

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES & CULTURE

SUMMER READING CHALLENGE 2013

Purpose of the Report

1. To update Members on the Summer Reading Challenge 2013 reading initiative.

Information and Advice

2. The Summer Reading Challenge is the UK's biggest national reading initiative which is aimed at children aged 4 – 11 years old.
3. The Challenge is an annual event and involves 98% of UK local authorities and is led by public libraries. It is co-ordinated nationally by voluntary sector partner The Reading Agency. The Challenge is now in its 15th year.
4. Children are invited to read six books of their choice during the summer. They join at their local library and a themed membership pack gets them started. There are stickers and rewards to collect along the way with a medal and certificate if they read six books. The Challenge is designed for children of all reading abilities. They can read any books they like – fact books, stories, joke books, picture books – it is up to them.
5. Each year the Summer Reading Challenge has a different theme. The 2013 theme was Creepy House - a spine-tingling adventure.
6. The combination of fun, freedom and creativity impacts significantly on children's reading levels, range, motivation and confidence. Taking part in the Summer Reading Challenge helps prevent the 'summer reading dip' in achievement when children without reading opportunities at home over the long summer break from school traditionally lose ground in their reading.
7. In order to keep children motivated library staff and volunteers are on hand to provide advice, encouragement and support and there are linked activities to encourage families into libraries during the summer. There is also an interactive Summer Reading Challenge website full of activities to keep children engaged and motivated to keep reading.
8. Libraries work closely with schools and each year library staff promote the Challenge to schools in the summer term. Invitations are provided for children to take home to encourage families to take part.

9. The Challenge was run in all Nottinghamshire libraries from 13 July – 8 September 2013.
10. Key achievements include:
- 10,186 children took part in this year's Challenge, a considerable increase on last year's number of participants (8,896)
 - 5,647 children completed the Challenge by reading six books (55%) exceeding last year's total of 4,973 and exceeding the national completion rate of 50%
 - the highest number of children taking part was in the 4 – 7 years age group (51%); the second biggest age group was 8 – 11 year olds (42%).
 - boys accounted for 42.5% of children signing up for the challenge and 40% of children completing
 - 327 children joined as library members in order to take part
 - 38,639 books were read as part of the Challenge
 - 195 activities for children were held in libraries throughout the six week holiday
 - 4,749 children attended activities
 - 101 volunteers helped in 20 libraries giving 1,618 volunteer hours.
11. Evaluation was overwhelmingly positive. Parents and carers thought that the incentives were motivational; children loved the stickers, wristbands and medals. It encouraged children and families to borrow more books and reminded children and families to use the library more. It has also encouraged children to read a wider range of books and motivated children who already enjoy reading to read more. Comments received from parents include:

"I love these reading challenges! It encourages us to get to the library, read new books as a family. It also meant my eldest son read more over the holidays. Thank you". (Parent of children aged 5 & 3)

"The summer reading challenge was a great initiative. My son couldn't wait to start reading his books and began already in the car on the way from the library. He wore the medal proudly for days" (Parent of child aged 6)

"Excellent – definitely without a doubt encouraged my (reluctant) son to read this summer. Thank you!" (Parent of child aged 9)

"The reading challenge is an excellent idea. Although Esme is an avid reader the challenge has become part of our summer holiday where sometimes reading can slip when away from school. It is always a talking point between Esme and her friends" (Parent of child aged 8)

Comments received from children include:

"I really enjoyed the reading challenge it made reading way more fun and because you got things every time you read books it was like you was working towards something" (Child aged 10)

"Creepy House was spooktacular!!" (Child aged 11)

"I really enjoyed the creepy house reading challenge because it helped me learn new words and read more books" (Child aged 7)¹

"I think Creepy House was amazing and it is so much fun to do. The best bit about it was I read some different books and not just stories" (Child aged 11)

"I think that Creepy House has been one of the best ones so far. I have really enjoyed the prizes and the smelly stickers! Thank you!!!" (Child aged 10).

12. Using The Reading Agency's Summer Reading Challenge enables the Library Service to deliver a high quality, well developed reading product which is evaluated on a national scale. The scheme benefits from economies of scale as it involves the majority of UK local authorities which makes it a cost effective means of delivering a reading scheme in libraries.
13. The Challenge is now a prioritised programme within the Universal Reading Offer strategy developed with the Society of Chief Librarians which Nottinghamshire has signed up to.
14. The Summer Reading Challenge is a successful way to encourage children to read for pleasure. The Department of Education in 2012¹ stated that research shows the benefits of reading for pleasure are numerous and include:
 - children who say they enjoy reading for pleasure are more likely to score well on reading assessments compared to pupils who said they enjoyed reading less
 - regularly reading stories or novels outside of school is associated with higher scores in reading assessments
 - there's some evidence to show that the activity is a more important determinant of children's educational success than their family's socio-economic status
 - it can have a positive impact on pupils' emotional and social behaviour
 - it can have a positive impact on text comprehension and grammar
 - positive reading attitudes are associated with reading more later in life and having increased general knowledge.

Other Options Considered

15. The report is for noting only.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

16. The report is for noting only.

Statutory and Policy Implications

17. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

1. Education Standards Research Team (2012). Evidence for Reading for Pleasure. ESARD.

Implications for Service Users

18. The Summer Reading Challenge is a reading scheme that is available to all children of the target age via Nottinghamshire's public library network. Customer satisfaction with the scheme is excellent.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the update on the Summer Reading Challenge 2013 reading initiative be noted.

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Constitutional Comments

19. As this report is for noting only, no Constitutional Comments are required.

Financial Comments (KLA 29/10/13)

20. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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