



AUTUMN UPDATE 2024

Welcome to our autumn newsletter. It's been a very busy term at the charity as our new Early Years intervention – Story Lab – gets underway, plus new schools, new tutors and some fantastic impact data for last year. The Christmas holiday will soon be upon us so we wish all our partner schools, funders and friends a joyful seasonal break and look forward to working with you in 2025.



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New Literacy Labs, new Reading Labs and new tutors for the autumn term

Literacy Lab

This autumn, five new primary schools have joined our high impact Literacy Lab programme.

As well as welcoming St Mary's Primary in West London, we are delighted that our partnership with All Child (AC) goes from strength to strength: four new AC schools in Brent join Bevington School in Kensington on the 1:1 programme and every AC school now has a 12-place Literacy Lab:

Ashburnham Primary
Brentfield Primary
Donnington Primary
St Mary's, Willesden

Reading Lab

Our Reading Lab programme also thrives: we started the autumn term with new Reading Labs at two primaries and two secondaries in London and, as part of our work with the St Barts Multi Academy Trust, we are in three new schools in Stoke-on-Trent and Crewe.

New Reading Lab primary schools:

Bird In Bush - Southwark
St Mark's - Lambeth
St Nathaniel's - Stoke-on-Trent
Hungerford - Crewe
St Michael's - Crewe

Secondary school Reading Labs:

Leigh Academy Halley - Greenwich
The Ravensbourne - Bromley

A big welcome also to our 15 new tutors who joined the charity in September. We continue to attract high quality teaching staff who are dedicated to closing the literacy gap for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. We now have over 40 skilled tutors delivering our high impact, expert programmes.

And new offices...



At the end of the summer we packed up our desks at our Surrey Quays office and moved to the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE) building near Waterloo.

Housed in a Grade II listed Victorian school building, the CLPE has the most wonderful literacy library of



23,000 children's books and resources. Our small head office team is thrilled to be sharing such an inspiring space with the CLPE and we were delighted to host our first tutor team meeting of the new academic year at the new offices.

Impact

89%

**OF GRADUATES CLOSED OR
SIGNIFICANTLY NARROWED
THEIR LITERACY GAP**

75%

**OF GRADUATES CLOSED THEIR
READING GAP ENTIRELY**

**FOR EVERY MONTH OF OUR
TUITION, CHILDREN MADE**

4.6

**MONTHS
OF PROGRESS**



We are pleased to report that we achieved outstanding impact across both our Literacy and Reading Lab programmes last year, improving outcomes yet again on the previous academic year.

In our Literacy Labs, 89% of graduates closed or significantly narrowed their literacy gap; 75% of graduates closed their reading age gap entirely.

After one month of Literacy Lab tuition, a child makes on average 4.6 months of progress – a ratio gain considered as 'remarkable impact' in independent studies.

Our rigorous assessment methodology indicates that outcomes in 1:3 Literacy Labs are comparable to those in our 1:1 sessions, demonstrating the effectiveness of small group tuition.

Reading Lab outcomes were also very strong indeed: following the 10-week catch up tuition block, children made seven months of reading progress and schools taking the Reading Lab programme continue to provide positive feedback, citing the beneficial impact on a child's confidence and love of reading alongside stronger engagement with the curriculum and improved classroom behaviour.

[Read more here ►](#)

A celebration of reading at Hollydale School



Hollydale School in Southwark is one of our longest standing Literacy Lab schools so we were delighted to learn that their recent OFSTED inspection drew special attention to the school's focus on reading. Rated Good across all criteria, and outstanding for behaviour and attitudes, the OFSTED report highlights that "Reading is at the heart of the curriculum."

A walk through the school reveals a vibrant reading culture with displays of diverse, captivating books, children's personal reading journeys and a library bursting with engaging books, creative displays, book reviews and story boxes.

Hollydale's commitment to fostering a love for reading is evident in the myriad of activities and resources offered, including reading buddies, library activities, book swaps, local library visits, volunteer readers, author visits, read together sessions with parents and termly 'Poetry by Heart' performances. Embedded within this rich reading environment is our Literacy Lab which, over the years, has become an integral part of the school.



Literacy Lab provides a specialist intervention for children needing additional support to build essential literacy skills and close their literacy gap. In the small group sessions led by our expert tutors Corinne and Sam, children practice phonics, reading fluency, comprehension and writing, with a strong emphasis on reading for pleasure and cultivating a lifelong love of books.



Head Teacher Reema Reid, commented:

“

At Hollydale, we are passionate about nurturing a love for reading in every child. We believe that reading is the gateway to success, not just in academia but in life.

.....

We understand that some children need additional support to develop essential reading skills and this is where the Literacy Lab plays a vital role. It allows those children who might otherwise be left behind to accelerate in their reading.

Our recent OFSTED recognition highlights the incredible efforts of our staff, pupils and community in creating a vibrant reading culture.

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We are proud of the Literacy Lab's impact, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to develop essential literacy skills and a lifelong love for reading.”

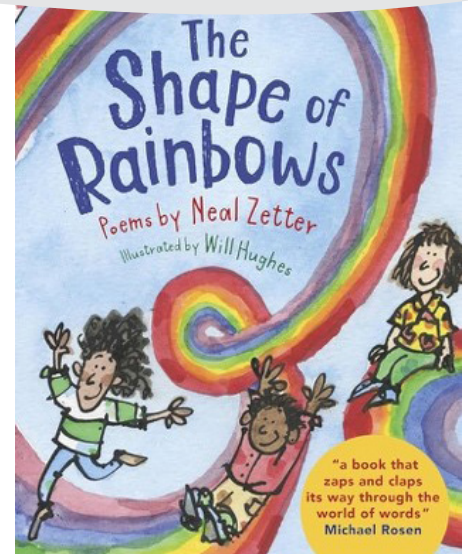
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Poetry in practice in our Literacy Labs

For National Poetry Day this October, every Literacy Lab received a copy of the poet Neal Zetter's new book, *The Shape of Rainbows*. In a [video](#) made specially for our Literacy Labs, the author performed some of his poetry and sent a personal message to the children.

Our tutors chose poems to share and perform with the children and then encouraged them to write their own rainbow themed poems. Based on an idea devised by the former Children's Laureate, Joseph Coelho; each child or group of children created a line of a poem about a colour of the rainbow. All of the lines put together became a rainbow poem.

The response was overwhelming and wonderful to see so much creativity and amazing vocabulary.



The first colour tastes sweet and juicy, covered with little seeds - strawberries are such a treat.

The second colour has leaves that swirl as they fall off trees in the autumn breeze.

The third colour is shaped like a curve, a soft and sweet banana - a fruit I love to eat.

The fourth colour has seeds inside and is shaped like a ball - green apples are yummy for us all.

The fifth of the colours is seen up high, behind the clouds, there's the sky.

The sixth colour is small but full of flavour, delicious blueberries, good for you and tasty too.

The seventh colour smells lovely, needs soil to grow, lavender is a flower I'd like to show.



Story Lab - A new focus on Early Years



Our Charity was founded on the belief that early intervention in closing the literacy gap could be life-changing for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

While we have successfully delivered our Literacy Lab programme for many years, and more recently our catch-up Reading Lab for older children, we have long thought that if we could do something even earlier, we should.

So, we were delighted to be able to announce in September that we were selected by The Mercers' Company* to receive significant funding to develop Story Lab – a new Early Years intervention for nursery and reception children.

Designed for pre-school children who have poor language and communication skills, Story Lab will

be a new expert intervention to support the children who need the most help at this early stage. As well as equipping them with the literacy building blocks, the programme will help ready children for the effective acquisition of phonics and support their social and emotional development.

Recent research shows that children from a disadvantaged background start reception nearly five months behind children from higher-income backgrounds and language development suffers if there is an absence of talk and interaction at home or limited availability of or engagement with books.

Julie Taylor, the charity's Education Lead commented:

“

We can see from the referrals to our Literacy Labs that children are increasingly arriving at school with very poor language skills and struggling with attention, concentration and listening.

“

Story Lab will, like our existing expert interventions, use specially trained tutors to deliver a structured programme designed to improve language and communication skills, helping those children who need additional support to engage with the magical world of books and develop a lifelong love of reading.

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The Children's Literacy Charity Trustee Jenny Thomson, Professor of Language and Literacy, University of Sheffield supports this exciting development for the charity:

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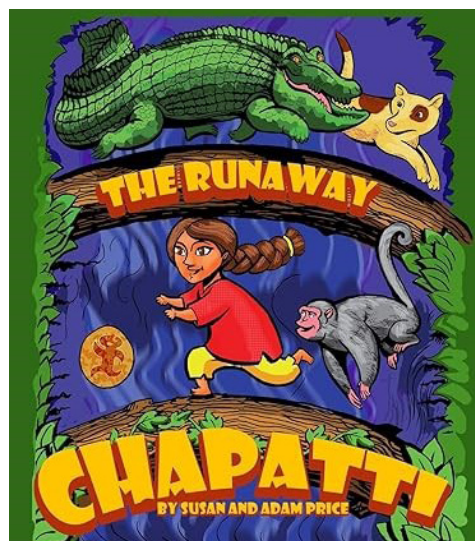
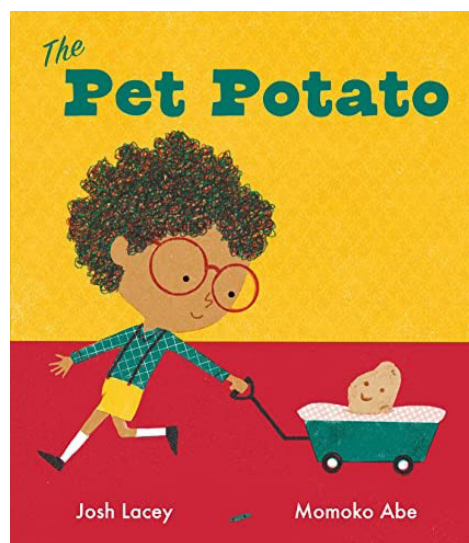
We know that strong speech and language around the time of school entry is critical to a child's literacy trajectory and we also increasingly know that developing an intrinsic motivation to read is what will sustain progress over time, and is a key limiting factor for a lot of children and young people.

.....

In targeting early intervention AND interest in reading, I feel confident this project's evidence informed approach will deliver powerful outcomes and have a significant impact on a child's future literacy potential.

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Designed for the Early Years Foundation Stage, Story Lab will develop a child's language and communication skills through storytelling. The programme will focus on five key stories and the charity's specialist tutor will explore the texts with groups of five children, twice a week, over a 10-week period. Involving parents is key to this programme and families will be gifted all five books to encourage storytelling at home and foster a love of books.



*The Children's Literacy Charity is one of seven not-for-profit organisations who form the second cohort (of the second phase) of The Mercers' Company Young People and Education Programme's Early Years Special Initiative. Each organisation will receive funding over a four-year period through The Charity of Sir Richard Whittington of which the Mercers' Company is corporate trustee.

Talking about oracy - Julie Taylor, Education Lead

Oracy has been much in the news of late and with the consultation for the Curriculum and Assessment review underway, it is also very much top of mind for many in the education world.



The Oracy Education Commission's recent report – **We Need To Talk** – spells out the challenges very clearly: no one can or should argue about the necessity of developing, 'A curriculum that ensures children and young people leave compulsory education ready for life and ready for work. This includes embedding digital, oracy and life skills in the curriculum.'

The report's key recommendation that oracy should be one of the 'four Rs, alongside reading, writing and maths, as a cornerstone of education' is welcome news to us given our long history of seeking to close the literacy gap by improving all the literacy skills: reading, comprehension, writing, listening and speaking.

As the report states, 'talk is a key aspect of every classroom and educational environment. When used effectively, it boosts thinking and improves outcomes.'

We were particularly struck by the report's emphasis on how oracy should be embedded across the whole curriculum, with a significant focus on the Early Years given that early language experiences are so key to children's cognitive development and act as a predictor of future educational achievement.

We have carefully structured Story Lab, our new Early Years intervention, to create a language-rich environment designed to motivate a child to engage, spark their imagination and acquire the skills to express their thoughts and feelings in a small group setting.

In our existing Literacy and Reading Labs, talk is modelled by our expert tutors, vocabulary is developed and language is enriched. Children develop language structures using prediction, reasoning and comparison and they embed storytelling language, learning to orally rehearse their sentences before they write.

Across all of our programmes, oracy has always been and is a key strand of learning and is an implicit part of our sessions, not only supporting the children's language and literacy development but also developing the confidence to talk.

Read the full report ►

Bring the joy of literacy to children this Christmas

This year we have reached out to supporters asking if they can give the gift of life-changing literacy by helping to decorate our virtual Christmas Tree. If you or anyone you know is passionate about the joy of reading, you can choose to hang a bauble or turn on a light. Every donation made means we can continue to deliver our specialist literacy programmes. Thank you.

Click here ►



Please follow us on social media:



For more information about our school partnerships or supporting our vital work please contact:
info@thelc.org.uk

The Children's Literacy Charity works in socially and economically disadvantaged areas, helping to close the literacy gap for children who have the greatest need. Our provision of one to one and small group tuition helps children realise their true potential.

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