



Summer Update 2026

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As we approach the end of another busy academic year, it's been a privilege to reflect on our work with two highly experienced headteachers, as well as spend time talking to all our schools about the challenges and opportunities ahead.

For school leaders, change is a constant and we work closely with our partner schools to serve their evolving needs, while never forgetting our goal of helping to close the literacy gap for those children who have the most catching up to do. While some changes take time to implement, and we wait to see the impact of the most recent reforms and reviews, we are reminded by senior leaders that other developments need urgent attention, never more so than in the social media and AI space.

The latest reports, including the Milburn Review, not only highlight the challenges facing young people today, but also show that many of these problems stem from the wide attainment gap at primary school and the disengagement from education that often results.

Our own report, produced by a team of postgraduate students from the London School of Economics, reinforces the value of early investment in literacy yielding the highest return – [read more here](#). So while we flex to meet changing needs, we are steadfast in our belief that in-person, small-group, specialist literacy tuition provides the greatest opportunity to improve outcomes for children who face barriers to learning.

Wishing you all a wonderful, restful summer break and we look forward to the start of a new autumn term.

Isabel Greenwood, CEO



Our Growing Band of Author Supporters

The charity's education team has been busy with our Authors of the Month programme in support of the National Year of Reading. Each author has produced a video, sharing the delights of their book with our Literacy Labs.



From left to right, authors Rob Biddulph, Nicola Davies, Bethan Woollvin and Rashmi Sirdeshpande

Family Learning in the summer holidays

A reminder to all our schools, families and supporters that the Family Learning section of our website is live, offering a one-stop-shop for families wanting to support their child's literacy over the long summer holidays. [Click here to visit the pages.](#)



LSE volunteer research team takes a deep dive into the case for early intervention

Drawing on a wide range of published evidence, a volunteer research team at the London School of Economics has made a strong case for early literacy intervention creating the best opportunity to build strong educational foundations for future success.

The LSE's Research Volunteering Scheme asks teams of postgraduate students to use their academic knowledge and skills to assist a charity and we were delighted to be one of ten research projects chosen.

LSE Team members volunteered to help us answer three efficacy questions:

Is early literacy intervention effective?

How effective are out of classroom interventions compared to in class approaches?

Are improvements in literacy skills sustained beyond the intervention?

Accessing published research on literacy and looking across economic, neurological and societal factors, the report unequivocally supports early intervention as a highly effective, targeted response to the widening disadvantage gap in education.

In particular, their report highlights the fact that when children fall behind in reading early on, the impact is cumulative; early literacy gaps widen over time and children who struggle initially risk becoming increasingly disengaged. Furthermore, children who do not reach expected literacy levels by age five are more likely to face long-term challenges in education and beyond. Early literacy intervention offers one of the highest returns on investment in education, both for the individual and society.

The report concludes that intervening early, outside the classroom, with well-trained practitioners gives children the best chance of a lasting, positive trajectory through education and beyond.



“Working on this research project has been an invaluable experience, allowing me to put my MSc in Education Policy into action. It is clear that the charity remains steadfast in its mission to accelerate the literacy progress of as many under-served children as possible.”

LSE team member Kate Anderson

LSE postgraduate students Kate Anderson, Alexandra Horwich and Kate Mallory, joined online by Trisha Punamiya, at the presentation of their research findings. With our thanks to the full LSE team which also included Maura Tallon and Elizabeth Zhu, and to Dr Rosalind Coffey, Programme Manager, LSE Volunteer Centre. Full details of the report, including all sources, will be available on our website soon.

Key findings are:

Early childhood is the most adaptable window for language and literacy development as neural circuits for language and reading are rapidly forming and highly responsive to input.

Early intervention is particularly effective for literacy development because it addresses the Matthew Effect where early advantages in reading skill accumulate over time while early difficulties compound into long term disadvantage.

Spending on early years education in the UK remains below the OECD average. The UK spends £5700 per child on early years compared to an OECD average of £9700.

Early investment yields the highest societal return as literacy is the access point to education. Children with early literacy deficits struggle across subjects; children from disadvantaged backgrounds benefit the most from early intervention.

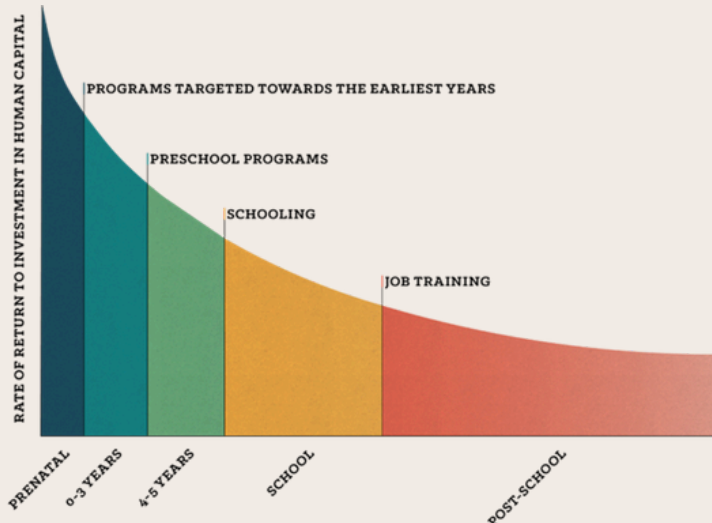
Out of classroom delivery is effective for the most 'at need' pupils but the quality and consistency of implementation are crucial factors: when delivered by well-trained, qualified practitioners, small group, out of class tuition reduces pressure on school staff while retaining the benefits of targeted, structured support.

Evidence exists that gains made through programmes which build foundational and learning skills persist beyond the interventions and throughout the education journey.

Poor literacy at age five costs a child a lifetime of lost earnings, reduces tax receipts and increases welfare spending costing an estimated £270m per year group.

Funding, especially in less affluent areas, remains the most significant structural barrier to ensuring high quality, early intervention literacy support.

The return on educational investment increases the earlier it occurs in life, as evidenced by Heckman's Curve.



(Adapted from Heckman, J.J. (2008) 'Schools, Skills and Synapses' Economic Inquirt, 46(3): 289-324)



We thoroughly enjoyed working with the LSE team and were so impressed by their thoughtfulness, insight and analytical skills. Their report is a timely reminder of the importance of early intervention in addressing the attainment gap if we are to improve the life chances of the 100,000 five-year-olds currently failing to meet the expected literacy standard.*"

Julie Taylor, Education Lead at The Children's Literacy Charity

(*Pro Bono Economics 2024)

Spotlight on St Mark's Primary School

St Mark's is a Church of England foundation school in the London Borough of Lambeth. Sola Ingram has been Head for 11 years; he is a long-time supporter of our Literacy Lab intervention and more recently of both our Reading Lab programme and the new Story Lab trial.

We talked to Sola about the school, his priorities and why he believes our interventions are such good value.



[Click here to read the interview in full](#)

Tell me why you continue to invest in our programmes?

Quite simply, what you do works. We can see the impact and it is the very high quality of your tutors that makes the difference. That and your accountability measures: I like how you baseline assess and measure progress so that we can track outcomes. We also have a very positive, collaborative relationship.

Any external intervention takes school time to manage. For it to work well you have to be invested in the process but if you put the time in and the outcomes aren't strong, what is the point?

Some schools don't like children missing lessons for interventions, how would you respond to that?

I get it; mornings in particular are prime learning times. However, for a child who is struggling in the classroom, if they are benefitting from a quality, high impact intervention that more than compensates for what they've missed.

And because your tutors rotate the timetable, the children don't miss the same lessons and that works for us.

How do you prioritise what you look for in an intervention?

We look at the whole picture: confidence, engagement and enjoyment and we see that what children produce in your Labs exceeds what they can do in the classroom. The children are able to do their best because of the rapport with the tutor and the calm, small group environment with no distractions and 100% focus.

The other thing your tutors do very well is celebrate success and give feedback to the parents. The children always have a sense that they are doing well and they are very, very proud of what they achieve.

Last but not least: how do you budget for our interventions?

We use our Pupil Premium monies and for the outcomes achieved, your programmes are very cost effective, compared for instance to other, cheaper reading programmes or to the cost of employing a dedicated teacher to deliver small group support.

The charity's interventions are invaluable, not just because the children attending make strong, evidenced progress but also because in acquiring literacy skills in the way they do with your tutors, the children grow in self-esteem and motivation and can then engage with learning, right across the curriculum.

The Importance of Oracy



Our literacy interventions place as much emphasis on speaking and listening as on reading, comprehension and writing, and recently our Education Lead Julie Taylor was asked to contribute a chapter to *Voices of Opportunity: Oracy for Social Mobility in Education* by Michael Gardner.

In the book, Julie highlights how strong oral language skills support literacy development and engagement with learning. At a roundtable run by **The Oracy Shift** she joined education leaders to discuss oracy's role in improving outcomes, wellbeing and social mobility and the shared goal of ensuring every child has the opportunity to develop their voice and be heard.

Connecting Over the Transformative Power of Reading

Established in 2025, Literacy Link connects literacy organisations, building a collective voice for the sector and creating opportunities to collaborate in the pursuit of shared goals. At the second Annual Gathering, held in May at the British Library, attendees were treated to a powerful keynote speech by Professor Teresa Cremin CBE of the Open University.

As a founding member of the Literacy Link Steering Committee, The Children's Literacy Charity's Education Lead Julie reported on the event for the Fair Education Alliance:

'Crucially, Teresa reaffirmed the transformative power of reading - not only as the foundation of literacy attainment, but as a driver of wider curriculum success, personal agency, and wellbeing. Her message carried both inspiration and urgency: fostering deep engagement with reading is central to educational equity. In this context, every organisation in the room, regardless of its specific focus, is part of a collective effort that extends beyond individual aims, contributing to the wider pursuit of social justice through literacy.'



[Read more here](#)

Literacy Hive

One important member of the Literacy Link is the Literacy Hive, a free, online signposting platform, helping educators find resources to support their literacy curriculum quickly and easily.

We know that sometimes finding the right resource to help deliver a rich, engaging literacy curriculum can be a challenge, especially when time is tight. Literacy Hive makes accessing high-quality resources from a wide range of providers straightforward. You can:

- Browse resources to support all areas of the literacy curriculum
- Plan your Literacy Year with the online events calendar
- Go All In! for the National Year of Reading 2026 with the dedicated Reading for Pleasure Hub

[Click here to check it out.](#) You'll find the Children's Literacy Charity there too as part of the wider community of organisations supporting schools.

Mauldeth Road Head Andy Kilcoyne reflects on his long partnership with our charity

This year sees the retirement of Andy Kilcoyne, headteacher at Mauldeth Road Primary School near Manchester. Andy took some time out of his busy schedule to reflect on our long-standing association.

"In the 15 years that we've been working together, the charity has consistently delivered crucial support for children at risk of underachievement and needing to develop their literacy skills. Over the years, Literacy Lab has become a trusted intervention and their specialist tutors are an integral part of the school, working in a close and successful partnership with staff and parents.

We have typically used Literacy Lab to support pupils who are struggling with phonics at Year 2 and 3. The individual mentoring provided is key, not only in boosting phonological knowledge and wider reading skills, but also in fostering in children greater self-belief, and with this a sense of belonging and engagement. The tutors are incredibly well trained and we have also been very lucky to have had tremendous consistency of support: tutor Andrea has been here for the duration of our involvement!

One of the privileges of having been a headteacher at the same school (for longer than I care to admit) is seeing the long-term outcomes of the work that we do. We have maintained contact with many of our former pupils and we look back with pride when we see their successes, and especially among those who attended Literacy Lab.

One of our current teaching assistants, a Literacy Lab 'graduate', is leaving soon to study pharmacy at university; other 'Lab' graduates return to talk to our current pupils about their educational and working experience as part of our Aspirations programme.

As I prepare to say goodbye to a much-loved school, I will take so many good memories with me but also the hope that many more children will be able to benefit from the expertise of this charity and its remarkable tutors."



Andy Kilcoyne with Mauldeth Road Primary School's two Literacy Lab tutors, Andrea and Nabila

“Andy has been an amazing Headteacher to work with. His ethos runs through the school with staff, parents and children alike. He has always championed the work we do and it has been a privilege to be a part of his school community.”
Andrea, Literacy Lab tutor

Supporter News

We are always looking for opportunities for corporate partners to get involved in our work, whether that be through individual or team fundraising, or finding the space for employees to learn more about how to support a child in their reading journey.

So we were thrilled when a team of Campbell Lutyens employees showed fantastic commitment to supporting our work by taking part in the London Landmarks Half Marathon in April. The runners successfully raised £3,650, which was then match-funded by the company.



One of Campbell Lutyens' team members ran dressed as a pineapple - their company's logo!

Engaging parents and families in a child's literacy journey is a key part of our work and we were delighted when corporate partner Stellantis UK asked us to visit their Coventry headquarters and take part in a Lunchbox Learning session. Hosted by Louise Gardner (Head of Inclusion, Belonging, Talent & Wellbeing at Stellantis UK) and with employees from around the UK joining online, Education Lead Julie Taylor shared literacy insights, top reading tips and the importance of reading with your child.



"This was a wonderful opportunity to engage staff in the work of our leading charity partner, inspiring conversations around children's literacy and strengthening the link between the charity and the Stellantis UK community", commented Louise.

Our [Where Reading Begins](#) match funding campaign in March was a great success, raising over £60,000 and beating our campaign target. With huge thanks to the Handspark Charitable Trust, who so generously provided the initial match funding pot, and to Campbell Lutyens who also donated.



There are many ways to support The Children's Literacy Charity. If you are inspired to raise money for us, why not join a fundraising event? Visit the [Run for Charity](#) website to find a race, challenge or activity. If events aren't for you but you'd still like to make a difference, you can support our work by [making a donation on our website](#) and help close the literacy gap for a child facing barriers to learning.



Please follow us on social media:



For more information about our school partnerships or supporting our vital work please contact: info@theclc.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. Registered Company No. 6251103. Registered Charity No. 1124257