



# Bookmark

Change a child's story



## Impact Report 2022/23

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# A message from... Bookmark Reading Charity's Chief Executive

## Children need our support more than ever

SATs results published in July 2023 show that the number of Year 6 students hitting the reading, writing and maths standards set by the government is 59%, down from 65% in 2019. Children's reading levels are declining in the wake of the pandemic and the cost of living crisis. Disadvantaged children are disproportionately affected, with the attainment gap at its widest in 10 years.

We have been working hard to scale our reach and deepen our impact so we can help more children. Despite the sector-wide challenge with volunteer recruitment and industrial action, we supported 1,856 children with at least one full reading programme – an increase from 1,384 last year. We are also supporting more children who qualify for pupil premium and children who have English as an additional language than last year, and significantly more than the national average.

Promoting a whole school reading culture is now a key strategic priority. Over the past year, we have been packaging up our reading programme with other initiatives. This has included carefully curated books, resources for teaching inspiration, scrap books, plus grants for both whole school reading culture and CPD. We have also created our first Comic Book Club to engage reluctant readers. This provided over 300 graphic novels and additional resources to seven partner schools with great results. Last but not least, we have delivered Your Story Corner and Bookmark Book Booster packs to primary schools in deprived communities.

Thank you to everyone who has made it possible for us to support children with their reading this year. I am grateful for our Chair, Board of Trustees, Bookmark team, partner schools, volunteers, donors and supporters. I look forward to implementing our plans for future growth together, so that more children can experience the joy of reading to have a fairer start in life.



*Emily*

**Emily Jack**  
Chief Executive Officer



It's lovely building the relationship and seeing the child begin to trust you, volunteer their own thoughts and ideas, and become more confident."

– Volunteer, Close Brothers

## 2022/23 at a glance

**3,288**

six-week Bookmark reading programmes

**2,186**

Bookmark volunteers

**157**

active partner schools

**40,100** reading sessions

**91%** of teachers say their pupils enjoy reading more

**95%** of teachers saw an increase in children's reading confidence

**80%** of teachers noticed an increase in reading skills

**282,000**

'The Story Corner' magazines distributed



**52,600**

high-quality reading resources distributed as part of the Your Story Corner project

# The children we worked with in 2022/23

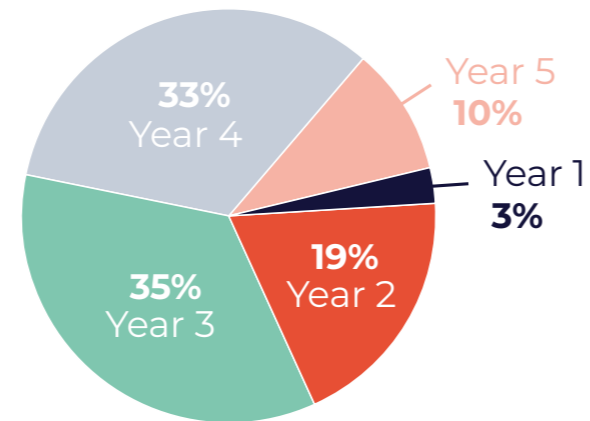
**2,267** children reached\* **1,856** children received at least one full reading programme



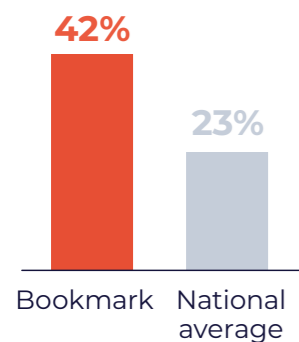
\* Defined as having received one or more Bookmark reading sessions with a volunteer.

## Children supported by year group

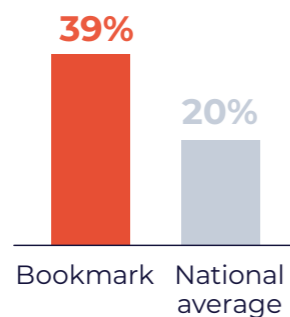
We supported children across Years 1 to 5, delivering 40,100 reading sessions – that's over 20,000 hours of support or 2.28 years of continuous reading! We continue to offer the most support to Year 3, closely followed by Year 4, whose Reception and Year 1 schooling was disrupted by the pandemic. Responding to demand from schools, and following a successful trial last year, we also extended our programme to support Year 5 children. These pupils were in Year 2 at the start of lockdown.



## Children supported on Pupil Premium



## Children supported with English as an additional language



This year, we reached even more children who qualify for pupil premium – much more than the national average. We also supported more children who have English as an additional language at nearly double the national average.



## SECTION ONE

# One-to-one reading support



## Our core programme

Our six-week reading programme gives children who need extra support one-to-one time with a volunteer. It involves two 30-minute sessions each week. These can take place face-to-face in school or virtually through our secure online platform.



### Reading Enjoyment

Children and young people who enjoy reading are nearly four times more likely to read above the level expected for their age (NLT, 2020). However, in 2023, levels of reading enjoyment are at their lowest. The National Literacy Trust reported that just two in four children and young people aged 8 to 18 said that they enjoy reading. This is the lowest level since the question was first asked in 2005 (NLT, 2023).



Engagement with reading is a crucial factor in children's reading performance, particularly for those who are disadvantaged by their socio-economic circumstances. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)'s Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) stated that 'PISA data consistently shows that engagement in reading is strongly correlated with reading performance and is a mediator of gender or socio-economic status' (OECD, 2022).

### Reading Attainment

There is a stronger link shown between doing well in school reading assessments and reading for pleasure, than with reading for information (DfE, 2012). Data from the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) shows that children who express positive attitudes towards reading, and who are motivated to read outside of school, achieve higher literacy scores (McGrane et al, 2017).

### Reading Confidence

Reading for pleasure is positively linked with reading confidence (Clark and Rumbold, 2006). Motivated readers feel more confident in their reading, which increases their willingness and ability to discuss texts (Cremin et al, 2021).



"I have truly felt a sense of purpose whilst volunteering and has given me the confidence to start my PGCE in primary education."

**Volunteer**



**It was lovely speaking to my reader in our reading session. She said she loves turtles, so I was able to find a book that captured her imagination for us to read together. She is amazing!"**

**– Volunteer, DHL**

## Our Reading Programme's Impact

### Improvements observed by teachers

➤ **98%** of teachers felt that the Bookmark reading programme made a positive or somewhat positive difference to children

➤ **91%** of teachers noticed an increase in reading enjoyment

➤ **95%** of teachers noticed an increase in reading confidence

➤ **80%** of teachers noticed an increase in reading skills

➤ **80%** of teachers noticed an increase in motivation to read



#### Confidence

"We have been amazed by the boost in confidence this programme has given all of our children. They love taking part and we have definitely seen progress in their willingness to have a go at reading challenges. It has been wonderful to see so many of them reading more for pleasure now as well."

**Teacher**

#### Motivation

"Every child who has participated has seen a positive impact from this programme. Most noticeably it has been the increase in their confidence and motivation to read, but also we have seen increased performance in comprehension exercises and participation in reading activities generally."

**Teacher**

### Improvements in attainment

➤ **52%** of children improved their reading level after receiving Bookmark support

➤ **57%** of children who received Bookmark support improved from below the expected reading standard

➤ **56%** of children with English as an additional language improved their reading level after receiving Bookmark support



#### Accelerated progress

"I have seen a huge difference in the children's attitudes around reading. They are now choosing their own texts in the classroom and are being far more vocal now that they consider themselves to be good readers. Most of our Year 3 pupils on the reading programme have made between 4-5 months progress over the 12 weeks and two formerly disengaged boys have made 11 months and 16 months progress respectively – it's fantastic!"

**Teacher**

#### Enjoyment

"The most important difference I have noted is wanting to read!! The children are wanting to read and enjoying it which wasn't the case before. So, thank you."

**Teacher**



## Accelerating the progress of pupils in Essex

In Essex, 33% of pupils failed to meet expected standards of reading in 2021/22 – up from 25% in 2019<sup>1</sup>. Bookmark has been supporting children at Janet Duke Primary School in Basildon in the county. We spoke to Jane, class teacher, about her pupil's progress.



### What were the children's attitudes to reading before taking part?

"They were quite reluctant readers. Lots of them struggled because they didn't know their sounds. Reading different genres, like non-fiction or poetry, seemed to make them especially anxious."

"Not all of them get to practise their reading at home, and while they read every day in school, it won't be one-to-one. This leads to them lacking confidence and affects their work in other areas of the curriculum."

### How did you choose which children took part?

"We chose children that were on the cusp of a reading level. We wanted to get those children through their SATs and give their reading a boost."

### What changes did you see in the children after they completed the programme?

"In my class, children have a reading incentive. They need to read at home three times a week and they'll get a treat. One boy would never do this before but now he asks his mum to read with him."

"He also struggled to focus. He would call out, or not sit on his chair properly, or not listen when I was speaking. He comes from a busy home, and I think having that one-to-one time focused his attention. I'm not seeing that low-level misbehaviour anymore. It's encouraged him in all areas."



## Reading progress at Janet Duke Primary School



After receiving one or two reading programmes each, children at Janet Duke Primary made on average 11.38 months reading progress.



"Pupils on the programme are more engaged in lessons, happy to read for pleasure and for a purpose. This has made them all round better learners as they can now access the curriculum more readily."

**Teacher**

<sup>1</sup> Meyler, P. (2023). Essex kids in basic literacy crisis so bad chiefs call it "desperately worrying." Essex Live. <https://www.essexlive.news/news/essex-news/essex-kids-plunge-basic-literacy-8018220>



**Most of the children have made progress but 2 of them have made 20 points progress in their standardised score. This means they are now considered 'borderline' rather than 'below'."**

– Teacher



## *Marta's Story:*

### **'An incredible 17-months progress'**

Marta\* is eight years old and didn't speak the English language when she arrived in the West Midlands almost two years ago. Marta's teacher Cath said 'the language barrier and lower level of vocabulary made it harder for her to interact in whole class situations.' During ongoing assessments and reading tests, Marta's teachers discovered that she was 'well below the chronological reading age she should've been' and 'was off track in terms of the national curriculum levels.'

Many schools are struggling to manage the cuts in funding and Marta's school is no exception. Cath said 'cuts to school funding means we're losing our learning support staff and as a result children are not able to receive additional reading support.'

Marta began reading with a Bookmark volunteer and has now completed four programmes. Marta 'was loving the texts she was reading because she was seeing her own success and getting devoted time with her volunteer.'

As a result, Marta has become a better reader, enjoys reading more and has become more confident in the classroom. Cath said 'interacting with her reading volunteer has increased her ability to communicate' and having dedicated 'one-to-one reading support has been really important.'

Since taking part in the Bookmark programme Marta has joined her year group as they take regular trips to a local day centre for people with dementia. Her teacher said 'she got straight in and chatted, she wouldn't have done that two terms ago, so it was really lovely to see.'

Marta is now working at the expected reading age and has made an incredible 17-months progress in the last six months. Cath said the teachers at her school find the Bookmark reading programme to be 'beyond valuable.'

\*Child's name has been changed for anonymity



## Our school partners

We work in partnership with schools to help children develop a love of reading – and we receive overwhelmingly positive feedback from teachers.

We began collecting a Net Promoter Score (NPS) from our partner schools for the first time in 2021/22, and this year we improved our School NPS from 44 to 64. The results suggest that schools are increasingly and consistently likely to recommend us as an impactful intervention.

We'd like to see a higher level of engagement from schools with our programme. To achieve this, we've introduced new ways of working with us, including additional literacy resources and our grants programme.



64

School NPS

157 schools



From County Durham

To the Vale of Glamorgan

### Our partner schools

Our volunteers read with children at 157 schools this year, from County Durham in the north-east of England to the Vale of Glamorgan in south-east Wales. We also reached 263 primary schools through our Your Story Corner scheme – up from 197 schools last year.



"I would say this is the BEST reading programme we have ever participated in. It allows the valuable 1:1 time to read, which staff in schools struggle to find in school. The volunteers are amazing, and the children truly love their sessions."

Teacher

## Our volunteer community

Every one of our programmes is run by a volunteer. They are fully trained and dedicate one hour a week to supporting a child with their reading.

We're proud of the impact they have – and we know this is important for them too. 88% of our volunteers strongly agreed that volunteering with Bookmark made them feel like they were making a difference.

We want to make sure our volunteers have a great experience, which is why we ask them to take part in our end-of-programme review survey. We've scored 62 in our Volunteer Net Promoter Score, which means our volunteers are likely to recommend us to others.



➤ 1,728 new volunteers joined Bookmark

➤ 84% of volunteers rated their experience with Bookmark as 'Excellent' or 'Good'

➤ 88% of volunteers strongly agreed that volunteering with Bookmark made them feel like they were making a difference

➤ 92% of volunteers felt supported by Bookmark this academic year

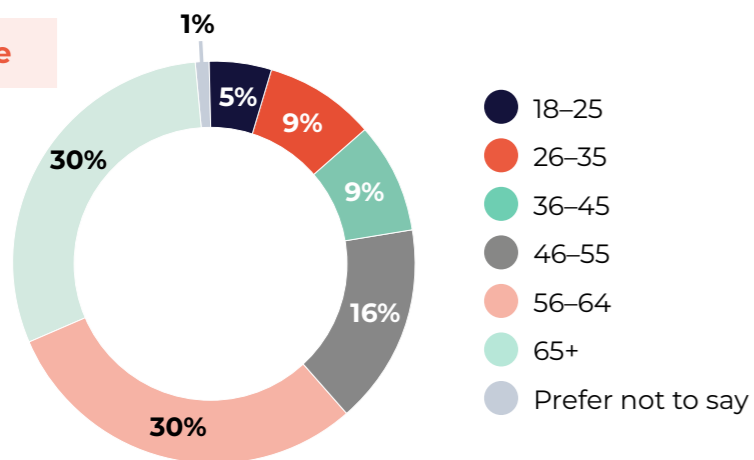
62

Volunteer NPS



## Volunteer demographics

### Age



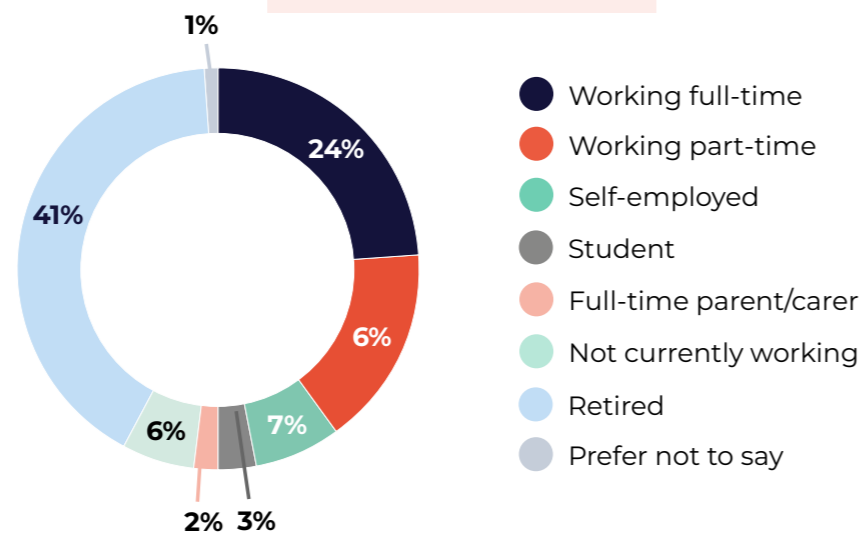
“Thank you, I am really enjoying it. I feel happy to know that I am helping a child to read, and it is also improving my skills too. I have really enjoyed the training and optional training videos. I feel they have helped me improve and I want to continue to learn and improve. I am hoping to keep volunteering long-term.”

**Volunteer**

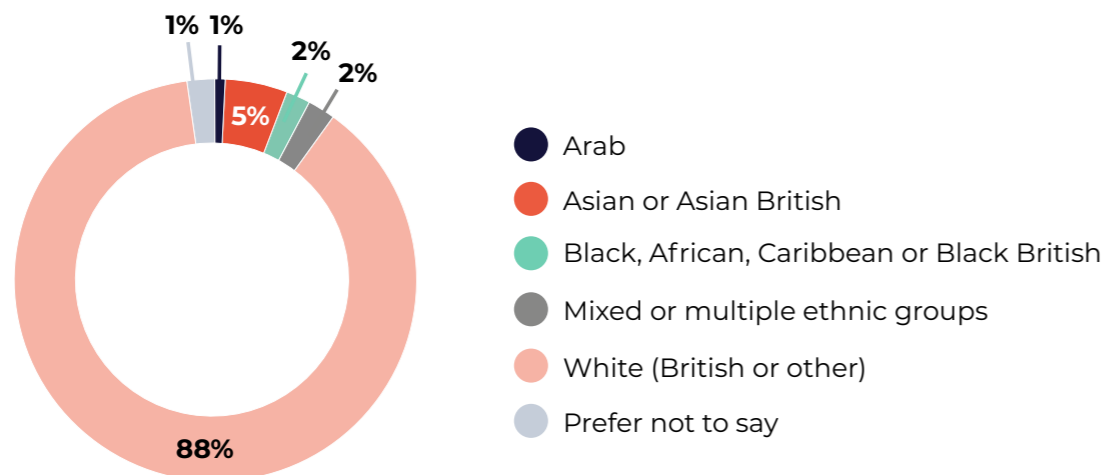
“It’s quiet at home. Some days it’s a bit isolating but as soon as I hear the buzz of the classroom and see my reader, I’m so happy. I’ve never felt so connected to a community of volunteers. It’s honestly the best thing I’ve ever done. When you know your reader is enjoying their sessions and you see them improve, what more can you want. I know I’m privileged to be able to read. Everyone should be able to read.”

**Volunteer**

### Employment Status



### Background



## Diana's Story: 'Volunteering has made life worth living'

Diana is our oldest volunteer. The 91-year-old has delivered 230 online sessions since she signed up to be a volunteer in September 2021.

Diana is a retired teacher and reached out to Bookmark after her husband died, leaving 'a huge hole' in her life. "I had to try and fill my time with something instead of spending all of it moping," she explains.

Angie and Diana have completed three programmes and over 40 sessions together. Angie says of Diana: "She is a great teacher. I really like her; she treats me well and is kind with me." Diana says the help she provides to children is 'a privilege and a gift', adding: "It's made life worth living – I've got some purpose and it's so rewarding."

Diana's story made news headlines. It was featured on 38 shows across the BBC network, including BBC Newsline, BBC Breakfast and CBBC Newsround. It also ran on BBC radio stations, inspiring more people to help children learn to read with Bookmark.

**Diana says the help she provides to children is 'a privilege and a gift'**

Diana is currently supporting five children from the comfort of her own home in Tettenhall, Wolverhampton. One of those children is nine-year-old Angie, who moved to the UK from Central America three years ago unable to speak English.



## Our corporate volunteers

Our community of corporate volunteers delivered thousands of one-to-one reading sessions last year, both in person and online. We're grateful to them for giving up time in their working day to help children become better, more confident readers.

This year, we formed some impactful corporate partnerships with organisations who are looking to engage their employees in giving back. We are looking forward to growing and strengthening these relationships over the coming year, so we can recruit more volunteers and support even more children in 2023/24.



"I will always be grateful to Barratt for allowing us to do this in our work time! It feels like a really worthwhile cause. It was quite alarming to see the number of children leaving school without [being at the expected reading level] ... you take it for granted that it will happen, but it doesn't so you have to step forward! It's the feeling you have made a difference, that's what I do it for."

**Volunteer, Barratt Developments**



"Our Ideagen community strategy has social mobility at its core and a huge part of that is education. We want to create opportunities and hope for the future by building skills in communities. Being able to support Bookmark through donations and volunteering has been a great way for us to share that message and extend our support."

**Ben Dorks, CEO, Ideagen**

"I liked that the Bookmark reading programme worked around my schedule! Over the course of the six-week programme, I was really able to get to know the pupil and enjoyed seeing their progress and development."

**Volunteer, Bloomberg**



"I thoroughly enjoyed my reading sessions. [My reader] did go up a few levels in her reading during the six weeks. She was very proud when she told me. The impact of knowing you are helping someone with their development is invaluable."

**Volunteer, Bank of America**

## The Barratt Foundation & Bookmark: helping children in disadvantaged communities to thrive

In October 2022, Bookmark was delighted to partner with the Barratt Foundation through a donation of £100,000 to reach more children across the UK in areas with high need for additional literacy support.

Over the course of the year our partnership has achieved fantastic results for children across the country. Key highlights include:

- We have extended our reach to cover additional areas with limited social mobility nationwide, and our partnership with the Barratt Foundation helped to give the charity confidence to deliver our Your Story Corner project. The project delivered Your Story Corner packs to 112 schools in Leicester, where a number of Barratt Developments employees live and work. In total 22,400 books have been gifted to these schools along with a host of other resources for pupils to develop the reading enjoyment and motivation they need for a fair chance in life. The Barratt Foundation acted as a key partner to this: their support was the equivalent of delivering books to over 5,000 children.
- We developed the first Barratt Foundation Story Corner magazine, themed around Building Homes and Communities. The magazine itself was distributed to 112,600 children through schools, foodbanks, shelters and more. Barratt employees delivered copies to local organisations important to them.

- Employees from Barratt Developments were generous with their time, runners supported Bookmark at the London Landmarks Half Marathon. They were able to raise £4,840, with generous match funding provided by the Barratt Foundation.
- Barratt Developments employees also made a significant contribution to their communities with 9 employees taking part in a volunteering pilot and delivering 52 online reading sessions to children this academic year.

Andy Button-Stephens, Head of the Barratt Foundation says "We're very proud to partner with Bookmark and provide Barratt Developments employees with meaningful opportunities to get involved in the partnership. From putting books in the hands of children who need them the most to providing valuable one-to-one reading sessions, we are so excited to support children's literacy in communities across the country. We look forward to continuing to make a difference to the lives of hundreds of children in the areas in which Barratt employees live, work and build."

We are incredibly grateful to the Barratt Foundation and all our partners for their support in 2022/23 and look forward to growing our partnerships over the coming year so together we can deepen our impact for disadvantaged children and schools.

## SECTION TWO

# Building Whole School Reading Cultures



## Introduction to Whole School Reading Cultures

We want children to get excited about reading. A whole school reading culture distinguishes reading from the teaching of reading. It creates a buzz – about new book titles and different genres. Promoting that culture is now one of our key strategic priorities.

A whole school reading culture creates time for reading and chatting about books. It supports children's perceptions of themselves as readers and motivates them to read frequently, in class and at home. Reading regularly and for pleasure enriches them, socially and academically, and positively shapes their life chances (Cremin et al, 2021).

To develop a love of reading, children need access to high-quality books and other reading resources, from non-fiction to graphic novels.

They need to have the opportunity to explore and talk about new and different styles of books, authors, and illustrators (CLPE, 2021). Texts also need to be diverse and inclusive, with characters who are representative of the children reading them (McClung et al, 2019).

In addition, nearly 1 in 8 children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds say they don't have a book of their own at home (NLT, 2023).

Young people who use their school library are consistently more likely to say that they enjoy reading (NLT, 2018). This is why, over the past year, we've been packaging up our reading programme with other initiatives to provide holistic support to schools that fosters a love of reading.

**'Diverse'**

**'Engaging'**

**'Inviting'**

are the three most common words used by schools across both regions after receiving a Your Story Corner pack.



## Your Story Corner

This year, we donated 52,600 new books to 263 primary schools through Your Story Corner. The scheme targets areas where we know our support can have the most impact. Previous recipients have included over 197 schools in Lincolnshire and Birmingham.

Your Story Corner aims to support areas with historical levels of literacy deprivation, where communities have been impacted by the lifelong effects that poor reading skills can have. Using government data, including the IDACI (Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index), recent Key Stage 2 reading data, free school meals populations and school Ofsted results, we can build a picture of where Your Story Corner will have maximum effect and support the children who need us the most.

At the end of last year, we opened applications for schools in Plymouth, where, in some of the city's most deprived wards, over 35% of children live in poverty. Every primary school in Plymouth

was offered a free pack and 82 schools (91%) applied. We also donated packs to 112 primary schools across Leicester and Leicestershire.

Each pack is worth £2,000 and includes 200 books suitable for children aged 4 to 9, an annual subscription to The Story Corner Magazine, and teaching resources to encourage reading for pleasure. Of those schools that received a pack, 95% reported that it made a positive difference to reading motivation.

**86%** of schools said their whole school reading culture has improved after receiving support from Bookmark for Your Story Corner

**99%** of schools told us the Your Story Corner packs have made a positive difference to children's enjoyment of reading



## “Too good to be true” for children in Plymouth

91% of primary schools in Plymouth received Your Story Corner packs worth £2,000 and The Cathedral School of St Mary was one of them.

Each pack includes 200 books suitable for children aged 4 to 9, an annual subscription to The Story Corner Magazine, and teaching resources to encourage reading for pleasure. The schools also get a School Library Association membership, providing access to reading for pleasure training, CPD and more.

We visited the school in January to deliver their pack, together with Kerry Bidwell from Promoting Children in Plymouth, who was instrumental in organising the day. We were also joined by local MP Luke Pollard, who helped the children to unpack the books and held a story-time session for them.

Bea Stafford-Smith, Bookmark’s Head of Schools, was there on the day and experienced the children’s delight for herself. “We absolutely loved chatting to the staff about their school and how much of an impact these books and resources will have for hundreds of children”, she says.

Of the 81 schools that received a pack in Plymouth, 93% reported that it made a positive contribution to whole school reading culture. We

also received feedback from teachers at schools in Plymouth praising the quality of the selection as ‘fantastic’, ‘gorgeous’ and ‘wonderful’.

A teacher at one Plymouth school commented on the ‘wonderful diverse selection of texts that will instantly improve our children’s reading experience’. Another said it was ‘almost too good to be true’. “Such a lovely gift”, said a business manager.

One teacher said: “There are so many beautiful books, such a good range of genres, interest levels for all, popular authors and some very new books! We love them and children are already very engaged and asking more to go into the reading for pleasure area – even at breaktime!”



## The Story Corner magazine

We’re helping more children than ever before to access reading resources outside of school. This year, we distributed 282,000 copies of The Story Corner magazine to children across the country – up from 107,871 in 2021/22.

The magazine is distributed to children through food banks, children’s hospitals, children’s support services, libraries and schools. By providing children who have limited access to books with high-quality reading material, we aim to encourage year-round reading and tackle learning loss during the school holidays.

Since the magazine’s launch in 2020, we have distributed over 449,000 copies for children to take home and enjoy.

➤ **99%** of teachers agreed that the magazine is printed to a high quality

➤ **84%** of teachers agreed that the magazine is engaging



“It’s well laid out and well-pitched to the age range. It is accessible to those even with a poor reading ability – there’s something in the magazine for all pupils to enjoy.”

**Teacher**



## Bookmark Rocket Packs

We launched the Bookmark Rocket packs at the start of the academic year 2022/23, with our third pack released in September 2023. In total, we've distributed more than 220 packs to our partner schools – that's almost 5,500 new books.

The packs, which include books and accompanying lesson resources, are each worth £150. They are curated by an author or expert from the education sector around a theme of

their choice and distributed to our Silver, Gold, and Platinum partner schools.

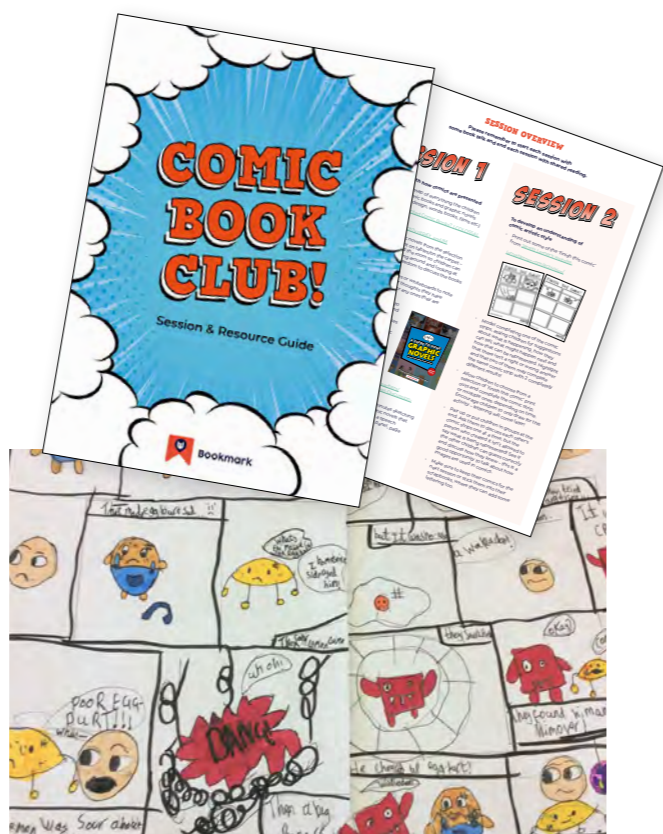
We introduced this tiered partnership system in 2022, offering different packages, with varying levels of additional support and resources, from Bronze to Platinum. Partner schools have access to our one-to-one reading programme, as well as additional benefits designed to help them create a whole school reading culture.



## Comic Book Club Pilot

Our Comic Book Club aims to engage reluctant readers. We launched it as a pilot to seven partner schools during the 2023 spring term. The schools received over 300 graphic novels worth £650; scrapbooks and resources for the number of children in their club; a teaching booklet outlining session plans; and a weekly subscription to The Phoenix Comic.

We asked teachers from the schools that took part for their thoughts. All those surveyed said the Comic Book Club was successful in its aim to engage disengaged readers – and all of them said they would continue to run it next year. It was so successful that we're now offering the Comic Book Club to our Platinum partner schools.



## Whole School Reading Culture Grants

As part of our vision to help schools establish whole school reading cultures, we piloted our first grants programme this year. We received over 700 applications and awarded more than £30,000 to 19 primary schools across England. This was made up of five reading for pleasure project grants of up to £5,000 and 14 reading for pleasure teacher training grants of up to £500.

We're evaluating the impact of our grants programme, and we'll share our findings in next year's Impact Report. In the meantime, find out how some of the schools are using the funding below.

### Hylands Primary School, Romford, Essex

The grant has provided additional resources for KS2 pupils, including books for older pupils who find reading challenging. Other initiatives include bedtime book boxes and playground 'book nooks', as well as after school library sessions for parents and children.

### Bradley Primary, Nelson, Lancashire

The school has used the money to buy new books for a reading for pleasure curriculum, as well as new library furniture. They are funding extra hours for the school librarian to run 'stay and read' sessions, as well as reading for pleasure events and activities.

### St Thomas' C of E Primary School, Newhey, Rochdale

The school has created reading suitcases for classes in EYFS and KS1 to take home each week. The money is also being used to fund 'book nooks' and 'Grandma's snug', an after-school programme that provides a home-away-from-home reading experience in school.

### Co-op Academy Beckfield, Bradford

The grant is being used to purchase books for the library and create a comfortable environment for the children to read in. Over 95% of their pupils said they had never visited a public library and so the school hopes to set up a loaning system so the children can take books home.

### Stony Dean School, Amersham, Buckinghamshire

The SEN school had nowhere for students to read quietly. Its student council had also asked for a library and better books. Work has begun on the creation of a calm space to encourage reading for pleasure, with a woodland mural installed and furniture ordered.

"Children across school ask to read books, including those on display in public areas. We have noticed an increase in the number of children who choose to read in their spare time or when they are feeling down."

**St Thomas' C of E Primary School**



## Closing

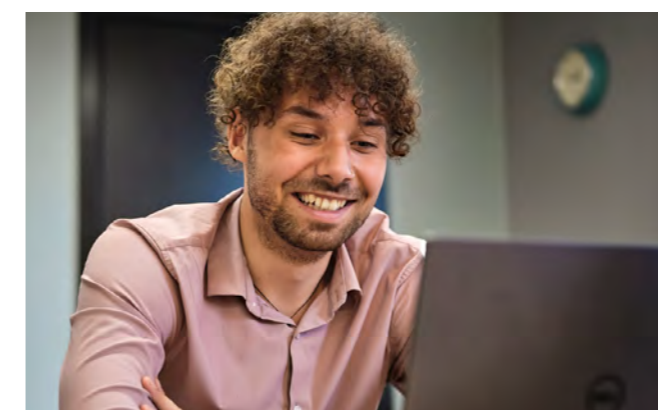
### What we've learnt and what we'll do next

Year 5 pilot	
What we've learnt:	The action we're taking:
Throughout the year we continued to support more Year 5 children across our partner schools. Initially piloted in 2022 we offered over 40 children at 13 schools the opportunity to participate in the autumn term – now, Year 5 children make up 10% of those benefitting from our programme (in the 2022/23 academic year).	<p>The sustained positive feedback we receive has prompted us to continue to deliver our reading programme to this age group.</p> <p>We have prioritised expanding our online reading resources to ensure a variety of age-appropriate content for children we support.</p>
Reading Mentors	
What we've learnt:	The action we're taking:
This year, we invited sixth-form students to volunteer with us by delivering our core reading programme. We focused on partnering children with peer-based reading mentors who could support them to discover the joy of reading.	We will continue to roll out the pilot in the year ahead as we explore the potential of the programme to benefit mentors and children alike.
Comic Book Club	
What we've learnt:	The action we're taking:
After piloting the Comic Book Club in seven schools, we received overwhelmingly positive results.	We're now offering this programme to our Platinum partner schools as an effective initiative to engage children who may be considered reluctant readers and to generate a reading buzz across the school.
Whole School Reading Culture Grants	
What we've learnt:	The action we're taking:
Our experience delivering the grants programme has inspired us to develop a tool to help schools understand their literacy needs and boost their whole school reading cultures.	This is being developed and will be piloted in the current academic year.

## Looking ahead

### Measuring progress in reading attainment

Throughout the 2023/24 academic year we will collect more detailed reading age data from a selection of partner schools. This is in addition to our usual attainment data collection and will provide us with greater insight into the reading attainment progress of children on Bookmark's core reading programme. ImpactEd is supporting us with the design, analysis and reporting of this research to further demonstrate our impact.



### Capturing children's perspectives

It is a priority for us to demonstrate the impact of our programmes on children's reading attitudes and behaviours in a way that includes the children's own perspectives. This year, we are collaborating with another children's literacy charity and have engaged a consultant to work with us as we develop our approach to collecting information from participating children.

### Single session pilot (variation of our reading programme)

Volunteers are vital to our core reading programme. We know that some volunteers are limited in how they can contribute their time. By removing barriers for volunteers who wish to participate in the programme, we hope to support even more children.

- Our single session pilot will deliver our core programme across an extended timeline (one session per week rather than two) to suit corporate partners and sixth-form students who may wish to volunteer.

- We will be closely monitoring this pilot throughout the year to understand its feasibility, scope, and impact.

### Meeting delivery numbers

Last year we had 68% year-on-year growth in reading sessions moving from 23,870 to 40,100 sessions delivered.

We continue to hold ambitious delivery targets, as we plan to deliver 50,741 sessions across our partner schools in the 2023/24 academic year.

### Your Story Corner locations

Your Story Corner was delivered last year to schools in Nottingham, Plymouth, and Leicester. We learnt a lot about the positive outcomes on whole school reading culture within participating schools and the potential for school business development. We know that Your Story Corner has a lot to offer.

This year we will continue to expand our reach across three new locations: Sheffield, Barking & Dagenham, and Wolverhampton.

As we deliver Your Story Corner in Wolverhampton, we will refine our needs assessment criteria. This will ensure we are reaching schools and children who will benefit most from our support.



# Theory of change

## Changing children's stories: discovering the joy of reading

During the 2022/23 academic year we set out to refresh our Theory of Change by reconsidering how we were positioned to achieve our desired impact.

This was a comprehensive process that began with expert external consultation and drew upon the experience held internally within

Bookmark. It involved a review of the evidence base for our programmes, and considered the alignment between our vision, mission, and approach.

We now have an updated evaluation framework which is underpinned by our refreshed Theory of Change.

### OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN:

#### During a Bookmark reading programme:



Children have the opportunity to discover the joy of reading



Children's teachers and volunteers report that the programme has made a positive difference to them

#### After completing a Bookmark reading programme or programmes:



Positive changes to a child's attitude to reading



Positive changes to children's reading skills



Positive changes to children's reading behaviour

#### Benefitting from a Whole School Reading Culture:



Children have access to high quality, varied and diverse reading resources



Teachers are equipped to grow a holistic whole school reading culture



Teachers report improvements in the reading attitudes and behaviours of their pupils



Children have access to school reading spaces



Teachers have access to high quality reading for pleasure training and resources



Every child has the same opportunity to discover the joy of reading to set them up for success.

### Alyssa's reading journey with Bookmark:

Me before Bookmark



Unhappy

Me after Bookmark



Happy



Steve is very nice

My brain before Bookmark



My brain after Bookmark



Best reader!

#### The problem:

Many children leave primary school with poor reading skills which directly contributes to poor educational attainment, lower literacy in adulthood and even lower life expectancy.

Studies indicate that levels of reading enjoyment in children are low, that large numbers of children do not own their own book or have access to a library and that many children do not have opportunities for 1-1 reading or reading role models.

*(National Literacy Trust, 2022; National Literacy Trust, 2022 Cole Brown Clark; National Literacy Trust and National Governance Association, 2022.)*

We are Bookmark Reading Charity. We exist to change children's life stories through the joy of reading. We partner with schools to develop whole school reading cultures, and to provide one-to-one reading support.

#### Reading for pleasure supports children to:



Read more and gain confidence  
*(Cremin et al., 2021)*



Improve their reading skills  
*(Clark & Rumbold, 2006)*



Become happier, healthier and experience better wellbeing and self-esteem  
*(BookTrust, 2023)*



Make progress at school in reading attainment and across the curriculum  
*(DfE, 2012, NLT, 2020, McGrane et. al, 2017, Open University, 2021)*



Ultimately overcome barriers presented by disadvantage  
*(BookTrust, 2023)*

By inspiring the 'joy of reading' we can give every child the opportunity to succeed.





## Methodology

### Our core reading programme:

- We collected pre-intervention reading level data for all children referred to our reading programme. Schools were also asked to provide end-of-year reading level data. Of the children supported, we received complete data for 1,560 pupils (a response rate of 84%).
- Teachers were asked to complete a survey each term. The responses were averaged to create indicators for the whole year. The average response rate was 61%.
- Volunteers were asked to complete a survey at the end of each reading programme. We had a response rate of 50% across the three terms. We also conducted an end-of-year survey for volunteers (from which we received 602 responses, a 26% response rate).

### Whole School Reading Culture

#### Your Story Corner

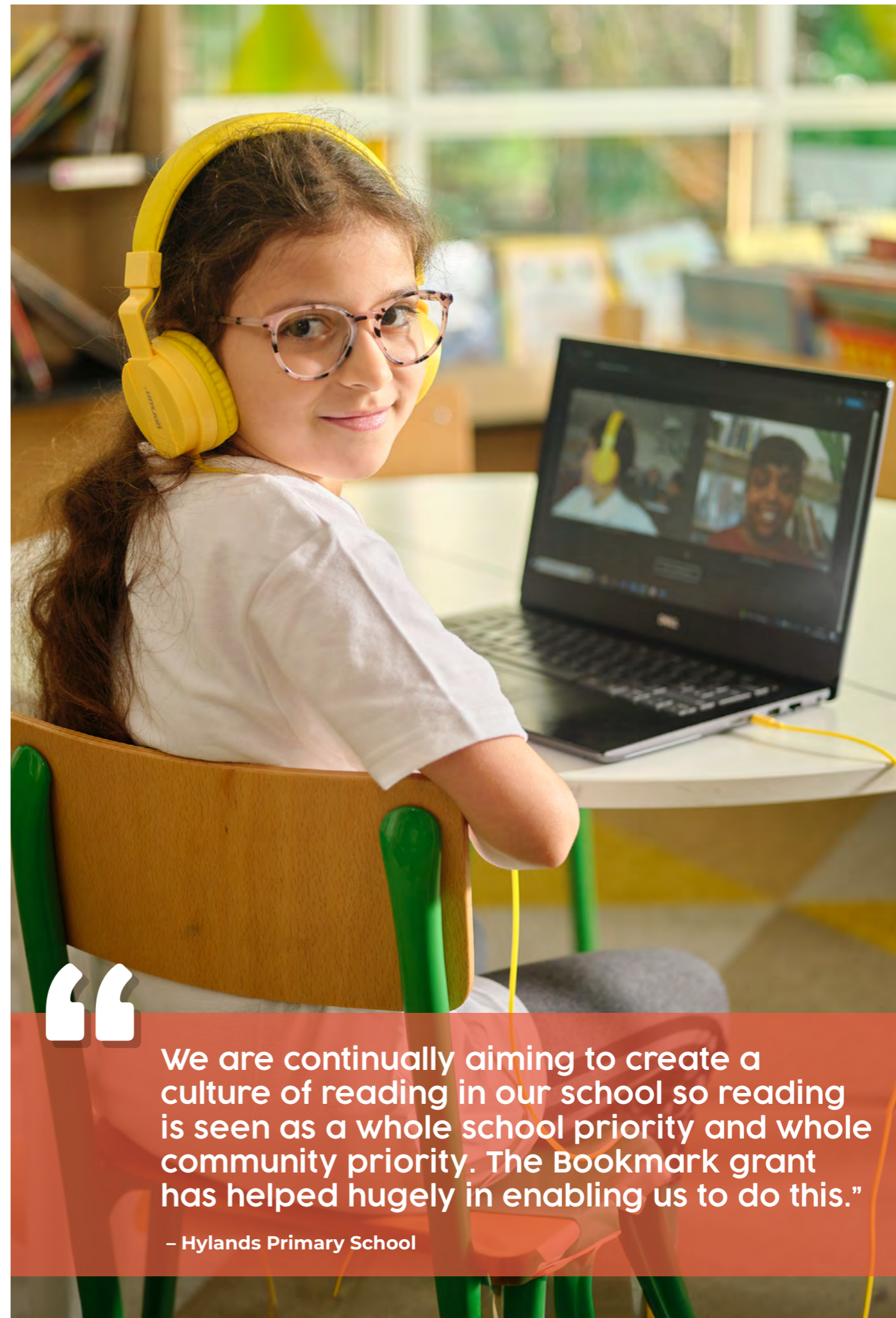
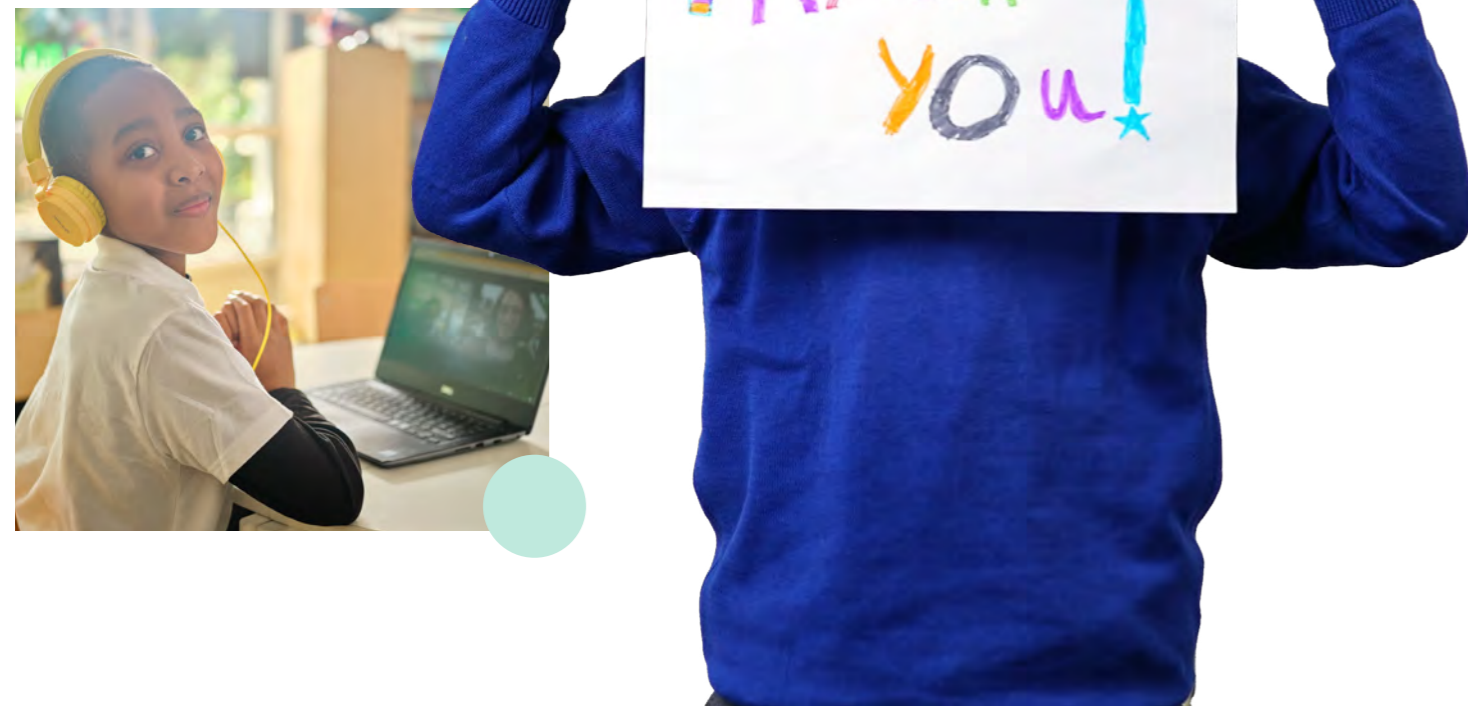
- Schools provided pre- and post-intervention data using our reading audit survey.
- Pupils were asked to complete pre- and post-intervention surveys which teachers then sent us.

#### The Story Corner Magazine

- Questions about the magazine were included in the summer's end-of-term teacher survey.

#### Comic Book Club Pilot

- Four out of seven teachers who ran the pilot completed a survey and semi-structured interview. A session was observed at a school piloting the club. In total data was collected from five out of seven schools who participated.



“

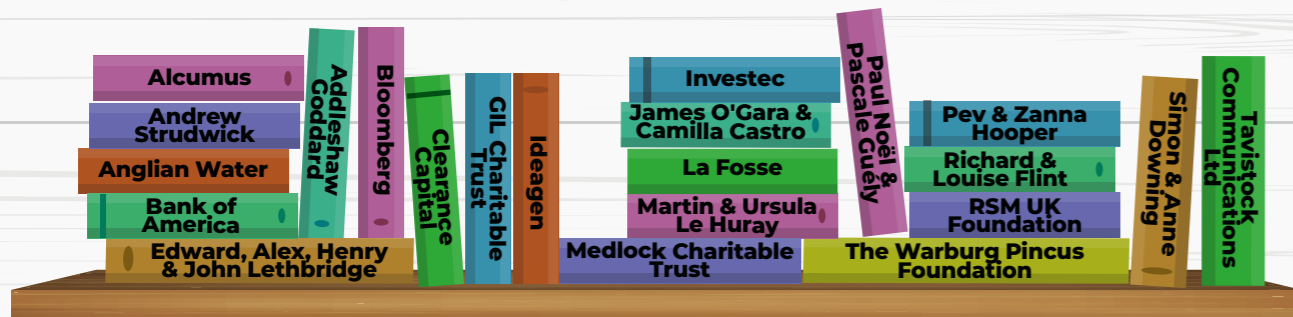
We are continually aiming to create a culture of reading in our school so reading is seen as a whole school priority and whole community priority. The Bookmark grant has helped hugely in enabling us to do this.”

– Hylands Primary School

# Our supporters and partners

## We couldn't do it without you!

Thank you to everyone who has supported us this year. Alongside many who wish to remain anonymous, we would like to recognise the generosity of the following supporters...



A huge thank you to **The Literacy Network** of philanthropists who are instrumental to Bookmark being able to scale in a way that would otherwise not be possible...



# Bookmark

change a child's story

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