

The Impact of Chatterbooks on Children's Reading Enjoyment, Behaviours and Attitudes

Executive Summary

**Clémence Pabion and Christina Clark
National Literacy Trust**

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The Reading Agency's Chatterbooks programme is an extracurricular reading initiative that aims to increase a child's motivation to read by providing schools with tools and resources to encourage reading for pleasure. This evaluation explored the impact of a delivery model focusing on school-based rather than library-based activities on children's reading enjoyment, reading behaviour and reading attitudes.

Data were analysed from 114 schools that ran Chatterbooks between September 2015 and April 2016, with responses from 1,430 children aged 8 to 11 to an online pre-survey and 1,141 children aged 8 to 11 to an online post-survey. This evaluation shows that:

- Children hold more positive attitudes towards reading after taking part in Chatterbooks activities. In particular, fewer say at the end of Chatterbooks that they read only when they have to and that they cannot find things to read that interest them.
- Children read more frequently after taking part in Chatterbooks. For example, there was a 22% increase in the number of children who said that they read daily over the course of the project, increasing from 35.9% to 43.9% at the end of project activities.
- Children also discovered some new genres and reported a shift in their reading preferences. Some of the genres the children said they enjoyed more in the post-survey include adventure, mystery, war or spy stories, fantasy worlds and family and friends.
- More children also said that they enjoy reading at the end of Chatterbooks activities, but the increase was not statistically significant.
- There was a significant difference in children's perceptions of their own reading ability over time, with 49.1% of children feeling that they are very good readers at the end of Chatterbooks compared with 41.1% before.
- Nearly twice as many children say that they are a member of their local library after Chatterbooks than before (54.8% vs. 33.9%). In addition, 30.9% of children said in the pre-survey that they never go to the library, a percentage that dropped down to 19.3% at post-survey.

These impacts are corroborated by Chatterbooks group leaders (N = 101). In particular:

- 9 in 10 club leaders believe that as a result of the project, children enjoy reading more and have become more enthusiastic about reading. Most also believe that as a result of the project, children read more often and more children read on their own initiative. But the project did not just lead to improved reading outcomes: 8 in 10 club leaders believe that children are more confident speaking in public as a result of taking part in Chatterbooks activities.
- 8 in 10 club leaders also believe that children are now better at choosing books to suit their interests and over 9 in 10 believe that children discovered books they like as a result of taking part in Chatterbooks activities.
- Over 3 in 4 believe that Chatterbooks has resulted in either significant improvement (17.3%) or some improvement (60.5%) in children's reading skills. Similarly, most group leaders identified either significant or some improvement in children's speaking and listening skills. However, they were more ambivalent about any impact on writing skills.

Some of the testimonies from Chatterbooks group leaders gathered in the survey provide useful illustrations to the statistical data, and demonstrate the enthusiasm of group leaders who delivered the project for the outcomes they have seen on participating children:

"A very disengaged boy attended Chatterbooks. He has discovered that he likes to read series of books. It has been lovely to watch him become a confident reader and enjoy reading. He couldn't wait for the next box of books to come out and loved talking about the funny stories to the group. From January to March he made five months' progress. Fantastic!"