

Summer Reading Challenge 2017 Participation Report



"The Summer Reading Challenge has become a traditional part of our summers as a family. It's a lovely family activity (visiting the library... or library bus) that can be enjoyed for free and keeps the reading momentum going."

Parent of 4-7 year old girl, Powys

Overview

The Reading Agency, along with the UK public library network, has developed and delivered the Summer Reading Challenge since 1999. It is the UK's biggest annual reading promotion for children aged four to eleven (with increasing participation of pre-school children). The Summer Reading Challenge draws children into their local libraries and inspires them to read for pleasure by combining free access to books with fun social activities and a creative online element. Throughout the Summer Reading Challenge, library staff and teenage and adult volunteers support children, helping them to discover new authors and explore a wide range of different types of books.

"The Summer Reading Challenge is about reading for the pleasure of reading. Discovering a world inside a book. A fictional world that makes sense to you – a writer who understands you, this is one of the true comforts of reading. Sometimes you will discover a story which better helps you understand this world, and that too is a great thing.

Maybe the book you read will take you to a place you have never even imagined, or maybe it will take you back to a place which feels very much like home. Stories are important because they nourish us and broaden our thinking. Librarians and all those involved in the huge success of the 2017 Summer Reading Challenge know how important this is and seek to change lives one book at a time."

Lauren Child, Waterstones Children's Laureate

Through programmes such as the Summer Reading Challenge, The Reading Agency wants to inspire more people to read more, encourage them to share their enjoyment of reading and celebrate the difference that reading makes to all our lives. These programmes, delivered in partnership with libraries, are designed to take people on their personal reading journey and for many young readers the Summer Reading Challenge can be their first step on that journey.

In Wales, the Summer Reading Challenge is supported by the Welsh Government, through the Welsh Books Council, that helps to create the bilingual materials for use by 100% of Welsh local authorities.

Why the Summer Reading Challenge is important

- Reading for pleasure is the best way to support children to develop into confident readers
- The Summer Reading Challenge provides libraries with a platform to engage with an increasingly diverse educational landscape
- The Summer Reading Challenge is accessible for children with a range of special education needs and disability, and provides equality of opportunity for all young people
- The pre-school materials support local authorities in their school readiness agenda
- The parallel volunteer element provides opportunities for young people to gain skills and work experience beneficial to further education, community engagement and employment
- The Summer Reading Challenge is cost effective and enables local authorities to benefit from economies of scale whilst being flexible to meet local priorities (the core Summer Reading Challenge materials costs libraries less than £1 per child)

2017 Participation

Introduction

In 2017, 97% of UK local authorities took part in the Summer Reading Challenge. All participating authorities submitted data for inclusion in this report. The submissions include participation statistics and feedback from local authority run libraries, mobile libraries and volunteer-led libraries. The additional feedback provided helps The Reading Agency and libraries shape the Summer Reading Challenge of the future.

Total Participation

In total 761,758 children participated in the Summer Reading Challenge in England, Wales and Scotland, of these:

- 734,552 children between ages 4-11 years inclusive took part in the Challenge at their local library (44% were boys¹).
- 27,206 children under 4 took part using specially produced Summer Reading Challenge pre-school materials.

Internationally, the Summer Reading Challenge reached a further 18,400 children who participated through the British Council and the armed forces.

UK Library Participation

Of the 734,552 children aged 4-11 who participated in the main Challenge:

- 415,732 children (57%) completed the Challenge by reading at least six books (43% were boys).
- 86,709 children joined the library as new members during the Challenge this summer.
- In addition, 7,763 Reading Hack young volunteers aged 12 to 24 enthusiastically supported the Challenge by helping younger children take part.

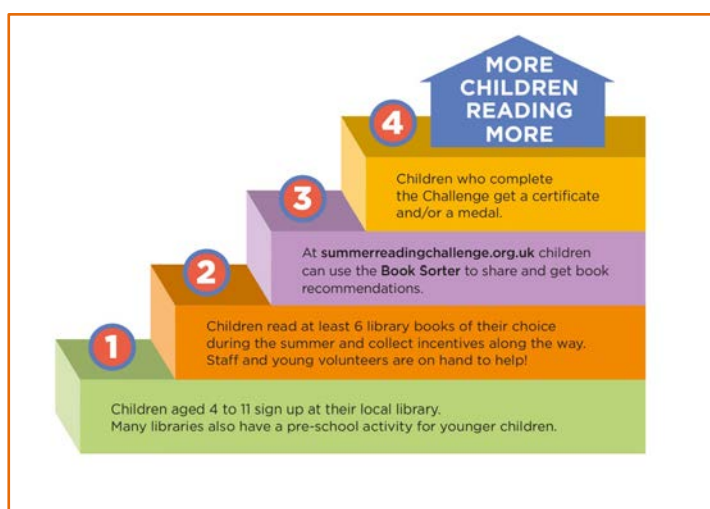
¹ Only 1 in 4 boys read outside the class every day – The National Literacy Trust Report 2012

- The families² that took part in the Challenge reported that it had strong positive impacts in the following areas:
 - 87% felt the Challenge helped their child enjoy reading
 - 78% believed that it encouraged children to read more over the summer
 - 75% felt that taking part increased library usage
 - 73% reported that it increased conversation about books.
- We estimate that there were more than **16.5 million** children's loans over the summer based on the data supplied by 90% of participating libraries about their borrowing figures.
- **192,358** users visited the website. They added **181,941** titles to the Book Sorter and also submitted **89,632** book reviews.
- **766** children used the Summer Reading Challenge to achieve Arts Award Discover³ across **24** authorities in England (this figure may increase as children finish their Arts Award in the autumn term).

2017 Participation – Wales

- **38,066** children in Wales participated in the Summer Reading Challenge at their local library. 43% of these children were boys.
- **22,746** children (60%) completed the Summer Reading Challenge by reading six books.
- A further **2,379** under 4-year-olds took part in the Summer Reading Challenge, using the specially produced pre-school materials.
- **2,759** children joined the library as new members during the Challenge this summer.
- We estimate that there were **815,535** children's loans in Wales over the summer, based on the data supplied by 18 out of the 22 participating authorities about their borrowing figures.
- **141** young people aged 12 to 24 supported the Challenge through volunteering.

How the Summer Reading Challenge works



² [Summer Reading Challenge Family Survey 2017](#)

³ www.artsaward.org.uk/srcdiscover

Each year, the Summer Reading Challenge adopts a theme which is popular with children and families. This year's theme was **Animal Agents**, based on a detective agency staffed by all kinds of clever animals – furry, scaly and slippery. **Tony Ross**, the UK's best-selling children's illustrator (including creator of the Little Princess books, illustrator of the Horrid Henry series by Francesca Simon, and books by David Walliams and Claire Balding), created this year's exclusive artwork.

For more information about the Summer Reading Challenge, please visit our website readingagency.org.uk/children or our year-round children's website summerreadingchallenge.org.uk

The Summer Reading Challenge and local authority corporate policy

Reading for pleasure

The Summer Reading Challenge, delivered by libraries, is the UK's leading reading for pleasure programme for primary aged children. The Challenge harnesses the power of reading for pleasure to improve children's life chances. Reading for pleasure is a more important determinant of children's educational success than their family's socio-economic status⁴ and the only out-of-school activity demonstrably linked to securing managerial or professional jobs⁵. The Challenge also motivates children to read more independently and often, and inspires boys to read outside the classroom (only 1 in 4 boys read outside class every day⁶).

"The reading challenge has made me read more because before I wasn't reading very much but now I am reading a book in about a day! I LOVE THE READING CHALLENGE. I think everyone should take part." 8-11 year old boy, Torfaen

"It's brilliant. We've completed it 4 or 5 years in a row now. It's a great incentive to keep reading through the summer holidays." Parent of 4-7 year old, Caerphilly

"Exposure to literature extends children and young people's understanding of the power of language. It can stimulate imagination, challenge thinking and introduce new ideas. This Area of Learning and Experience can generate a love of reading that will enrich lives and contribute to present and future well-being." Successful Futures - Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales – Professor Graham Donaldson CB, February 2015

School readiness and an equal start for every child

2,379 under 4s in Wales were able to take part in this year's Summer Reading Challenge using the specially produced pre-school materials. Parents and carers who regularly share books with their young children are helping their child's speech and language development, which in turn sets their children up for the best start in their school lives⁷.

As well as ensuring school readiness, the Summer Reading Challenge is also encouraging children who are already in school to continue reading over the long summer break to keep up their reading skills and confidence.

⁴ OECD 2002; Oxford University 2011

⁵ University of Oxford, 2011

⁶ The National Literacy Trust Report 2012

⁷ *Social Inequalities in Cognitive Scores at age 16: The Role of Reading*, Alice Sullivan and Matt Brown, 2013

“Reading the books and going to the library is fun. I like getting the medal on stage in assembly” 8-11 year old girl, Vale of Glamorgan

“Learners should experience a language-rich environment where oracy, reading and writing experiences are connected to ensure that they become enthusiastic, independent and reflective readers.” Programme of study for English KS 2-4, Wales, 2015

Getting the message about the Summer Reading Challenge into schools across Wales in the run up to the summer holidays is vital in encouraging children to participate and in 2017 library staff visited 504 schools to promote the Summer Reading Challenge.

As staff capacity reduces we are seeing a fall in the number of school visits and the Summer Reading Challenge digital schools’ pack is becoming a hugely important resource for libraries as part of their school engagement plan. The schools pack is designed to help teachers promote the Summer Reading Challenge as a summer holiday activity to their pupils. Library authorities in Wales shared the digital schools’ pack with over 600 schools.

As well as making these resources available to libraries, they were also available for teachers to access directly – via The Reading Agency’s website and also on the TES website.

“Throughout the key stage, they experience a progressively wide range of demanding texts, for enjoyment and information, so that they can develop into fluent and effective readers” English in the National Curriculum for Wales KS 2–4 2008

Health, well-being and confidence

The Summer Reading Challenge brings families together through reading, as well as offering a rich variety of free creative events. These free events give children and families the opportunity to connect with others in a community setting and counteract potential social isolation. The Challenge helps children to build their confidence in social interactions and strengthen family bonds. This year, through the Summer Reading Challenge, libraries across Wales gave 28,039 children and their families the opportunity to attend 1,582 high-quality events. The Challenge’s combination of fun, freedom, and creativity impacts significantly on children’s reading levels, range, motivation, confidence and overall educational attainment. Talking about books and reading with children exercises their speech and language skills, helps them to understand what they’ve read and builds their confidence in presenting their likes and dislikes. This links directly to Welsh Government guidance that ‘learners should experience a language-rich environment where oracy, reading and writing experiences are connected to ensure that they become enthusiastic, independent and reflective readers’⁸. Increasingly, the Challenge is being used by libraries and schools to target children most in need of support with reading.

“I really enjoy making crafts and getting stickers, medal and certificate” 4-7 year old boy, Swansea

“I thought it was good. It makes me read more” 8-11 year old girl, Cardiff

⁸ Curriculum for Wales: Programme of Study for English Key Stages 2-4 (2016)

“As I have 4 children, it's great they can do something altogether and best of all it's a free activity.”

Parent, Carmarthenshire

Meeting all children's needs

The Summer Reading Challenge is inclusive of all children and families, and all stages of reading development, allowing children with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) to take part.

The Challenge is all about choice and puts the child in control. There are no levels, so children can choose whatever they want to borrow from their library – joke books, graphic novels, poetry, non-fiction – and audio books count too. At the heart of the Challenge is children choosing and sharing any books – in any format – that they like.

For children who struggle with print or who are visually impaired, libraries suggest alternatives. Also, the free RNIB Library Service (which covers Braille, Giant Print and Talking Books) is often used to borrow books for the Summer Reading Challenge and throughout the year, and most libraries can help with this.

Library services are increasingly aware of the needs of children with autism and some libraries run dedicated Autism Friendly sessions.

Community Engagement through Volunteers



7,763 volunteers aged 12 to 24 across 153 UK authorities supported the Summer Reading Challenge and other activities within their libraries, with the double benefits of acting as positive role models for children and building their own confidence, love of reading, and pre-employment skills.

Volunteering has been shown to positively impact the health and well-being of young people by raising their self-esteem and encouraging a sense of achievement and responsibility⁹. Young volunteers engaged in supporting librarians to deliver the Challenge are empowered to gain new skills and contribute to their local communities.

Of the 548 Reading Hack young volunteers who completed the participation survey over the summer:

- 90% said their confidence had increased
- 89% felt their skills had increased
- 72% said they feel they want to read more as a result of taking part
- 84% said they felt more a part of their community
- 85% said they felt they helped increase children's confidence in reading.

“Volunteering has definitely benefited me. It's given me more confidence to talk to people I don't know. I wouldn't necessarily have done that before I started volunteering two years ago. I plan to carry on volunteering; it's the best thing I have ever done. I plan to use this experience on my CV to

⁹ Department of Health (2011). 'Social action for health and well-being: building co-operative communities Department of Health strategic vision for volunteering'

help me with my future career; I'm going to college next year and I want to work with children, so having this experience will be amazing." Aimee, Reading Hack Volunteer

Wales Community Engagement through Volunteers

With the support of the Welsh Books Council and Welsh Government, a bilingual Reading Hack offer has been developed. This pilot was to encourage Welsh library authorities to engage with young volunteers to help support the Summer Reading Challenge and other activities within their libraries. 141 young people aged 12 to 24 took part across Wales.

Community Engagement through Partnership Working

The Summer Reading Challenge gives libraries the opportunity to work and partner with other organisations within their local area. Many of the collaborations we hear about involve libraries working with groups to target some of the most vulnerable children and families, and this is where the Challenge and libraries have the potential to make the biggest difference.

In 2017, Welsh library authorities said they had specifically targeted the following groups: Children with learning or physical disabilities, home educated children, looked after children, traveller families, refugees and asylum seekers. More targeted initiatives involved taking the Challenge out to rurally isolated families or into the areas of most deprivation within the authority.

UK national launch PR and activity

PR activity for the Challenge focused on our summer reading booklists; a news story on the predicted increase in summer library loans; and a fun photo story featuring children reading to animals at Colchester Zoo. We successfully secured coverage of the Challenge in national newspapers and magazines including *The Sun*, *The Guardian*, *The Sunday Mirror Magazine* and *Good Housekeeping*, in addition to consumer coverage and local interest pieces.

To enhance local press coverage we held a drop-in photo opportunity for MPs at Portcullis House on 27 June. MPs from across England, Scotland and Wales attended and pledged to support the Challenge, including John Glen, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Arts, Heritage and Tourism. Following the event we supplied MPs with a personalised press release and photographs to share with local media.

The Challenge launch was supported online by our Animal Agents video trailers, which included appearances by Tony Ross, and by call to action video messages from Waterstones Children's Laureate Lauren Child and radio and television presenter Dermot O'Leary.

Wales National Launch

Ken Skates, Cabinet Secretary for the Economy and Infrastructure, Welsh Government, officially launched the Challenge in Wales at Prestatyn Library, Denbighshire on Monday 10 July 2017.

Award-winning author Rob Lewis did two sessions including some live illustration, with children from nearby Ysgol Clawdd Offa primary school.

Summer Reading Challenge 2018

The Reading Agency and libraries are delighted to present the Summer Reading Challenge 2018, which will be called **Mischief Makers**.

Children will explore a map of Beanotown to find the mysterious buried treasure and become ultimate mischief makers! Dennis, Gnasher and friends will help them solve clues and collect stickers, having lots of fun and adventures along the way!

The Summer Reading Challenge is excited to be working with Beano in their 80th anniversary year. This iconic publication, recently refreshed for a new generation of fans, will bring its unique brand of humour to the Challenge to help us celebrate reading, creativity, friendship and fun!