

Summer Reading Challenge 2009 Impact Research: Key Findings

The Summer Reading Challenge of 2009 was on the theme of Quest Seekers. 725,000 children were involved in the Challenge through 95% of library authorities in the UK.

An Impact Research Project carried out by UKLA on behalf of the Reading Agency saw the Challenge as an overwhelmingly positive experience and made recommendations for reaching even more children.

What we found out

Children who took the Summer Reading Challenge saw it as an overwhelmingly positive experience.

I wasn't a massive fan before and the lady came in to tell us about the Reading Challenge and I thought it was good opportunity and now I've started, like reading, I love it.

Year 6 boy, Staffordshire

Teachers see the Summer Reading Challenge as beneficial, particularly praising the materials and website resources for the Quest Seekers Challenge.

The enthusiasm came when we looked at the Quest Seekers website... the games...that was the real hook for them.

Teacher, Coventry

It really seems to have aroused a lot of enthusiasm and interest in going to the library and clearly some children had never been.

Teacher, Staffordshire

The Challenge can contribute towards preventing the 'summer holiday dip' in reading motivation and attainment.

She has definitely improved since the summer and has raised her reading level. Furthermore, she enjoys reading and reads for pleasure - the SRC was ideal for someone like her.

Teacher, Wiltshire

The Summer Reading Challenge boosts children's inclination to read at home and widens the reading range and repertoire.

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Danny was a boy who liked short texts and mainly read comics and magazines.
Now he's walking around school with novels, reading them avidly.

Teacher, Coventry

Children who undertook the Summer Reading Challenge read far more books over the summer than those who are keen readers but who did not undertake the Challenge.

Anya was always a good reader but she has grown in enthusiasm during the holidays and keeps asking Mum to take her to the library.

Teacher, Coventry

Children's choice of reading at home is wider and more varied than their school reading and in many cases more extensive than their teachers thought.

Children enjoy talking about reading with friends, family, teachers and librarians.

Teachers themselves are keen readers. They place high importance on being enthusiastic readers themselves in order to encourage a love of reading in their classes.

Practical support should be given to children whose family circumstances make it difficult for them to participate in the Challenge.

The role of the Headteacher is critical in supporting the Summer Reading Challenge. In those schools where the Headteacher was centrally involved more children were engaged with the Challenge and benefited from it.

The Headteacher knew what the Summer Reading Challenge was about; he was very much on board and very encouraging. He was great at emphasising to the young people that this was something that they should get involved in.

Library Information Assistant, Manchester

Librarians value the way the Challenge encourages links between libraries and schools and provides an opportunity to engage with children and their reading.

We go as a small group and we look at the different areas, so there's fiction and what we might find there ... We talk about the authors that we know already, who we've read and what we like so the children have a catalogue of authors they can draw on and we look at how it's organised and we help the children to ask questions to the librarian.

Teacher, Manchester

The best recruitment and completion of the Summer Reading Challenge happens where the librarians are flexible and innovative.

The library is only too happy to open at any time for us to take children for a visit.

Deputy Headteacher, Staffordshire

The Summer Reading Challenge has the potential to reach more families whose circumstances do not always allow them the opportunity to use library facilities. Closer collaboration between agencies: schools, libraries, and youth services can strengthen community cohesion.

What you could do

Based on the research findings, the following suggestions were made:

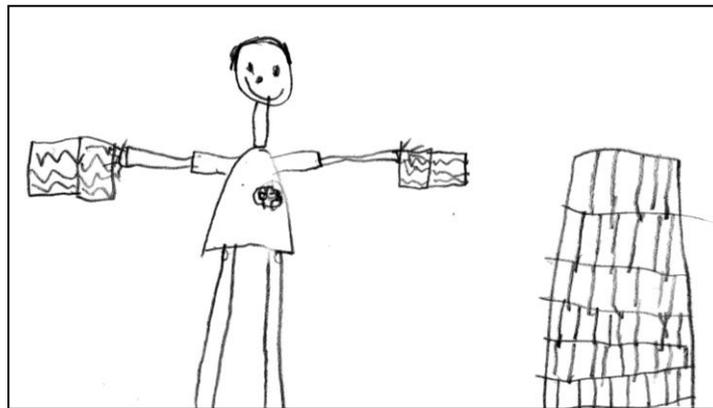
Schools might:

- Identify particular groups of children and their families and offer practical support to help them to take part in the Summer Reading Challenge. Make personal contacts with parents and encourage siblings, older friends and reading buddies to arrange to accompany younger readers to the library.
- Follow up and try to sustain any gains in commitment and achievement made by children who have taken part in the Summer Reading Challenge.
- Continue to take classes to visit the local library and invite librarians to school during the year to discuss reading enthusiasms more generally.
- Use the expertise of local library staff to visit the school to advise on book availability, how to expand the range of books used in the classroom, and help develop in-school library facilities.
- In collaboration with local librarians, plan to include the Summer Reading Challenge in the reading curriculum of the school, directly linking summer and autumn texts and discussions about reading and organising events across the school or between schools.
- Discover more about the interests and preferences of young readers' home practices in reading all kinds of texts – paper-based and on screen – and use this knowledge to support their in-school reading.
- Share teachers' own reading enthusiasms and preferences with young readers, discussing reading as an everyday, pleasurable and satisfying activity. Establishing book-talk groups, perhaps in collaboration with the local library, with parents and with children of mixed ages, would enhance opportunities to talk about reading, and expand the reading repertoire of adults and children alike.

Libraries might:

- Establish a policy of greater flexibility of lending arrangements during the Summer Reading Challenge, perhaps allowing for longer periods of loan and numbers of books borrowed at a time.
- Identify a small number of local schools which have not previously been involved in the Summer Reading Challenge, or have only had a few children who participated. Target Headteachers specifically and make efforts to visit schools to promote the Challenge and to plan it into their reading programmes throughout the year.
- Organise conferences or network meetings with headteachers and local authority literacy consultants.

- Establish an annual programme of links with schools so that visits to promote the Challenge can start early in the school year.
- Sustain gains made by children who participated in the SRC through post-Challenge contacts.
- Publicise the facilities offered by the library to support schools in developing the range of reading in school and in setting up more vibrant school libraries.
- Network with local authority staff with a responsibility for literacy in order to profile the Summer Reading Challenge at Local Authority literacy events.
- Expand the provision of media and types of text offered as part of the Summer Reading Challenge. Plan specifically for particular groups, for example, bilingual families.
- Develop closer links with other agencies, for example, the youth service, to strengthen efforts to work with the community and develop greater community cohesion. Discover what other summer holiday activities are offered by the local authority and voluntary groups and seek to connect with them.



Draw yourself doing the Summer Reading Challenge, Joe Y3

For full report, go to: readingagency.org.uk/about/impact/