



SUMMER UPDATE 2025

As we step into summer we are reflecting on a year of exciting developments and deepening impact across our programmes. This term has shown once again just how powerful targeted, expert literacy support can be. Behind every statistic is a child whose world is opening up through learning and it's their journey that continues to inspire us. In this edition, you'll find updates on our latest work, new partnerships, and a look ahead to what's coming next.

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End of year message

As the academic year draws to an end we are delighted to announce a significant new partnership with Stellantis UK, enabling us to build our regional presence in Coventry, Luton and Ellesmere Port schools.

We have also had an excellent start to delivering Reading Lab at secondary school level and trialling Story Lab, our new early years language and communication skills intervention.

Across all our interventions we see that the need for specialist literacy support is greater than ever and our 1:1 and small group, in-person delivery continues to have an extraordinary impact on the children needing the most help. The feedback from partner schools, parents and children is always encouraging but there is one child's literacy journey that has stood out for me.

Dawn Persad, Head at Henry Fawcett School in Kennington, London recently shared the story of a Year 5 child who had been referred to Reading Lab for our specialist help.

The school felt that the child's learning profile suggested possible dyslexic traits and thought that a smaller, tailored environment could provide the specific support needed to build literacy skills, concentration and confidence.

Dawn Persad commented: "This child has made remarkable progress and his journey through Reading Lab illustrates the profound impact of tailored, emotionally-attuned intervention. When we look beyond standard data points and engage with the whole child, we can foster not only academic success but also identity, agency, and joy in learning."

Most rewarding of all though was feedback from the child's mother: she credits Reading Lab with "changing everything"—unlocking not only reading skills but also confidence, curiosity, and a genuine love of learning, "Where reading was once a source of conflict, it has become a shared pleasure".

To all our partner schools and supporters, our skilled and dedicated tutors and every child who has worked so hard to make progress, have a wonderful summer break and looking forward to Autumn 2025!

Isabel Greenwood, CEO.



New corporate partner to build grassroots delivery and help drive regional expansion

The leading global automaker Stellantis has become a major new corporate funder of the Children's Literacy Charity.

Over the next two years Stellantis, which designs, manufactures and markets vehicles under 14 brands, including Alfa Romeo, Citroen, Peugeot and Vauxhall, will partner with us in three regions important to the corporation's UK presence, as well as providing wider support across all our literacy programmes.

With the generous Stellantis funding, this term we have started delivery of Reading Lab across six schools: Parklands Primary and The Oaks Community Primary in Ellesmere Port; Riverbank Primary and The Linden Academy in Luton and Aldermoor Farm Primary and Willenhall Primary in Coventry.



Louise Gardner, Stellantis, (right) joins our tutor Eimear Keating (left) and children at the Aldermoor Farm School Reading Lab



As well as funding for our specialist interventions in local schools, the Stellantis grant will also support our core delivery, help to build the charity's parental engagement programme and develop literacy resources for families. Furthermore, Stellantis is boosting our Reader Leader training programme in which older students learn how to become reading mentors for younger pupils.

Louise Gardner, Head of Inclusion, Belonging, Talent & Wellbeing, Stellantis UK, said:

"We were struck by the incredible impact The Children's Literacy Charity tutors can have in supporting those children who are the furthest behind and we know from the feedback we receive from right across our business that, post Covid, the catch-up needs of many children are still great. At Stellantis we have a long history of philanthropic support and felt that by partnering with this high impact charity, we could make an important contribution to closing the attainment gap."

Isabel Greenwood, CEO, added:

"This new partnership with Stellantis represents an important milestone for the charity, not only enabling us to expand our delivery into new regions but also allowing us to work hand in hand with a corporate supporter at a grassroots level. We have long believed that working closely with supporters to build longer term involvement with local schools and communities is a powerful model, ensuring the children who need the most help can thrive in the secure setting of one of our Literacy or Reading Lab spaces in their school".

Spotlight:

Secondary school Reading Lab success at Leigh Academy Halley

Our 10-week Reading Lab intervention has proved hugely popular with primary schools and this year, we've had significant success running Reading Lab for KS3 pupils at the Leigh Academy Halley in Greenwich, London.

As part of our funding partnership with The Tallow Chandlers Company, we were able to launch Reading Lab at the school with a cohort of Year 8 pupils needing catch-up literacy support to equip them with the skills and confidence needed to become effective learners.



The Year 8 group referred by the school had a significant literacy deficit but after the 10-week block of 1:3 tuition support, twice a week, the outcomes were very encouraging.: on average they improved their reading age by 9.4 months, with standout progress from seven students who gained 12 months or more.

The Reading Lab programme then took a Year 7 cohort where students made an average of a month of reading progress for each week of the tuition block. Notably, one student advanced by 19 months. The success of the Year 7& 8 pupils led to the school referring a Year 9 group.

Ben Russell, Principal at the school commented:

"It's been a delight to work with the Children's Literacy Charity on establishing a Reading Lab at Leigh Academy Halley. Students across Years 7-9 have made significant progress in closing the gap between their chronological and actual reading ages. More importantly, on a whole range of different metrics, these students have shown increased engagement in their learning across the curriculum due to the literacy barriers that have now been removed. The staff at the Reading Lab have fully integrated themselves into Academy life as trusted, hardworking and valued members of staff. We cannot wait to continue this project into next year."

A particularly striking aspect of our work at the school has been that Reading Lab has quickly become embedded at the heart of learning at the school, thanks in large part to the commitment from the Principal and support from key staff members, helping to create a collaborative working relationship between the school and our highly experienced delivery team.

Developing Self Confidence and Agency

Beyond gains in reading, we have also received an insight into how our small group tuition programme has positively affected behaviour, engagement and confidence.

In the Year 8 group, many of the pupils had significant behaviour issues: one student in particular had a history of over 100 negative behaviour points and three internal exclusions. Since completing the Reading Lab programme, the school has seen a remarkable transformation with students earning positive points and no internal exclusions. As well as stronger engagement, school attendance has also improved for the majority of Reading Lab participants. The sense of progress and personal achievement has helped reduce school avoidance and many students now view school—and especially the Reading Lab—as a welcoming and rewarding place, often dropping in to the library during free time.

Julie Taylor, our Education Lead added:

"Perhaps most rewarding is the rise in students' self-belief and their enthusiasm for learning. Many describe feeling more capable—not just in reading, but across all subjects. This renewed confidence fosters a greater sense of ownership over their education and inspires them to set ambitious goals for their future."

With Story Lab trials underway, we take a look at why shared reading matters

The first groups of nursery and reception children to have experienced Story Lab, our new early years intervention designed to boost language and communication skills, have responded positively and enthusiastically, with schools, tutors and parents reporting a noticeable boost to confidence.

Delivered by one of our specialist tutors working with groups of five children, Story Lab is an immersive experience based on high-quality, diverse stories. Children are encouraged to retell narratives, connect with characters, expand their vocabulary, and grow in confidence as storytellers.

Our approach is rooted in the knowledge that early reading experiences are vital because they build language skills and spark imagination: children who are read to regularly from a very early age develop better literacy, focus, empathy, and emotional intelligence - all foundations for lifelong learning and wellbeing.

The Story Lab programme supports this by encouraging the kind of shared reading that Julian Grenier (Education Endowment Foundation) calls "one of the most powerful pedagogical techniques we have in the early years."

An investment of a few minutes a day has the power to create a lifelong love of books and reading, which is why Story Lab places great emphasis on engaging families with the programme: parents and carers are invited to attend an introductory workshop, observe the in school sessions, and take part in reading and related activities out of school. We also gift to the children five books over the course of the 10-week programme to encourage parents to read with their child at home.



Yet a study this year by Harper Collins UK found that only 41% of children aged 0–4 are read to frequently, down from 64% in 2012. Perhaps as concerning is that the same study revealed that only 40% of parents consider reading to their children as enjoyable, indicating a shift in perception towards viewing reading as a chore or academic task.

So we were delighted to see the Waterstones Children's Laureate Frank Cottrell-Boyce calling for every child to have "the opportunity to hear stories and experience books in their early years" in the recent Book Trust report, Reading Rights.

But as the report highlights, while shared reading contributes significantly to the health, wellbeing and happiness of our children, "reading is a privilege shared by fewer and fewer children."

This is why the gifting of books to the families of those children attending Story Lab is a key strand to the programme.

Research by Dr Caroline Zwierzchowska-Dod (Books, Babies and Bonding) highlights the powerful impact of gifting books—not only on children's development, but also on family relationships. Regular shared reading deepens bonds, enhances understanding and positively shapes parents' attitudes and confidence in supporting their child's literacy.

Emma Richards, the charity's Story Lab manager added:

"Our parent survey and anecdotal evidence shows that not only have parents really appreciated the books but many are now reading the stories at home with their children. We are seeing clear evidence that the Story Lab sessions, coupled with gifting the books, not only boosts a child's sense of well-being but gives parents the motivation and confidence to start the shared reading journey."

The Literacy Link

The Literacy Link is a newly established network formed by a group of literacy organisations, including The Children's Literacy Charity, with the goal of improving collaboration, knowledge sharing and impact for charities involved in supporting children's reading.

At a time when children's enjoyment of reading is at an all-time low, the network aims to bring together like-minded organisations to support and inspire children's engagement with reading. Using the power of their collective voice, expertise, and experience, the network is committed to creating lasting impact.

Our Education Lead, Julie Taylor, has played an active role on the steering group, contributing to the planning of the launch conference on 15 April, hosted by The Mercers' Company, and leading a well-received workshop at that event on building effective partnerships with schools.



42 organisations have joined the network so far, with over 70 representatives attending the launch.



Julie Taylor, Education Lead added:

"This was a fantastic opportunity to connect with a wide range of literacy organisations, all united by a shared commitment to improving literacy outcomes. I look forward to future collaborations and opportunities to strengthen our collective impact on literacy and reading outcomes."

The future of state-funded tutoring

At the Children's Literacy Charity we have long believed in the power of specialist literacy tuition to help close the attainment gap and we were delighted therefore to have collaborated alongside six other charities to commission a report on the future of tutoring.

Published in April by research agency Public First, the Past Lessons, Future Vision Report set out to draw lessons from the National Tuition Programme and recommend a blueprint for a future state-funded tutoring provision.

Calling for a national state-funded tutoring programme to be renewed, the report makes practical recommendations for how a future national tutoring scheme could work to support those children from disadvantaged backgrounds who are disproportionately impacted by 'lost learning' and need the most help to catch up with their peers.

Included in the key recommendations for any future programme is that the default delivery model should be in-person 1:1 or small group; tutoring should exist across all key stages; be offered in English and Maths only and be for a minimum of 12 hours, although separate analysis by the National Foundation for Independent Research showed that the optimum number of tutoring hours for greatest impact is likely to lie above 20 hours per pupil.



[Click here to read the report](#)

Reflections & celebrations

In March, the charity marked five years of successfully delivering life-changing literacy since the Covid pandemic and also the launch of our first-ever Big Give Match Funding Campaign!

An evening of reflection and celebration on 18 March saw us welcome school partners, funders, friends and tutors to the inspirational children's library space at our new offices.

We were thrilled to be joined by actress Dame Sheila Hancock in her role as Trustee of the John Thaw Foundation – a long-standing supporter of our work.

Two specially invited guest speakers brought the experience of the last five years to life for those attending the evening:



Reema Reed, Head at Hollydale School, Southwark and ambassador for the Children's Literacy Charity, gave a very personal and moving speech on the transformative power of literacy and the vital need for specialist intervention support for children experiencing economic and educational disadvantage. Reema and Dame Sheila Hancock found plenty to talk about!

Sola Ingram, Head at St Mark's Church of England School, Lambeth, a well-established Literacy Lab school partner now also taking our Reading Lab intervention, spoke about his own journey with the charity when he joined as Head, not knowing anything about our work:

"When I started, I did the usual thing that a new head teacher ends up doing: thinking I've got to change everything, kick it all out and start over again. But after a meeting with the Children's Literacy Charity it dawned on me that it was having such an impact on the children's learning we should stick with it. And I'm so glad that I did.

"The tutors are absolutely phenomenal. Sometimes with an intervention what happens is that no one is really clear about what's going on but with Literacy Lab, the tutors work alongside the teachers; they meet and liaise regularly together; they're very highly skilled; they build up relationships with the children; they're dedicated. This charity has a real impact upon the lives of the children in our school. Without their work, many children would leave school lacking the essential literacy skills so crucial for their future success."

The evening was also an opportunity to highlight our Big Give Match Funding Campaign which launched on 5 March with the goal of raising £50,000. Every donation which was made through the Big Give platform up until 5 April was doubled and we are delighted to announce that we reached, and exceeded, that target!

We have been overwhelmed by the incredible response to this campaign and would like to thank everyone who made a donation: your generosity will help us to support even more children with our life-changing interventions. A Big Thank You!

If you would like to continue your support and contribute to our Summer Reading Campaign,

[Please click here for more information and to donate.](#)



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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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