



A mission to ensure *ALL* children in Scotland are reading well by 11:
Helping children escape poverty



SUMMARY

Children living in poverty are less likely to be able to read well at school than their classmates. 1 in 5 children from poor families in Scotland leaves primary school unable to read well, a level four times as high as that of pupils from better off households. Not reading well can cut short children's chances in life, and makes Scotland less fair and less prosperous. This is despite the best efforts of government, teachers and families around the country.

Reading well, and with enjoyment, is a skill that unlocks opportunities at school and in life. It is essential to tackling the effects of poverty on children. A good education is of course about much more than just reading. But being able to read well is the foundation on which so much else depends: reading for enjoyment helps to build children's learning for life.

That is why, as a nation, we need to turn things around. By setting a historic goal, and working together to achieve it, we can ensure all children are reading well at 11. Meeting this goal would be a huge step towards creating a fairer Scotland. To achieve this we cannot afford to leave any children behind. There are some signs of progress in tackling this inequality. But it has been too slow and we must do more. We are optimistic about turning this situation around. If we all come together – parents, teachers, government, business and communities - to commit and work towards this goal we can improve children's chances and strengthen society for the whole country's benefit. Our task is to enlist *all* those who can help to achieve this ambitious but vital goal.

Achieving the goal will require action on all fronts. We are urging government and political parties to sign up to the ambition: policy and funding matter. But achieving the goal will require action and a sense of ownership for a

wide range of organisations – including business and civil society. It will require action across four main fronts:

1. **Celebrating the importance and enjoyment of reading.**
2. **Prioritising the development of communication skills in the early years of a child's life.**
3. **Providing the right support to help every child learn to read well at primary school.**
4. **In homes: supporting families to help their children's reading.**

READ ON. GET ON. CAMPAIGN ACTIONS

Reading: Parents, carers and anyone with a child in their life can make a huge difference by reading together for just ten minutes a day.

Volunteering: People can give their time to schemes that help children with reading and language. Employers and schools can play a vital enabling role.

Embedding and innovating practice: The voluntary sector, schools, policy makers and the private sector should look to build on existing work to embed practice based on research of what works and develop interventions and partnerships to help all to read.

Leading the way locally: Schools, often working in partnership, already make a huge difference – they can sign up to the ambition and set their own ambitious local goals.

Driving across government: All parties can commit to the goal and set out in their manifesto's how they would support its achievement.



1. NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

UNFAIRNESS AND INEQUALITY IN SCOTLAND

Scotland is one of the most unfair countries in the developed world. Family background matters more to an individual's life-chances in our country than in many other rich nations. High levels of child poverty are associated with Scotland's stubborn history of educational inequality, with the lottery of birth mattering more than a child's efforts at school or their talents.

Tackling these inequalities and forging a fairer country is a concern for all of us. The talents and efforts of each individual should determine their chances in life, not where they were born and who their parents are. This is an issue that resonates across the political spectrum, as well as with business and in communities across Scotland.

Sir Harry Burns, The former Chair of Scotland's Literacy Commission

"We recognise without question that a strong, successful country requires strong and secure literacy skills. Literacy support, indeed unlocks, learning in all other areas, is crucial for developing employability skills and is a prerequisite for full, informed and responsible participation in social, economic, cultural and political life. Without literacy skills, health and wellbeing can be seriously impaired, or even negated."

EDUCATIONAL UNFAIRNESS FUELS WIDER INEQUALITIES

Many factors contribute to a child's lack of chances in life. One of them is poverty: 220,000 (22%) children in Scotland are growing up in poverty.¹ Not having enough money

makes it harder for parents to provide stimulating and enriching home environments and pay for the opportunities and the support children need to flourish, from educational trips to books and toys. Struggling to make ends meet also increases stress, particularly among parents of younger children.²

It is a great cause for concern that the number of children living in poverty in Scotland is set to rise considerably in coming years. In the last year alone the number of children who have experienced poverty increased by 30 000. This growth in child poverty is set to continue. It is predicted that 1 in 3 children will experience poverty during their childhood by 2020.³

Potentially, the most critical lever we can use to open up opportunities for children in poverty is education. A good education is key to supporting and enabling every child to reach their potential. Yet the hard truth is that Scotland - despite years of effort from several governments - still has a highly unequal education system.

Rather than unlocking potential, our education system too often entrenches disadvantage and inequalities. There still exists a large gap in attainment between poor children and their peers, despite many developments in Scottish education. This gap starts in the early years and widens as children progress through schooling. 1 in 4 pupils from deprived areas are underperforming in reading and almost 1 in 2 are underperforming in writing by early secondary school.⁴ By the end of compulsory schooling, children in deprived areas finish with much lower levels of attainment than their peers. There is an average gap of 300 points in the tariff score of the most and least advantaged pupils which corresponds to roughly four 'A' grades in Higher.⁵



It has long been recognised that we let down too many children who are allowed to fall behind. Until we succeed in giving every child the basic skill of reading, thousands of children will continue to struggle through their education and have limited opportunities to learn and succeed. It will make it harder for Scotland to close the wider gap in achievement in education and learning that exists between children living in poverty and their peers. It is in this context that we are concerned and launching a national mission to get all children reading well by age 11.

LEARN TO READ – THEN READ TO LEARN

Firm foundations in reading are critical to breaking the cycle of educational inequality in Scotland - and to improving the wider life-chances of the poorest and most disadvantaged children. Ensuring all children are reading well by 11 would make a game-changing contribution to making Scotland a fairer country.

A good education is, of course, about much more than being able to read. At school, children need a broad and balanced curriculum that ensures each child finds and nurtures his or her particular talents. But being a good reader is crucial for every child. Children first learn to read; then they read to learn.

We expect children to read to access much of their learning. Without first developing good early language skills and then being able to read well, children will not be able benefit from all the other opportunities that a good education offers. Many children who struggle to understand what is going on in a classroom switch off from education.

Reading well by the age of 11 is particularly important. The first 11 years of a child's life are the period when most learning of literacy happens.⁶ In the early years – a major focus of this report and of the Read On. Get On. campaign – children need solid foundations in

early language and emergent literacy skills, including knowledge of sounds and letters and understanding how books and stories work. Many children start to read before they begin primary school. Strong readers will often have much of these skills in place before they set foot in a classroom. The primary school years that follow are just as critical to developing good reading skills.⁷

This age is also when children develop a love of reading, of books and of stories. Reading can open children's imaginations and expose them to new worlds, cultures and ideas, whether through a book or other media, such as blogs, magazines or song lyrics.

If children do not read well by the age of 11 and do not enjoy reading, they are far more likely to have poor literacy as adults and for their lives to be severely constrained. Basic literacy is still the skill employers most often cite as being of concern when they are recruiting.⁸ Booktrust and the National Literacy Trust have highlighted why struggling with reading can mean social, economic and cultural exclusion as adults.⁹ Booktrust has also shown how not reading well makes social mobility less likely.¹⁰

In short, reading is probably the most fundamental skill a person needs to get on and to achieve their potential.

A HISTORIC GOAL: ALL CHILDREN READING WELL BY THE AGE OF 11

Recognising the foundational importance of reading well by age 11, we are encouraging a wide coalition of organisations to come together to launch the Read On. Get On. campaign in Scotland - teachers, headteachers, businesses, reading charities, children's charities, publishers, local libraries and many more. This diverse coalition will work towards a historic and achievable goal: **that all children should be reading well by the age of 11.**



It is possible to ensure that children born this year, in 2014, will be the first of a generation of children in which all children are reading well by 11. The impact for these children will be profound. The impact on Scotland could be transformational.

that, evidence suggests, children need to reach by the age of 11 in order to have a good chance of getting good qualifications by age 16. It is also the level that ensures social inclusion as an adult.¹¹

One of the reasons achieving this ambition has so much potential is that the goal we are setting is not simply basic literacy: it is much more demanding. The box below sets out what we mean by 'reading well'. Essentially, this is a level of reading that is necessary *not just to get by, but to get on* – and to succeed. It is the level

What do we mean by reading well in Scotland?

Our core definition of 'reading well' is as follows:

“Reading well’ by the age of 11 means that children should not only be able to read the words that are written down, but they should also have a wider understanding of the meaning behind stories and information and be able to talk about them and comment on them. As well as being able to read and understand books such as Harry Potter or Treasure Island, they should also be able to read a range of different materials, including magazines and newspapers, relevant websites, letters and dictionaries.”

Under this definition, if children are 'reading well' they can identify relevant parts of a story or plotline in a fictional book and interpret the motives of characters based on their actions. Children are able to identify the main purpose of the book (for example, *“It’s all about why going to the dentist is important and how you should look after your teeth”*). And they can recognise the difference that context makes to the meaning of the story, such as its historical context or geographical location.

Children should be able to make comments on the structure or the organisation of the story, such as, *“He describes the accident first and then goes back to tell you why the child was in the road,”* or *“The writer uses bullet points for the main reasons.”*

Children will be able to comment on features of the writer’s language, such as, *“All the questions make you want to find out what happens next,”* and *“‘Disgraceful’ is a good word to use to show he is upset.”* They can also say what effect they think different words and language have on the reader.

It is important to stress that reading well in this way is also strongly associated with good wider language skills. The number of spoken words a child understands, for example, is a predictor of how well they will be able to read.

It is not the point at which a child can be said to be literate; rather, it is the level that education experts believe children need to obtain to go on to do well at secondary school and to prosper in life.



2. POOR YOUNG CHILDREN FALL BEHIND IN READING

To achieve the goal of all children reading well by age 11 we cannot afford to leave any children behind. Children growing up in poor families are at greatest risk. Every child should have the chance to fulfil their potential. Being able to read well is a vital skill and can unlock learning. But despite the best efforts of teachers across the country children living in poverty are less likely to be able to read well at school than their classmates.

WHY BUSINESS AS USUAL IS NOT AN OPTION

While many schools and communities have made good progress in helping children read well in recent years, if we continue at our current pace of progress, we will still fall a long way short of all children reading well by the age of 11. Business as usual, then, is not an option. It would leave another generation of low-income pupils with curtailed life-chances and restricted horizons.

WHICH CHILDREN ARE FALLING BEHIND?

Poor children

All too often, being born into poverty limits children's life-chances. Despite persistent efforts over many years from government, schools and civil society, disadvantaged children continue to have significantly less chance of doing well at school than their better off classmates.

Children growing up in poor families are at greatest risk of not reading well. They are less likely to be able to read well at school than their classmates. This has the potential to have a significant and negative impact on their wellbeing and future life-chances. The latest official Scottish Government data shows the

gap in reading ability between poor children and their peers on two measures – reading well and reading very well:

- **1 in 5 poor children are not reading well by age 11** – a level double that of all children (1 in 10) and four times as high as that of pupils from the least deprived areas (1 in 20).
- **Over half of children from the most deprived areas leave primary school not reading very well**, compared to just under a third from the least deprived areas.¹²

The latest available data also shows that the gap in reading inequality between poor children and their peers is greater in the early years of primary school. While progress is made in reducing this gap by the end of primary school, this progress is lost in the transition to secondary school:

- **At P4 a quarter of children living in deprived areas are not reading well.** This reduces to 1 in 5 at the end of primary school.
- **By S2 a quarter of children living in deprived areas are not reading well**, suggesting the gap widens again as children move to secondary school.¹³

The available evidence confirms that literacy and reading skills are linked to socio-economic status and level of deprivation, with those from more deprived areas achieving lower scores.

It is difficult to assess recent trends in the reading gap between poor children and their peers in Scotland. This is because the way the data is collected changed in 2012 and therefore is not comparable with previous years. The



next available data on the reading gap will be published by the Scottish Government in 2015.

The gap between girls and boys

Boys, as a group, continue to read less well than girls. In 2012, 92% of girls were reading well or very well in Scotland by the age of 11 compared with 88% of boys.¹⁴

Trends in attainment in reading are repeated when looking at attitudes and behaviour. In general, girls enjoy reading more than boys, read more often, hold more positive attitudes towards reading and are more likely to seek out opportunities to read – for example, by visiting the library. Previous research published by Booktrust has attempted to explain this difference in reading attitudes. It suggests that boys' reading interests are not fully valued by the curriculum, which may 'fail' boys by not recognising the value of their home reading choices.¹⁵ While boys have a tendency to prefer information-based books and digital formats, debates about reading for pleasure often privilege the kind of reading associated with print fiction to the exclusion of other genres and formats.¹⁶

New research for this report by the National Literacy Trust confirms the differences in attitudes towards reading between girls and boys in Scotland. Analysis of a 2013 survey of 8-11-year-olds reading habits in Scotland found that boys were more likely to recognise the importance of reading for their later chances in life – 71% agreed with the statement, "If I am a good reader it means that I'll get a better job when I grow up." This was higher than the figure for girls, which was 63%. But despite this:

Girls were more likely to enjoy reading:

- 73% of girls said they enjoyed reading compared with 52% of boys.
- Nearly two in five (39%) girls in Scotland said that they enjoy reading very much, compared to only half as many boys (23%).

- Boys were four times as likely as girls to say that they don't like reading at all (10% compared to 2%).

Girls were more likely to read outside the classroom:

- Nearly half of girls aged 8 to 11 in Scotland said they read daily outside class compared with only three in ten boys of that age (47% compared to 28%).
- Twice the proportion of boys reported that they never read outside the classroom: 18% of boys compared with 8% of girls.

Boys were more likely to report less positive attitudes about reading:

- Only 51% of boys said they saw reading as 'cool' compared with 63% of girls.
- A third of boys (34%) say that their parents don't care whether they spend any time reading compared with a fifth of girls (22%).¹⁷

Children with additional support needs

Some children with additional and complex support needs are less likely to be able to read well. Those classified as having 'severe learning difficulties' and 'profound and multiple learning difficulties' will read at a level appropriate to their additional support needs.

READING INEQUALITY IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Scotland has a regretful history of reading and wider educational inequality. For many children, this country provides enormous and rich opportunities. At the top end of our education system we rival the best in the world. But it has long been recognised that we let down too many children who are allowed to fall behind. Many of them are condemned to restricted horizons and limited opportunities.



HOW SCOTLAND COMPARES WITH OTHER DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

Inequalities in reading ability in Scotland, compared internationally, show some recent improvement. A study of international reading showed a slight reduction in average reading scores amongst primary school pupils in Scotland between 2001 and 2006, compared to an improvement in average reading scores in many other countries.¹⁸ From 2006 to 2009 Scotland's own performance remained steady. Since 2009, Scotland's relative position compared to OECD countries and other parts of the UK has improved, with a greater number of countries performing significantly lower, and fewer countries performing similarly to Scotland.¹⁹

In addition, international evidence suggests that the extent of the relationship between deprivation and reading performance in Scotland reduced between 2009 and 2012 and sits around the OECD average. However, the likelihood of disadvantage affecting a pupil's score was similar in Scotland to the OECD average. About 11% of the variation in Scotland could be explained by socio-economic factors. This was similar to the position for reading in 2009 (14%).²⁰

The link between a child's socio-economic circumstances and their reading ability is similar to many other developed nations, including England and Northern Ireland (Wales performs slightly worse).²¹

Some progress has been made in ensuring more children leave primary school reading well. But it has been too slow and we must do

more. Future action must focus on ensuring children in poverty leave school reading well. If we don't act now, thousands of children will continue to fall behind. No child born this year should be behind by the time they finish primary school. Our aspiration should be that Scotland catches up with the best performing countries around the world.

PAUL, AGE 9

Paul enjoys reading and thinks it's important for his future. His family don't earn a lot of money and his dad has to work very long hours. He thinks that reading well will help him to get a job and have more money when he is older.

"I didn't like reading when I was young because I didn't understand the words. Now I've learned lots of them and I enjoy reading now. When you go into a new book it feels like you can't read it but the teacher helps you. When you learn new words, you can say them right and you get better and better. Your teacher keeps on helping you even if you get it wrong.

The books I'm looking for are interesting ones like about icebergs... I like factual books because they can make you learn more at school so that when you're in high school you don't need to be scared, when you're moving on to big stuff.

If you want to be like... a lawyer you need to be able to read... I think you need to read to be a shopkeeper sometimes. When you need to look up the numbers and the letters on the screen. [At school] It opens the key for other things like language and maths stuff, to do, so you can get it easy."



3. WHY READING MATTERS

When children, particularly the poorest, have fallen behind in reading by 11, the impact can last for the rest of their lives. They are less likely to go on to secure good qualifications. Their chances of getting a good job and pulling themselves out of poverty are severely diminished. And there are substantial wider costs, such as increased risks of poor health. It also makes Scotland less fair and less prosperous.

INEQUALITY IN READING AT 11 AND WIDER INEQUALITIES

Scotland is a highly unequal country. It is widely claimed that the unequal distribution of income and wealth contributes to unequal life-chances and opportunities. There are many complex causes of these wider inequalities. But one critical contributing factor is continuing inequality in our education system.

Reading ability is linked to educational attainment and positive outcomes in adulthood. Falling behind early in life, particularly in reading can mean a lifetime of poorer opportunities. As the Scottish Government's Literacy Action Plan – Interim Progress Report stated *'We know that if a person has low levels of literacy, they are more likely to suffer poor health, they are more likely to be living in poverty and deprivation and they are more likely to be out of work or in unstable and low paid employment.'* It also affects our national prosperity.

Failing to ensure all children are reading well is a significant contributing factor to low earnings and wider inequality. If Scotland made progress towards all children reading well by age 11 this would help narrow these wider inequalities.

READING, EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS

Inequalities in core skills, such as reading, are significant drivers of wider inequalities. We

have unequal educational outcomes at 11 and this feeds through into unequal attainment for older children. This, in turn, creates inequalities in the skills of adults in Scotland, which drive unfairness in the labour market. A considerable body of research documents the links between literacy and how well people do at work – their employment rates and incomes.

There are strong links between low-income and deprivation and lower levels of literacy. A quarter of adults in Scotland have low levels of literacy. A survey of adult literacy in Scotland found that 14% of people with income of less than £9500 per year had low levels of literacy, almost double the rate for all groups. There was also evidence that people from the 15% most deprived areas tend to have lower scores. This is a potential drag on Scotland's economic capacity. It is also a social issue, because parents who are unable to read are less able to support their children's learning, putting the next generation at risk.²²

On average, adults with functional literacy – just below the definition of the level of 'reading well at 11' used in this report – earn 16% more than those without this level of literacy.²³ Taking the current national minimum wage of £6.31 an hour, an increase of 16% in the earning potential of someone who is able to read well represents an additional £1.01 and an hourly wage of £7.32. Applying this increased earning potential to the national average salary of £26,500, would give a salary of £30,740. The UK government's Skills for Life survey illustrated that in England:

- Approximately one in four people earning less than £10,000 was not functionally literate – compared with less than one in 25 of those earning over £30,000.²⁴
- Around one in four (24%) of those not in work was not functionally literate –



compared with around one in ten (11%) of those in work.²⁵

Employers have long been concerned about these issues and the lack of basic skills among many young adults in the UK. A recent CBI survey of employers found that 85% of firms across Britain thought that ensuring a solid grounding in literacy and numeracy should be the focus of primary schools.²⁶ In 2014 the UK Commission for Employment and Skills stated that economic growth and recovery may be constrained by skill shortages. Almost three in ten vacancies are reported to be hard to fill.²⁷

FUTURE PROSPERITY: WHY CHILDREN'S READING MATTERS TO ALL OF US

It is not only disadvantaged children and adults who pay the price for Scotland's reading inequality. There is a significant economic cost to the country from children falling behind in reading. There is long-standing evidence that improved education systems and more skilled young people lead to higher levels of economic growth.

CAROL PATTERSON, DEPUTY HEAD TEACHER

Carol believes reading is an invaluable life skill and that all children should be confident readers.

"This has a huge impact for life skills and learning. Children need to be able to read to access their own learning and life. It gives them invaluable access to information, opportunities, choices and fun. Children then become parents and if they cannot read and access letters, read with their own child, shop and read labels, prices, access the internet (child's online journals) etc they are at a huge disadvantage and the cycle continues. We do not want children to give up and turn away from the fun and joy which learning can bring and the opportunities it opens in life."



4. FOUR KEY AREAS FOR ACTION TO ENSURE ALL CHILDREN ARE READING WELL BY 11: ENJOYMENT OF READING, BEFORE CHILDREN START SCHOOL, AT SCHOOL AND AT HOME

Responding to the scale of the challenge will require action across four key drivers of reading well: in communities, before children start school, at school and at home.

All children should have a fair chance to succeed in their education and in later life, whatever their background. However, too many children are being left behind. Responding to the challenge will require a high level of ambition and coordinated action across many settings and from many organisations and individuals. While schools are critical, they cannot achieve a national goal of reading well by 11 on their own.

i) CELEBRATING THE ENJOYMENT OF READING

The enjoyment of reading is critical to ensuring all children learn to read well. When children enjoy reading they are far more likely to learn to read well. New evidence for this report shows that children from poorer households are least likely to be reading for pleasure outside school. Ensuring all children, from all backgrounds, are reading well by the age of 11 will require us as a nation and our local communities to celebrate the joy of reading.

READING FOR ENJOYMENT MEANS BETTER READING

Evidence shows that when children are young a love of reading can run parallel with an eagerness to learn to read better and confidence in their ability to do so. Moreover, reading habits 'rub' off in the home and are passed on through the generations.

A recent 'reading habits' survey, carried out by Booktrust, found that children who are encouraged to read and who enjoy reading at school go on to read more as adults – and also read more to their own children.²⁸ Previous research has found that regularly reading for pleasure can be linked to better progress in maths, vocabulary and spelling between the ages of ten and 16.²⁹ The same research found that reading for pleasure is more important for children's cognitive development between ages ten and 16 than their parents' level of education.³⁰

CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS READING

Given how important reading well and for enjoyment is for learning, it is worrying that poorer children appear to be typically less likely to read for pleasure. Booktrust's reading habits survey has shown that people who never



read books tend to live in deprived areas where more children live in poverty.³¹ As reading habits are passed on through the generations, this suggests that children in poorer families are less likely to have the opportunity to develop a love of reading than children from other backgrounds.

New National Literacy Trust research for this report, which for the first time focuses on the reading habits of 8-11-year-old children in Scotland, finds that children from poorer families understand the importance of reading:³²

- More low-income than higher income 8-11-year-olds see the link between being good at reading and getting a good job when they are older (three quarters (74%) compared to a third (66%).

They are also just as likely to enjoy reading:

- The same proportion of children from low-income and higher income households enjoy reading.

However, it also finds that children from poor families are less likely to:

- Read frequently outside of school – only 30% of poor children read daily outside of class compared to 40% of their peers.
- Have books of their own - twice as many poor children in Scotland say they don't have children's/ young adult books at home.

- Read as broad a range of materials – books, magazines and technology-based materials such as text messages and emails – as other children.

In addition, children from poorer households in Scotland are more likely to say that they would be embarrassed if their friends saw them read than their better-off peers (21% compared with 17%). As set out earlier in this report, these negative reading behaviours are more prominent among boys than girls in Scotland.

Children's attitudes to reading also highlight why enjoying reading matters:

- 8-11-year-olds who enjoy reading are nearly four times more likely to say that they read daily outside class compared with those who don't enjoy reading.
- 13 times as many children who do not enjoy reading say that they do not read a book outside class in a typical month compared with those who do enjoy reading.

A quarter of children surveyed said that they cannot find things to read that interest them. Studies have found that children's attitudes to reading are influenced by how they connect emotionally and socially to reading materials and whether they can relate the subject to their own lives. One study defined this as 'aliteracy' – an unwillingness rather than an inability to read.³³ Reading in the language children speak has also been found to be important. The Itchy Coo project has demonstrated the importance of addressing the disconnect between school teaching and Scots language.



CAMERON, AGE 8

Cameron recently discovered his love of books and writing stories. He doesn't always get a lot of help with his reading at home, but meets up with his friend after school and they read out loud to one another.

"I love reading, and I used to hate it. I used to just play all the time and never take a spare minute to read, but now I read all the time. [When I read] I get inspired and I write my own stories too.

Sometimes, when I walk home from school, I just stop and read a sign. And, sometimes graffiti artists write their names on lampposts. I just love reading!

Some books are difficult - usually Roald Dahl books because they make up words. It makes me struggle. If I can't read it I usually just skip it, because I don't like asking for help. I like to be independent.

None of my family like reading really, they just don't read. It is quite important, because it's a good part of your education and if people get grown up they can get good jobs and get good money for good things. My mum and dad like that I like my education, but sometimes I go on a bit, rapping on about it."

READING IN A CHANGING WORLD

Achieving the goal of all children reading well will require us to recognise the changing world in which children are growing up. Three factors in particular provide important context.

Reading in a digital age

Technology has changed the nature of and access to reading. For example, the internet has replaced the need for reference books in the home. These new forms of digital reading material need to be valued in the same way as books.

New research from the National Literacy Trust for the Read On. Get On. campaign shows that, just three years ago, in 2010, children in Scotland were most likely to be reading books if they were reading outside of school hours. By 2013, while books remain popular, the most commonly read material was text messages.

The research shows the growing importance of new technology. While books – whether fiction or non-fiction – remain prominent, they show a

modest reduction in children's reading engagement. In contrast reading e-books and text messages has increased significantly. In just three years, the use of e-books by 8–11-year-olds almost doubled. This trend looks set to continue and will have important implications for efforts to promote reading.

While these trends present challenges, new technology can also be an opportunity to increase children's access to books and their excitement and enthusiasm about reading through a medium other than a physical paper book.

Time-pressured parents?

Reading is also not necessarily an activity that time-pressured parents will choose to do with their children. A qualitative study undertaken among parents suggested that reading for pleasure was seen as an unsociable activity that they did not have time for and that was not necessary or relevant to their lives.³⁴ In a survey by Quick Reads, 19% of parents with children under eight admitted that they read with them just once a week or less.³⁵



Some parents feel that when they are with their children, they would rather be doing something active and fun. Reading for pleasure is not a consideration in many households, and reading primarily had work or school associations, rather than being seen as an enjoyable activity.

Reading is not cool?

Many children do not want to be seen as 'a reader'. While many 11-year-olds view children who like to read as achievers, being a 'reader' is seen as 'geeky', 'uncool' and boring by some children. Indeed, research for this report found that despite 67% of 8-11-year-olds making the link between reading and their future job prospects, 18% of those children said that they would be embarrassed if friends saw them reading.³⁶

A READING CULTURE

A study of 27 nations explored the impact that the presence of books in the home and growing up with a reading culture had on children's wider academic attainment. It found that children growing up in homes with many books get three years more schooling than children from bookless homes, independent of their parents' education, occupation, and class.³⁷

The Scottish Government has an ambition to develop a strong reading culture in Scotland where reading is a valued activity from the earliest age. This forms a core part of the government's literacy action plan in recognition of the social, educational and familial benefits of 'reading-rich' homes. Initiatives such as Book Week Scotland, run by the Scottish Book Trust, aim to deliver on this aspiration. Supporting the development of this reading culture is critical to meeting the Read On. Get On. campaign goal.

SOPHIE, AGE 10

Sophie likes reading at home in quiet places, but sharing a bedroom with her brother can make that difficult. She wishes there were more volunteers who could come in to her school to read with the children.

"I read on my own at home before I go to bed and when it's, like, raining, I sit up in my bed and read. But it's really hard because I have a brother and we have a two bedroom house and we've got to share. I usually either go under the bed, because we have boxes under there and I just go behind them. It just feels exciting, I ask everyone to be quiet so I can get right into the moment.

When I was little, and I didn't read as much, I wasn't as confident to read my homework out. I think I learned most at home because my mum was always reading and I always sat beside her. At night my dad would always be reading a couple of bedtime stories to me.

When you go to high school you might not have enough time to sit and just learn how to read but when you're younger you're the right age to learn.

We used to do this thing where each class had a chance to come to read over the wet break. It was people like Daniel's mum would come in, and she used to come in and help us to read. But now she has a job. They're going to try to do it again, but they don't have enough volunteers."



The importance of public libraries

Public libraries, in providing free access to books, e-books, audio books and other reading materials for families who struggle to afford them, have a key role to play in helping to deliver the Read On. Get On. campaign. In offering reading activities and materials of all kinds for families, they are places to encourage everyone to read more and to develop a love of reading.

Libraries in Scotland provide opportunities for family reading and learning and support. Examples include summer reading programmes, hosting Bookbug sessions, Rhyme Time and reading groups. They can also provide services such as bulk lending for nurseries. The role of librarians – both in and out of school - is also important in developing a love of reading and suggesting materials. Libraries can also provide texts in different formats such as large print.

ii) DEVELOPING EARLY LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS

In the critical early years of a child's life, what happens before he or she even sets foot inside a classroom can shape their life forever. The early years of a child's life are critical to ensuring all children are reading well by age 11. When children are very young they are starting to learn communication skills critical to subsequent development of reading. This section highlights the wide gap in early language development between poor children and their peers in Scotland and the importance of tackling this gap.

THE EARLY YEARS AND EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITY

The early years of a child's life, before they start school, are critical because at this time children are acquiring the skills that provide a platform from which they go on to read well.³⁷ Evidence suggests that by age three, 50% of our language is in place and by age five, 85% of is in place.³⁸ In addition, evidence from England shows that a two-year-old's language development can strongly predict their reading skills on entry into school, as well as their later attainment.³⁹

A child's background has a significant impact on acquiring these all-important early language skills: poorer children are far more likely to be behind at a young age. At school entry, low-income children lag behind their high-income counterparts in vocabulary by 16 months – a much larger gap than those for other cognitive skills.⁴⁰ These gaps are key causes of educational inequality in Scotland today.

STARTING BEHIND, STAYING BEHIND

A two-year-old's language development can strongly predict their reading skills on entry into school, as well as later attainment. Yet a child's background has a significant impact on acquiring these all important early language skills.

- Children from lower socio-economic backgrounds go to school having heard 32 million fewer words on average than their middle class peers.⁴¹ As a result, their comprehension and language development is likely to be more limited.
- In their first year, young children living in poverty are less likely to be read to or look at books on a daily basis at home. Three quarters of parents in the highest income group read stories to their babies every day, compared with 57% of parents in the lowest income group.⁴²



- At school entry there is a significant gap in early language development. Children in poverty are twice as likely to have difficulties in early language development as other children.⁴³

Analysis from the Growing Up in Scotland survey has found that children who are read to often, and those who had visited a library by the time they were 10 months old scored higher in assessments of cognitive ability at 34 months than children who have less experience of these activities. Further, doing frequent home learning activities such as reading and singing from an early age is associated with better cognitive ability (vocabulary and problem solving) at age 3, even after taking account of socio-demographic factors.⁴⁴

Evidence also shows that at age five, compared with children whose parents have no qualifications, children with a degree educated parent are around 18 months ahead on vocabulary. Children who display better communication skills at an early age are more likely to see their cognitive skills improve during the pre-school period (between ages three and five). This relationship is stronger for children whose parents have no or low educational qualifications. Children from less educated backgrounds whose relative vocabulary ability improves are typically those who are already demonstrating better communication skills at an earlier age. This reinforces the need to support communication skills and language development before the age of three.⁴⁵

Early experiences of reading also appear to impact on children's later reading habits. New analysis for this report suggests that children who read more frequently at age two are more likely to enjoy reading a lot at age eight. Conversely those who read less days a week are more likely to not like reading:

- 66% of children who like reading a lot at age eight, read four or more times a

week at age two compared to 10% of eight-year-olds who don't like reading.⁴⁶

Analysis in England for the Read On. Get On. campaign examined how far some children fall behind at a young age and their prospects of being able to catch up. It showed that amongst children in poverty who were 'advanced' in their language skills at age three, over 20% were behind by the age of 11. This is around double the figure for children in higher income households. The research also highlights how these early delays in language skills continue throughout childhood.⁴⁷

BUILDING ON EXISTING GOALS AND PRACTICE

As the evidence shows, the early years of a child's life will need to be a major focus of the Read On. Get On. campaign as they matter so much to children's ability to do well later on in life and at school. The work of early years services, such as health visitors, will be vitally important.

There is plenty of scope and opportunity to further develop and embed approaches across Scotland to *prevent* early difficulties and support young children's early language and literacy. The Early Years Collaborative has an aim to ensure that 90% of children have reached all of the expected developmental milestones at the time they start primary school, by the end of 2017. We believe reaching key milestones in early language development at this age are central to meeting the goal of all children reading well by 11.

Literacy (and numeracy) is included as one of nine key features in the *Pre-Birth to Three* national guidance for professionals working with children in the early years. The guidance recognises how fundamental literacy is to all areas of learning in the earliest years both to help children function effectively in every day life and to contribute to society. It promotes a number of ways in which early years professionals can support the development of



literacy including play, listening, rhymes, singing and stories. In addition, it suggests involving parents in their child's learning by providing a home lending library and keeping them informed of the stories, rhymes and songs that the child is learning in the nursery.

In addition, there are many positive examples of practice, based on what research suggests works. The Scottish Government's Play, Talk,

Read initiative aims to raise awareness of the importance of the early years in children's development and provide opportunities and support to families. In addition, Scottish Book Trust's Bookbug programme targets vulnerable families, emphasising the importance of building literacy and language skills in the early years.

MRS MURRAY, HEAD TEACHER

Mrs Murray is concerned at what she sees as being a growing gap in the early language skills of young children starting at her school in P1 between children from disadvantaged backgrounds and other children. She recognises that many of the children experience poverty at home and believes that financial, along with parents' own literacy challenges, mean that not every child is getting the support they need for their learning within the family. She has made literacy a priority for the school, to try to tackle the issue of children not reading well by age 11.

"We have found that there is an ever increasing gap between the pupils that have good literacy skills starting in school [at P1] and those that are starting with very basic skills and, in some cases, not able to access language and literacy at all. We do understand that nurseries and early years establishments are trying very hard to promote literacy skills, however, for some children it's not being promoted in the home and that's a vital part of their learning.

One of the key skills is talking and listening and using the book as a strategy for talking to their children about the stories and about the pictures in the book. It's not just the words, however, but the understanding. You can see it when the children start school, that this is where the gap is. Some children have a very basic level of vocabulary and others, who have been spoken to regularly, have a rich vocabulary - they are in a place where they are ready to learn and to develop that richness of language.

At school, we say that first they are learning to read and then they are reading to learn. And that learning to read stage is crucial. It is a challenge for children to learn how to read and we have to remember that. We use a multisensory approach in the school, digital and IT, whiteboards, letters hidden in sand, foam, magnetic boards. We also use lots of nursery rhymes, which very sadly, a lot of children just don't know.

Campaigns that will raise parents and carers' understanding of the role of language skills is key. I think we have to build parents understanding of the things that do help a child to develop their literacy. Parents sometimes think they are at school now so it's all being done, but their role is still so important. Children are at school a lot less than they are in their community so it needs to be a whole partnership, not just solely relying on the classroom. It has to be lots of partners in the community helping."



iii) PROVIDING THE RIGHT SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS

Schools cannot achieve the goal of all children reading well by 11 on their own. But they are, of course, central to improving children's reading. Thousands of great schools, headteachers, classroom teachers and school staff are helping turn around children's lives every day. And they are ambitious to achieve more.

GREAT SCHOOLS TURN AROUND LIVES

Many schools achieve impressive results for their pupils in very challenging circumstances. They can make an enormous difference, particularly for children from more disadvantaged backgrounds. They have demonstrated that while poverty often makes it harder for a child to learn and achieve, it should not be an excuse for low ambitions. Headteachers and classroom teachers have transformed the chances of thousands of children.

The 2009 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey shows that increasing reading engagement could mitigate 30% of the attainment gap associated with socio-economic disadvantage. Studies of schools that have been successful in narrowing the attainment gap associated with economic disadvantage suggest that prioritising literacy and making literacy enjoyable is key. This includes making tasks relevant to pupils' out-of-school lives.

BUILDING ON EXISTING PRACTICE

One of the priorities of Scotland's national strategy to tackle literacy is to improve reading and wider literacy skills through primary schools. The national literacy hub approach – aimed at improving literacy in schools and in communities – has focused on sharing

successful initiatives, approaches and ways of working across local authorities to develop a more systematic approach to improving literacy outcomes for young people. An evaluation of the Literacy Hubs points to areas of good practice in improving the reading skills of children. Key factors identified included a sustained approach from the early years; a focus on constantly striving to raise the bar of what young people can achieve; early identification and monitoring of interventions; more targeted approaches; leadership and evaluation; pedagogy practice as a means of improving literacy outcomes for young people; the use of texts and novels in consolidating reading skills and use of assessment data at school and local level.⁴⁸

The Curriculum for Excellence also provides opportunities to further develop ways of teaching reading and literacy in school, based on what we know works from research, including working with parents, reading stories, singing songs and using a wide range of books. It is important that professionals can build and share evidence of the approaches that work, particularly for children from deprived backgrounds.

A critical point is that schools cannot work alone. They need to work with others, including families and parents, but also the voluntary sector. Scotland has some great examples of engagement activity around reading including work by agencies such as the Scottish Book Trust. Interventions for school age children include Scotland Reads, literature circles, Book Week Scotland, Scottish Children's Book Awards and Booklists projects.

Earlier this year the Scottish Government set up a new programme, Raising Attainment for All. One of the aims of this programme is to ensure that 85% of children have successfully



achieved level two in relation to literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing by the end of primary school by 2016. We welcome this ambition and will promote the need for the goal for all children to be reading well by 11 to be a key element of this approach.

We also know much more about what works in schools to improve children's literacy through developments in England. The Education Endowment Foundation – an independent expert group that funds

educational innovations – has reviewed the evidence on what works to improve poor children's learning, including a particular focus on literacy. It shows, not only the impact that great teaching can have, but also the importance of working closely with parents and ensuring children are supported to catch-up if they have fallen behind in reading.⁴⁹

There is scope to achieve even more by further supporting teachers and schools and ensuring a focus on children living in poverty.

GREG DIMECK, HEAD TEACHER

Greg believes in primary schools can support children who struggle with reading

"There always has been a significant minority of children who have found access to curriculum difficult due to their inability to read. Often those kids can act out in class, distract others and can mask their literacy problems with poor behaviour. Boys are over represented in this group of children. We have to address this. We do this in a number of ways. One is trying to make learning fun and make reading cool. We do this by using a variety of novels and programmes to make sure the kids experience success and that is what our Fresh Start programme does."

CAROL PATTERSON, DEPUTY HEAD TEACHER

Carol believes that support from parents is integral to children meeting their learning and literacy needs and believes that reading is an activity best shared with your child.

"Parents have a huge impact at home in developing children's love of reading and helping them develop their reading skills. In Primary 1 the children get reading books at home and common words to learn by sight. If they can read the first 300 common words they can then pick up any book, newspaper, magazine and be able to read it – this has a huge impact. We invite parents into school and we show them fun ways of teaching their children these words i.e. snap, bingo, flashcards, board games, pairs, whiteboards to write on etc. The Class Teachers also model how to read and ask questions to check understanding. The Bookbug events in Nursery and P1 are also super opportunities to re-enforce these skills and get parents involved with their children."



iv) SUPPORTING FAMILIES TO HELP THEIR CHILDREN'S READING

What happens in the home has a profound effect on children's language development and their reading. We know how poverty can make it much harder for parents to do what they know is the right thing for their children: parents with poor literacy themselves may lack confidence to read with their children and they may not be able to afford the books that better off families can, may work shifts or long hours making it harder to read to and with their children.

BEYOND THE SCHOOL GATES: THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILIES

To some, it may seem a statement of the obvious to say that mothers, fathers and carers have a profound influence on children's reading. New analysis for this report suggests that parents of young children (aged eight) recognise the importance of their role in helping children to learn to read:

- 43% of parents believe schools and parents have equal responsibility in teaching children to read.
- Parents on lower incomes seem to emphasise the parent's role more than those on higher incomes.⁵⁰

The evidence in favour of mothers and fathers reading with and to their children is overwhelming. Recent data from PISA shows that those pupils whose parents regularly read books to them when they were in the first year of primary school were the equivalent to about a quarter of a school year ahead in reading tests at age 15.⁵¹ Reading is one of the areas where most parents normally have the simple facilities – books or other reading materials as well as simply being able to talk to their

children about reading – to get involved and make a difference. Of all subjects, reading has been found to be most sensitive to parental influences.⁵² Booktrust commissioned research that found that the home and family are crucial in the development of reading and writing, particularly in terms of reading for pleasure.⁵³

Reading to or with children matters for all children under 11. But the earlier parents start, the more profound the results and the longer-lasting the effects.⁵⁴ The evidence shows that if children pick up books from a young age, then these are life-long habits that last into adulthood - "becoming a lifetime reader is predicated on developing a love of reading".⁵⁵ Yet, research has shown that family disadvantage and lack of support is linked to less frequent activities that are important for child development from a young age (when children are 10 months old), including looking at books, reading stories and singing or saying nursery rhymes.⁵⁶

THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF FATHERS

It has long been recognised that fathers can play a particularly important role in helping to support their children's reading. Children whose fathers spend time with them and read with them do better at school, an impact which lasts into later adult life.⁵⁷ But we also know that fathers are less likely than mothers to read with their children. New analysis for this report shows that fathers in the lowest income households are less than half as likely to read with their children at age two as fathers in the highest income households (39% compared to 81%).⁵⁸

POVERTY, THE HOME AND INTERGENERATIONAL DISADVANTAGE

Raising children on a low-income makes it harder for parents to be able to give their children the best start in life. Children from



low-income families may have less access to age-appropriate books and toys than those from better off families because of cost. Evidence points to a reading resource gap between children living in poverty and their peers. This reading resource gap is confirmed by research, which found that 9% of families (with young children aged three) have less than 10 books at home (including library books), compared to 40% of families in the lowest income quartile have less than 10 books.⁵⁹

In addition, there appears to be a link between parents' attitudes to reading and socio-economic background. In their first year,

children from low-income families are less likely to have been read to on a daily basis than children from the highest income families. Over half of children from the lowest income families are read to on a daily basis compared to almost four in five of the highest income. There also appears to be a link between adult literacy and children's reading habits. 85% of parents who had read a book for pleasure in the last week read stories to their child every day, compared with 72% of parents who had not read for pleasure.

BOOKBUG

Bookbug is the Scottish Book Trust's Early Years programme, encouraging parents and children to read together from birth. The Bookbug programme provides free packs of books and resources to every baby, toddler, three and five year old in Scotland. In addition, Bookbug Sessions provide free opportunities encouraging parents and carers to talk, share books, sing, play and cuddle their babies and children.

The aim is that these activities lead to improvements in confidence, social skills, speech and language development and parent and child attachment. Evaluations have shown that Bookbug for the Home has increased the number of people reading daily with their children from 41% to 78%, and in the case of singing or rhyming daily with their children from 53% to 78%. 69% of professionals who had introduced Bookbug for the Home said that families were more likely to engage with their children as a result.

Since 2012, Scottish Government has also funded an Assertive Outreach programme to better support vulnerable families. Interviews with families who had experienced Book Bug for the Home as part of this initiative suggest that it had not only increased their capacity to support their children to enjoy reading but also strengthened the relationships between parents and children. It was reported that children had gained in confidence and self-expression; had improved language and communication skills and were better prepared to fit in with some of the routines of nursery activities as a result.



SHAUN, AGE 10

Shaun is a big reader and will read anything. He thinks the reason he loves reading is because of the encouragement he got from his parents and teachers.

"Often a person can't get a job because they don't read and they can't pay for their bills and they don't have the money to pay for food.

I enjoy reading, it takes your mind off things in life...Goosebumps, they were the first chapter books I read. Once I finished it, I felt proud. I felt astonished that I could do it. Eventually I ran out of Goosebumps books in school though.

The best person who's probably helped me read is my mum. She read me my first book ever, it was this dinosaur book and she read it to me every night, when I was going to sleep. And, see, if my mum didn't do that, I probably wouldn't be as in to books as I am now. When you're reading, you need support from your family, your teacher, basically everybody or else you're kind of not really excited about it.

The laptop is probably the worst way to read but it's one of the only ways I can at home [and] I don't really have access to a library. I have to read books on the laptop, but often my family need to take it away from me to do stuff. I would really like in the future to build a library close to me...because that means I could go down all the time, without even my mum. It'd be brilliant!"

Ten Minutes a day

The Read On. Get On. campaign commissioned education experts, EdComms, to review the evidence on what mothers and fathers should do to support their children's reading. The main findings were:

- ❖ There is good evidence that parents reading with their children for as little as 10 minutes a day can make a big difference.⁶⁰
- ❖ A little bit of reading every day appears to be better than less frequent, more extended periods: pupils who read on a daily basis, even for a few minutes, may experience more growth in reading ability than students who read for an extended period once or twice a week.⁶¹
- ❖ Books and stories are important, as they offer a way of expanding cultural and imaginative horizons, introducing children to a wide range of vocabulary and grammatical structures, and introducing the concept of 'beginning, middle and end'.⁶² But reading anything counts, particularly if it builds on the child's personal interests.⁶³

This more eclectic and inclusive view of reading material is good for children and good for parents. From a child's point of view, allowing her or him to choose their own materials gives them a sense of ownership, and is more likely to result in them enjoying reading and persisting with it.⁶⁴ Boys in particular benefit from reading being made purposeful in terms of following their interests. And from a parent's point of view it allows for the opportunity to integrate reading into everyday life, whether while on the bus or looking at the breakfast cereal packet in the morning.



5. A COMPREHENSIVE RESPONSE: WORKING ON ALL FRONTS TO ENSURE ALL CHILDREN ARE READING WELL

There is wide ranging agreement – across the political spectrum, among business and civil society organisations and in communities – that all children should have a fair chance to succeed in their education and in later life. It is unfair that so many children are left behind.

There is no magic bullet. Achieving the goal of reading well at 11 for all children requires comprehensive and sustained action on a number of fronts. This comprehensive response, in turn, requires high ambitions and sustained action from a wide coalition of people and organisations, and clear communication to the Scottish public so that everyone can play their part.

A NATIONAL MISSION TO ENSURE ALL CHILDREN ARE READING WELL BY THE AGE OF 11

As a country we cannot continue with a situation where so many poor children are not reading well at the end of primary school. Progress in reading amongst 11-year-olds has been, at best, steady in recent years. The cost of continuing with 'business as usual' will be considerable.

We know there are many remarkable examples of schools and projects turning this around. Equally, we know without the dedication and hard work by teachers and others the situation could be much worse. This is a challenge that can be tackled.

We can and we should be more ambitious. Doing even more to ensure children are

reading well by 11 means addressing the four drivers of children's reading outlined in this report. A comprehensive response requires a new kind of campaign. We need to rally together – this is not just about schools and government. The Read On. Get On. campaign aims to engage school leadership, child poverty charities, classroom teachers, publishers, reading and parents organisations, and those focusing on special needs and early years. Working closely together – and talking to many others – we can form the nucleus of a national mission to get all children reading.

The invitation is open to all to get involved. We have come together to make a start. This report is a call for others to join us. The campaign launched in the rest of the UK earlier this year. The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission welcomed the campaign in their recent *State of the Nation 2014* report and urged the whole of society to get behind it.

Our Goal

The Read On. Get On. campaign will work towards the goal of **All children to be reading well by the age of 11**. We are also arguing for two interim goals to be met: **1. All children with good early language development by the age of five**. This will be critical in order to ensure that we make the progress needed. We know how important this stage of children's lives is. **2. Half the number of poor children who do not read well by the age of 11**. This will support progress for the children who are already at school.



What can we all do to get there?

Reading: Parents, carers and anyone with a child in their life can make a huge difference by reading together for just ten minutes a day.

Volunteering: adults across Scotland can give time to schemes that help children with reading and language. Employers and schools can play a vital enabling role.

Embedding and innovating practice: The voluntary sector, schools, policy makers and the private sector should look to build on existing work to embed practice based on the research of what works and develop and share, interventions and partnerships to help all to read.

Leading the way locally: networks of schools and partnership across the community have made a difference. Towns and communities across Scotland can also embrace it as a local priority.

Driving across government: Even without additional resources, a clear commitment to get all children reading by 11 will create additional focus in the education system and, crucially, drive other departments and agencies outside education to play their part.

Donating: the voluntary sector organisations among the signatories to this report and many others will be delivering and innovating towards the goal. By giving money, individuals, companies and other organisations can support measurable progress towards our vital national goal.



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READ ON. GET ON.

How reading can help children escape poverty

Each year we leave thousands of young children in Scotland, very many of them poor, behind in their reading. This means they're less likely to experience the joy of reading, and they then struggle for the rest of their education and career. This report sets out who we're leaving behind and why.

Recognising the fundamental importance of reading well by age 11 and optimistic about our chances of turning this situation around, a coalition of organisations has come together to launch the Read On. Get On. campaign. Together we will take action to work towards a historic goal:
all children should be reading well by the age of 11.

Helping children read