

The Summer Reading Challenge



“The Summer Reading Challenge is an excellent way of sustaining reading levels whilst not in school.”

Literacy coordinator

“I like doing the Summer Reading Challenge because it’s fun to do over the summer... there are lots of different books for you to read. I will definitely do it again this year and reading is a proper hobby of mine now. I read a lot more than I used to.”

Joseph, aged 9, Solihull

The Summer Reading Challenge

Public libraries are doing a crucial job in helping the next generation to love reading, and they use the Summer Reading Challenge to reach more children each year.

The Summer Reading Challenge is a massive national promotion of reading for 4-11 year olds organised by The Reading Agency. Run by public libraries, it involves nearly 700,000 children and encourages them to read more books during the long summer break from school.

Every year the Challenge has a new theme. Last year we celebrated our 10th challenge with a sporting theme – Team Read. This year we are inviting children to take part in a fantastical adventure called Quest Seekers.

The Challenge helps overcome the ‘summer learning dip’ and sends children back into school feeling really positive about reading.

“Children who take part in the Summer Reading Challenge return to school enthused about reading, motivated and ready to learn.”
Literacy Coordinator.



The Challenge in 2008:

- 690,000 children took part in the Challenge in the UK
- 400,200 children read at least 6 books during the Challenge
- 96% of UK public libraries took part through 4,000 libraries and mobile libraries
- 47,000 children became new library members to do the Challenge
- 238,600 children got involved in 13,500 events
- 10,000 children from 28 different countries took part through the British Council

The library reading offer

The Summer Reading Challenge is a great example of how libraries are supporting reading in new ways. It combines free access to books with social activities and a creative online element.

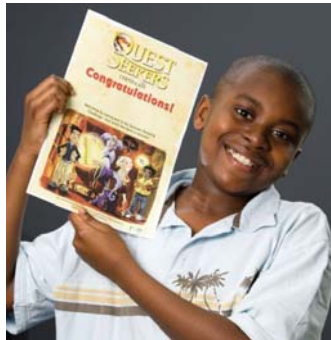
It's a simple challenge – children sign up at their local library, and are rewarded for reading six books during the summer holidays. But the role of libraries is much more than just handing out incentives; staff and volunteers help children find new books, encourage them to talk about the books they've read and give them new reading ideas.

And there are thousands of inspirational events held in libraries over the summer, linked to the Challenge and injecting creativity into families' reading experiences.

Children who complete the Challenge are presented with a certificate, and often a medal as well, at a special ceremony in their local library or their school. This gives them a real sense of achievement.

“With the Summer Reading Challenge my children have got access to lots of different books, and they are really encouraged to keep reading – they get certificates and stickers and the library does lots of activities linked to this year's theme.”

Clare Stevenson, parent, Solihull



The Challenge website

The Summer Reading Challenge website offers children an exciting fusion of reading and IT, with games, blogs from their favourite authors and messages from thousands of children taking part in the Challenge. Through a link with Stories from the Web they can also send in reviews and see what other children are reading.

“This website is great it has encouraged me to read more.”

Katharye, aged 11, Harrow

www.questseekers.org.uk

www.storiesfromtheweb.org

Reading enjoyment

Research shows that reading for pleasure is central for children's life chances¹, and yet recent international comparisons show that children in England enjoy reading less than their international peers². Boys are less likely than girls to say that they enjoy reading, and their achievement is lower.

The Summer Reading Challenge has a key role to play in stimulating reading enjoyment and supporting reader development – including a large number of boys.

290,000 boys took part in Team Read last year (42% of participants) and 50% of them completed the Challenge. Messages sent in by boys clearly showed how much they enjoyed taking part, and parents commented on how the Challenge encouraged their sons, who wouldn't ordinarily read, to pick up a book.

“Our eldest son, Joe, was not a very keen reader at all, pretty reluctant in fact. But the Summer Reading Challenge has developed his reading skills to the point where he has actually moved up a set in English at school, so it's obviously done some good.”

David Pursglove, parent, Staffordshire

Children taking part in the Challenge read more books, read more widely, enjoy reading and recognise authors more than children who did not take part. In a 2006 survey, 80% of children said they were better at reading by the end of the summer³.

“I like Team Read because it made me get into BOOKS..”

Georgina, aged 8, Sleaford



Encouraging reading

Parents are also noticing the positive difference that the Challenge has made to their children's attitude to reading and their reading progress:

“My daughter feels like an Olympic champion with her medal. My son is determined to finish his sixth book... and he's dyslexic. Fantastic, easy, well-designed scheme.”

Parent, Edinburgh

“Team Read has helped me to read loads of books.”

Saad, aged 8, Harlesden

¹ Reading For Change, OECD, 2002

² Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS): <http://timss.bc.edu/pirls2006/index.html>

³ Summer Reading Challenge 2006: Impact Research Report Product Perceptions Ltd, 2007

Partnerships between schools and libraries

The Summer Reading Challenge is a highly effective tool for public libraries, schools, and school library service to work together to support children's reading. Schools encourage children to join the Challenge before the summer, and celebrate their achievement through special award ceremonies in the autumn term. In one authority, targeted work with one school led to a 56% increase in numbers at the nearest library.

“We are delighted with the number of children from all the year groups in our school who participated in the Summer Reading Challenge. By encouraging more children to read during the summer holidays, this reading initiative has not only succeeded in promoting reading for pleasure but it has raised the profile of our school library and contributed to the children's reading development.”

Teacher, Walton Priory Middle School, Stone

Literacy coordinators in schools said that children taking part in the Challenge⁴

- have a more enthusiastic attitude
- maintain their reading age/level for the autumn term
- return to school more settled and ready to learn
- have enhanced confidence and self esteem through doing the Challenge and receiving the medals.

“Nice encouragement for the children ... it's a super idea to get them motivated and also when the schools are actively encouraging the children, it ties in nicely – school-home-library.”

Parent



Working together

Libraries and schools working together can be a powerful force for change. When public library and school staff work together, children's reading enjoyment and skills can improve dramatically.

Libraries can help schools encourage children to read for pleasure, and some libraries also run children's reading groups (Chatterbooks) and other initiatives throughout the year. The Summer Reading Challenge provides the perfect opportunity for children to become familiar with the library environment and all it can offer them. www.readingagency.org.uk/children/schools/

The Challenge and policy priorities

Reading widely and for pleasure

Research shows how important reading for pleasure is for children's life chances, and OFSTED's report "Reading for purpose and pleasure"⁵ identifies the value of children reading widely and the importance of parental support, including visits to the local library.

Taking part in the Summer Reading Challenge increases opportunities to enrich all four strands of language – speaking, listening, reading, and writing, as recommended in the Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum⁶.

The Challenge helps children become confident and enthusiastic readers and so helps to raise standards of reading achievements.

Summer Reading Challenge research⁷ shows:

- 93% of children say they enjoyed taking part in the Challenge
- 73% of participants read six or more books compared with 30% of non-participants
- 96% want to take part in the next Challenge.

"I thought the scheme was very very good. It made me read more books in the holidays and I got a medal to take to school."

Jared, aged 7, Essex

Making a positive contribution

Through the Summer Reading Challenge, libraries run mentoring and volunteering schemes involving young people, to help children complete the Challenge.

"I very much enjoyed my time with Summer Reading Challenge. I would recommend it to anyone who enjoys working with children and who loves to read. I learned new skills and had fun whilst working."

15 year old volunteer, Essex

5 Reading for purpose and pleasure OFSTED, December 2004

6 www.dcsf.gov.uk/primarycurriculumreview/

7 Summer Reading Challenge 2006: Impact Research Report Product Perceptions Ltd, 2007



The Summer Reading Challenge is run by The Reading Agency and the public library network and is supported by leading children's publishers.

The Reading Agency is an independent national charity working to get more people reading more.

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