

## National reading charity calls for schools to take new action to combat summer reading 'dip'

**All primary schools and head teachers urged to make more use of Summer Reading Challenge as tool to improve children's literacy**

**New research shows that Challenge helps prevent summer holiday dip in reading attainment**

The Reading Agency is today (13 November) calling for every primary school and head teacher to be actively engaged in the Summer Reading Challenge to curb the decline in reading standards over the long summer break. The independent charity runs the Challenge with the public library network and is aiming to get a million children taking part by 2012.

The call comes in response to new research, which demonstrates that the Challenge helps prevent the 'summer holiday dip' in reading motivation and attainment.

This year 725,000 children aged 4-12 took part in the Challenge, an annual programme. They are challenged to read six books over the summer. The level of engagement between primary schools and their local library varies dramatically.

### Research findings

The research was commissioned by The Reading Agency and undertaken by the United Kingdom Literacy Association (UKLA). Its preliminary findings will be unveiled today as senior figures in education, Children's Services, publishing and libraries gather at the British Library for a conference celebrating 10 years of the Summer Reading Challenge.

The research looks at the extent to which the Challenge supports reading attainment and motivation. Researchers carried out in-depth interviews with teachers and children of different ages and social circumstances.

There is evidence that children doing the Summer Reading Challenge are more likely to **maintain momentum in reading achievement and commitment**. The research also shows that the **Summer Reading Challenge boosts children's inclination to read at home and encourages them to talk about books** with their families and friends.

All teachers surveyed commented on the value of the Challenge in **developing a wider reading repertoire and increasing children's confidence** – giving them a more secure view of themselves as readers as well as greater independence. These are all crucial factors in developing children's literacy.

The Reading Agency says that libraries and schools need to work more closely together, to ensure that predicted public sector funding cuts do not affect motivational creative reading activities.

Anne Sarrag, Director of the Challenge, said: “Children’s reading ability tends to take a nosedive during the long summer break if they aren’t encouraged to read or take part in creative activities. This is particularly true for children from disadvantaged backgrounds without the same access to structured holiday activities.

“The Summer Reading Challenge is a powerful tool to combat this dip. Children who take part demonstrate increased motivation and achievement, and there are thousands more reluctant readers who would benefit from targeted encouragement to get involved.

“By 2012 we want to see a million children taking part. To achieve this we will need increased partnership working between schools and libraries, with every primary school head teacher taking a lead by putting the Challenge into their school development plan; ensuring each child, regardless of their background, is signed up as a library member and encouraging families to take part.

“But it’s not just down to schools. Today we’re encouraging libraries to hold fast to their creative reading activities, and challenging local authorities to cut library budgets at their peril!”

The Summer Reading Challenge 10th Anniversary Conference will explore the future of the challenge. Speakers include **Estelle Morris; Ed Vaizey MP**, Shadow Minister for Culture and the Creative Industries; **Michael Rosen**, Patron of the Challenge; **Alan Yentob**, Creative Director, BBC; **Paul Collard**, Chief Executive at Creativity, Culture and Education; and **John Harris**, Director of Children's Services at Hertfordshire County Council.

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#### **Notes to Editors:**

- Spokespeople from The Reading Agency available via Colman Getty
- Conference speakers may also be available for interview. Please contact Colman Getty
- The Conference will take place at the British Library, London NW1 on Friday 13 November from 10am – 5pm. PRESS PASSES AVAILABLE VIA COLMAN GETTY

#### **About the research**

The research was measured through analysis of APP (Assessing Pupils’ Progress) assessments before and after the Summer Reading Challenge. Pupil perception surveys of themselves as readers, their attitudes and commitment to reading, before and after were also carried out. Teacher surveys included perceptions of what the Summer Reading Challenge has to offer and their views on what supports reading development.

**The Reading Agency**

The Reading Agency is an independent charity with a mission to inspire more people to read more. The Reading Agency believes that reading changes lives, and is at the forefront of cutting-edge creative projects designed to encourage reading. It runs a number of high profile, national initiatives that reach out to and inspire readers of all kinds – children, teenagers, families, adult learners and general book lovers. It specialises in spreading reading by working with public libraries, and also teams up with prisons, publishers, unions, businesses, broadcasters, and others. It is supported by the Arts Council and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council ([www.readingagency.org.uk](http://www.readingagency.org.uk)).

**United Kingdom Literacy Association (UKLA)**

The United Kingdom Literacy Association (UKLA) is a registered charity whose sole objective is to further education in literacy. As well as a strong publications profile, with two international journals and a range of books about literacy education, the Association has extensive experience of evaluative and collaborative developmental research including Raising Boys' Achievements in Writing in collaboration with the Primary National Strategy, Reading on Screen with QCA and Teachers as Readers and Building Communities of Readers in collaboration with the PNS and now Building Communities: Researching Literacy Lives, ongoing research which has developed from the previous two successful research projects ([www.ukla.org](http://www.ukla.org)).