



# Helping children learn to love to read



2020 – 2021

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# 01: Our vision

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## ***"Every child a reader – this is our vision for children in Wandsworth"***

Learn to Love to Read is a local charity that supports children who are finding learning to read challenging or who are at risk of starting school poorly prepared for learning to read. Working in the London borough of Wandsworth since 2014, we want all children to have frequent, positive reading experiences, and be enabled and empowered by learning to love to read.

Poor reading skills in childhood often result in limited literacy as adults, bringing well-recognised risks and missed opportunities; there is a proven increased likelihood of unemployment, low wages, obesity and depression. Outcomes are poor for those who never get to grips with the written word.

The academic year 2020 to 2021 began several months into the pandemic and ended with restrictions still in place. COVID-19 has particularly impacted disadvantaged pupils. As a result of school closures and interruptions, the gap in average reading attainment in Years 1 and 2 between those eligible for Pupil Premium and their peers had grown to a shocking seven months by spring 2021, representing a COVID-19 increase of around three months (National Foundation for Educational Research interim report). We generally work with schools that serve a disadvantaged pupil population, with high levels of Pupil Premium, Free School Meals or EAL families. The reading levels of the children currently being referred to us for support are significantly lower than we've seen in the past.

We work in partnership with local primary schools, providing trained volunteer teams to improve reading levels, build confidence and inspire a love of reading. Understanding that early intervention is key, we develop early literacy skills through our Early Years parent and toddler classes and work to engage parents in supporting their children's reading. We are excited to tell you about our work and our impact in this highly unusual academic year. If, after reading this report, you would like to support our vision of making every child a reader, we would love to hear from you.

**TERESA HARRIS**

*Founder, Learn to Love to Read*



# 02: The need

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## Poor literacy levels

In 2019 (last available figures), 27% of children in the UK left primary schools unable to read at the government's expected standard (24% in Wandsworth).

The National Literacy Trust estimates that 16.4% (7.1 million) of adults in England can be described as having 'very poor literacy skills', often finding themselves locked out of the job market and unable to support their own children's learning. In the prison population, this number rises to one in two, far higher than the population as a whole (Learning & Work Institute).

## Impact of COVID-19

Lockdowns, closing of school bubbles, and the total closure of schools between January and March 2021 has had an enormous effect on children's education in the 2020-21 academic year. According to The Royal Society, all year groups will feel the impact of school closures throughout their adult working lives, stretching into the 2080s. The need for parents to feel confident in supporting their child's learning at home has never been greater.

Seventy-six per cent of schools reported that children who started Reception in autumn 2020 needed more support than children in previous cohorts, with children struggling in particular with communication and language, personal, social and emotional development, and literacy (Bowyer-Crane et al. 2021).

By spring 2021 Year 1 pupils were as much as 3 months behind in reading compared with previous cohorts, with the attainment gap for disadvantaged pupils in this year group observed to have grown 'significantly'. (National Literacy Trust).

7.1  
million

adults estimated to have  
'very poor literacy skills'  
(National Literacy Trust)

76%

of schools reported children  
who started Reception in  
Autumn 2020 needed more  
support than Reception  
children pre-pandemic  
(Bowyer-Crane et al. 2021)

3  
months

Year 1 pupils were as much as  
3 months behind in reading  
compared with previous  
cohorts (National Literacy  
Trust)



# 03: What we do

Our goals:

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

Reduce the number of children whose opportunities are limited by poor reading skills.

3

Build partnerships with local schools and charities to give children, regardless of background, 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

Help children learn to love to read.



# 03: What we do

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We strive to meet our goals by providing:



## One-to-one reading support

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

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## Early Years classes

Our online classes for two to four year olds, focusing on singing, playing, chatting and reading, help children start primary school ready to learn to read.

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## Training and supporting volunteers

All our volunteers attend a half-day training session, as well as receiving ongoing support from L2L2R staff through newsletters, termly meet-ups and our virtual volunteering support line.

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## Parent engagement

We run training sessions for parents whose children are in the early stages of learning to read. Sessions focus on phonics, with hints and tips to enable parents to support their children's reading journey at home. We also use our existing family connections to encourage ongoing parental involvement in their children's reading.

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## Summer programmes

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

# 04: Theory of change

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## The need

- In 2019 (last available figures), 27% of children left primary school unable to read at the government's required standard (24% in Wandsworth).
- 16.4% (7.1 million) of adults in England can be described as having 'very poor literacy skills'. In the prison population, this number rises to 50%.
- Targeted intervention with 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.



## 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 read with children weekly for 20–25 minutes, either in school or virtually via Zoom.
- Training is run for parents in partner schools with children in Nursery, Reception and Year 1.
- Online Early Years literacy classes are run for younger siblings of children at partner schools and children referred by local charities and professionals.

# 04: Theory of change

## Outputs

- Volunteers read with children weekly for 20–25 minutes.
- 50 volunteers.
- 100 children supported across 7 schools.
- 1,100 reading sessions this academic year.
- 100 parents trained at 7 training sessions.
- 15 Early Years literacy classes run and 52 families attended.



## Outcomes

- Children show progress in their reading skills.
- Children show improved attitude and concentration as they engage with reading.
- Children's self-confidence in their reading abilities and enjoyment of reading grows.
- Parents' understanding of the importance of their support, and confidence in their ability to help their children's learning, increase.
- Babies and toddlers are introduced to vital early literacy skills.



## Impact

- Children start school better prepared for learning to read.
- 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 confident and motivated to support their children's ongoing learning.





# 05: Our COVID response

## How we responded to meet the changes in education brought about by COVID-19

This report mainly focuses on our work during the 2020–21 academic year. However, the impact of the sudden arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in the previous year was enormous. It had significant knock-on effects on all our work, not only immediately but long term.

Our work in schools came to a temporary halt when the schools closed in March 2020. As a small and agile organisation we were able to respond quickly to the crisis, continuing to support local children and their families throughout the remainder of the 2019–20 academic year by delivering gift packs of new books, magazines, games and crafts to children referred by our partner schools and other children living on the local large housing estates in Wandsworth.

**Over the spring and summer of 2020, we delivered 1,350 packs to Wandsworth children.** All our partner schools felt the packs gave families resources they would not have otherwise had access to and felt that the recipients read more over the summer as a result.

We had hoped our work would return to normal in the new academic year of 2020–21 but it became clear to us over the summer of 2020 that COVID-19 was likely to continue to affect schools throughout the new academic year. Although schools reopened in September 2020, some were concerned about allowing volunteers back in, and many volunteers were worried about visiting schools on a regular basis. We therefore began to investigate how we could move our volunteering out of schools and online.

### Early Years

In March 2020 we were running weekly early literacy classes in all our partner schools. These were aimed at supporting nursery children and younger siblings of pupils, together with their parents and/or carers. These also had to be halted when schools closed and we were not able to restart them in September 2020 as most schools were not allowing parents, siblings and visitors on site. Again, we looked to adapt this intervention and move these classes online, which we launched in November 2020.

“

*As a single parent it is hard to find the extra income to buy books and activities. So for us these activity packs are a lifeline. We enjoy sitting together and doing the activities - it's great bonding as well as for the kids' learning.*

*- Parent*

”

# 05: Our COVID response

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## Virtual volunteering

We developed a new virtual reading support programme, where volunteers connect with children via Zoom, using online graded reading books. The programme launched in the autumn of 2020 with additional full training for those volunteers wishing to switch to offering virtual support.

Our virtual support has also meant that we can recruit individuals who previously would not have been able to volunteer with us – people who are working full time but able to take an hour out of their day to support one or two children, and those who live further away from our partner schools.

By summer 2021, we had 32 virtual volunteers supporting approximately 50 children. Due to its success and the likelihood of ongoing disruption in schools due to the pandemic, we are continuing our virtual support programme in the 2021-22 academic year as an after-school activity.

## Training sessions

Our volunteer and parent training sessions, which had traditionally taken place face-to-face in schools or other venues, also had to be moved online. We were able to achieve this quickly and in the academic year 2020-21 ran 19 online training sessions, 12 for volunteers and seven for parents.

“

*Learn to Love to Read has provided the most amazing help and support for our children and their families. Despite the global pandemic, they have effectively adapted their support and it has had such a positive impact. They provided high quality books for our disadvantaged pupils to use at home, encouraging them to continue to develop a love for reading. During this lockdown they have connected with a number of our disadvantaged children to offer online support, which has been excellent. Parents have benefitted from some of their high quality videos, which have helped parents build their skills in supporting children at home. We can't thank them enough for all their ongoing support and keeping our children reading!*

*Fiona Loudon, Headteacher,  
Smallwood Primary School and Language Unit,  
June 2021*



”

# 06: 2020–21 highlights

## 1 One-to-one reading support

- 100 children supported across 7 partner schools in Wandsworth, both face-to-face and virtually.
- Over 1,100 reading sessions during 2020–21.
- 95% of parents who responded to our survey said the virtual reading sessions had made their child a better reader.
- 80% of parents who provided feedback felt more confident with helping their child read at home after sitting in on their child's virtual reading sessions.

## 3 Volunteering

- 12 volunteer training sessions run for 50 volunteers in 2020–21.
- 97% of volunteers who gave feedback felt they made a real difference to the children they worked with.
- 100% of volunteers would recommend volunteering with L2L2R to others.

## 5 Summer programmes

- 126 parents signed up to our Summer Sounds holiday phonics programme.
- 1,800 views of our phonics videos.
- 94% of parents who responded to our survey said they would sign up to similar future programmes.

## 2 Early Years

- 15 Early Years classes delivered in 2020–21.
- 52 families attended.
- All parents who attended our Early Years classes and responded to our survey would recommend the sessions to other parents.
- 75% of parents who provided feedback felt more confident helping their children learn at home.

## 4 Working with parents

- 7 parent training sessions run in 2020–21.
- Nearly 100 parents attended
- 100% of parents who completed our survey would recommend the sessions to others.





# 06: 2020–21 highlights

## How we measured 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 the end of the academic year. The form asks specific questions around reading attainment, comprehension, confidence, enthusiasm and parental engagement (for children reading virtually).

This year, due to disruption caused by COVID-19, many children were not supported for a full academic year. However, we were able to collect information for 62 children who were read with for the majority of the year, which accounts for just over 60% of the total number of children supported.

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, however this year with schools under pressure from the effects of the pandemic, it has not been possible to collect information from every school.

Feedback on our Early Years classes, parent and volunteer training, volunteer satisfaction and our summer projects was also collected via online forms. We often find a telephone call is the most successful way of obtaining feedback from the families we work with.





# 07: One-to-one reading support

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## What we do

**Our volunteers read with children every week, for 20–25 minutes. We focus on children in Years 1 and 2, though this year we have also supported some children in Year 3 to combat the impact of school closures during the pandemic.**

Children are chosen for our reading support by their form teachers if they are 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 at home, because they have missed some schooling or moved schools often, or, currently, because they have fallen behind due to interrupted schooling caused by COVID-19.

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.

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 are part of every session.



All our volunteers are trained in how to support children's reading in schools, including the synthetic phonics system and how to run a reading session. They are also given safeguarding training.

When reading with each child, volunteers follow a framework that allows the child to get the maximum benefit from the 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, etc.

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. All our volunteers follow the same framework, whether reading face-to-face with children in school, or virtually over Zoom.

# 07: One-to-one reading support

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## Facts and figures

In the academic year 2020–21, our volunteers supported around 100 children with their reading across seven partner schools – approximately 50 through face-to-face support in school and 50 with virtual reading sessions over Zoom. Our volunteers ran over 1,100 reading sessions.

This year was very disrupted by both lockdowns, and periods where some of our partner schools were unable to allow volunteers on the premises, so it has been harder than usual to measure children's progress. We asked for feedback from our volunteers and schools about children who were supported by us consistently for at least two terms.

# 3/4

By the end of the year three quarters of children scored either 5/6 or 6/6 for their attitude towards reading.

# 80%

By the end of the year nearly 80% of children scored 5/6 or 6/6 for their ability to answer simple questions about the text, compared to just over 60% at the start of the year.

## Outcomes

Over half of children with whom we worked have shown progress in all areas of their reading – attainment, comprehension and confidence – despite the disrupted nature of the academic year. We saw improvement particularly around children's confidence, with three quarters scoring 5/6 or 6/6 for their attitude towards reading, and 73% of volunteers reporting that their children were excited about books by the end of the year.

Our virtual reading programme also enabled us to give access to online reading books to children and families at home for the first time. We were delighted to find that 67% of families who gave feedback had accessed the books between volunteer reading sessions.

# 70%

Nearly 70% of children were scoring the highest marks for reading with confidence by the end of the year, compared to just 50% at the start of the year.

# 73%

By the end of the year 73% of children were assessed by teachers as having improved their reading levels

# 07: One-to-one reading support

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## What parents said about their children's progress

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*F really enjoyed reading with [his volunteer] and thanks to her he improved his reading. She made reading a lot funnier and enjoyable.*

*C has enjoyed working with volunteer N and volunteer R. He says thank you and he enjoys reading more now. Thanks to her he improved his reading.*

”

“

*N has made an enormous amount of progress over the last few months. His perseverance and determination have enabled him to improve rapidly, and he has clearly enjoyed the challenge.*

*D's progress has skyrocketed, and it is clear to see she loves reading. It is also clear to see that she receives much help and encouragement from her mother which has been a great benefit.*

*A is such a confident reader now that he is asking to read chapter books! He looks forward to reading sessions and asks about any words he does not understand. He is eager to improve and has made great progress - I am very proud of his achievements.*

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## What volunteers said about children's progress

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# Case study

We spoke with one of our volunteers, Elisa, about her experience volunteering with L2L2R in 2020-1.



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**"I don't give up on any child."**

Elisa is thinking about one of the children she's worked with as an L2L2R volunteer. A boy in Year 1, he was struggling with reading when L2L2R and Elisa got involved.

Lockdown hit which added to the chances of the boy falling even further behind. Although L2L2R adapted its work so volunteering could continue online, Elisa began to fear that she wasn't 'making any progress'.

But rather than give up, she doubled down, reading with the boy not the usual once or twice a week, but every single day, using different materials, an online library, flashcards, making three-letter words on a white board, getting help from the 'wizards' on BBC Bitesize. A mixture of resources to keep the session fun and enjoyable.

And slowly they started to make progress. 'I start to see it going in, you can see progress. A lot of letters he can sound out now. He's still struggling but things are going in.

**"I find it very rewarding:  
I'm really glad I chose this volunteering."**

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# O8: Early Years

## What we do

In the academic year 2020–21, L2L2R ran 15 Early Years literacy classes via Zoom, in partnership with three local charities, CARAS, Home Start Wandsworth and Contact.

Aimed at children aged between the ages of two and four with their parents/carers, these classes focus on singing, playing, chatting and reading. They are designed to give parents the confidence and skills required to support their child's early literacy learning, as well as help children improve their communication skills and expand their vocabulary.



Our experience in running early literacy classes face-to-face pre-pandemic demonstrated the difficulties firstly in persuading families to attend classes, and secondly making sure they keep coming back. We were delighted that 88% of our families who came to our virtual classes attended two or more classes, with 63% attending three or more. A number of parents commented in their feedback that they would be keen to sign up to future classes in 2021–22.

We asked parents to rate how useful they found the classes – 81% of those who responded rated the classes 5/5, with 100% giving a rating of 4/5 or 5/5.

# 100%

All parents who responded to our survey said they would recommend the classes to other families

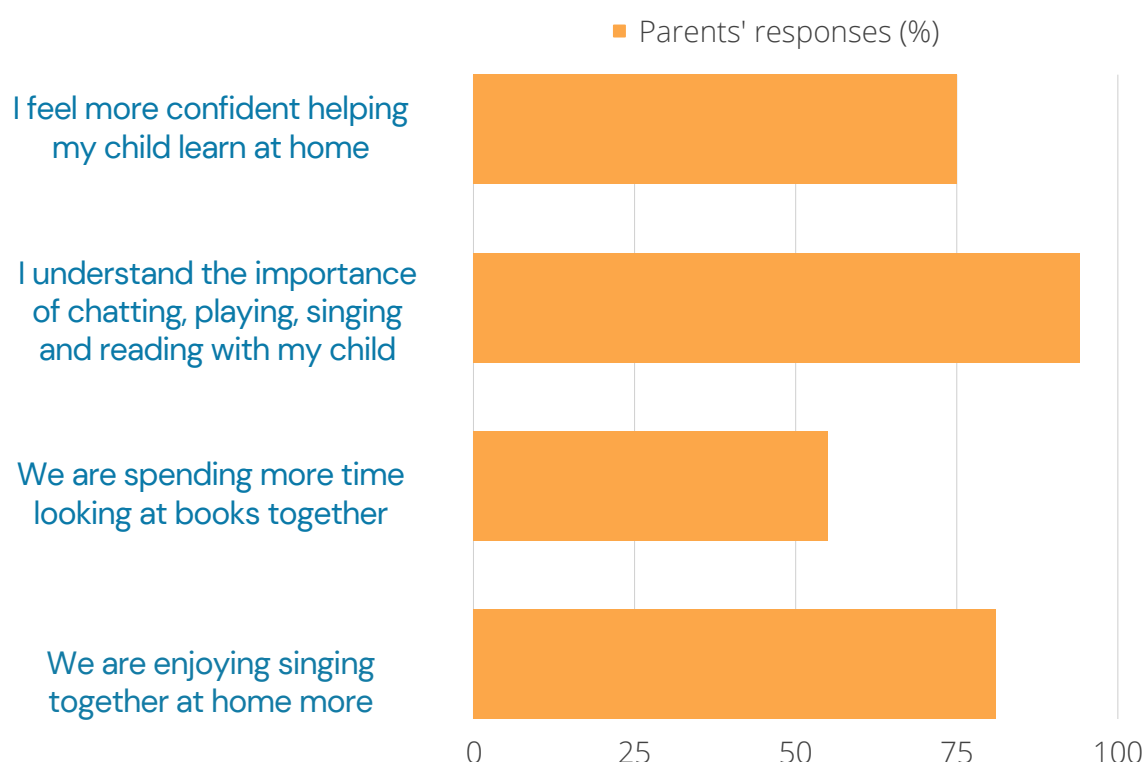
# 81%

rated the classes 5/5, with 100% rating the classes a 4/5 or above

# O8: Early Years

## Facts and figures

Following the classes, 94% of parents who gave feedback felt they better understood the importance of chatting, playing, singing and reading with their child in developing early literacy skills. Eighty-one per cent of parents also spent time between or after the classes singing some of the songs they'd learnt and 75% felt more confident in helping their child learn at home – a particularly important skill during the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.



## Outcomes

After attending the Early Years classes, parents were more engaged in their children's learning, with over half reporting that they spent more time sharing books with their children than before the classes, and 80% telling us that they had enjoyed singing the songs they learnt during the classes with their children.

These figures clearly demonstrate parents' increased confidence in helping with their children's learning at home.

# O8: Early Years

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## What parents said about our online Early Years classes

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*When we were online chatting, I could feel the energy and happiness around me.*

*The classes were informative, engaging and fun. My child really enjoyed them. As a result we are chatting and playing together more and my child is learning new things and furthering her development.*

*My son looked forward to the virtual classes and loved every minute of it! We still use the books and puzzles sent to us by you regularly and would definitely recommend to family and friends!*

*Game changing, we love the sessions!*

”

“

*L2L2R has provided wonderful sessions for parents and small children at CARAS. Anna [Early Years class leader] made the online classes interactive and fun, sending out packs of books and games that went down very well with families. It was inspiring to see how parents and children gained confidence to engage in the sessions as time went on, with parents telling me it was the highlight of their week. It's been a pleasure working with Anna this year and I have only good things to say about L2L2R to any organisations looking for engaging family learning activities.*

**Head of Learning, CARAS**

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# Case study

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We asked a local mum for her experience of the L2L2R Early Years classes that she and her four-year-old son attended online during lockdown. This is what she had to say:



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**"Really tangible actionable advice, wrapped up in a lot of fun."**

As schools, nurseries and playgroups closed, she worried that her son was becoming isolated and so the class quickly became 'a highlight,' giving him 'social time,' and 'really punctuating the day.' The packs were 'incredible – the books, jigsaws and games have become a staple in our home.'

As the group chatted, sang, played and read, she loved watching him take part, waiting his turn to 'say his bit,' and seeing his face 'light up' during the games. The classes quickly became 'a real highlight during lockdown – a bit of a miserable period.'

*Would she recommend the classes?*

'A hundred percent yes. They help, they really do. They level the playing field, giving you the tools to help your child. I wish they were available to more people.'

Asked to sum up the classes in a single sentence she replies:  
'Really tangible actionable advice, wrapped up in a lot of fun.'

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# 09: Volunteers

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## What we do

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

The training session explores how reading is taught in schools today, including explanations and practical exercises to explain the synthetic phonics system. We discuss what each 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.



When a volunteer starts work in school, our volunteer manager or an experienced volunteer is on hand to guide them and introduce them to the children they will be reading with.

## Facts, figures and outcomes: Training

Feedback is collected using an online feedback form after each training session. In the autumn term 2020 we retrained all our existing volunteers as they had not been able to read with children since the previous March. We also trained new volunteers.

We ran 12 volunteer training sessions over Zoom from September 2020 – May 2021 covering both in-school and virtual volunteering, as well as separate sessions covering phonics.

Attendance across all sessions – bearing in mind some volunteers attended two or perhaps three sessions – totalled 125, of which 94% scored the training 8, 9 or 10/10.

“

*The session was very well organised and delivered, and gave plenty of opportunities for questions and interactions. I found the information on safeguarding and the reading site both very useful. Thank you!*

*I was made aware of everything I needed to know before I start the volunteering, which made me feel a lot more at ease.*

*It was an honest, informative and comprehensive session with plenty of opportunities to ask questions.*

”

# 09: Volunteers



## Looking after our volunteers

Our volunteer manager looks after all our volunteers and communicates with them regularly to keep them up-to-date with L2L2R's news and answer volunteers' queries. We run termly social get-togethers too, where volunteers can meet and exchange ideas and tips. In 2020-21 these took place online via Zoom. Virtual volunteers are further supported by our dedicated helpline operating daily during volunteering hours – this has been an invaluable new resource for volunteers and families participating in our virtual reading intervention.

## Facts, figures and outcomes: Volunteer satisfaction

# 97%

of volunteers either agreed or strongly agreed that they felt they were contributing to their local community by being part of something valuable

# 9/10

On average volunteers rated their experience as an L2L2R volunteer as a 9/10

# 100%

100% of volunteers said they would recommend volunteering with L2L2R to others.

In September 2020 we had volunteers working across seven schools in Wandsworth. The overwhelming majority find volunteering for L2L2R a positive experience where they feel they are not only making a real difference to the children with whom they work (97% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed), but also contributing to their local community by being part of something valuable (97% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed). On average respondents rated their experience of volunteering as a 9/10.

Seventy-five per cent of volunteers rated their experience of volunteering with L2L2R as 9/10 or 10/10, with 90% reporting that they felt their volunteering experience had been fulfilling and satisfying. The majority of our volunteers said their volunteering role helped them feel part of the local community and gave them useful knowledge, skills and experience.

**In 2020-21, 50 trained volunteers worked across seven schools in Wandsworth, supporting 100 children. All felt supported in roles where they believed they were making a difference, while increasing their abilities and skills.**

# 09: Volunteers

learn to

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## What our volunteers said about reading with the children

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## What our volunteers said about working with L2L2R

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*I feel if I have helped even just one child improve their chances at a better education, and thus hopefully a better life, then that must be a success.*

*Reading with my child is also helping his mum learn English which is amazing!*

*The delight of the one-to-one and the palpable excitement of the progress made and the little goals reached, have been a joy to witness.*

.....

*I have felt supported and encouraged by the L2L2R team and inspired by their passion to develop children's reading skills in the local community.*

*I have felt the wonderful enthusiasm and passion for the children and the important objectives of L2L2R from all the staff I have encountered. Very inspiring indeed!*

*The L2L2R staff are fantastically supportive of the reading volunteers.*

”



“

*One moment really stood out this term. When I came into the classroom, one of the children I read with ran up to me super excited saying 'I finished it, I read the book at home. Can I tell you what happened in it?'*

”

# Case study

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L2L2R volunteer Dorota shares what inspires her to volunteer.

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**'I think it's good for the heart and for the soul, for both kid and adult.'**



Dorota was inspired to start volunteering by her son who brought information on the charity home from school. It struck a chord with her as she herself loves reading:

'I just love books myself, and I have read to my children since they were tiny, actually I read to my son when he was in my belly!'

As a parent she knows it can be hard to find the time and the resources to read with your child: 'Not everybody has the time to read with their own children and lots of children don't have books at home.'

And so she's happy 'to support the children, to give them a boost early on in life. The best thing about L2L2R is that I can help out children who need the help.'

She's seen the children she reads with learn to really understand and enjoy the books they read:

'We talk about the book we are sharing – the characters, how it makes us feel and we make up different endings. I encourage them to talk about what they learn from the story and how it makes them feel. They might not get the chance to do that at other times.'

'It's the most rewarding thing! When you come week by week, it is amazing to see how well they are doing from one week to another. I managed to move two children up two reading-levels, because their reading just improved so much.'

.....



# 10: Working with parents

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## What we do: Parent training sessions

L2L2R runs interactive training sessions either in school or virtually via Zoom to inform parents about how to support their Nursery, Reception or Year 1 child's reading. It is targeted at parents whose children are in the earliest stages of learning to read.

The session explains how reading is taught in schools today and a parent's role in supporting this at home. We look at the synthetic phonics system with explanations of some technical terms, as well as an exercise on the correct pronunciation of letter sounds. Our sessions are interactive with practical exercises and plenty of opportunity for discussion and questions.

We explore the most effective way parents can support their child at home, giving hints and tips on when to help and when to step back, and how to build discussion around the reading book to check comprehension. We also consider the importance of parents reading to their children and how literacy skills can be encouraged in daily life through games, conversation, oral storytelling, etc.

Due to visitor restrictions in schools, it was not possible for us to run our usual face-to-face parent training sessions, but the flexibility of our team meant that from November to March we were able to run seven online parent training sessions.

**Nearly 100 parents attended the sessions and feedback for our new way of working has been overwhelmingly positive.**



# 10: Working with parents

## Facts and figures

**100% of respondents said they would recommend our training to other parents.**

85% scored the training an 8, 9 or 10 out of 10, with 98% telling us they felt they had enough time to interact with the leaders and the rest of the group, and 89% commenting were happy with the length of the training session.

# 85%

scored the training  
an 8, 9 or 10

## Outcomes

Parents who attended our training sessions reported that they came away with new ideas of how to support their children at home, with over 70% of respondents finding L2L2R's parent tips the most useful part of the training.

Over half said they would also ask their children more questions when they hear them read (to improve their comprehension) and practise tricky words more often.

# 98%

felt they had enough  
time to interact with  
the leaders & group

# 89%

were happy with the  
length of the training  
session

“

*It was interesting to hear how  
reading at a young age impacts  
learning and success later on.*

*Parent*

”

“

*The explanation of oral segmenting  
and blending was extremely useful  
– non-reliance on the letter symbol is  
often overlooked and certainly  
undervalued!*

*Teacher*

”

# 10: Working with parents

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## Virtual volunteering

Our virtual volunteering programme has allowed us to reach parents in a way previously not open to us. When we support children with reading in school, we do not usually get to meet their parents. However, children supported virtually read with their volunteer after school hours when they are at home. We ask that a parent or carer is there to greet the volunteer and close the session, and sometimes they are able to sit with the child for longer. This has given us a unique opportunity to engage with parents and has allowed us for the first time to ask them what they thought of our reading support programme. In the academic year 2020–21 L2L2R supported 50 children virtually through weekly Zoom reading sessions.

## Facts and figures

Despite the difficulties we faced with numerous lockdowns over the year, our volunteers always aim to make sessions a fun experience for the children we support. In feedback this element was highlighted by parents, and many commented on how enjoyable volunteers made the sessions, which in turn made reading something to look forward to each week, both during and outside the session.

96%

of parents who responded would recommend L2L2R's volunteer support to other parents.

100%

reported that their child enjoyed the Zoom reading sessions, rating the sessions a 4/5 or above

95%

felt that the sessions had made their child a better reader

## Outcomes

For the first time we have been able to see how parents value the work our volunteers do in supporting their children. It was particularly pleasing to find that 80% of parents felt that simply sitting in on the reading sessions and hearing the volunteer work with their child gave them more confidence when it came to helping their child outside the sessions.

# Case study

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For Erika, her weekly reading session was something to look forward to, especially during lockdown, as well as a chance for her to keep up her reading.



## It's helping the whole family.'

Each Monday at 4.15pm, Erika, age seven, sits down at her laptop ready for her reading session with Claire, an L2L2R volunteer. The session isn't due to start till 4.45pm, but as Erika's dad Sabino explains: 'We say "there's still half an hour to go," but she's ready and waiting. Erika gets really excited: she can't wait to talk to Miss Claire.'

It's also been rewarding for Claire:

'I do find it rewarding and a lot of that is fuelled by Erika and her excitement. The screen pops up and she's there smiling and excited and usually with something funny to show me.' Claire was even able to donate a laptop so Erika had her own device to read on.

Most important to the success of the partnership is the relationship. 'We can't say anything bad about Claire,' says Sabino. 'She's got patience and most importantly my daughter likes her, she trusts her, that's the most important thing.' Claire agrees. 'With Erika I feel each week that she and I are forming some sort of relationship, albeit digitally. And if there's trust and enjoyment that will lead to reading being a good thing – something you enjoy, rather than a chore.' 'Each week we focus on two or three words. Erika's mum writes them down and then each week they practice.

'They're really on it.' Sabino adds: 'My wife, she's learning with Erika. Her reading is improving too. It's helping the whole family.'

# 11: Summer programmes

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## What we did

L2L2R has long recognised that the summer holidays can be difficult for many families. In the past we have run a variety of programmes during the summer to encourage children in Wandsworth to keep reading over the long break. In summer 2021, we ran two such programmes – Simple Sounds and Story Walks.

## Simple sounds

Our Simple Sounds programme ran throughout the summer holidays, from 20th July to 5th September 2021, and aimed to introduce a new phonics sound daily to parents and children who signed up to receive a link to a YouTube video in a daily text message.

126 parents signed up and, of those, 25% were committed to daily practice. This amounted to over 1,800 total views of our phonics videos.



## Story walks

Our Story Walks programme ran from the beginning of August to October half term. The walks featured three brand new stories, written specially for L2L2R by local author, Julie Sharp. Each walk began at a different library – Putney, Southfields and Wandsworth – where listeners scanned a QR code to listen to the first chapter of the story read aloud. The stories had five chapters, with QR codes located in five different places around the borough. The walks were promoted via social media, community groups, schools and the local 'Families' magazine.





# 11: Summer programmes

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## Facts and figures

- 100% of families who responded said that they found the Summer Sounds scheme a helpful resource to practise phonics.
- 94% indicated they would sign up to similar future programmes.
- 71% of parents also found the scheme was a helpful tool for encouraging their child to engage with learning over the summer.
- We recorded 221 QR code scans in total for 'Story Walks' over the period, with Southfields being the most popular walk.

# 100%

of families who responded found the 'Simple Sounds' scheme a useful way to practice phonics

# 94%

said they would sign up to similar programmes in the future

.....

## Kamila talks about how her son Philip, aged four, enjoyed L2L2R's Simple Sounds programme

.....

## Outcomes

Our summer programmes proved popular and feedback supports the fact that they helped families keep their young children engaged with reading and stories over the long holidays. We also hope to adapt both of these summer programmes for use in our partner schools during term time.

“

*He loved it. It got to the stage where he was waiting for the daily text – he thought it was a special message just for him!*

*The way it was done by text message was so useful. Everyone's busy aren't they? And an email you think "I'll do it later", and then you don't. But no matter what we were doing we stopped and did it. It was really quick, just two minutes and it's like – now or never!*

*And it helped. Philip continued with his reading over the summer. As Kamila says: 'Regularity is incredibly important, it's absolutely key, if we don't practise a little every day we can slip, so the text and task was a really good little reminder. I hope L2L2R does this every holiday.'*

”

# 12: Looking forward

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Being a small and agile organisation allowed us to respond quickly to the changes brought about by the pandemic and switch to offering virtual support across all areas of our work.

These are some highlights of what we've learnt over the past year and how that impacts key aspects of our work going forward.

## Additional benefits of our virtual reading support

Although we're delighted to be able to get our volunteers back into schools, working with children face-to-face, the situation remains volatile as the pandemic continues in the 2021-22 academic year.

We have therefore continued our virtual reading support. This new offer also means we are able to involve a wider range of volunteers – including those who are working full time – and we have been excited by the unexpected outcome of being able to engage directly with the parents of children we support.



## A new approach to our Early Years work

Moving our Early Years classes online has been successful, with improved retention of families. We are continuing our Early Years work online, with some changes made in structure for 2021-22.

We are now offering sets of four weekly classes to help families get into a regular routine. Gift packs are sent before the first class and after the last, providing families have attended at least two classes. In between classes, we message families with ideas of simple activities they can do at home to reinforce our key message of the importance of playing chatting, singing and enjoying books together.



# 12: Looking forward

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## Partnering with local charities to broaden our reach

Working in partnership with other local charities has been exciting. In the past our Early Years class attendees have been younger siblings of children at our partner schools.

While we have continued to offer classes to these children, working with local charities who support local families in other ways has allowed us to broaden our reach. Feedback from our partner charities has been overwhelmingly positive and we will continue to work with them in 2021-22. We also plan to create a network of local professionals who can refer suitable families for help.



## Working to recruit and retain quality volunteers

We hope all our volunteers will commit to a year of support, and we have a good record on volunteer retention. Nearly 60% of our current volunteers have been with us for one year or more, and 20% have been with us for three years or more. Despite the surge of interest in volunteering during lockdown, we inevitably lose volunteers at the end of each year, so it's vital we continually recruit regularly.

Working with the Wandsworth Care Alliance's Voluntary Sector Co-ordination Service has brought us some excellent volunteers over the past year and we hope this will continue to be the case moving forward.





# 13: Our thanks

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We'd like to thank everyone who supported us throughout 2020-21, and especially those grant-making bodies that have supported us for a number of years. Without your support we could not achieve any of the work described in this document.



We are also extremely grateful to the individuals who support us on a monthly basis. Their regular 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, please visit [Donate | Learn to Love to Read](https://www.learn2love2read.org.uk/donate) ([learn2love2read.org.uk](https://www.learn2love2read.org.uk)) or contact our Founder, Teresa Harris on [teresa@l2l2r.org](mailto:teresa@l2l2r.org).

## Volunteer

If you're interested in becoming an L2L2R reading volunteer, you can find information and apply online here: [Volunteer | Learn to Love to Read](https://www.learn2love2read.org.uk/volunteer) ([learn2love2read.org.uk](https://www.learn2love2read.org.uk)) or contact [matilda@l2l2r.org](mailto:matilda@l2l2r.org) with any questions.

## Partner with us

If your organisation would like find out more about how we might work together please visit: [Partner with us | Learn to Love to Read](https://www.learn2love2read.org.uk/partner) ([learn2love2read.org.uk](https://www.learn2love2read.org.uk)) or get in touch with [anna@l2l2r.org](mailto:anna@l2l2r.org).

If you work with disadvantaged families in Wandsworth in any capacity we would love to hear from you!

Find us: @learn2love2read



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