

First Minister's Reading Challenge Advisory Group

Minutes

21 March 2017

10.00am – 12.00pm

Scottish Book Trust, Sandeman House, Trunk's Close, 55 High Street, Edinburgh, EH1 1SR

Present:

Amina Shah – Scottish Book Trust

Antonia Clark – Scottish Book Trust

Caitlyn Bannatyne – Graphic Novelist

Kevin Brack – Brunstane Primary School

Angie Crawford – Waterstones

Catriona Mackenzie – Scottish Government

James Robertson – Writer

Jen Harwood - Scottish Book Trust

Lindsey Duncan - Education Scotland

Lindsey Fraser – Fraser Ross Associates

Lucy Jukes – Chair

Matt Wheavil – Scottish Book Trust (note-taker)

Margaret Leitch – National Parent Forum of Scotland

Moira Findlay – Scottish Book Trust (observer)

Pamela Tulloch - Scottish Library and Information Council

Niall Walker – Scottish Book Trust

Rosemary Ward – Gaelic Books Council

Sean McNamara - CLIPS

Apologies:

Craig Flunkert - Scottish Government

John Doherty – Larbert High School

0. Previous Minutes Approved

- Previous Minutes from the November 2016 Advisory Group Meeting were approved unanimously

1. Update from Scottish Book Trust

Key Facts & Figures

- As of 20 March, 1549 schools have registered for the reading challenge (74% of schools in Scotland).

- 135 Inspiring Classrooms applications were received. Of these, 50 have been successfully funded.
- 32 blog posts and case studies have been posted on the FMRC website
- 208,420 English Reading Passports have been ordered and 2380 Gaelic Medium Education Passports have been ordered

1.1. Inspiring Classrooms

Scottish Book Trust updated the group on the progress of Inspiring Classrooms.

- Of the 50 schools funded for an author visit, 12 have given feedback and work is being undertaken to increase this number
- Case studies are being selected and written up, which include various activities run by schools to facilitate their author visit, including kick starting reading projects, reading cafes and pyjama parties.
- There has been a lot of passion among communities for IC and a good geographical spread, widening opportunity for pupils across Scotland to engage with authors in person

1.2 Evaluation

- Blake Stevenson were successfully appointed to carry out Evaluation for FMRC. They are in the process of mapping to reach a good range of schools and are including 2 schools who have not taken part to provide balanced feedback.
- A letter will be sent out to make sure schools know evaluation is being carried out and feel comfortable with taking part*
- Blake Stevenson was chosen because they demonstrated a good understanding of context and are incorporating a focus on parents
- The evaluation should be ready by June 2017 and will ensure a comparison exists to build on next year
- Dr. Sarah McGeown from Edinburgh University is working on widening participation with SBT and Book Trust England, which will help link FMRC with reading motivation

1.3 Expansion

- SBT can confirm expansion of the First Minister's Reading Challenge will be rolled out for Primary 1-3 from September 2017
- In addition, SBT can also confirm a pilot of FMRC for secondary schools. The programme will be piloted across 6 secondary schools in Scotland.

- Schools have not yet been chosen for the secondary pilot, they will be chosen to ensure as diverse a demographic as possible - SBT, SG, ES and ADES will meet to discuss this going forward.

2. Looking Forward

2.1. P1-3 Expansion

The Group were updated by the Scottish Book Trust on announced plans to expand the First Minister's Reading Challenge to Primary 1-3.

The Trust are working closely with teachers to add more books to the recommendation list on the First Minister's Reading Challenge website. This list will be available online by September 2017, when the expansion is set to begin.

The group discussed the extent to which the challenge and relevant materials such as reading passports should stay the same or change for the younger pupils.

The group agreed that response to expansion is positive and given its high level of success in its opening year, the aim should be to keep as many elements as similar as possible. However, thought needs to be given to what the challenges will be to ensure accessibility for the wider age-range of pupils. There also needs to be a balance between home and school reading/participation.

It was suggested that P1-3 resources should involve more activities, both class based and at home. These activities should also make links between Bookbug and Read, Write, Count to nurture a fluid crossover.

The Group discussed the possibility of expanding the First Minister's Reading Challenge to nursery. It was suggested that, with some adaptations to approach such as a higher emphasis on illustrations, it could work just as well as it would for Primary 1. The Group acknowledged that enough change to the First Minister's Reading Challenge was already taking place this year and will examine the possibility of nurseries further at a future point.

It was suggested that book gifting programmes such as Bookbug and Read, Write, Count could be utilised to help introduce the First Minister's Reading Challenge to pupils as they have shown strong evidence of boosting enthusiasm for reading.

2.2. Secondary School Pilot

The Group suggested that the Secondary School pilot of the First Minister's Reading Challenge could explore strengthening links with communities and potentially develop a model for "Reading Schools". It was suggested that community practice in Digital Schools has had a powerful impact on digital literacy. The Group agreed that the pilot year should be used to generate ideas for how Secondary Schools can develop their reading cultures. One possibility could be older pupils sharing their

reading experiences with younger pupils, in a Shared Reading model, to help boost reading confidence across the school.

The Group expressed a hope that the pilot year will enable as many ideas to be tried out as possible across 6 different schools and should ideally include at least one GME school.

School Library involvement in the pilot was emphasised and efforts should be made to ensure information about the pilot is available to all libraries.

2.3. Library Perspective

The Group acknowledged a possible tension between the success of the First Minister's Reading Challenge and increasing pressure on school and public libraries facing job losses and closures.

The Group agreed that rather than tension, a more appropriate perspective is to view the First Minister's Reading Challenge as a building block for library advocacy, to show how important libraries are and increase the opportunity for library investment. An emphasis was placed on getting the message out more clearly, that reading and its increased accessibility is linked to attainment.

The Group acknowledged that the Scottish Government has provided £2 million of additional funding for public libraries in the last 2 years and that there has been an increased number of visitors to public libraries during this period. The First Minister's Reading Challenge should build on this momentum and be used as a tool to showcase libraries.

The Group agreed that the FMRC and book gifting programmes rely on libraries and that this issue is absolutely critical for their continuing success.

3. Maintaining Momentum

The Group agreed that it was important to have strategies in place which ensure that schools who have engaged with the First Minister's Reading Challenge this year continue their engagement every year.

The Scottish Book Trust confirmed that school and key contact information from last year has been archived and that those involved last year will receive an email prompt to sign up for 2017/18.

The initial feedback from this year has been overwhelmingly positive with practical and photographic evidence of excited, highly engaged pupils taking part in the challenge. The Scottish Book Trust intends to build on this with regional visits to primary schools and additional engagement with secondary schools to nurture their enthusiasm for any potential future expansion.

The Group discussed the role of booksellers in helping maintain momentum next year. It was suggested that a visual aid such as a window decal, poster or bookmarks and badges at till points be displayed as a prompt for customers to discuss the First Minister's Reading Challenge.

The idea of a personal shopping experience in bookstores was also discussed as it encourages parents to feel more comfortable in buying or choosing books for their child and has received positive feedback. This could take the form of a recommendation card disseminated through the First Minister's Reading Challenge for family members to take with them to bookshops to help them engage with book buying.

Discount promotions linked with the First Minister's Reading Challenge were suggested. The Group agreed that it is too complicated for the FMRC to be involved in financial discounting of books as there are too many different suppliers to consider. However, it was proposed that Bookseller promotion could take a democratic shape and reflect the voice of the child, perhaps marketing a 'Book of the Month' on the basis of recommendations made by pupils taking part in the challenge.

The Group acknowledged that this was a good idea but it may be more ideal to promote a "Theme of the Month" rather than a single book, allowing for more children's recommendations to be promoted. A card of recommendations could also work in libraries and incorporate children of similar age recommending books to each other. This could also help strengthen the Community Partnership Journey challenge.

A stamp card similar to those used in coffee shops was suggested, which once completed could be rewarded with a badge. This could be rolled out in libraries and bookshops.

The Scottish Book Trust confirmed that should any book vouchers be gifted to rural schools; they will be arranged in conjunction with travel to ensure that children make use of their vouchers.

4. Celebration Event

The Scottish Book Trust confirmed the following:

- The First Minister's Reading Challenge Event will be held 14th June 2017 at the Edinburgh Corn Exchange from 10am – 2pm.
- 20 schools from across Scotland will be showcasing their challenge entries
- So far, 45 applications have been received by schools to attend, equating to 1,000 pupils. The venue can seat 400-600.

- There will be space for 15-20 exhibitors, likely to include organisations such as Education Scotland, Summer Reading Challenge and Gaelic Books Council
- A Videographer will be present to film the event
- The Prizes will include trophies, plaques, certificates and book tokens.

5. AOB

The group briefly touched on the Young Person's focus group which will potentially be led by Caitlyn Bannatyne (AG Member) Further details will be available at the next AG meeting.

The following meeting dates are confirmed for 2017:

- Thursday 18 May
- FMRC Celebration Event- 14 June
- Thursday 21 September
- Tuesday 21 November

Advisory Group members are asked to contact Scottish Book Trust if they are unable to make any of these proposed dates.