

The history of Reading Recovery

Developed by New Zealander Dame Marie Clay in the 1970s, Reading Recovery's presence in Britain extends over nearly 2 decades. Observing its popularity and impact in New Zealand, Surrey Local Education Authority opted to introduce the approach to its schools in 1990, and in 1992 the then Conservative Government made £14.2 million available to pilot the programme in 20 more authorities across England. This money funded the training of Teacher Leaders, who went on to train around 600 teachers to provide Reading Recovery in schools.

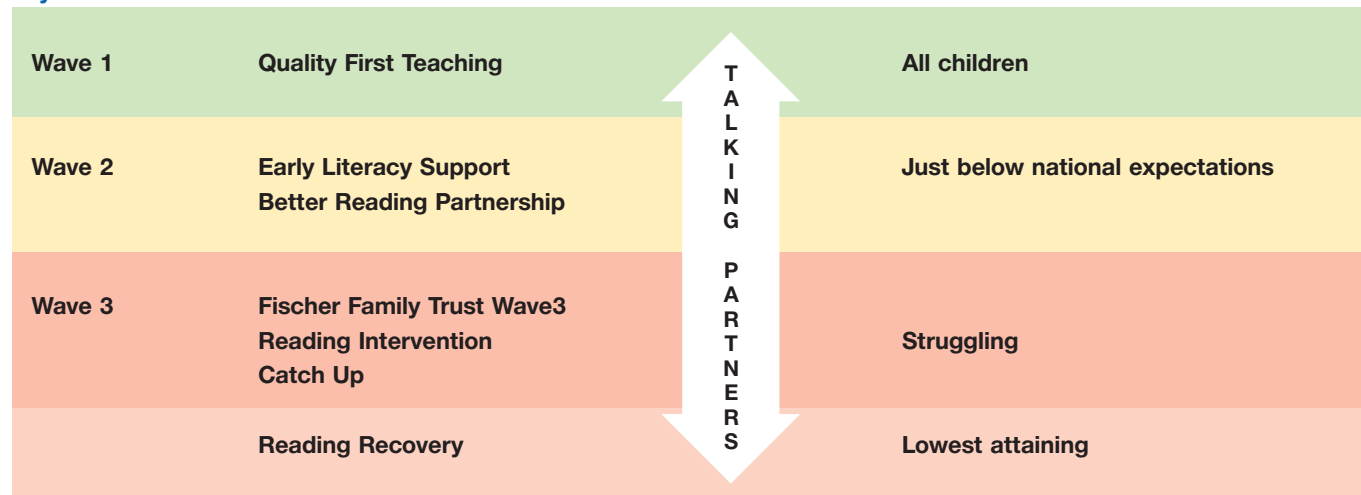
When funding ended in 1995, many schools sought to continue the programme, with Headteachers and Governors convinced that the impact of a specialist teacher justified the spend on salary. But competing demands on school budgets, and the diversion of Teacher Leaders to train for the delivery of other, less intensive literacy interventions inevitably led to a steady decline in the reach of the programme.

Schools that withstood this attrition have now been offering the programme to their student body for over 15 years, with impressive results.

“We looked at the end of Key Stage 2 results of the 14 children who had Reading Recovery when they were six. Thirteen got Level 4 in English, and one got Level 5.”

Special Needs Coordinator at a Bristol Primary School

Layered Intervention



By taking a layered approach, Every Child a Reader balances the rights of children with severe literacy difficulties to the best possible support with the principles of cost effectiveness and school autonomy.

The features of the Every Child a Reader Programme: “creating the challenge”

Every Child a Reader enables schools to provide the best-evidenced intervention for its most challenged readers. Beyond this, it is a resource for schools to use towards the goal of raising the literacy standards of all its pupils, based on their own assessment of how the specialist teacher's expertise can be most effectively deployed.

The programme places highly trained Reading Recovery teachers in primary schools to work one-to-one with the lowest achieving six year olds and support literacy teaching more widely. It is unique in its quality assurance infrastructure, which requires teachers delivering the programme to take part in ongoing professional development, observation and on-the-job coaching to maintain their accreditation.

One-to-one tuition from a specialist teacher has been shown to have an unparalleled effect on the attainment of those children with little or no reading skills at age 6. Interventions such as Better Reading Partnership, in which teaching assistants or volunteers work one-to-one with children for ten weeks, work well as long as the children have started reading, but not if they are non-readers. Likewise, interventions based on tuition in groups show good results for raising the standards among those with below average reading performance, but not those children with the most acute difficulties.

“We have bright children whose domestic experience and background denies them the privilege of early literacy. Reading Recovery helps us to bridge that gap and then demands that the school maintain children at the ‘norm.’ Thank you for creating the challenge!”

Headteacher

Planning for the future

The welfare of the child is the founding motivation of ECaR and all those who work on the Programme. The short term impacts of Every Child a Reader on attendance, behaviour and confidence are clear.

Yet Every Child a Reader is not just about improving the prospects of the lowest achieving 5%. The implications of inaction on literacy spread far wider.

Without help early on, children with severe literacy difficulties require significant investment later, in special needs support and truancy and behaviour support. A typical primary school

“This approach will help ensure that all children are able to leave primary school literate and numerate.”

Centre for Social Justice



Research

- 1 Correlations found in a number of studies including Mills, S. and Stipek, D. (2006) Contemporaneous and longitudinal associations between social behaviour and literacy achievement in a sample of low income elementary school children. *Child Development: 77*, 103-155; Galloway, D. (1985) Persistent absence and exclusion from school, *British Educational Research Journal* 11, 1; Martin, C. (1995) *Psychological characteristics of pupils permanently excluded from school*. Paper presented to the British Psychological Society Annual Conference; Parsons, S. and Bynner, J. (2002) *Basic skills and social exclusion*. London: The Basic Skills Exclusion; Parsons, S. (2002) *Basic skills and crime*. London: The Basic Skills Agency; Vorhaus, J. (2006) *Returns to literacy and numeracy: recent evidence*. National Research and Development Centre for Basic Literacy and Numeracy
- 2 E.g. Center, Y., Wheldall, K., Freeman, L. and McNaught, M. (1995) An evaluation of Reading Recovery. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 30, 2; Quay, L., Steele, D., Johnson, C. and Hortman, W. (2001) Children's achievement and personal and social development in a first-year reading program with teachers-in-training. *Literacy teaching and learning: an international journal of early reading and writing*, 5, 2.
- 3 Every Child a Reader: the results of the first year (2006)
- 4 Schwartz, R., (2005) *Literacy learning of at-risk first grade students in the Reading Recovery early intervention*, *Journal of Education Psychology*, 23005, bol97, pp. 257-267
- 5 Douetil, J. (2004) *The long term effects of Reading Recovery on National Curriculum tests at end of Key Stages 1 and 2*.
- 6 McDowall, S., Boyd, S. and Hodgen, E. (2005) *Reading Recovery in New Zealand: uptake, implementation and outcomes*. New Zealand Council for Educational Research
- 7 Schwartz, R. M., Askew, B. J., & Gómez-Bellengé, F. X. (2007). What works? Reading Recovery: An analysis of the What Works Clearinghouse Intervention Report issued March 19, 2007.
- 8 Torgesen, J., Myers, D., Schirm, A., Stuart, E., Vartivarian, S., Mansfield, W., Scancavage, F., Durno, D., Javorsky, and Haan, C. (2006) *National Assessment of the Title I: Interim Report Volume II: Closing the Reading Gap*, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance NCEE 2006-4002, US Department of Education
- 9 Blanden, J. (2006). *Bucking the trend*. London: Department for Work and Pensions Working Paper no 31

The Every Child a Chance Trust

The development of the Every Child a Reader programme is testament to the power of the business community and voluntary sector to combine and create initiatives that combine social conscience with evaluative rigour.

The Every Child a Chance Trust was established in 2007 to continue to develop and promote early intervention programmes proven to improve the educational outcomes of the lowest-achieving children. Independent from Government, we continue to monitor the progress of the Every Child a Reader Programme, consulting with officials, local authorities, schools and headteachers on best practice.

will spend £2,187 over Key Stage 2 (ages 7-11) on special needs support for each pupil who has not learned to read by the age of 7. A typical secondary school will spend £3,526 per pupil on special needs support for each child entering below Level 3 in English, over the ages 11-16.

Beyond school, costs incurred through unemployment, poor health and the increased crime rates associated with poor literacy rise steeply. KPMG research conducted in 2008 estimated the cost to the public purse of pupils in England leaving primary schools with very low literacy skills to be up to £64,000 a head over a lifetime – an annual cost of around £2.6BN.

“From what I have seen, I've been struck by how far schools invest emotionally in this programme – the achievements of children on Reading Recovery raise aspirations across the whole school and encourage staff to think more inventively and ambitiously about how they can support all pupils.”

Charlotte Leslie, Conservative PPC for Bristol North West



The vision of Every Child a Reader

The Every Child a Reader programme was developed in recognition of the power of reading to enable and enhance learning and life chances. There are robust, persistent correlations between poor literacy skills on leaving primary school and disillusionment with education, anti-social behaviour, crime, low pay, unemployment, and the poor literacy skills of the next generation.¹

By tolerating failure in reading, we lower not only our aspirations for that individual; we undermine our ambitions for society as a whole.

All children should be able to read and write by age seven. What works for one may not for another. Every Child a Reader sets out to offer personalised learning support to those children who are unresponsive to whole-class teaching methods and would otherwise struggle to come close to the achievements of their peers.

If we value and respond to the needs of the individual child, we equip them to participate, contribute and share in all our success.

**Every Child
a Chance
Trust**

Making Reading Recovery work harder and better

The revival of Reading Recovery in the UK began when the KPMG Foundation set about research into the best way to support reading development among children with dyslexia.

Their investigations kept leading them back to Reading Recovery. Teachers who had trained in Reading Recovery or seen it used for the lowest achieving pupils in their classes displayed a strong personal commitment to the approach. They were emphatic about its impact on those children who had little or no reading skills at age 6 – not just narrowing the gap between them and their peers, but bridging it. Academic research and its use internationally lent substance to this grassroots support.²

But the KPMG Foundation wanted to better understand the barriers to applying Reading Recovery in the UK. Its decline in the absence of government funding suggested that schools were having difficulty justifying investment and tended to opt instead for other approaches. Cheaper interventions based on group teaching rather than one-to-one tuition had grown in popularity. In addition, some research questioned whether initial gains made by pupils exposed to Reading Recovery were sustained over time.

Foundation Trustees saw that any long term plan to implement Reading Recovery in the UK needed to address these concerns directly. They raised £5 million from supportive businesses and charities to fund a new pilot of Reading Recovery with the goal of developing and rigorously evaluating a new, sustainable and cost effective programme. This sum was matched by Government, following a further assessment of existing evidence within the then Department of Education and Skills' research division.

The Every Child a Reader programme in the form we see it today was devised in consultation with school leaders, teachers and parents in the first year of the pilot, which discussed how Reading Recovery could be set in a framework which supported broader literacy teaching whilst continuing to produce impressive results for the lowest achievers.

Evaluation by the Institute of Education, University of London found that the reading age of students exposed to Reading Recovery through the Programme – the lowest achieving five per cent - improved by an average of 21 months after just 40 hours of teaching.³ 86% of the children involved went on to achieve the level expected of children their age in National Curriculum reading assessments at age seven - two percentage points ahead of the national average for all children. Whole-class standards also improved in schools

using Every Child a Reader, recording an average four per cent increase in overall reading scores at Key Stage One, against a static national average.

On this basis, the Department for Children, Schools and Families has committed to match-fund a national roll out of the Every Child a Reader programme in schools from 2008.

“This programme has raised our expectations for special needs support – it’s shown we can turn the lowest achievers into high achievers.”

Jonathan Douglas, Director National Literacy Trust

Making Reading Recovery make sense

Researchers saw that making Reading Recovery cost effective for individual schools and local authorities depended on extending the impact of the specialist teacher beyond a core group of children with acute reading difficulties.

The central component of the programme remains the placement of a Reading Recovery teacher in schools to provide specialist tuition for children with severe literacy difficulties. However, equal emphasis is put on the freedom of the school to use the teacher as a resource for supporting literacy teaching more widely.

Reading Recovery teachers funded through the Every Child a Reader Programme are encouraged to support literacy learning across the school, whether by disseminating best practice in whole-class literacy teaching, or by enhancing the quality of the less intensive reading interventions for those children who struggle with reading but do not experience the acute difficulties of the lowest achieving five per cent.

Where total cost is an issue, there is provision for cooperation between schools to share salary costs. Local authorities have also been able to involve Reading Recovery teachers in professional development, teacher training and adult learning initiatives across schools.

“Being unable to read pushes people onto the fringes of society – that’s why investment in reading has such power to bring communities together.”

Jim O’Neill, Chief Global Economist Goldman Sachs

Every Child a Reader’s impact... ... on the individual child

Reading is critical to building self esteem and relationships with peers. The burden of being unable to read impacts on a child’s confidence early, as they find themselves unable to participate fully in lessons or keep up with the academic standards achieved by their classmates. Evidence shows a clear relationship between poor literacy and truancy and behavioural problems, and involvement in crime.

The positive impact of investment at age 6 is as well-evidenced as the consequences of failing to act. Studies have shown that children from disadvantaged backgrounds who develop good reading and vocabulary skills early on are more likely to go on to achieve economic wellbeing.⁴ Every Child a Reader has a profound impact on educational outcomes for these most disadvantaged children in particular.

In addition, parents who have had limited contact with the school previously have become more involved in their children’s education through engagement with Every Child a Reader, beginning to address social exclusion further up the scale.

“I can’t do it’, ‘I am in the lowest group.’ That’s what he used to say all the time. But this quiet, insecure boy who would not dare to participate in classroom activities has, contrary to all my expectations, now made extraordinary progress as a result of the intervention programme.”

Classroom teacher

“At first we a little concerned about whether these lessons would benefit J. and also if she would receive any stigma from the other children in her class for being on this course. But after a few months on the Reading Recovery Programme J. went from a timid little girl with not much confidence, who would cry about going to school, to a confident, happy child who was eager to go to school each day. Her reading and writing has improved dramatically... thank you, Miss Smith, you are a credit to the school!”

Parent

“It really does in almost every case rescue a child – catch them up with their peers and enable them to keep up after the programme finishes. You need to see the delight on the children’s faces as the mysteries of learning to read unfold and their confidence and pride in their achievement grows.”

Headteacher

“The strongest impact is on the new level of engagement with all aspects of school life.”

Headteacher



... on the lives of teachers

Every Child a Reader was developed in consultation with teachers on the ground to create a Programme that would impact on the whole school environment. Teachers with pupils exposed to Reading Recovery through Every Child a Reader have reported a transformation that spreads beyond their individual achievements.

“When the children [on Reading Recovery] not only succeeded but began to outperform the rest of the class, this created a real challenge for class teachers. Their expectations had to rise for all children. We are now seeing the results, in form of an overall improvement in the quality of teaching and in the standards we are achieving across the board.”

Headteacher

“Now I know I can teach any child to read. It is the most satisfying and rewarding role I have undertaken in 30+ years of teaching!”

Teacher

... on the quality of literacy across the community

Reading Recovery teaches the lowest achieving children in a formal setting with specially trained teachers. As a part of Every Child a Reader, this teacher is a key part of broadening participation in education and lifting literacy standards across the community. The best applications of Every Child a Reader have a strong local element, with activities spiraling from the Programme to tailored to the particular needs of schools, parents and pupils in the area.

The Every Child a Chance Trust, which developed Every Child a Reader and now fulfils an advisory role to the Programme at the national, local and school level, is encouraging schools to seek sponsorship from local businesses to promote even more community participation in literacy initiatives. Businesses are encouraged to fund the production of ‘toolkits’ to take reading support materials back into the home, offer additional one-to-one teaching and books for those children most in need, and to take a place on the governing body of participating schools in their area.

Checking it twice

The KPMG Foundation wanted to ensure that investment in literacy teaching was directed to those interventions where the evidence base was both impressive and sound. The most up-to-date research into Reading Recovery challenges early criticisms.

A randomised controlled study conducted in the US in 2005 showed at-risk first grade students who received Reading Recovery for the first half of the school year ‘caught up’ with their classmates. A control group receiving teaching in the same classrooms but without Reading Recovery showed no progress in relation to their peers.⁴

Key Stage Two results of children who had received Reading Recovery five years previously showed more than half achieving at or above expectation for 11 year olds. All were identified at age 5 as children likely to fail to reach national standards over the long term.⁵

“Tolerating poor literacy standards threatens the UK’s ongoing economic prosperity – quite apart from our responsibility to give all children access to the support they need to become happy and successful members of our communities.”

John Griffith-Jones, Chairman, KPMG

Shaping a community-wide strategy on literacy

“Input from the Reading Recovery teacher gave me a structure for my literacy teaching, like a light being switched on!”

Year 2 teacher

Kent schools have introduced a transition plan for children who benefit from Reading Recovery, to ensure initial gains are maintained and spread their new skills and confidence throughout the class. Next steps for learning are agreed with class teachers and ongoing support provided by a teaching assistant trained in Better Reading Partners.

Bristol’s Teacher Leader has trained 250 teaching assistants and business volunteers to deliver Better Reading Partners, a programme that works with children performing below average in reading and

A study of the impact of Reading Recovery across New Zealand, where it is used in 67% of schools, concluded that the approach produced strong gains in performance for students across all schools and characteristics, with the greatest gains made by those who had the lowest literacy levels to start with.⁶

In 2007, the US Department of Education’s What Works Clearinghouse found that Reading Recovery produced bigger and more consistent improvements in all literacy domains than any other beginning reading intervention. Researchers found ‘positive effects’ on alphabetic skills and general reading achievement, ‘potentially positive effects’ on fluency and comprehension and impressive improvement index scores for children exposed to Reading Recovery.⁷

A 2005 study into the impact of additional help provided in small groups found little improvement in attainment for those children who began with very poor or no reading skills.⁸



which has been successful in ensuring gains made by the lowest performers through Reading Recovery are sustained.

Reading Recovery teacher leaders and teachers have supported teaching assistants in delivering Talking Partners, a group-based intervention aiming to improve speaking and listening skills.

In Kent schools, parents of graduates from Reading Recovery mentor parents of children coming on to the Programme

Parents in Liverpool have been offered training in Better Reading Partners, with enthusiastic take up. And there are clear advantages for their life chances - two of those who benefitted are now employed as teaching assistants and two are pursuing NVQs of their own.