



SUMMER UPDATE 2024

New Reading Labs in Stoke-on-Trent and Norwich

**Reading
Lab**



IST Inclusive
Schools
Trust

We are delighted to welcome Stoke-on-Trent based St Bart's Multi Academy Trust (SBMAT) to a new partnership with the Children's Literacy Charity. This term we started delivering our Reading Lab programme in five of their schools in Stoke, Crewe and Cannock and this will extend to eight primaries next year as well as introducing our Reader Leader programme to many of the Trust's schools.

Welcome also to two schools from the Inclusive Schools Trust in Norwich: Lionwood Junior and George White Junior.



We are especially pleased to have attracted very high-quality tutors from the local areas. Tutor Sam, working at Kingsland C.E Academy in Stoke-on-Trent commented: **"It has been amazing to see the difference in the initially reluctant children. The whole class is now begging to come."**

Eva Cerioni, School Improvement Officer SBMAT, added: **"The introduction of Reading Lab has enhanced our focus on promoting a reading for pleasure culture and the charity's tutors have formed really positive relationships with pupils. We can already see that Reading Lab children have increased their engagement with reading and are able to comprehend a wider range of age appropriate texts with greater confidence"**.

As one enthusiastic Reading Lab attendee said: **"I didn't used to like reading but I love coming in here. My favourite book was Tuesday. We didn't know what the frogs were going to do next! It was so exciting."**

Learning all about empathy in our Literacy Labs

Empathy Day is an annual event organised by new partner Empathy Lab to help shine a light on the role books can play in raising an empathy-educated generation. The goal is to inspire children to have transformational experiences through stories and to put empathy into action.

In June all of our Literacy Labs marked Empathy Day with a whole range of activities and tutors selected books to share with the children that they felt had the power to help children learn about empathy.



At Bevington Primary School they used the books **Be More Dog** and **When I Feel Surprised** to talk about empathy and consider the different emotions that the characters were feeling. The children created thought bubbles about what makes the boy in **Be More Dog** happy and then what makes them happy.



At St Marks School, the children read **The Colour Monster** and made puppets to help them play the role of the characters in the book and at Bird in Bush School they focused on the book **Gorilla** which tells the story of a child's relationship with a toy gorilla that comes to life, helping children to understand the importance of friendship.

CLC Education Lead Julie Taylor commented:

"We have always believed that books are vital in helping a child to understand emotions and become more resilient. Our Literacy Lab space is an ideal environment for children to learn how to navigate the world with growing independence".

Celebrating World Book Day with Dragons, Tignons and Ligers



For this year's World Book Day every Literacy Lab received two wonderful books: **Dare We Be Dragons?** by Barry Falls and **The Tigon and the Liger** by Keilly Swift.

The Tigon and the Liger is a delightful story in rhyming verse about appreciating your differences and learning to love the skin you're in; **Dare We Be Dragons?** celebrates imaginative adventure and the love between a parent and a child.

Our tutors devoted the week's Literacy Lab sessions to immersion in the texts and linked activities. We were delighted when both authors agreed to make videos for Literacy Lab children in response to some of their thought-provoking questions.



WATCH THE Q&A HERE



Author nominates us for law firm's Literacy Lounge

Law firm Laura Devine Immigration hosts Literacy Lounge book readings at their London offices - authors are invited to talk about their books and a raffle is held to raise funds for the author's chosen charity.

For their first Literacy Lounge of 2024, guest author Mary Lawson nominated The Children's Literacy Charity and Education Lead Julie Taylor made a short presentation on the charity's work. Mary Lawson is a Canadian author, now living in London, who has been longlisted for the Booker Prize, first in 2006 for *The Other Side of the Bridge* and in 2021 for *A Town Called Solace*.



Julie, pictured on the left here with Mary Lawson, commented:

"the Literacy Lounge events are a great idea and we were delighted to be nominated by Mary. I can highly recommend her books - it was a novel way to help raise funds for our work!"

Why meaning matters - Latest blog from Education Lead Julie Taylor



In my blog post last year on phonics ([Beyond Phonics: why children need to enjoy reading](#)) I argued that while the rigour of phonics has improved reading standards overall, phonics teaching alone is not always enough to produce confident, resilient readers, whatever their background.

However, for children coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, providing them with an enriching language and literacy experience is a crucial element if they are to develop as independent and motivated readers. For children struggling with reading, context and comprehension and reading enjoyment are as important as the process of decoding.

It is this holistic approach to the acquisition of reading skills that is highlighted in an excellent new book: [The Balancing Act: An Evidence-Based Approach to teaching Phonics, Reading, Writing](#) by Charlotte Hacking (Centre for Literacy in Primary Education) and Dominic Wyse (Professor of Early Childhood and Primary Education, UCL). We have long admired the work of the CLPE and regard their resources as integral to the reading process.

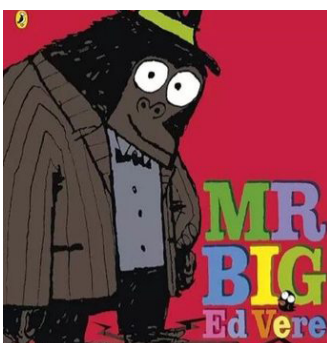
Over our many years of experience in supporting children who are significantly behind in their reading, it is both the depth of our phonics tuition combined with the richness of our language and literacy environment which makes the difference, enabling us to close the literacy gap and broaden horizons.

[CLICK HERE FOR THE FULL BLOG](#)

Keeping literacy alive in the Summer holidays

Summer learning loss, or the 'summer slide' as it is sometimes called, is a well-documented phenomenon that has long been a feature of the British education system. Sadly, learning loss is most pronounced among children from disadvantaged backgrounds due to a range of factors, including limited access to books and educational resources and fewer opportunities for enrichment activities.

We hope to keep literacy learning alive this summer by providing all Literacy Lab children with a 'Book Buzz' activity pack. Distributed by our tutors before schools break for the summer holidays, this resource will engage children in a variety of fun activities linked to stories available online.



The children will need to access one story per week for every week of the holiday and can then complete activities which include drawing, talking, making and writing. They will be able to choose activities and complete them independently or families can join in and enjoy sharing stories and follow up activities together. Happy Reading!

Examples of what the content will include can be found on the following page:

TALKING



- Would you like to be big like a giant? Why would it be good? Why would it be bad? What would be fun? What would be tricky?
- Would you like Mr Big to be your friend? Why? Why not?
- Describe Mr Big. What is he wearing? What does he look like?
- Use the pictures on each page to retell the story. Tell the story every day!
- Pretend you are Mr Big. Tell your adult how you feel at the beginning and at the end of the story.

WRITING



- Write your top tips for the animals to make Mr Big feel better.
- Cut out the picture of Mr Big at the beginning of the story and at the end.
- Draw a thinking bubble next to each picture and write about how Mr Big is feeling in each picture – "I feel sad because..."
- Write and draw your own invitation to the bear who played the piano.
- Write down as many words as you can think of that mean SAD then do the same for HAPPY.

DRAWING



- Go through the book and write a list of all the places that Mr Bear visited – the café – the bus – the pool – home – The Blue Note – his car. Draw a map showing each place. Label your map.
- Where else might Mr Big play his piano? Draw a picture of him playing in a different place.

Looking back; Looking forward: Trustee Steven Artist reflects on his long association with the charity

My relationship with The Children's Literacy Charity (The CLC) started some 18 years ago. As a new recruit on a corporate graduate scheme in London, I had organised a black-tie boat trip on the River Thames and was looking for a suitable charity partner to benefit from an auction on the night.

The CLC felt like a really natural fit: not only did the charity work in primary schools around our offices but the impact data on the gains made by children on the programme spoke volumes about the exceptional nature of their expert literacy intervention.

From my first interaction with the CLC, I knew there was something really very special about the charity that goes beyond the quantifiable achievement. Their Literacy Lab programme, and the tutors who deliver it, provides something magical that is quite hard to put into words: it is family warmth and trust, a metaphorical hug, a safe, supportive and encouraging space.

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Finding the CLC helped me to reflect on my journey with literacy and to support the charity going forward. In 2012 I took part in the Marathon Des Sables – the distance of six marathons in five days across the Sahara Desert -to raise money for the charity.

In the lead up to the event, I wrote a blog exploring my own struggles with literacy (later diagnosed as dyslexia), how this has shaped who I am today and why specialist intervention is so important.

Throughout primary school I was extremely disruptive: because I struggled with literacy I could not engage with learning and I found the school experience very, very difficult. Although I had endless appointments with educational psychologists and senior teachers, access to the support I really needed was limited. The school was a state primary in an inner-city area, with large class sizes and limited resources to adapt learning to meet the needs of individual pupils.



Secondary School was different. Again, another inner-city school but one with an amazing SENCO department and exceptional teachers. Alongside the literacy intervention I received, it was the mentoring and nurturing support that was as important in helping me to navigate the world. With my tutor I had someone who really understood my skills, talents and capabilities and who gave me strategies for how to overcome the challenges that even today dyslexia presents.

This literacy intervention turned my life around: the coping mechanisms helped unlock my true potential and I didn't look back. After a Masters in Aeronautical Engineering from a top University I later became a Managing Director for a major international bank at a very young age.

I will be forever grateful to the teachers and support staff at that school: not only did they give me the gift of literacy, they gave me a chance in life, something I have never taken for granted. I became a Trustee of the CLC in 2016 wanting to ensure that other children struggling with literacy get the same opportunity to close their literacy gap as early as possible.

The CLC tutors are the real heroes here: it is so much more than giving children life-changing literacy so they can engage with their education, it is the nurturing that helps a young child comprehend a complex world. Every child deserves the right to a fair start in life and it should never be down to luck or circumstance which is why I continue to support the charity in whatever way I can.

My ultra-distance running days are now behind me but to celebrate my 40th Birthday this summer I will be on the start line of the Berlin Marathon aiming to set a new PB (Sub 2:44) and raise some essential funds for the CLC along the way. Wish me luck!



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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