



Reading Squad Pilot

Impact Report

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About the school

Crow Lane Primary and Foundation Stage School is located in the Longwood district of Huddersfield with around 200 students aged 4-11. The school serves an area where disadvantaged pupil rates are well above the national average (around 39.1% are eligible for free school meals). There are a higher than average number of children with SEND needs in school and some SEMH (Social, Emotional and Mental Health) needs

The Headteacher Martin Vayro reported that over the years the school has established a positive reading culture, with many pupils enjoying reading. However there were still a number of pupils in each class who only read when it was required and would not choose to do so for pleasure.

A longstanding priority and challenge in the school has been strengthening parental engagement with reading at home. The school recognises that home reading support can be difficult to monitor, and that some families face barriers, including limited access to books and varying levels of parental literacy.

These factors have highlighted the importance of providing strong, school-based reading support and leadership opportunities for pupils.

Selecting the project name

When the project launched, it quickly became clear that the language used to promote reading leadership had a significant impact on pupil engagement. Given the school's strong sporting culture, the school's initial idea of labelling the project Reading Warriors with lead participants as Reading Chiefs did not resonate with pupils. Renaming these roles to Reading Squad and Reading Coaches immediately increased understanding and enthusiasm, as pupils could readily relate the concepts to their sporting experiences. They recognised that:

- Leadership in reading, like sport, provides opportunities to inspire and support others
- Regular practice leads to improvement and success
- Coaches encourage, guide and develop others
- A squad works collaboratively to organise, support and achieve shared goals.

Louise Grassby, Schools Co-ordinator



Engaging the students

Our School's Co-ordinator organised a visit from Spider-Man, paid for by the Festival. He dropped in for a school assembly to announce that the school had won the opportunity to take part in the pilot of the project.

His visit generated additional excitement for the project among students and reinforced that reading is for enjoyment as well as academic reasons - and can include comics and graphic novels as well as books.



A visit from Spider-Man

The Process

The school appointed six Year 5 pupils through a formal recruitment process to form the Reading Squad. These pupils then recruited and supported two reading leaders from every class, from Reception to Year 6, ensuring that every class had dedicated pupil leaders to encourage reading, support classmates and help achieve individual and class reading goals.

Reading leaders were presented with specially designed badges, recognising their responsibility, raising the profile of reading leadership and reinforcing the importance of their role across the school. Every child in school was given a printed booklet to collect stamps as follows:

- Reading in class (1 stamp)
- Reading and returning library books (2 stamps)
- Reading and returning reading books (2 stamps)
- Completing a book review (3 stamps)

Students who earned 10 stamps in a week were entered into a weekly raffle to win a brand new book, provided by the Festival.

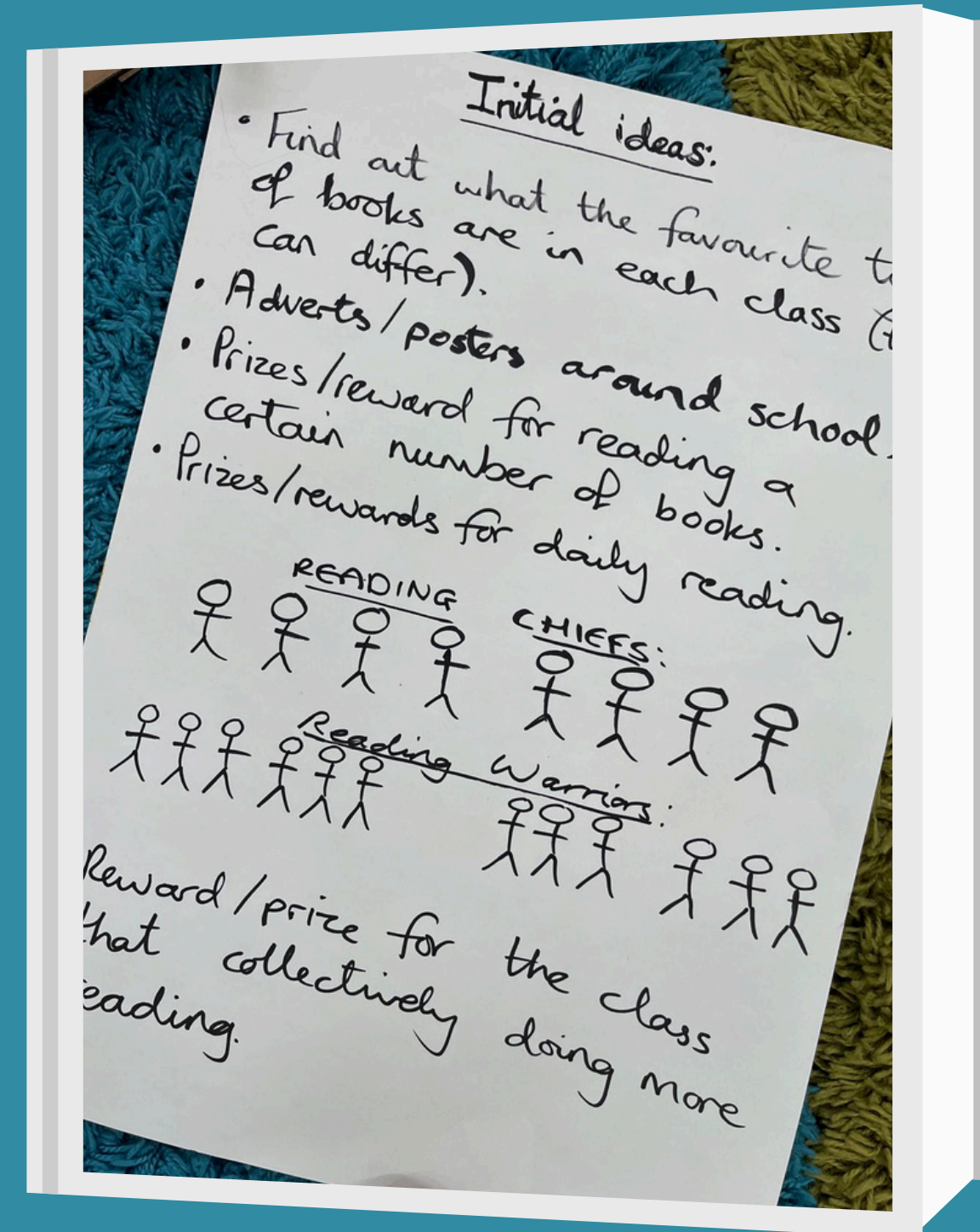
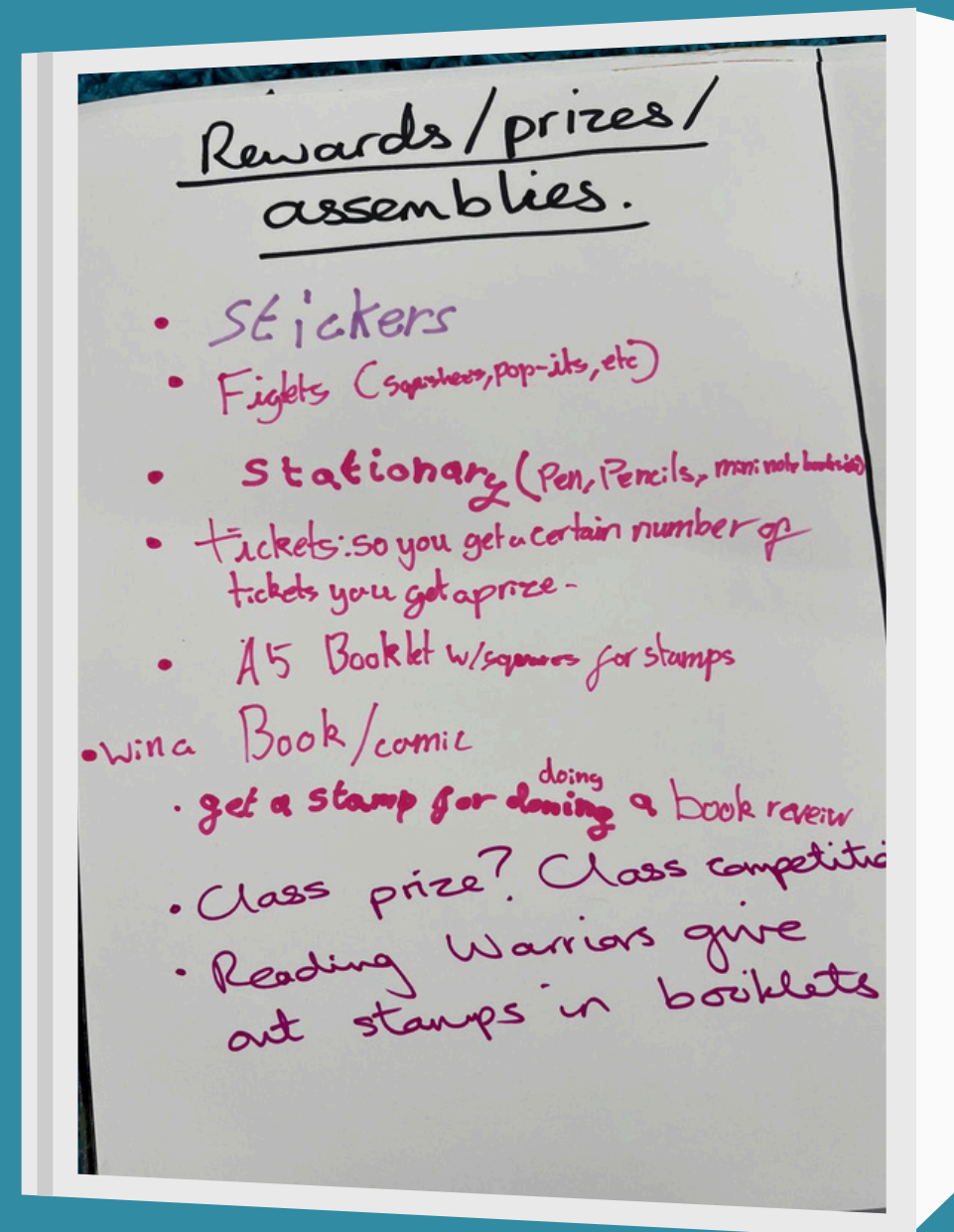


**Martin Vayro, Headteacher Crow Lane
& Louise Grassby, Schools Co-ordinator**

Selecting the students

Following planning meetings between Festival and Crow Lane staff, a number of students were selected through an internal interview process to help shape the project by taking part in brainstorming sessions.

This put students front and centre of the initiative and ensured that they felt invested in its success.





Impact and Engagement

The project had a significant positive impact on pupils' engagement with reading for pleasure across the school. The assemblies, stamp books and prizes were highly motivating for all students, including previously reluctant readers, and teachers reported that a number of pupils who would typically read only when required became more motivated to read independently and for enjoyment as a direct result of the project. Key outcomes included:

- An increase in the number of pupils choosing to borrow and take books home on a regular basis
- More pupils reading a wider range of texts more frequently during the school day
- Increased participation from quieter and more reserved pupils, who became actively involved in reading activities and the wider initiative
- Consistently high levels of engagement, with between 80–90% of pupils celebrating their reading achievements each week by placing a raffle ticket into the reward draw
- Pupils developing a more positive attitude towards reading for pleasure rather than viewing it solely as an academic task

Impact and Engagement (cont.)

The weekly Recommended Reading display in the school library, curated and refreshed by the Reading Squad, generated considerable interest, encouraging pupils to explore new authors, genres and titles recommended by their peers.

Pupils became increasingly confident in sharing book recommendations with classmates, leading to greater pupil ownership of the class Recommended Reading displays and creating a culture in which reading was regularly discussed and celebrated.

Younger pupils greatly valued opportunities to discuss books and reading with older Reading Coaches, benefiting from positive peer role models whose enthusiasm for reading was both authentic and inspiring.

The weekly book prizes had a particularly meaningful impact. The Headteacher highlighted that some pupils had never previously owned a brand-new book, making the opportunity to win and keep a book of their own a memorable and highly valued experience that further strengthened their enthusiasm for reading.



The success and visibility of the initiative has established reading leadership as a valued part of school life. Pupils now see becoming a Reading Squad Leader or Reading Coach as a role of responsibility and prestige, with many expressing a strong aspiration to take on these leadership roles in the future.



Impact and Engagement (cont.)

Key benefits for the school

Staff valued the influence of older pupils as reading role models. Younger children responded positively to encouragement from their peers and the initiative fostered meaningful collaboration between older and younger pupils, creating a whole-school culture of encouragement, leadership and shared responsibility. This not only increased reading frequency and enjoyment but also strengthened relationships, promoted pupil voice and supported wider curriculum priorities, including leadership, communication, teamwork and personal development. Additionally:

- The Reading Stamp booklets provided an effective way for staff to recognise and celebrate pupils' reading achievements with parents, reinforcing the value of reading both at school and at home
- Teachers observed significant growth in the confidence, leadership, communication and organisational skills of Reading Squad members and Reading Coaches, with these skills transferring positively into classroom learning and wider school life
- Pupils managed many of the administrative tasks, including counting reading stamps, distributing and collecting raffle tickets, supporting weekly rewards and maintaining the Recommended Reading displays. As a result, the project had high pupil ownership with minimal impact on teacher workload
- The project complemented the school's strong sporting ethos by reinforcing the shared principles of practice, coaching, teamwork and continual improvement

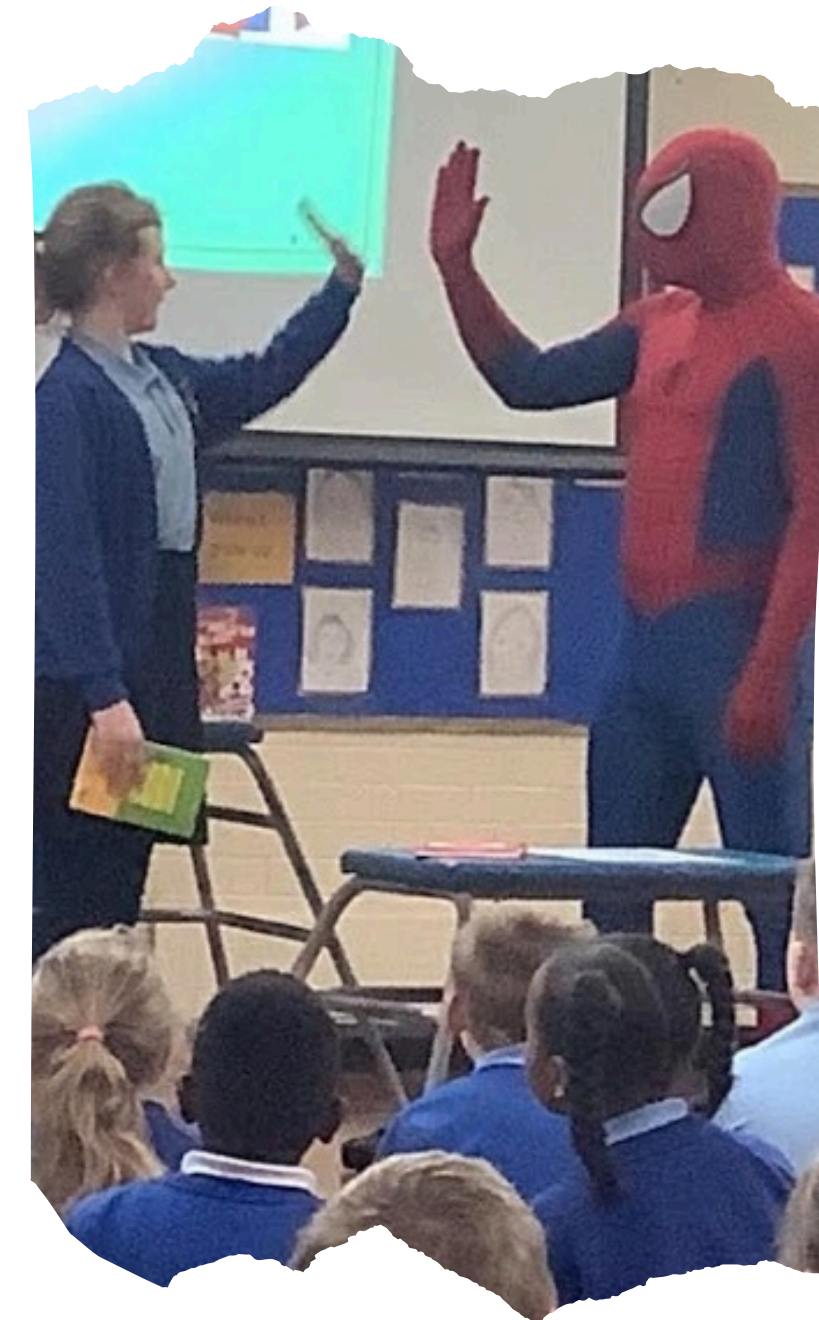
Impact and Engagement (cont.)

Headteacher Martin Vayro spent time with the Year 5 Reading Coaches at project end to collect feedback. He reported that they really enjoyed taking on the role and being part of the design process, and they think that the initiative has worked well. When asked what the best thing about the project was, they said:

“The best thing about it is encouraging others to read. The prizes are important at the start but then people keep reading and the prizes can get smaller. People are still getting their stamps. J got 95!”

“It has really worked in our class (Year 5) and in Reception. The little ones all got 10 stamps; we expected them to struggle, but they haven't.”

“The Reading Coaches should be in Year 5 and Year 6, so we can help the younger ones read and give them something to look forward to in Y5 & Y6. We can train up the Year 4 children before we go to high school.”



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Reading Squad - next steps

The Headteacher of Crow Lane Primary has confirmed that they plan to continue the project, running it for one term a year. Positive outcomes for reading results and reading ability will be measured year on year and they have already seen that younger students aspire to become Reading Coaches, setting an example for others and championing the benefits of reading for pleasure.

With additional funding, this worthwhile initiative, which has brought so many benefits to individual pupils, classes and the wider school, could be rolled out to schools across the region.