



Impact Report

2023-2024

learn to
love to
read

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Who we are - our vision

Working to support children's early literacy in Wandsworth

We are delighted to share our latest annual impact report for the academic year 2023–2024. This year we celebrated our tenth birthday. Our charity has grown from small beginnings where our founder, Teresa Harris, and her friends, approached a Wandsworth primary school, with the offer of supporting children who struggled with reading.

In 2023–2024 L2L2R has grown to a team of 69 volunteers reading in eight partner schools across Wandsworth and seven part-time staff. In addition to supporting 178 children with their reading in schools, we are supporting hundreds of children and their families from 0–11 years old with parental talks, workshops, events and messaging, and we are now delivering 96 early years classes a year in schools, nurseries, children's centres, community centres, libraries and with partner charities.

Our vision of making 'every child a reader' – being able to read and also enjoying reading – continues to guide us.

We know from recent exam data (2024 KS2 attainment data, gov.uk) that, nationwide, 45% of children entitled to Free School Meals are leaving primary school without reaching the expected level of reading. A widening attainment gap means that even more children could fall behind their more affluent peers in their education and literacy skills, which can go on to have a lifetime impact.

In 2023, the National Literacy Trust published research which shows that over half (56%) of children and young people aged 8 to 18 don't enjoy reading in their free time. This is an all-time low statistic since they began surveying children in 2005 and is down 15.2 percentage points from its height in 2016.

The challenge to achieving our vision continues but we are confident that the work we do – supporting children's reading and fostering a love of reading – is helping to change lives.



We hope you enjoy reading about our achievements and challenges in the academic year 2023–2024 and the continuing need for our work.

If you would like to know more about our work or get involved in some way, please get in touch at tara@l2l2r.org.

Tara Coffin
Director, Learn to Love to Read

The need

According to government statistics, the number of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading at the end of Year 6 nationwide remains similar to past years at 74%, meaning that, once again, over 25% of children left primary school last summer unable to read well. Wandsworth figures, as usual, track slightly above the national figures with 79% of children meeting the expected standard in reading at the end of Year 6 (75% in 2022–2023), but this was still below the 81% reported in 2021–2022.

At the end of Year 1, all children take a phonics screening test to assess their phonics knowledge. Last year, once again, a fifth of children did not meet the expected standard nationally (20%) with figures slightly lower in Wandsworth (16%). For disadvantaged pupils, however, the national figure increases to 32%. This gap has remained broadly similar to the year before.

In *The Benefits of Reading*, BookTrust notes that reading supports children to overcome disadvantage. Those growing up in poverty are likely to remain in poverty as adults, but a child growing up in poverty who is read to at age five has a significantly higher chance of economic success in their twenties than their peers who are not read to. Disadvantaged children who achieve highly at the end of primary school are also twice as likely to be read to at home in the early years, compared to their peers.

In recent research with early years families from low income backgrounds (*Children's Reading Habits in the Early Years & The Role of Multiple 'Reading Influencers' in Supporting Children's Reading Journeys*) BookTrust also found that although 95% of parents see reading as important for their child, over a quarter of parents (28%) don't find reading with their child easy and a fifth don't feel confident choosing a book their child will enjoy. This research is borne out in Coram Beanstalk's 2024 survey of 1,000 Mumsnet members which found that children from low income households are less likely to read by choice (64%) than high income households (76%).

BookTrust also observes that children are more likely to become independent readers when they experience reading with multiple people – including family members, teachers or other trusted people in families' lives. However, many fathers and grandparents feel they lack confidence and knowledge in supporting children's reading journeys and teachers report that they have limited time to discover new books and inspire children in their schools.

If children experience early shared reading they are more likely to continue to read as they grow up. Reading for pleasure in the early years has four times more powerful impact on a child's progress across the curriculum at age 16 than parental education or socioeconomic status.

Our goals for 2023-2024

1

Improve literacy levels. Literacy is the ability to read, write, speak and listen in a way that lets us communicate effectively and make sense of the world.

2

Develop early literacy skills so children start school ready to learn to read.

3

Build partnerships with local schools, children's centres and charities, to give all children the opportunity to have positive, frequent reading experiences.

4

Give parents the motivation, skills and confidence to support their children's reading at home.

5

Unlock access to ambitious life opportunities by helping children become confident readers.

6

Help children learn to love to read.

How we strive to meet our goals



One-to-one reading support

We offer children in Years 1, 2 and 3 weekly one-to-one reading sessions with trained volunteers.



Early Years classes

Our classes for 0 to 4 year olds, focusing on songs, stories and speaking and listening games, help children to be ready to read when they start primary school.



Parent engagement

We use our existing parent connections to encourage ongoing parental involvement in their children's reading as well as reaching parents through regular parental talks and workshops.

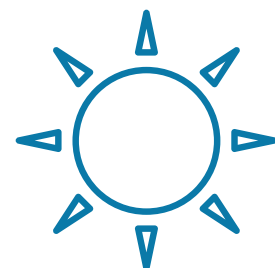


Training and supporting volunteers

Volunteers attend a half-day training session, as well as receiving ongoing support from our Head of Volunteering through regular newsletters, termly meet-ups, our virtual volunteering support line and additional training.

Summer programmes

We offer reading-based play sessions for parents to enjoy with their children during the summer holidays.



Theory of change



Impact

- Children close the attainment gap between themselves and their peers.
- Children are not disadvantaged at secondary school and in future life by having low literacy levels.
- Children develop a lifelong love of reading.
- Parents are more likely to help their children with school work in the future.



Outcomes

- Children show progress in their reading skills.
- Children show increased desire to engage with reading through improved attitude and concentration.
- Children's self-confidence in their reading abilities and enjoyment of reading grows.
- Parents' understanding of the importance of their support grows.
- Parents' confidence in their ability to help their children learn increases.



Outputs

- Volunteers read with children once or twice weekly for 20–25 minutes.
- 69 volunteers.
- 178 children supported in 8 schools.
- Over 3,000 1-to-1 reading sessions run this academic year.
- 208 families attended 25 sets of Early Years literacy classes.
- 185 parents attended 18 talks and workshops.
- 17 families attended 5 reading sessions during the summer holidays.



Activities

- L2L2R forms partnerships with local primary schools who identify children who are below expected levels for reading.
- L2L2R recruits and trains suitable reading volunteers.
- Volunteers work one-to-one with children for 20–25 minutes each week, either in school or virtually via Zoom.
- Early Years literacy classes are run for children aged 0 to 4 years, referred by partner schools, children's centres, local charities and social care professionals.
- Gift packs containing books and activities are given to families who attend Early Years classes.
- L2L2R runs regular talks and workshops for parents about literacy and reading.
- L2L2R holds summer reading programme sessions for parents and children in August.



Resources & inputs

- In 2024 26% of children left primary school unable to read at the government's required standard.
- 32% of disadvantaged children did not meet the expected standard in Year 1 phonics screening.
- Children are more likely to become independent readers when they experience reading with multiple people.
- Targeted intervention in Early Years and Key Stage 1 pupils and their parents, is key to helping children who are at risk of not meeting expectations in their reading.

Theory of change



Changes and challenges in 2023-2024

This year we have focused on building on the foundations laid in 2022-2023 following a strategic review of the charity's work. We remain committed to our five strategic pillars: embedded in the local community, serving the whole family, providing continuity of support, targeting the greatest need, ensuring quality delivery and measuring impact.

In 2022-2023 we began working in Battersea, an area of Wandsworth in which we had not previously had a presence. We have continued to run Early Years classes in this area in 2023-2024 and, for the first time, we now also have two Battersea partner schools.

It was our Battersea work that saw the introduction of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. In 2022-2023 specific funding allowed us to give 19 Battersea families access to this book gifting programme. This year, we have been able to more than double the number of family signups and at the end of the 2023-2024 academic year, we had 41 families enrolled on the programme. We will continue to seek funding to allow us to expand the programme further within our community.

In 2023-2024 it remained a challenge to ensure we always had the maximum number of parents signed up to attend events such as parent talks, Early Years classes and our summer reading club, as well as ensuring those parents who signed up then attended.

This year we focused on ensuring our target families were really getting to hear about our talks, classes and summer reading programme through carefully directed advertising and flyers distributed by our partner schools and community contacts to families they felt would most benefit from our support. If numbers remained low, we opened the events up to the whole Wandsworth community by publicising on social media. We also reminded parents who had signed up by text the day before.

While these campaigns were successful, some talks and classes still ran with less than optimum numbers. Looking forward we will seek to engage parents up with a phone call as we hope that a personal connection before the event will encourage families to attend.



2023-2024 highlights

One-to-one reading support

- 178 children supported across eight partner schools in Wandsworth, both face-to-face and virtually.
- Teachers reported over 90% of children supported by a reading volunteer had improved their confidence, comprehension and enjoyment of reading by the end of the academic year.
- 42% of children were reading at or above their expected age-related levels at the end of the academic year compared to 10% at the start of the year.
- Teachers felt that the support of a reading volunteer had a positive impact on a child's overall reading for 92% of children.
- Volunteer feedback showed over three times the amount of children reading with expression at the end of the year compared to the start of the year and three times the amount of children were on their way to becoming fluent readers.

Parental engagement

- 18 events attended by 185 parents.
- Verbal feedback overwhelmingly positive.

Early Years

- 100 Early Years classes delivered in 2023-2024 – 25 sets of four.
- 208 families engaged with the sessions, with 77% of families attending half or more of their set of four classes.
- 92% of parents who provided feedback rated the classes 5/5 for usefulness with 99% rating them 4/5 or 5/5.
- 88% of parents who provided feedback would recommend the classes to other parents.
- 41 children aged 0-5 receiving monthly books from the Dolly Parton Imagination Library.



2023-2024 highlights

Volunteering

- 6 volunteer training sessions run for 30 new volunteers in 2023-2024.
- 69 volunteers supporting children in school and virtually.
- 96% of volunteers who gave feedback felt they had been well supported in their volunteering role by L2L2R.
- 98% of volunteers who gave feedback felt their volunteering had made a real difference to the children they worked with.

Summer reading club

- 5 summer reading sessions held in July & August 2024.
- 17 families with 28 adults and 18 children attended.
- 100% of parents and carers who provided feedback felt the sessions had helped them understand more about the types of activities they could do to promote a love of reading and reading skills with their children.



How we measure our impact

L2L2R measures the outcomes of its one-to-one reading support – both in school and virtual – by asking volunteers to complete an online child information form at the beginning and end of each child’s intervention. The form asks specific questions around reading attainment, comprehension, confidence, enthusiasm and parental engagement (for children reading virtually). We were able to collect start and end of intervention data from volunteers for the majority of our children, although not for children who left a school part way through the academic year.

At the start of the year we also ask our partner schools to give us information about the children they refer to us – their current reading level, whether they are below, at or exceeding expected levels, if English is their first language and any other details that might be useful for volunteers. At the end of the year we ask schools to comment on the children’s progress. All eight of our partner schools gave end-of-year feedback this year.



This year, we also held Pupil Voice sessions in some of our partner schools to find out what the children receiving volunteer support thought about the help they received. L2L2R staff chatted with small groups of children across the year groups who read with a volunteer to obtain informal feedback.

Feedback for our Early Years classes was collected by the class leader at the end of the set of four classes. This was either by the parent or carer completing a paper form themselves or the class leader supporting them to do this. We also used the same approach when collecting feedback after our summer reading programme. Feedback from parent talks and workshops was collected informally at the end of each session by the presenter.

Volunteer training, volunteer satisfaction, partner school and partner organisation feedback is collected via online forms either after each training session or at the end of the year.

“

Friendly staff, great volunteers, really helpful partnership when working with parents.

Partner school

”

One-to-one reading support



What we do

Our volunteers work with their allocated children once a week, for 20–25 minutes. We focus on children in Years 1 and 2 and 3. Our in-school volunteers read with three children and our virtual volunteers read with one or two, depending on the time they are able to give. To ensure good relationships are built, volunteers read with the same children each week and the expectation is for them to volunteer for the entire school year. Where volunteer numbers allow, children are read with twice a week by two different volunteers.

Children are chosen for our reading support by their form teachers – they are generally not reaching the reading levels expected for their age. This might be because they are not read with regularly at home and/or English is not spoken by their family, because they have missed some schooling or moved schools often, or because they are just finding the early stages of reading challenging.

When working with a child, volunteers follow a framework that allows the child to get the maximum benefit from the intervention time. First the child will read a book matched to their level of reading ability. The volunteer will encourage the child to talk about the book, for example, what happened in the story, how it made the child feel, what specific words mean. Afterwards, the volunteer will work on a particular sound or word the child may have found difficult. At the end of the session the volunteer may read the child a more challenging story or they may look at a factual book together. These are chosen from a box of our own books kept at partner schools, or from a more challenging section of our online reading scheme. Volunteers follow the same framework, whether reading face-to-face with children in school, or virtually over Zoom.

One-to-one reading support

81%

of children confidently using sounds to work out simple words compared to just 52% at the start of the year

42%

of supported children reading at or above age related expectations by the end of the year compared to 10% at the start of the year

3x

the number of children scoring top marks for reading with expression at the end of the year compared to the start of the year

2x

the number of children approaching reading with confidence at the end of the year compared to the start of the year

As well as improving reading levels, our volunteers are aiming to inspire confidence and a love of reading in the children they work with. We want children to look forward to their reading time, so specific praise and encouragement and a recognition of effort even when unsuccessful are all part of every session.

All our volunteers are trained, learning how children's reading is taught in schools, including the synthetic phonics system, and how to run a reading session. They are also given safeguarding training which is refreshed each academic year. This year, many of our volunteers attended extra training offered in person and online which introduced a variety of word games volunteers could play with their children to support their reading.

Our virtual volunteering programme started as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, we have continued it as it means we are able to involve a wider range of volunteers – including those who are working full time – and it has enabled us to engage directly with the parents of children we support as we are working with families in their own home. Families are further supported through our virtual helpline which is open from 4–6pm.

Facts and figures

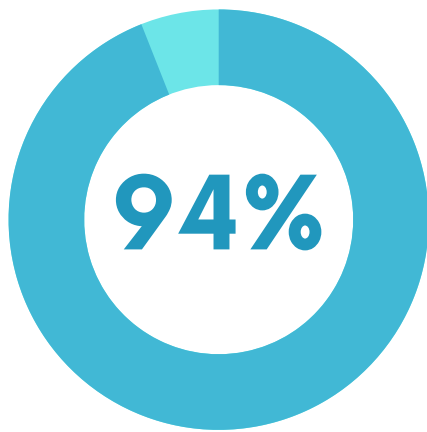
In the academic year 2023–2024, 69 volunteers supported 178 children with their reading across eight partner schools – 164 through face-to-face support in school and 14 with virtual reading sessions over Zoom. Forty-four per cent of children supported by volunteers were in Year 1, 39% in Year 2, 11% in Year 3 and 6% in Years 4 and 5.

Our volunteers ran over 3,000 reading sessions. We have sought feedback about children's progress from both teachers and volunteers, as well as informal feedback from some of the children supported in schools and the families of children read with virtually.

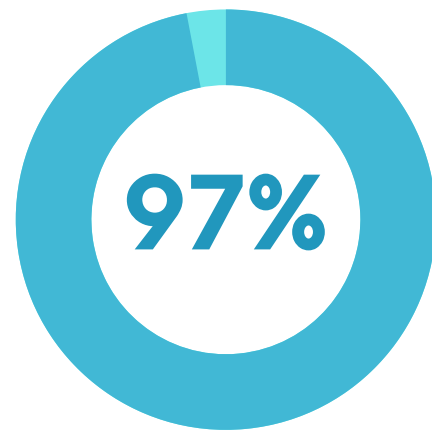
One-to-one reading support

Feedback from class teachers

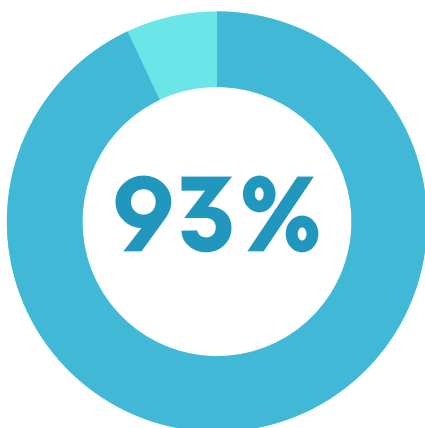
At the end of the academic year, we asked class teachers about the progress of children supported by an L2L2R reading volunteer.



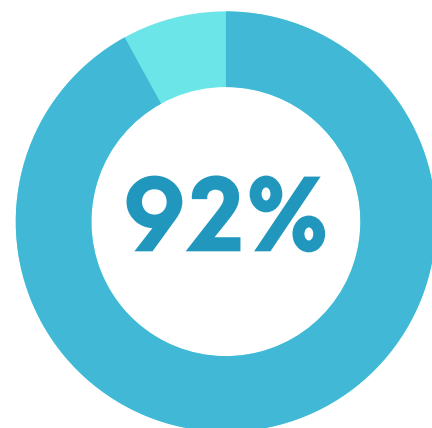
of children who were supported by an L2L2R reading volunteer enjoyed reading more than at the start of the academic year



of children who were supported by an L2L2R reading volunteer were more confident readers than at the start of the academic year.



of children who were supported by an L2L2R reading volunteer improved their comprehension by the end of the academic year.

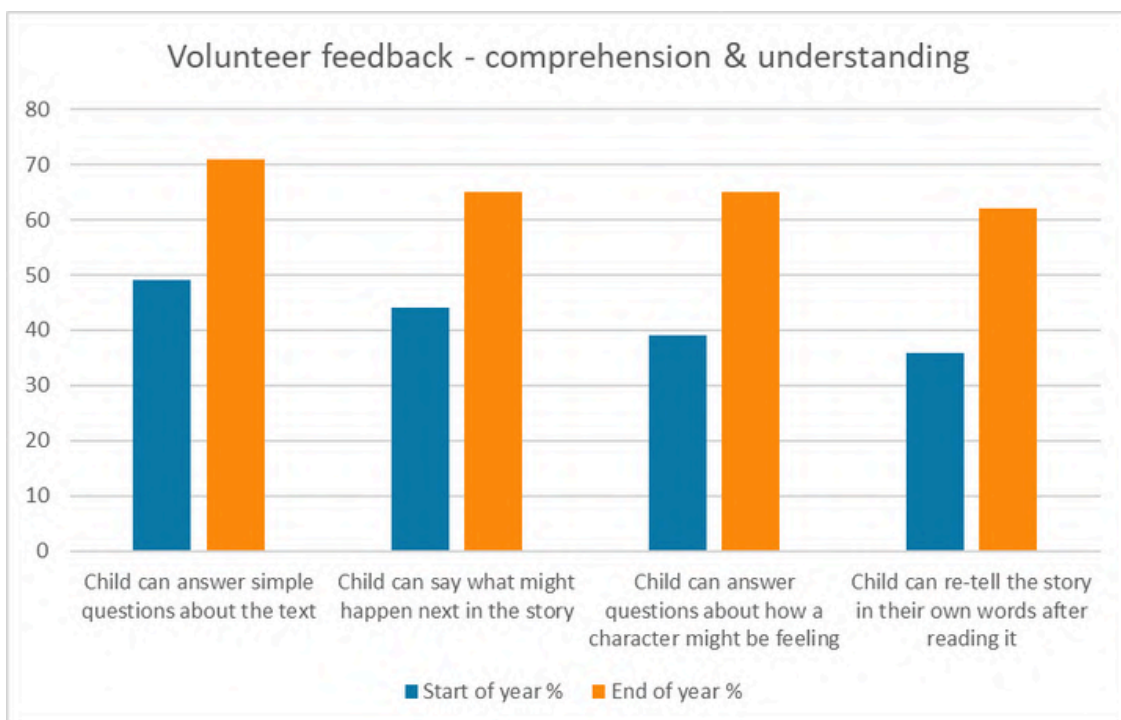
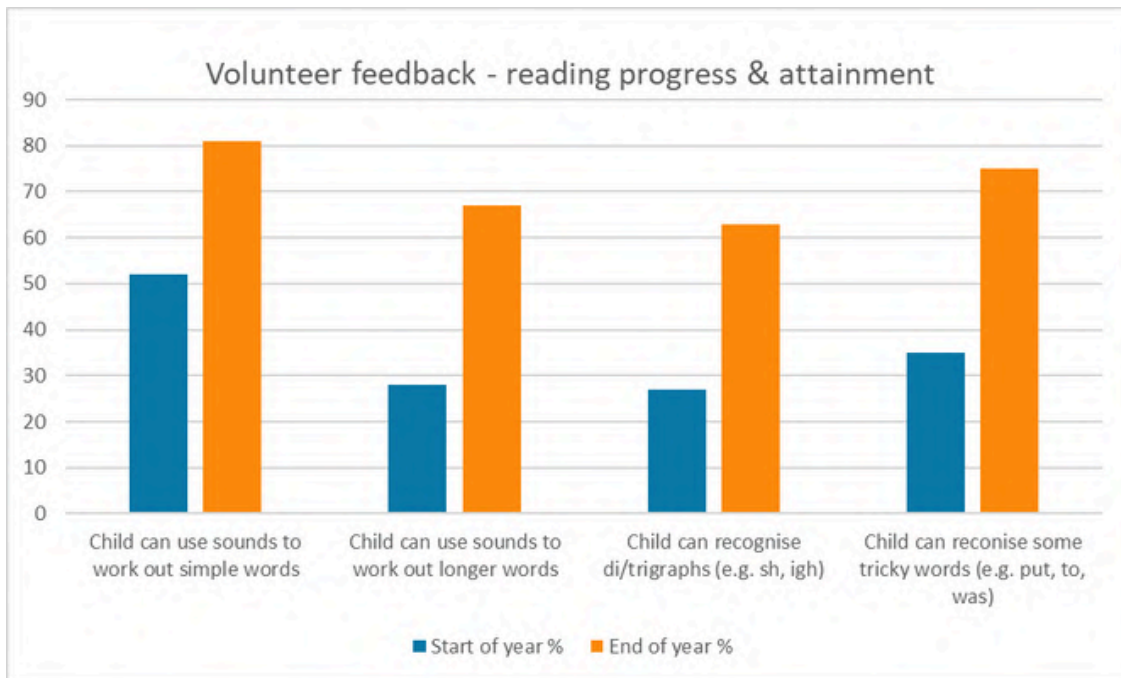


of children benefitted from the positive impact their reading volunteer had over the course of the academic year.

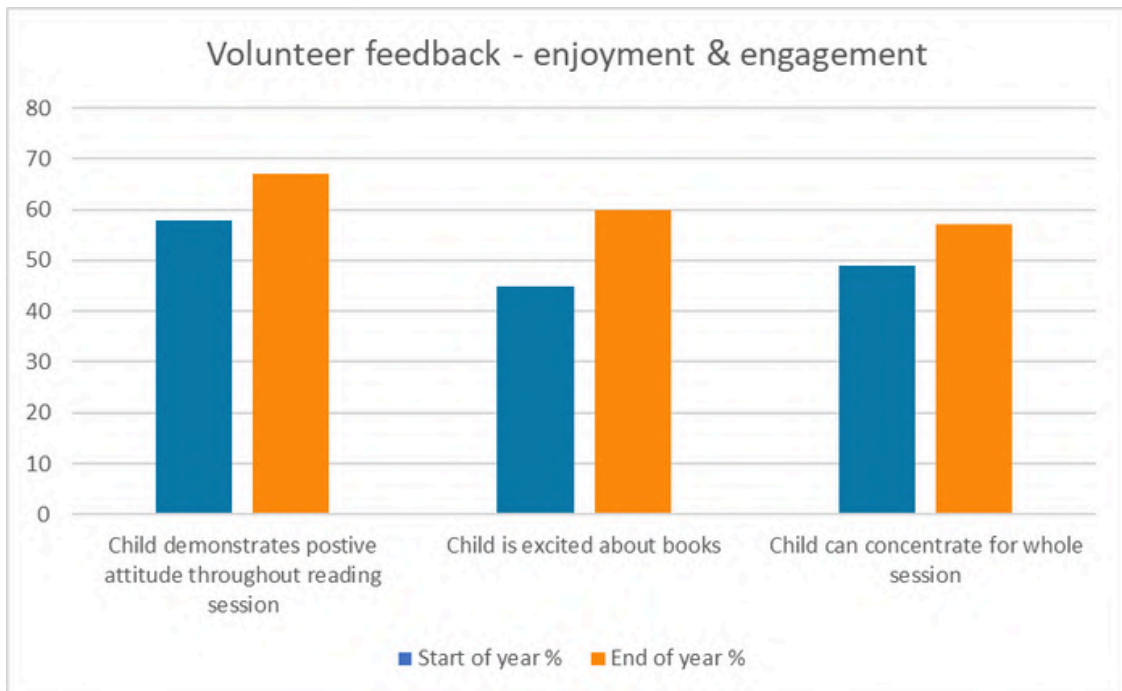
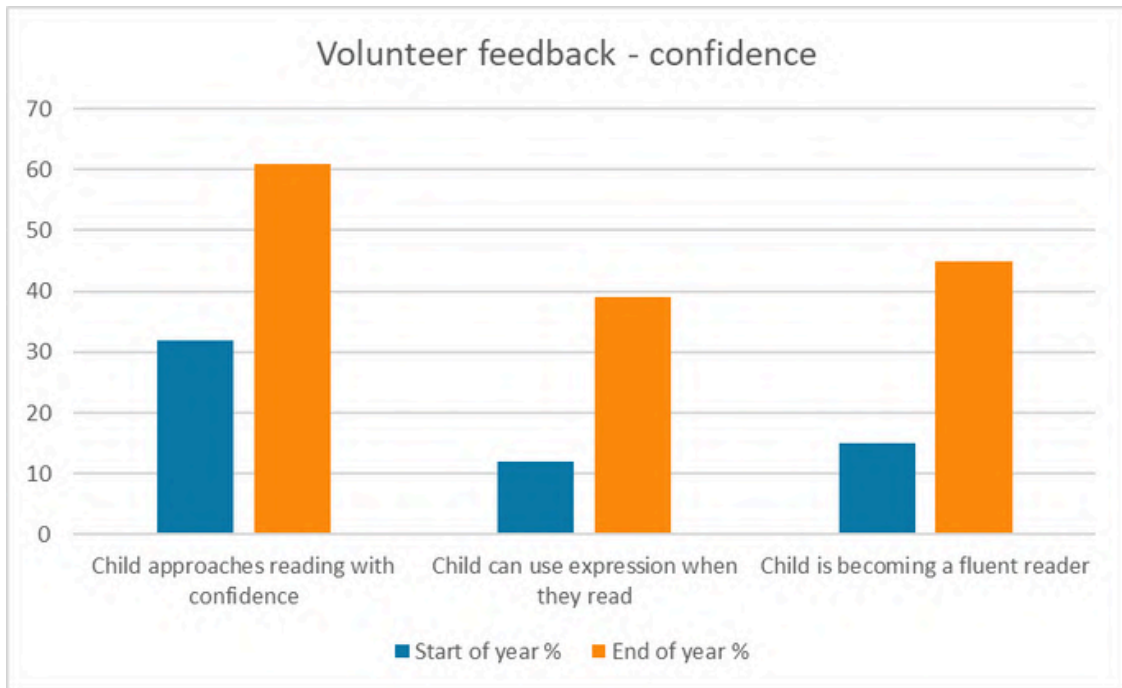
One-to-one reading support

Feedback from volunteers

Percentage of children scoring 5/6 or 6/6 at the end of the year, compared to the start of the year:



One-to-one reading support



One-to-one reading support

Outcomes

Teachers told us that 95% of children supported by an L2L2R reading volunteer had improved their confidence, comprehension and enjoyment of reading by the end of the academic year, and 42% of children were now reading at or above their expected age-related levels – an enormous achievement considering that 90% of children referred to L2L2R started the year reading below their age-related expectations. Teachers also felt that the support of a reading volunteer had a positive impact on a child's overall reading for 92% of children.

Volunteer feedback showed improvements in each monitored area shown in the graphs on the previous pages.

Twice as many children could use their sounds to work out longer words at the end of the year, compared to the start of the year, and twice as many could confidently recognise digraphs and trigraphs (sh, ch, th, igh etc.). Over three times as many children were using expression in their reading compared to the start of the year. Volunteers also felt three times as many children were on their way to becoming fluent readers.

Two thirds of children were able to retell the story they had just read compared to only one third at the start of the year and three quarters of children were able to read tricky words (words that cannot be sounded out using synthetic phonics, e.g. to, put, was) compared to one third at the start of the year.



One-to-one support: what teachers, parents & volunteers say

"S has made huge progress since I started reading with him. He is very attentive, curious, participates fully and seems to enjoy the session."

Volunteer

"Thank you to much to you and S [volunteer] for the love [of reading] you have given to my two children."

Parent of child supported virtually

"D's fluency in reading has greatly increased this year and most importantly his confidence has too. He has gone from a child who would be very anxious even when reading 1:1, to volunteering to read in front of the whole class. Fantastic progress!"

Class teacher

"C [volunteer] is the perfect match for E. He enjoyed every reading session with her, all the time looking forward to it. Apart from reading also they had really nice discussions about different topics which contributed to a friendly relationship. Regarding C, I only have words of praise - punctual, reliable, kind, professional, friendly, full of positivity. Thank you for all your support."

Parent of child supported virtually

"M is a super star - her reading ability, concentration and determination have hugely increased. Her confidence in choosing a book that she wants to read all by herself, without support, is impressive."

Volunteer

"When I met A first, he was painfully shy and struggled with easy words. He is naturally quietly spoken but his progress has been very pleasing. He can now read most books without hesitation and very rarely stumbles over words. I am so happy at how far he has come along."

Volunteer

"R has gone from having no interest to being enthusiastic to learn to read."

Volunteer

"S has benefitted hugely from L2L2R's [support]. She found it challenging to express her ideas and contribute to discussions. Now she is more confident and eager to share her thoughts."

Class teacher

Pupil Voice: what children say about one-to-one reading support

Pupil Voice sessions

L2L2R is committed to asking all its stakeholders for feedback in order to measure the impact of our work. In the past we have found it difficult to elicit useful feedback from the children we support as they are so young. This year, for the first time, we decided to run some trial Pupil Voice sessions, where L2L2R staff visited

partner schools and chatted informally to small groups of children who were being supported by volunteers. Asked four simple questions, the children seemed to really enjoy the sessions and were much more forthcoming about what they thought. We will aim to run these sessions in all our partner schools in the academic year 2024-2025

Do you enjoy reading with your volunteer?

- *I love reading all books, [my] volunteer makes it really fun to read.*
- *I like when I'm called from class. It makes me feel special.*
- *Sometimes I get tired so I don't want to do reading.*
- *I do! It is excellent because we get stickers.*
- *I love reading. Everything about it is fun!*

How does your volunteer help you?

- *She helps me read the best that I can.*
- *My volunteer breaks a very long word into two which makes it easier.*
- *She sounds out words with me. I like it when she gives me stickers and reads to me.*
- *When I get stuck on words, the nice lady gives me more time to remember and doesn't rush me.*

Is it fun?

- *Every part of it is fun.*
- *Yes. I like the bit where I read to her. She says I'm excellent.*
- *Yes, because when we finish reading we get a book from the library and she reads it to me.*
- *Nah, it's boring!*
- *Yes! 100 out of 100 fun!*

How could we make it more fun?

- *Playing more games, like odd word out and guessing games.*
- *Reading books where things hide.*
- *More free stickers.*
- *I will like it if they give me a reward like a toy/chocolate like my maths teacher gives after I get 50 stamps.*
- *Reading it faster!*

Case study

"I see her speed and accuracy has increased since she started her sessions."



Neina is seven in and Year 3. She receives one-to-one weekly reading support from one of L2L2R's virtual volunteers, Kimberley.

Neina's mother, Rochelle, first heard about L2L2R when she attended a parent talk given by the charity's director, Tara, at a children's centre in Tooting. Since then, Rochelle has attended L2L2R's Early Years classes with Neina's younger brother Vincent (3). She recalls: "Tara's session at the children's centre was so informative and inspiring that I was keen to participate in the classes she then held at Balham Nursery. I'm pretty sure we got talking then and she mentioned the online programme to me."

Neina started reading with volunteer Kimberley in October 2023. Each week Kimberley chooses a suitable book from an online reading library of graded reading books which are aligned to the reading programme used at Neina's school. She shares her screen with Neina so they can both see the book. Kimberley listens to Neina read the book, supporting where necessary, asking questions and chatting about what's happening in the story. Rochelle feels that Neina's confidence in reading has really increased as she's become more comfortable having reading sessions with Kimberley. She comments: "The good thing about the books used in the sessions is that my daughter recognises them from school too. I think this made it less daunting for her initially, and now I think she and Kimberley enjoy choosing new books to try."

Rochelle feels the sessions are particularly helpful as, living in a small one-bedroom flat, it has been difficult to juggle her time and give Neina the individual attention without distractions to practise her reading. She has found that during the sessions, Neina is focused on her reading with Kimberley, while Rochelle is able to keep her little brother occupied with other activities.

She continues: "I think it has strengthened her reading skill. She was in [the] lower range of reading in school, but I see her speed and accuracy has increased since she started her sessions. It has stopped her from losing her confidence about her reading ability in front of her classmates. Having that time, which I struggle to carve out for her, is really beneficial for her."

We asked Kimberley to comment on her experience supporting Neina and she says: "I've really enjoyed reading with Neina. She's developed so much in terms of her skills and confidence since we started our sessions. It's been wonderful seeing her progress and I'm so glad we can continue our sessions together this year."

And what does Neina think? "My favourite thing about the sessions is the interesting things in the book," she says. So would Rochelle recommend L2L2R's virtual reading sessions to other families? "Yes, especially for children who might need a boost with their literacy."

Early Years



What we do

L2L2R runs Early Years classes in collaboration with local charities, partner schools and partner organisations. Aimed at children aged between zero and four, attending with a parent or carer, these classes are designed to give parents the confidence and skills required to support their child's early literacy so they are ready to learn to read when they start school. Through songs, stories and speaking and listening games, children improve their communication skills, expand their vocabulary and increase their interest in sharing books.

Traditionally our classes have been offered to two to four year-olds. However, following a successful trial of classes aimed in zero to two year-olds in summer 2023, we have offered two more sets of these classes this academic year, in collaboration with partner charities, Home-Start Wandsworth and CARAS.

In the academic year 2023-2024, L2L2R ran 25 sets of Early Years classes, 23 sets in person and two online. In 2022-2023 we ran eight sets of classes online - out of a total of 24 - but the appetite for this type of interaction has dwindled quickly since the pandemic so all classes in the year 2024-2025 will run in person.

Each set of classes comprises four weekly sessions which last for 30-45 minutes, translating into 100 individual classes, 92 of which were in person and eight online. We were able to increase the number of classes offered from last year by one set.

Two sets of classes were run online with our partner charities CARAS and Home-Start Wandsworth.

Early Years

Two hundred and forty-eight families signed up to classes across the year, with 208 families (235 children) attending at least one class out of four. Although 16% of families who signed up did not attend any class, this is a more encouraging figure than the 21% who did not attend in 2022–2023. Initial informal research has shown illness, doctors' appointments or forgetting to be the most common reason why families don't attend.

We would still like to better understand the reasons why families sign up and then don't attend, or don't sign up at all, and this remains a focus for 2024–2025. We plan to call families before each set of classes begins to find out whether personal contact will encourage those who might otherwise decide not to attend.

We were pleased to note that engagement increased by 7% this year as 87% of families attended two or more classes out of the four (80% in 2022–2023), with 66% attending three or four classes (61% in 2022–2023).

Each week families are given a gift book, song card and another resource such as puzzles, playdoh or a card game. By the end of their four sessions each family has a tote bag full of books and other resources to support their reading. For our new 0–2 classes, contents included age-appropriate toys and gifts such as stacking cups and peekaboo scarves, as well as books and song cards. Attendees of online classes receive a similar pack through the post once they have attended the first class.

Support for families also includes regular messaging between classes, suggesting activities to do during the week as well as reminding about subsequent classes.

As I'm dyslexic, it took a great deal of pressure off my mind in the class as it is such a relaxed environment and it put me at ease. The class helped me understand that I didn't just have to read the book word to word which is hard for me as I'm dyslexic. It made me not worry about reading to my child.

Early Years focus group attendee



Early Years

Sample messages sent to parents attending Early Years classes

After a class

Thank you for joining us this week. Try to sing, chat, play and read with your child as often as you can so they start school ready to read.

This week we read 'We Love Dinosaurs.' If your child likes dinosaurs you may enjoy listening to and learning more dinosaur songs with them.

[Dinosaur Songs](#) | [CoComelon Nursery Rhymes & Kids Songs](#)

Perhaps you could try and find more books about dinosaurs in your local library?

At the end of a set of four classes

Thank you for joining our classes this term. Try to sing, chat, play and read with your child every day. We hope you enjoyed the classes.

Sharing a book at bedtime may be the perfect way to end the day, but reading in an unexpected place can be exciting, too. Why not take a book with you on your next journey on a bus or train? Or whilst you are waiting for an appointment? Could you make a den to read in using a sheet or blanket and placing them over some chairs?

Here is another book illustrated (and written) by Nick Sharratt for you to enjoy with your child.

[Watch Nick Sharratt read 'Shark in the Park on a Windy Day.'](#)

Early Years

Book gifting and the Dolly Parton Imagination Library

The Dolly Parton Imagination Library is an international book-gifting programme that posts free, high-quality books each month to children from birth to age five, no matter their family's income. We began offering membership to 19 families in 2022-2023 when we were awarded a grant to enable us to trial this service.

This year we were pleased to be able to continue offering this opportunity. We currently have 41 families enrolled on the programme, 22 more than last year.

Feedback from families has shown how much the books are appreciated and that the children look forward to receiving a book in the post especially for them.



"He will independently choose a book he'd like to read to me."

Parent

"She picks up books and 'reads' them in a way she never used to."

Parent



Early Years

Focus group

In the summer term we held our second Early Years focus group. We invited families who had attended at least one set of our Early Years classes to join a Zoom meeting where we put forward various topics for discussion. We had eight families join us. The feedback on our classes was very positive and parents particularly liked getting the books to take home. They found the sessions gave them ideas and they felt more confident reading at home.

The monthly messaging with ideas to do at home was also well received, with several attendees mentioning the suggested activities that they had enjoyed doing. As a result of the discussion we have added a note in our messaging encouraging parents to contact us if they have questions or to ask for help.

Through [the] messages I learned what activities are important for my child's development. For example there was a message about the importance of playing outside, and I showed it to my husband and explained to him why it is important for us to take our daughter outside more.

Focus group attendee



Early Years

96%

of parents surveyed said they would like to stay in touch and receive monthly messages from L2L2R

83%

of parents surveyed understood the importance of chatting, playing, singing and reading with their child in developing early literacy skills

79%

of parents surveyed felt more confident in helping their child learn at home

97%

of parents surveyed said they found the gift books very useful

Facts and figures

Feedback for Early Years classes was collected through a short paper survey, completed by families at the end of the set of classes, with support from the class leader where required, or via a telephone call for online classes.

We asked parents to rate how useful they found the classes and 92% of those who responded rated the classes 5/5, with 99% giving a rating of 4/5 or 5/5. Nearly all parents indicated that they would like to stay in touch with L2L2R and will now receive monthly messages with ideas to support their child's reading.

Following the sessions, 83% of parents felt they understood the importance of chatting, playing, singing and reading with their child in developing early literacy skills and 79% reported they felt more confident supporting their child's learning at home.

Nearly all parents said they found the books to be the most useful items in their gift packs, and over three quarters of parents reported they had spent more time looking at books with their child since attending the classes. Eighty-eight per cent of parents who responded to the survey said they would recommend the sessions to other families.

Outcomes

The classes continue to show a high impact on parental knowledge, confidence and behaviour. After attending the Early Years classes, parents were more engaged in their children's learning, with feedback figures demonstrating parents' increased understanding of the importance of reading, chatting and singing with their child and improved confidence in how to help their children learn at home.

Early Years classes: what parents say



“Very engaging for children and amazing for teaching grown ups how to read, play and the importance of chatting to children. They are also fun!”



“A great initiative with a good combination of songs, activities and books. It was lovely to be able to spend some time together with my daughter especially as we missed out on lots of these activities when she was younger due to Covid.”

“I really like these classes. They are useful and help me to have more methods to read with my child. I would like to do more in the future.”

“Amazing sessions. My child loved coming to check the bag and sing songs. The books were well chosen, very useful and gift puzzle at the end very sweet. Much appreciated your time in the sessions.”

“I feel lucky to join love to read class because I understand how important it is to sing and read with my daughter now. Thank you!”



Case study

“After each class I put some time aside to do the suggested activities which was great bonding time for me and my younger kids.”



A has four children aged 6, 3, 2 and 7 months. She first came across Learn to Love to Read during the COVID-19 pandemic through a nearby Children’s Centre.

Her eldest child had a speech delay at the time but clearly loved listening to A reading books so it was suggested she came along to one of L2L2Rs Early Years classes. She’s gone on to attend another set of classes with her younger children too, attending four weekly sessions aimed at children aged 2–4 at her local library. She recalls both children enjoyed the classes: “One of mine especially loved the toys they were given and my other child loved the songs we sang.”

A goes on to say: “I really enjoyed the classes as they refreshed my mind of activities which I did with my eldest child but not the younger ones. Also new activities were shown which I never have tried. The classes were 40 minutes which was not too long at all as the time flew very quickly.”

The library where the classes were held was very close to her house and A really appreciated that the venue had nappy changing facilities and space for her baby’s buggy. She also loved the fact that there were plenty of cafes nearby to grab coffee or lunch afterwards.

After the classes A noticed that her younger child was singing the songs they learnt at home and the other showed a greater interest in books, pulling more out to read and asking to play with the Play-Doh that was part of the gift pack. A also deliberately made time at home to do some of the activities that were suggested during the classes. As well as finding it was a great opportunity for bonding with her younger children, she also began reading more to them, using many of the links sent to class attendees via WhatsApp in between the classes to practice their listening skills.

All Early Years class attendees receive a gift pack with books, puzzles and toys used during the classes. A’s children loved these resources, and she comments: “Tara, who led the sessions, also gave me a book which is proving to be really helpful for all my children with pictures to talk about and ask questions which is helping to improve my children’s level of understanding of who, what, why questions as well as questions requiring children to ‘have a think.’” (You Choose your Dreams by Nick Sherratt and Pippa Goodheart)

The classes A attended were small groups of children and their parents/carers. While there was space for a few more, she was glad there weren’t too many as it was the first time her children had taken part in a group activity session and she didn’t want it to be too overwhelming for them.

So would A recommend Learn to Love to Read’s Early Years classes to other parents? “I would highly recommend these classes to new parents as well as parents who have not attended for a few years as they are also good as refresher courses.”

Volunteers



What we do: volunteer training

L2L2R trains all its volunteers in how best to support children's reading.

The training session takes place over Zoom and explores how reading is taught in schools today, including explanations and practical exercises to explain the synthetic phonics system. We discuss what each reading session should contain – focusing on a sound or word a child finds difficult, encouraging children to talk about the story they are reading and noting details of the session in the child's reading record, while giving specific praise and encouragement all the way. We also give important guidance on safeguarding. We run separate sessions for those considering virtual volunteering to cover the technology they will need to use to run the sessions.

When a volunteer starts work in school, our Head of Volunteering or an experienced volunteer is on hand to guide them and introduce them to the children they will be reading with. We offer a practice Zoom session with a member of staff or an experienced online volunteer for those working virtually.

Additional training for volunteers is also provided throughout the year, often at our termly volunteer coffee mornings or online.

Facts, figures and outcomes

Feedback from volunteer training sessions is collected using an online feedback form after each session. In the academic year 2023–2024 we ran six volunteer training sessions – two in the autumn term, three in the spring term and one in the summer term – with 30 new volunteers attending. In addition, ad hoc top-up training sessions were run for those wishing to support children online.

Volunteers

As in the previous academic year, we aimed to offer volunteers the opportunity to increase their skills if they wished, through further short training sessions at our termly volunteer coffee mornings. This year, we asked volunteers to submit their questions in advance and then addressed the two most common questions, e.g. how to support blending or how to help children stay focused. Afterwards volunteers also received a handout about the ideas discussed.

Of those volunteers who completed feedback about the initial volunteer training session, eighty-nine per cent thought the session covered everything they needed to know, with 88% feeling that the session was of a good length (12% felt it was too long). Ninety-three per cent also felt there was enough opportunity to interact during the session. Ninety-five per cent rated the training 9 or 10/10, with 100% rating it 8, 9 or 10/10.

“The depth of experience and enthusiasm of the presenters was confidence-inspiring.”

“The children seem to be at the centre of everything L2L2R does, and [it] recognises that it is more than just reading and phonics... it is just as important to interact with the child in other more fun ways.”

“Content was engaging, really nice touch switching between presenters, plenty of opportunity to ask questions.”

“I loved the interactive parts - it helped me properly engage in the topic.”

Volunteers

98%

of volunteers surveyed felt volunteering made a difference to the children they worked with

96%

of volunteers surveyed felt well supported by L2L2R staff

93%

of volunteers surveyed agreed their work had been fulfilling and satisfying

100%

of volunteers surveyed would recommend volunteering with L2L2R to others

What we do: Looking after our volunteers

Our Head of Volunteering looks after all our volunteers and communicates with them regularly to keep them up-to-date with L2L2R's news and with school information, as well as answering volunteers' queries.

This year 96% of respondents to our volunteer satisfaction survey agreed or strongly agreed that they feel supported by our Head of Volunteering and other L2L2R staff. We also run termly social get-togethers where volunteers can meet and exchange ideas and tips, as well as receive extra training. Virtual volunteers (and families) are further supported by our dedicated helpline operating Monday to Thursday during volunteering hours.

Facts and figures

In 2023–2024 we had volunteers working across eight schools in Wandsworth. We collect feedback from our volunteers via an annual online survey at the end of the academic year.

Ninety-eight per cent of volunteers who responded felt that their volunteering made a difference to the children they worked with, with the vast majority (93%) agreeing that their work had been fulfilling and satisfying. Nearly two thirds felt that volunteering had helped them feel part of their local community and that volunteering had given them useful knowledge, skills and experience. All volunteers who completed the survey indicated they would recommend volunteering with L2L2R to others. All feedback percentage figures showed an increase from the previous year.

When volunteers sign up, we ask if possible that they stay for a full academic year to support their children. While most do, there is inevitably some change, particularly at the end of each academic year. We were delighted therefore that, when asked in July 2024, 80% of our volunteers indicated they would be continuing to volunteer in the new academic year (with a further 16% not able to make a firm decision at that point).

Volunteers

Outcomes

At the end of the academic year 2023-2024, we had 69 trained volunteers working across eight schools in Wandsworth, supporting 178 children. Nearly all felt well supported in roles where they believed they were making a difference, with the majority of volunteers also feeling that their work had been personally fulfilling and satisfying.



What volunteers say about L2L2R and the children they work with

“There is evidently a strong partnership established by the charity with schools, which is reflected in how the schools make the volunteers feel welcomed and valued.”

“The staff at L2L2R are all very friendly and inclusive - they make you feel like part of a team.”

“Volunteering with L2L2R is a wonderful experience. I look forward to having my Zoom sessions with the children - I enjoy building a rapport with them, getting them engaged in the session and trying new things to make the session more exciting for them. It is one of the most rewarding things I have ever done, and I hope I can help even more children in the future.”

“I am a huge fan of L2L2R. Going into [partner school] is one of the highlights of my week. I enjoy seeing the staff who welcome me and treat me as a friend and who acknowledge the value of what we do. It is an unalloyed pleasure to see my current pupils and past pupils greet me so enthusiastically. I feel supported and valued and just feel incredibly privileged to be able to make a genuine difference to the outcomes of young people who need our help and support more than ever before.”

“It’s been a joy and privilege reading alongside the children. Seeing their growth in ability, confidence and love of reading has been hugely satisfying. I too have grown in confidence, ability and I love books even more!”



“I love volunteering with L2L2R. It feels rewarding to be helping local children who are struggling with their reading and trying to make it a positive experience for them. The support, training sessions, meet-ups, etc. are always so enjoyable and helpful and it’s always nice to see and catch up with staff and other volunteers.”

Case study

“It’s been everything I thought it would be.”



Our Head of Volunteering, Helen Liley, spoke to volunteer, Kirsty O’Shea, about her experiences supporting children in one of Learn to Love to Read’s partner schools.

Kirsty first heard about Learn to Love to Read when her children were attending one of the charity’s partner schools. Finding out more about the role from Head of Volunteering, Helen, she felt that it was the right time to get more involved as her children were a little older and she had more time to spare. She comments, “I really liked that Learn to Love to Read is a small, local charity, and the work it does is so important.”

At the time she applied, she was already volunteering elsewhere but decided she could make time for an additional volunteering role. “I felt it was something I could do well and would fit in well with my day-to-day life. I’m very glad I did because I really feel I’m making a difference.”

Following an interview, security checks and training, Kirsty started volunteering in January 2023. She immediately found the school to which she had been allocated to be extremely supportive and welcoming to volunteers. She knew that many of the children at the school had English as a second language and remarks: “For some children their only exposure to English is what they get at school, so they need help along the way with their literacy.”

Has volunteering met her expectations? “It’s been everything I thought it would be – straightforward and a real joy,” she says.

Helen asked Kirsty if she feels her volunteering has had an impact on the children she supports. She recalls that despite the volunteer training session she attended, she was nervous on her first day: “I collected my first child (E) from her classroom and could tell she was extremely reluctant to engage with me.” Luckily, she remembered one of the tips given during her training – to encourage the child to read to a toy if they don’t want to read to you. Kirsty found a tiny doll and noticed that E immediately appeared more comfortable and started to play-act with it. From there, it was an easy step to encourage her to read to the doll.

A year later, E was confidently and happily reading with Kirsty, always coming out of class with a smile. Kirsty recalls: “Her class teacher told me that E now has the confidence to stand in front of the class to read, and even reads to her baby sibling at home. It’s a pure joy to see the progress she has made.” While Kirsty appreciates her input is just part of the story, she does feel that her work has contributed to the fact that E is more engaged with stories and enjoys talking about how the characters are feeling.

Case study

So what does Kirsty feel is the best thing about being a volunteer? “Seeing where the children were when they started and where they are now – how they begin to enjoy reading and not be scared of it,” Kirsty replies.

While part of her role is to help children improve their reading ability, she has been pleased to discover it’s absolutely not about forcing a reluctant child to read. As well as attending Learn to Love to Read’s initial volunteer training session – which covers safeguarding, phonics and how to run a session – Kirsty also regularly attends termly volunteer meet-ups and coffee mornings, where staff are always on hand to offer extra training and give individual advice. After coming along to a Word Games Workshop run by charity director and qualified teacher, Tara, Kirsty asked her advice on engaging very reluctant readers. She was relieved when Tara advised her to take the sessions right back to basics – spending some time playing word games, rather than spending the whole session with a book. She comments: “I play this game with high frequency words fish where the child either has to catch or find the fish (sometimes I hide them). We then make sentences together from the words.” She’s found this approach very useful, especially with children who struggle to sit still for longer periods.

So finally, would Kirsty recommend volunteering to others who might be considering it?

“One hundred percent do it! The difference you can make in just two hours a week is incredible.” In fact while Kirsty was still in the application process, she’d already recommended Learn to Love to Read to a friend, who is now volunteering at the same school. “It’s a great charity to be part of,” she concludes.



Engaging parents: talks and workshops



What we do

Building our engagement with parents has continued to be a focus for L2L2R in the academic year 2023–2024 through our continued programme of parent talks, workshops and events in our partner schools, other Wandsworth schools, children's centres and online. These sessions were delivered by our Director/Head of Family Programmes, a qualified teacher.

Facts and figures

We ran a total of 18 events, nine in the autumn term, three in the spring term and six in the summer term. They were attended by a total of 185 parents. Quick and simple feedback was taken by asking parents to put a sticker on a chart. All attendees rated the talks and workshops 5/5.

Outcomes

Feedback was collected informally at the end of each session through chatting to the parents who attended. Many had lots of questions and the comments were overwhelmingly positive. Parents particularly appreciated fresh ideas about how to encourage their children to read at home.



Engaging parents: talks and workshops

Events held in 2023-2024	Age group	No. run in year
<p>Getting ready for reading in Reception. Helping parents understand how they can support their children's reading when they start school (one session run online).</p>	Nursery	5
<p>Supporting your children with reading in Reception and Key Stage 1. Introduction to phonics for parents and supporting children's reading.</p>	Reception and Key Stage 1	6
<p>Supporting your children with reading in Key Stage 2. For parents with children in Key Stage 2. Ideas and tips to keep older children reading.</p>	Key Stage 2	4
<p>Helping your child learn to love to read in Key Stage 2. For parents with children in Key Stage 2. Ideas and tips to keep older children reading.</p>	Key Stage 2	2
<p>Helping your child learn to love to read in Years 3 and 4. For parents with children in Years 3 and 4. Ideas and tips to keep older children reading.</p>	Years 3 & 4	1

What parents and schools said about talks and workshops



"I loved the ideas for games to play. They are so simple but fun."

Parent

"I'm going to try whole family reading sessions instead of TV one night."

Parent

"I'm definitely going to use the library to reserve books from now on."

Parent

"The workshop was really useful and it inspired me with lots of ideas to do with my kids. I am looking forward to the results, especially with my little one."

Parent

"That was so helpful. As English is my second language I was not taught phonics so don't know what I am doing, but I have lots of ideas now."

Parent

Summer reading club



What we did

In Summer 2023 L2L2R launched a Summer Reading Club, run at and in conjunction with St Michael's Church in Southfields in Wandsworth. Following the previous year's success, we ran the club for a second time in the school summer holidays 2024.

The Summer Reading Club was a weekly 90 minute-long stay and play session for children aged 0-10 years and their parents and carers. With a different theme each week (dinosaurs, jungle animals, under the sea, summer and superheroes), we offered a wide range of literacy-based activities, including crafts, a reading corner, word games, imaginative play-based toys and reading support from some of our regular reading volunteers. At the end of each session, each child was invited to choose a new or lightly used book to take home and keep. Following the sessions, the first ten families to sign up for the Summer Reading Club sessions were also invited to stay for a cooked lunch at the church's Community Lunch initiative. In practice, the church was able to accommodate all families who wanted to stay for lunch.

Each session was run by two members of L2L2R staff and supported by four L2L2R volunteers. The high ratio of support staff to families meant many of the children really benefited from one-to-one attention.

The sessions ran weekly, for five weeks during July and August. Feedback was gathered by paper form each week by event leaders.

Facts and figures

Seventeen families attended the sessions over the five weeks – an increase of four families from the previous year. Twenty-eight children aged from three weeks to 12 years attended with their parents/carers. The families who attended were from ten different schools and nurseries across Wandsworth.

Summer reading club

100%

of parents who gave feedback felt the sessions helped their children enjoy reading more



100%

of parents who gave feedback felt the sessions helped them understand the activities they could do to promote a love of reading at home



All parents and carers who attended and gave feedback felt that the sessions had helped their child to enjoy reading more or helped build the skills required before they start reading if they were not yet readers. They also all thought that the sessions had helped them understand more about the types of activities they could do to promote a love of reading and reading skills at home.

Parents valued the sessions as they gave their children a chance to play with other children, building their communication and social skills. They liked the fact there was a variety of activities which changed each week and the opportunity to explore a wide range of books. Parents appreciated that the sessions were free and also gave them an opportunity to get out of the house and meet new people.

Outcomes

By attending the Summer Reading Club, children and their families were able to strengthen and consolidate their reading skills over the summer break, as well as take advantage of reading volunteer support each week. Once again, families certainly appreciated having a regular summer activity which did not incur a cost.

To attract more families to the sessions, we cast our net wider in 2024, asking our contacts to advertise it across the borough. We were pleased that more families attended this year than in 2023. However, despite high sign-ups, numbers attending were still lower than we would have wished, despite text reminders sent out to families each week. In September 2024, we telephoned all families who had signed up but not attended any session to find out if there were specific barriers to attending. Reasons were wide ranging, from last minute doctors' appointments to simply forgetting, but we could not see a pattern of barriers. When we run the club again in 2025 we plan to telephone all families who sign up before the first session, to see if personal contact will result in a higher number of attendees.

What children and parents say about our summer reading club



"The staff are amazing. My children love coming to the activities every week."

Parent

"I loved my time here. I really, really enjoyed the different activities you could choose from and how interactive the whole thing was. My favourite parts are the story time, when we sang the songs and made the bookmarks."

Child



"I really enjoyed supporting the Summer reading club again this year and am so impressed with the brilliant organisation and care that goes into making it so successful."

Volunteer



"I loved the drawing because I got to do so much and I loved the song and story time."

Child

"The volunteers are kind, welcoming and encouraging."

Parent

Case study

“I find reading easier now and I read more at home.”



Freddie’s aunt, Stacy, first heard about Learn to Love to Read in summer 2023 when she brought her nephew, Freddie (8), to our weekly summer reading club.

L2L2R’s summer reading club was launched in 2023 and runs in conjunction with St Michael’s Church in Southfields, with a stay and play session running each Wednesday morning in the summer holidays for children aged 0–11 and their carers. Reading, craft and play activities are based on a different theme each week, with staff and volunteers on hand to support and read with the children and their families. After a story and song at the end of the session, children are also encouraged to choose a lightly-used book each week which they can take home and keep. Ten families are then able to stay for a hot lunch as part of St Michael’s Church community lunch initiative (places are allocated on a first come first served basis).

The club had been recommended to Stacy by a teacher at Freddie’s school, one of L2L2R’s partner schools. Stacy and Freddie came along to the sessions throughout the summer holidays in 2023. They also visited the local library where Freddie completed the summer reading challenge for the first time. Freddie was so proud that he brought his medal along to the final session to show the staff and volunteers.

Stacy and Freddie enjoyed their first year so much that they couldn’t wait to come back for every session in 2024. Stacy describes the club as: “Really good. Freddie’s reading more and it made us go to the library and read more as a family. I would definitely recommend it to other families.”

At the reading club in 2023, Freddie met L2L2R reading volunteer Claire and the pair hit it off immediately. Stacy comments: “Claire is really good with him. Freddie looks forward to seeing Claire every week; he loves her.” They teamed up again in 2024, with Freddie telling us that he particularly enjoyed colouring, drawing and sharing books with Claire and the other volunteers.

Claire and Freddie got on so well together that Claire changed the school she usually volunteered in during term time in autumn 2023 so she could continue to support Freddie – and other children at his school – every week. Freddie says he finds the reading support he receives at school very helpful, saying: “Claire talks about the book and makes it fun. I find reading easier now and I read more at home.”

Our thanks

We'd like to thank everyone who has supported us in the past and throughout 2023-2024, especially those grant-making bodies which have supported us for a number of years.



THE J J CHARITABLE TRUST



We are also extremely grateful to the individuals who fund us on a monthly basis. Their unrestricted donations give us the security and flexibility to continue to develop our work.

Get involved

Donate

If you'd like to make a donation to help us continue to support children's reading in Wandsworth, either as an individual or a local business, please visit www.learn2love2read.org.uk/pages/11-donate, scan the QR code or contact Matilda Tuke at matilda@l2l2r.org.



Volunteer

If you're interested in becoming an L2L2R reading volunteer, you can find information and apply online here: www.learn2love2read.org.uk/pages/4-volunteer, scan the QR code or contact Matilda Tuke at matilda@l2l2r.org with any questions.



Partner with us

If your organisation would like to find out more about how we might work together please visit: www.learn2love2read.org.uk/pages/3-partner-with-us, scan the QR code or get in touch with Tara Coffin at tara@l2l2r.org. If you work with disadvantaged families in Wandsworth in any capacity we would love to hear from you!



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