

Schoolreaders

improving literacy • increasing life chances

A message from our Founder, Jane Whitbread

I am writing this during the COVID-19 lockdown which has been a very difficult time for so many people in different ways. Our heartfelt thoughts go out to all those in the Schoolreaders family who have been affected. As you can imagine, our work has also been impacted by the current crisis. In March, Schoolreaders volunteers were supporting over 12,700 children every week in 686 partner schools across the country. With school closures, all volunteering has paused and we have had many messages from schools letting us know that they miss their volunteers and are looking forward to welcoming them back when it is safe to do so.



Thankfully, we have been able to adapt our reading support service during this time. In April, we launched 'Schoolreaders Storytime', an online portal with videos of Schoolreaders volunteers reading popular children's stories from authors such as Michael Rosen, Julia Donaldson and Emily Gravett. Over 1,500 primary schools have been receiving weekly stories which are then shared with both the children at home and those children who have returned to the classroom.



“Your stories were very positively received! We are looking forward to support when we return to school and are hoping to recruit additional Schoolreaders. Many children will have fallen behind in their reading, so sessions with the volunteers will be a great help in closing this gap.”

- A Bedfordshire school

Volunteer Kathy Thompson

We have received some wonderful feedback from schools, children and parents. Our thanks go to the Schoolreaders volunteers who recorded the stories and to the publishers and authors who generously allowed us to share them. As in-school volunteering may not be an option for some of our volunteers for some time, we are also looking at various technological options to complement our in-school volunteering in the future.

We are also running a Summertime Book Review Competition to encourage children to spend their holidays enjoying books, and writing creatively about what they've found interesting and enjoyable in their reading. Launched by M G Leonard, author of the 'Beetle Boy' series, the competition also provides the opportunity for the children to win books for themselves and for their school's library.

We have been very mindful that our volunteers are missing going into their school and helping children during the lockdown. We have therefore kept in regular contact with them, keeping them informed and providing some interesting resources. We opened a telephone chat-line and the team have enjoyed hearing from many volunteers throughout this period.

“Your messages have raised the spirits during these surreal times.”
- A reading volunteer

Thank you all very much for your ongoing support. We continue to make a difference to children's literacy even during these difficult circumstances. Unfortunately, as with many charities, our fundraising has been impacted. We are self-funded and rely on support from trusts, fundraising events, individual donors, gifts in wills, school donations and regular giving. Many of these areas have been affected. We offer our service to schools for free, so that all children have the opportunity for reading support, irrespective of a school's financial situation. I would like to say an extra big thank you to everyone who has continued to support us financially. Many, many children will have fallen behind with their reading during school closures. Schoolreaders is well-positioned to step in and help these children to catch up with vital reading support. Our volunteers will be needed more than ever.

With my very best wishes

Jane Whitbread

A NEW PARTNERSHIP



Schoolreaders is very pleased to have established a three-year partnership with Tritax Big Box REIT Plc, specialist investors in large logistics warehouse assets throughout the UK. Tritax Partner Petrina Austin comments, 'Tritax Big Box is delighted to be supporting Schoolreaders' valuable work within the local communities in which our warehouses are situated. We recognise that improving children's literacy skills is central to positively enhancing their lives and academic prospects. This core skill is key to bringing longer term social and economic benefits to the communities in which we operate'. We're delighted that our vision of how good literacy builds flourishing societies is shared by Tritax Big Box and we thank them for their fabulous support.

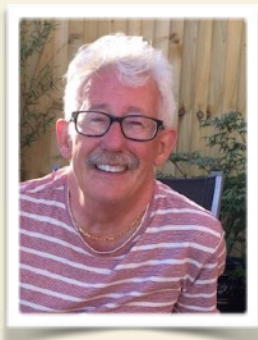


CREATE! for Schoolreaders

A small but wonderful silver lining of the COVID crisis has been the way so many of us have found time to reconnect with creative pastimes. We'll be celebrating this with a competition running this July and August, 'CREATE! for Schoolreaders'. If you've just picked up an old craft or delved into a new one, send us a photo of your work - find out how on our website. Categories: Needlework/Textiles, Painting/Drawing, Photography and Other Creations. Our judges include potter and entrepreneur Emma Bridgewater, New York-based artist Hugo Guinness, super-sewer Sarah Foot, and photographer Harry Cory Wright.

Keeping in touch

Hearing from our volunteers while they're isolating at home has been a real pleasure for our staff team, and it has been wonderful to receive so many stories from the Schoolreaders frontline.



“ I left home at 16 and trained as a nurse, progressing through practice to teaching, and ending up as a senior university lecturer. Then, one day, I was made redundant. Out of the blue I saw something on social media about Schoolreaders. To say that it changed my life is an understatement. I volunteer in a small school in a rural area that has a high level of social deprivation. It has the most dedicated, skilful and caring teaching and support staff I've ever experienced. I have been welcomed, encouraged, supported and dare I say, valued by them all. Every visit is a joy.”

- Chris Dowd

Schoolreaders in 'Hello!' Magazine

Best-selling author Sophie Kinsella is a champion of our work and is the featured author in our Book Quiz this year. As a self-confessed obsessive reader she recently shared her top 10 lockdown books with Hello! Magazine and used the opportunity to tell the magazine's 1 million-plus online readers why she supports Schoolreaders and our Book Quiz. You can read the full article in the online edition of 29th April 2020; Sophie's top reads included *Emma* by Jane Austen and *The Bookshop on the Shore* by Jenny Colgan. We're very grateful to Sophie for her wonderful support.



PHOTO © John Swannell

PHOTOS © Emma Bridgewater Ltd

The impact of COVID-19 on children's reading

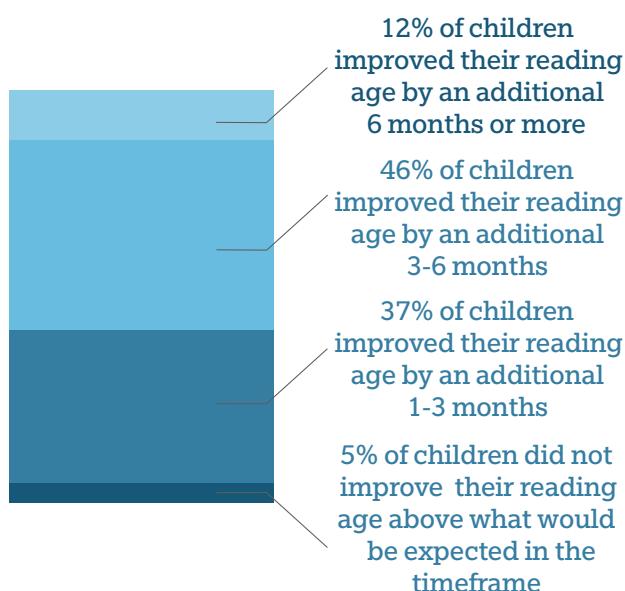
At the time of writing, in early July 2020, some primary pupils have returned to their classrooms having missed around 8 weeks of lessons. Many of their classmates may not return to school until the autumn.

The effect of this missed schooling on the reading attainment of some children will be enormous. When you're only six or seven years old, a gap like this represents a very large proportion of your entire school career.

While lots of children will have been enjoying quality time learning from their parents and carers, there will be many whose main carers lack the time, confidence, skills or motivation to step in where teachers have had to stand back. Disadvantaged children tend to suffer the most.

What difference can Schoolreaders make?

Schoolreaders' mission has always been to put the acquisition of good reading skills within the reach of all children. Our most recent feedback from teachers at partner schools shows how effective our support can be:

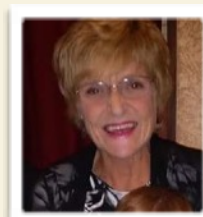


Research carried out with the Institute for Research in Education (University of Bedfordshire)

With your help we can mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on our children's education. The Department for Education has already acknowledged that one-to-one or small-group tutoring will be crucial in getting children's reading back up to speed, and we are in contact with the Department about how we can most effectively play our part in setting children back on the path to good literacy. Whether you are a volunteer, teacher or funder, we thank you for your support at this critical time.

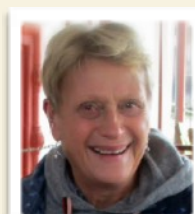
Answers to word puzzles on back page: ice cube, cat among the pigeons, all in a day's work, back-seat driver, first aid, head over heels, seven seas, once upon a time, three blind mice (no 'i's/eyes), ping pong - p 'in' g p 'on' g

“ I was reading with a young lady who pointed to the veins in my wrist and asked me what they were. I explained and we then talked about the difference between words that sound the same but are spelled differently. We discussed vain – as in the queen in Snow White – and veins – our blood vessels. She thought hard for a while about this, then said ‘have I got some?’. ‘Yes’, I replied, ‘but you can’t see them yet because you’re young’. She looked at me with big wide eyes and said ‘You must be very, very old Mrs English’. I just love how what comes into their heads comes straight out of their mouths! ”



- Pat English

“ I look forward to my two hours in school every Thursday and I'm happy to say the children feel the same. We chat about the book they have chosen, discuss the characters, and make sure they have understood the story. One boy was reading about a family, and I asked him if he had a baby brother or sister, he said ‘No, but I've got 2 guinea pigs’ – a better alternative, he implied! I am made to feel totally part of the school, and am invited to school plays and art exhibitions. In December I went with the children to our local church for carol service, then back to school for Christmas lunch, such a lovely happy occasion. ”



- Eileen Tucker

Some time to spare?

We hope you enjoy these fascinating websites. And if you don't find yourself immersed in these amazing virtual resources, you can have a go at our word puzzles - answers are at the bottom of the previous page.

National Geographic magazine has always been famed for its fabulous photography. Now you can enjoy moving images from the same team at <https://video.nationalgeographic.com>

Amazing videos include honeybees seeing off a marauding Asian hornet, and an insight into the social lives of manta rays.

If you're a fan of BBC 1's 'Fake or Fortune', you will enjoy Philp Mould's 'Art in Isolation'. In this series of more than 20 short videos the art historian and dealer takes us around his own house, telling us about the pictures that have earned a place on his walls. <https://philpmould.com/news/40-art-in-isolation-all-episodes-series-catch-up/>

You can explore the contents of more than 2000 museums in 80 countries at <https://artsandculture.google.com/partner> - there are virtual tours of many of them, or you can focus on individual artworks, seeing detailed photographs and amazing background stories.

Can you identify these 10 well-known phrases?

(frozen water)³ p F i E g L e I o N n E s
daysallwork aid aid aid head
revirdtaes heels
C C C C C C C once p
mce mce mce 08:45am G G

Thank you to all our supporters

We are grateful to each and every one of you who has contributed over the past few months. Special thanks go to:

- The generous couple funding our office rent for the next year
- Our trust supporters, including those funding the salaries of some of our Operations Team
- The many schools who have held fundraising events like cake sales and dressing up days for us
- All those who have sold books, DVD's, CD's and video games via www.ziffit.com and donated their proceeds to us

Schoolreaders is a charity and has to raise funds to cover all the costs of recruiting and placing volunteers in schools across the country. Children need your support now more than ever.

Donations of any size will make a difference. And if you might consider leaving a gift in your will please visit www.schoolreaders.org or contact Natalie or Fiona on 01234 924333. Please also feel free to share our details with anyone who might like to support this vital work.

“ I had last been in a primary school in 1953! A lot has changed - books for a start, which are now so varied and colourful. Once I got used to sitting on little stools in the library I soon got the hang of listening to the children read. Some were pretty good I have to say while others needed more attention. I quite often find myself competing with



ukulele and flute classes! When I was ill last year, I received a large 'Get Well' card signed by all the pupils, which I must admit made a grown man shed a few tears. ”

- Dennis Skeet

LOCKDOWN LEXICON

Have you been marvelling at the speed with which COVID-related words have entered everyday usage? But of course few of them are truly new:

'Quarantine' has its origins in the 14th century when the Venetian state, in an effort to keep plague out of its territories, would make foreign ships wait at anchor for 40 (*quaranta*) days before allowing them to dock.

'Isolate' also has its roots in Italian – by staying alone, one is making oneself into an island or *isola*.

'Epidemic' and 'pandemic' both appear in the 17th century, when England experienced the final waves of the 'Great Plague', at its most virulent in 1665 to 1666.

'Vaccine' - from *Vaccinae*, Latin for cowpox - after Edward Jenner's 1798 discovery that humans injected with cowpox virus were protected from deadly smallpox.