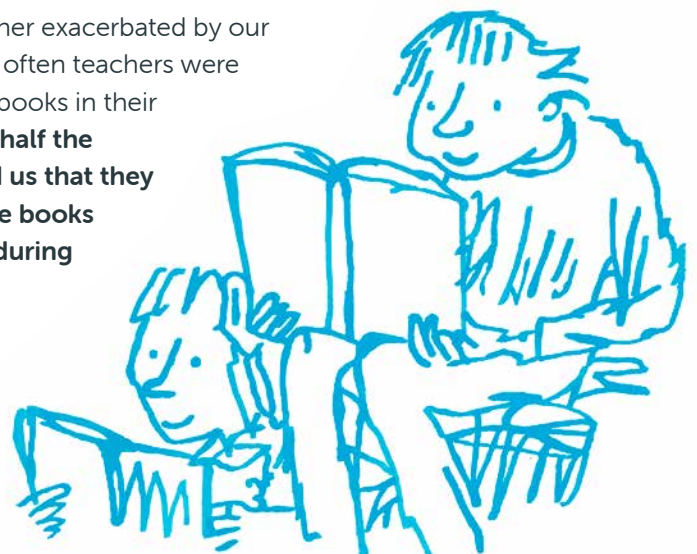
**88% of primary schools told us that they have a school library which is a very positive figure.** Most schools had more than 500 books in their libraries. Schools in the South West and the East England were less likely to have a school library (82% in both regions). Schools in these regions and schools in Yorkshire and Humber were more likely to have a book stock of fewer than 500 books in their library.

The vast majority of primary school teachers (94.5%) have a book corner in their classrooms. **However, in 57% of these schools the book corners contained fewer than 100 books.** This is a low figure if you are trying to create an environment where children have a range of texts and text types and can develop their own tastes and interests in literature.

**84% of classrooms in early years and 73% of classrooms in Y1 have fewer than 100 books in their book corner.** Children in these year groups are much more likely to be in classrooms where there are fewer books.

Children in the North East (80%) were much more likely to be in a classroom with fewer than 100 books.

This situation is further exacerbated by our findings about how often teachers were able to change the books in their classrooms. **Nearly half the teachers (48%) told us that they couldn't change the books in their classroom during the year.**



## What teachers told us about the importance of books and book stock



*“Some children have developed more of a love for books, whereas others have become totally disengaged through not having easy access to books at home.”*



*“Many of the children made such little progress as they had little access to high quality or new books. It was not a priority for many families.”*



*“Getting books into the hands of children was difficult during remote learning and this has led to some children falling out of the habit. Budget to buy books was already limited and has been restricted further with added expenditure on Covid costs such as an enormous amount spent on supply teachers and extra costs related to Covid-proofing the school.”*



*“The children are needing more and more support, as they have, in many cases had little interaction with texts during the pandemic and now need to be engaged, with excellent books an absolute necessity.”*

We asked teachers where new books in their classrooms came from.

- **37%** of teachers **have a budget** from their school for new books;
- **38%** of teachers **only get new books in their classrooms if they buy them themselves**;
- **17%** of teachers **rely on donations** in order to update their book stock;
- **8%** of teachers **never get new books** in their classrooms.

This picture was similar across the age ranges and across the country. **This means that more than 60% of classrooms have no access to a budget for new books.**

To encourage reading for pleasure, classrooms need a book stock where there are a wide range of books, books that encourage engagement whoever you are and whatever your starting point. Children need access to texts that reflect the lives that they are living and take them to new worlds and introduce them to new people – real and imagined. To build their reading repertoire and support them to develop stamina and understand text construction they need to have variety and the opportunity to develop and talk about new and different styles of books, authors and illustrators. A stagnant and never-changing book stock is not going to support them to develop a habit of reading for pleasure. This is even more important for children who may have less access to books at home – and these children are likely to be those who found it difficult to get hold of books during the lockdowns.

*“We are trying to place so much importance on reading, however our selection of books is outdated and some are very poor quality. I would really like to inspire other teachers to feel passionately about children’s literature to further promote that buzz in the classroom. Our library isn’t used very regularly at all as the selection of books is again pretty poor and uninspiring.”*





## The top ten books in each year group phase

### EYFS

Stick Man  
 Naughty Bus  
 Dear Zoo  
 Goldilocks and The Three Bears  
 Owl Babies  
 Room on the Broom  
 Ruby's Worry  
 Supertato  
 The Colour Monster  
 The Gingerbread Man

### Y1/2

Beegu  
 Traction Man  
 The Owl Who Was Afraid of the Dark  
 Lila and the Secret of Rain  
 Meerkat Mail  
 The Dark  
 George's Marvellous Medicine  
 Man on the Moon  
 Paddington Bear  
 Ruby's Worry

## Authors, illustrators and texts

We were interested to find out about the books that have had an impact in schools and classrooms. Between them, the 821 teachers who responded to this survey named a total of 360 different books that had been important or popular in their class this year.

The teachers who responded to this survey were very keen to share a wide range of texts that they were reading to their classes or that they had found useful or particularly engaging.

- EYFS named 55 different titles
- Y1/2 named 110 different titles
- Y3/4 named 106 different titles
- Y5/6 named 126 different titles

We asked teachers to tell us why the book that they had chosen had been important to or popular with their class. There were a variety of reasons and the most frequently mentioned were:

Funny or humorous	100
The children found the characters or story relatable	68
It links to our topic	60
The illustrations/pictures are engaging	57
An exciting adventure story	56
The children love mystery and suspense	43
They found the subject matter engaging	39
It gave them a different perspective	34
It spoke to their interests	29
It inspired talk and discussion	27



## The top ten books in each year group phase

### Y3/4

The Boy at the Back of the Class  
 The Iron Man  
 Arthur and the Golden Rope  
 Diary of a Wimpy Kid  
 The Christmasaurus  
 Harry Potter  
 Pugs of the Frozen North  
 The Wild Robot  
 How to Train Your Dragon  
 Leon and the Place between

### Y5/6

Letters to the Lighthouse  
 Holes  
 Goodnight Mister Tom  
 The Boy at the Back of the Class  
 There's a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom  
 When The Sky Falls  
 Cosmic  
 Once  
 Room 13  
 The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse

We asked teachers who was their class's favourite author, illustrator or poet. The teachers named 177 different authors, illustrators or poets. Of these, 94 were only mentioned by one teacher and 116 by one or two teachers.

### The top 20 most mentioned authors were:

#### 2021

- Julia Donaldson
- David Walliams
- Michael Rosen
- Roald Dahl
- J K Rowling
- Michael Morpurgo
- Jeff Kinney
- Oliver Jeffers
- Katherine Rundell
- Tom Fletcher
- Liz Pichon
- Onjali Q Raúf
- Emma Carroll
- Dav Pilkey
- Joseph Coelho
- Benjamin Zephaniah
- Nick Sharratt
- Jacqueline Wilson
- Anthony Browne

#### 2020

- Michael Rosen
- Oliver Jeffers
- Julia Donaldson
- David Walliams
- Roald Dahl
- Michael Morpurgo
- Rob Biddulph
- Katherine Rundell
- Cressida Cowell
- Onjali Q Raúf
- Emma Carroll
- Philip Pullman
- Jacqueline Wilson
- Quentin Blake
- Joseph Coelho
- Mini Grey
- Neil Gaiman
- Maz Evans
- Malorie Blackman

15 of those authors were also in the list of most mentioned authors in 2020.

3 authors were from a Black or Minority Ethnic background and 7 were women

## What teachers told us about Reading Aloud:



*"All children regardless of ability can access high quality texts with an adult reading aloud to them."*



*"It's a great way to connect with my class. I have seen the impact on their enjoyment of both the class book and their wider reading interests."*



*"I have always loved it and always held it as high priority, but I felt this year especially the children needed lots more enjoyment, engagement and introduction to a wider range of texts."*



*"After lockdowns and self-isolation, it provides an opportunity to share time, experiences and great books together."*

## Reading aloud

Reading aloud is probably the most important thing that teachers can do and needs to be a frequent and regular part of each school day. It slows written language down and enables children to hear and take in tunes and patterns. It enables children to experience and enjoy stories that they might not otherwise meet.

Teachers are reading aloud with more frequency than during the 2020 survey, with the biggest uplift in EYFS and Y1/2.

The pattern was similar across the year groups, although teachers were more likely to read more frequently with the youngest children.

### Reading Aloud by age group

	Daily (vs 2020)	Weekly (vs 2020)
All	75% (58%)	2% (23%)
EYFS	96% (68%)	0% (25%)
Y1/2	90% (54%)	1% (30%)
Y3/4	71% (56%)	1% (22%)
Y5/6	71% (61%)	0% (19%)

### Reading Aloud by region

	Daily (vs 2020)	Weekly (vs 2020)
East of England	78% (56%)	1% (24%)
East Midlands	76% (59%)	1% (24%)
London	75% (55%)	1% (25%)
North East	75% (57%)	0% (27%)
North West	69% (59%)	3% (26%)
South East	76% (61%)	1% (24%)
South West	79% (60%)	1% (17%)
West Midlands	70% (70%)	3% (20%)
Yorkshire and Humber	79% (63%)	2% (18%)

Teachers in the South West and Yorkshire and the Humber were most likely to read daily and teachers in the North West were least likely to read to their classes daily. Teachers in the North East read at the highest frequency overall.

The importance of Reading Aloud was highly valued among respondents. This is explored in more detail in the Reading practices since the pandemic section.

## What teachers told us about the choices made in regard to reading practices



*"We noticed how many children had fallen behind with their reading during the pandemic and how it was greatly impacting their vocabulary, their communication and their writing skills. This made reading aloud a priority for us."*



*"Children have missed skilled teachers sharing books with them and their ability to excite children about books. And to make links between different books."*



*"Reading Aloud was overwhelmingly chosen due to identified needs to prioritise a love of reading and because it was felt that many children has missed out on being read to over periods of lockdown and had less access to quality texts and models of reading."*

## Reading practices since the pandemic

On the return to schooling for all pupils, teachers continue to work hard to build on the successes of some children during periods of interrupted schooling and to overcome the challenges faced by many others in deciding how best to evaluate and deliver a reading curriculum which allows all children to make progress.

Teachers noted that some children, notably those who had good access to texts at home, technology to access home learning and engaged adults to support them, had actually made more progress during periods of interruption. However, for many more, they noted the adverse effects of the interruption to children's access to, learning and progress in reading, particularly for disadvantaged children who did not have these same advantages and experiences.

### Difference in children's reading since the pandemic

	Mentions
They are better readers	43
They are reading more	120
They are reading less	160
They are having more difficulty reading	313

A number of areas of concern were brought up by teachers that they needed to focus on as all children returned to full time schooling. These included the availability of resources in school to target areas of focus for the children. The most mentions went to addressing understanding of language and vocabulary, reading fluency, inference and deduction and the exposure to a range and breadth of texts. Teachers were also concerned about the availability of texts for both taught and independent reading, which would support them in targeting these areas of concern.

### Concerns raised by teachers about reading on the return to full time schooling for all

	Mentions
Understanding of language and vocabulary	520
Reading fluency	460
Inference and Deduction	445
Range and breadth of children's reading	434
Ability to respond to texts	254
Phonics / decoding ability	249
Availability of texts for independent reading	239
Availability of texts for taught reading	187
Literal retrieval	155



## What teachers told us about the choices made in regard to reading practices



*"It has become very apparent how much the school creates a community of readers because during lockdown it has dismantled."*



*"As reading lead, I'm far more aware of how many of the pupils in our school rely on us as teachers to provide the simple, essential experience of sharing a story daily."*



*"Reading also benefits from wider literary experiences – author visits, theatre visits, visits to exhibitions etc. related to non-fiction. Disadvantaged children are always disproportionately affected by the lack of this, but the pandemic has made this experiential reading gap extreme, with a consequent impact on verbal skills and general confidence, for the children in my school."*

### Targeted teaching practices

Our respondents recognised the value of Reading Aloud. It was the most mentioned reading practice for making the most impact on children's reading and also the most mentioned practice being given extra priority since the pandemic amongst respondents. Respondents were aware of the multiple benefits on children's access to texts, the ability to hear good models of reading fluency, the impact on concentration, language, vocabulary and comprehension, and the community building and social and emotional benefits of this approach, which respondents highlighted as necessary in the return to school.

Taught reading practices such as Whole Class Reading, Group/Guided Reading and Shared Reading were also given increased priority since the return to school for all children. This was due to the fact that many were aware that they had to adapt pre-pandemic practices, or that they did not have the means to deliver these in the same way or with the same frequency during periods of lockdown, or with high staff absences or restrictions being placed on the adults that could come in to school. At worst, some practices were cut altogether due to lack of capacity.

A return to Individual Reading was mentioned as a key priority that they were returning to more than before the pandemic for many teachers who were aware that there were so many children who hasn't been read with, or had read independently throughout periods of interrupted schooling.

Reading practice	Number of respondents who said they had prioritised since the return to school
Reading Aloud	449
Whole Class Reading, Group/Guided Reading	382
Individual Reading	242
Shared Reading	231
Home/School Reading	168
Independent Reading Buddy/Volunteer/Parent Reading partners	103

## What teachers told us about the choices made in regard to reading practices



*"In lockdowns, many children did not regularly read. A big emphasis and time given every morning to reading since the lockdowns has reignited their interest and created a more positive approach to books."*



*"I feel it has never been more important to do whole-class reading. Children have a shared experience."*



*"I have placed a huge focus on reading with in my classroom and led training across the school to ensure all teachers are using a variety of texts within their lessons and using literature to stimulate their lessons. As a school this is a priority this year to help children discover a love of reading from pleasure and experience high quality literature in school and ensure they have access to a wide range of genres."*

Teachers were guided in their choices by a wide range of priorities, which allowed them to consider which practices would be most beneficial for their children and why.

### Priorities guiding curriculum choices

	Mentions:
Not read to at home during pandemic	150
Promote enjoyment/engagement/love of reading/reading for pleasure	144
Access / Exposure to texts was an issue during the pandemic	99
Catch up, close gaps, declining standards	99
Focussing on school practices/routines/methods of curriculum delivery which were different/unable to be implemented during periods of lockdown and the pandemic	90
Not independently reading during pandemic	68
Giving children access to enabling adults/readers as models of reading	63
To improve children's social, emotional wellbeing	45
To improve fluency	44
To improve speaking and listening. language, vocabulary	42
We are trying a new approach we hadn't used previously	35
To improve comprehension	34
Prompted by new policies or guidance from DFE (phonics, reading framework, EYFS framework) or research read	33
To improve reader response	26
To improve phonics/decoding	23
To improve stamina and/or concentration	20
To improve confidence in reading	15
To highlight the impact of reading on writing	7

A number of teachers also highlighted concerns about the return to standardised assessments (the SATs and Phonics Screening Checks were specifically mentioned) narrowing the time and focus on the kinds of activities that support and promote children reading for pleasure.

## About the Research

This report is based on the responses of 821 people who filled in our survey in January 2022. The respondents were from across the regions and taught in all year groups of primary schools. We did have respondents from Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland but the numbers from these countries were too low for us to be able to draw conclusions about the other nations of the UK so we have limited the regional analysis in this report to the English responses.

The breakdown of responses is as follows:

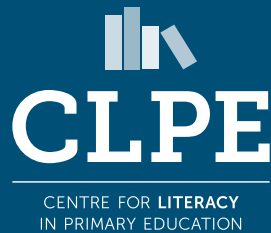
### Responses by age group

Early Years	67	8.2%
Y1/2	136	16.6%
Y3/4	164	20%
Y5/6	212	25.8%
All primary ages	216	26.3%
Secondary	26	3.2%

### Responses by region

East of England	67	8.2%
East Midlands	59	5%
London	156	19%
North East	53	6.5%
North West	65	7.9%
South East	153	18.6%
South West	87	10.6%
West Midlands	60	7.3%
Yorkshire and Humber	84	10.2%
Northern Ireland	2	0.2%
Scotland	14	1.7%
Wales	12	1.5%

We are aware that this is a survey that relies on people self-referring. The survey was publicised through CLPE email and social media therefore the respondents are likely to be teachers with an interest in literacy teaching and children's literature. They are also likely to be teachers who understand the importance of reading for pleasure and the pedagogical approaches that are effective.



The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE) is an independent UK charity dedicated to raising the literacy achievement of children by putting quality children's literature at the heart of all learning. It is a charity with a national and international reputation for excellent literacy training, teaching resources and research. CLPE has worked with Primary Schools for 50 years and supports thousands of teachers and schools each year. CLPE was the winner of the 2019 Eleanor Farjeon Award, Southwark Charity of the Year in 2020, Teach Primary English Award winner in 2021 and London Book Fair Charity of the Year in 2022.

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