

# **Our Little Big Book Club: 2023 evaluation**

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**September 2023**

# Introduction

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*“This is my second year of running for the Year 3s coming into Year 4, and the interest in books lasts. I am teaching children who were in last year’s cohort, and the conversations about what they are reading have continued – and the relationships with parents at the door.” – School coordinator, Middlesbrough*

The National Literacy Trust (NLT) and HarperCollins founded ‘Our Little Big Book Club’ out of a shared mission to improve reading for pleasure levels, with delivery focussed in areas facing the highest levels of literacy disadvantage across the UK. Families in these areas are disproportionately more affected by socio-economic challenges such as the cost-of-living crisis, with research showing a persistent link between poverty and low literacy levels. By providing a flexible programme of suggested activities for school staff, pupils and their parents or caregivers, Our Little Big Book Club seeks to augment the place-based approach adopted by NLT hubs and community areas.

In 2021, Our Little Big Book Club originally launched in just 3 areas, reaching 14 primary schools, 70 children and their parents. Now in its third year, this year the project has expanded to 17 areas, 75 primary schools, 638 children and their parents.

For pupils, benefits of participation include book discovery, choice, and increased book ownership, whilst sharing in a fun reading experience with peers and parents. Parents and caregivers can find new, enjoyable ways of learning at home, and benefit from exposure to literacy modelling behaviours demonstrated in the school environment. School staff can develop relationships with parents and caregivers, and tailor book club activities to meet the specific needs of the families involved.

Before the book club launches, each participating pupil is given the opportunity to choose and keep four books from a varied selection of 24 titles across Collins, Farshore and HarperCollins Children’s Books. This year, pupils also received an additional title from the book club’s feature authors Kevin and Katie Tsang, *Space Blasters: Suzie Saves the Universe* (Farshore).

A member of school staff (identified as a ‘school coordinator’) oversees a group of between five and ten Year 3 pupils and their parents or caregivers. They are asked

to invite families with low levels of literacy engagement, but some interest and willingness to foster reading enjoyment and habits. Over the course of six weeks, the group take part in a series of activities that encourage enjoyment of reading. Using the gifted books as a basis for the sessions, activities and content could include silly stories creation, 'guess the book', book bingo, character drawing and structured book discussion. The book club culminates in a final celebratory session, where everybody is encouraged to reflect on what they have learned. At this point, the school coordinator can also advise on further opportunities, for example joining the local public library, utilising school library provision (if applicable), recommending further reading or signposting to other NLT events taking place in the local area. Pupils, parents/ caregivers, and school coordinators are also asked to complete a post-evaluation survey. These results have been captured and summarised in this report.



# Pupil insight

99 pupils<sup>1</sup> completed a short survey, which asked about their favourite and least favourite parts of Our Little Big Book Club, and favourite book.

We were interested to hear, in the pupils' own words, their favourite part of Our Little Big Book Club. Many children loved exploring, reading, and sharing the books:

*"Books, being able to read different ones, and hearing recommendations." (Boy, Suffolk, Haverhill)*

*"I got inspired and I got to share my opinion of books and I got to take new books home." (Girl, Manchester)*

*"We get to read." (Girl, Middlesbrough)*

*"Talking about the book." (Girl, Islington)*

A couple of children highlighted getting to keep the books as their favourite part:

*"The books I got. Also, the biscuits." (Boy, Suffolk, Haverhill)*

*"My favourite part was receiving books." (Boy, Islington)*

*"Getting the books at the beginning and doing the quiz during one of the sessions." (Boy, Suffolk, Stowmarket)*

Others enjoyed the activities:

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<sup>1</sup> 43.8% (n = 42) of respondents were boys, while 55.2% (n = 53) were girls. 1 child described themselves another way, and 3 of the children skipped this question. 8 in 10 (81.8%) pupils described Our Little Big Book Club as 'a lot of fun', and the rest (18.2%) described it as 'OK'.

*“Playing the reading games.”* (Girl, Black Country)

*“My favourite part was the activities like designing my own front cover and also being able to keep the books forever.”* (Boy, Manchester)

*“Fun activities.”* (Boy, Doncaster)

Several children enjoyed the social elements of the project, such as sharing the time with loved ones:

*“That we were reading Space Blasters and that Mommy was here.”* (Girl, Birmingham)

*“Reading with my mum.”* (Boy, Cornwall)

*“Reading with friends and teachers.”* (Girl, Black Country)

*“Reading with my family and sharing it.”* (Boy, Birmingham)

And finally, some couldn't tell us just one favourite part:

*“Everything.”* (Boy, Middlesbrough)

*“Reading, listening, and having fun.”* (Girl, Peterborough)

Beyond the favourite parts, it was also important to hear from the pupils about any aspects of Our Little Big Book Club that they felt could be made better. Some told us that they were sad it ended, or that they didn't have a least favourite part:

*“Nothing, I liked everything.”* (Girl, Middlesbrough)

*“[I didn't like] when it ended!”* (Boy, Suffolk, Stowmarket)

*“I wish it went on for longer than 7 weeks.”* (Girl, Wales)

*“Nothing, I enjoyed it all.”* (Boy, Birmingham)

And some highlighted other concerns:

*“Not enough biscuits.”* (Boy, Suffolk, Stowmarket)



The pupils who completed the survey were also asked how true several statements about Our Little Big Book Club were for them (see Figure 1). The books were the most positively received aspect of the programme, with almost all (99.0%) agreeing that they liked the books they read as part of the project. Pupil feedback also suggested the project had an impact on reading frequency and enjoyment, with 9 in 10 saying that they read more often (88.7%) and enjoy reading more (87.8%) after taking part in Our Little Big Book Club. A similar percentage of pupils (87.8%) enjoyed the opportunity to read with their parents. Finally, 3 in 4 (73.7%) felt they had also improved their skills in choosing books after taking part in the programme.

Figure 1: Pupil changes as a result of Our Little Big Book Club



Finally, we asked pupils to tell us the favourite book that they read as part of Our Little Big Book Club. As shown in Figure 2, there was great variation in the book the pupils enjoyed the most.

Figure 2: WordArt of favourite book read by pupils as part of Our Little Book Club



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# Parent and carer insight

75 parents and carers responded to our survey about their experience of Our Little Big Book Club. All rated the experience as either 'excellent' (77.3%, n = 58) or 'good' (22.7%, n = 17). Telling us why, they said:

*"I really enjoyed the sessions with my daughter, it sparked a bigger love for reading in her and she enjoys sharing what books she has read and hearing about other books."* (Parent, Dundee)

*"Such a lovely club to be part of and the books were all a lovely read."* (Parent, Suffolk, Lowestoft)

*"My child has always been a keen reader, but this definitely helped him to branch out to other authors. Choosing the books with my child also encouraged us both to get back to reading together rather than separately."* (Parent, Dundee)

*"It has been a fun experience working alongside my daughter in the classroom environment, taking part, and doing something together."* (Parent, Blackpool)

*"Great effort made by staff to make each week engaging. Nice to spend time doing something just the two of us, with having other children at home."* (Parent, Stoke)



Almost all (98.7%, n = 74) said they would recommend Our Little Big Book Club to other families. When asked why, three core themes emerged. First, parents wanted to recommend the programme because it aided reading practice, encouraging future uptake:

*“Yes, it gave us discussion points which encouraged us to have a conversation about the books. The fact we had the club meant we had that extra incentive to do it. I would recommend this to all parents whether their children are keen readers or not.”* (Parent, Dundee)

*“It will encourage the parents to know how important reading is.”* (Parent, Stoke)

*“It has helped my son be more enthusiastic about reading.”* (Parent, Islington)

*“My child now actively seeks out things to read by themselves.”* (Parent, Suffolk, Haverhill)

Some also highlighted that Our Little Big Book Club was enjoyable, for them and their child:

*“I like that it’s so fun for children for reading.”* (Parent, Middlesbrough)

*“It was fun to have the time to read with my daughter without any distractions.”*  
(Parent, Birmingham)

*“The teacher was encouraging and fun and brought out the best in my child’s confidence in reading aloud.”* (Parent, Suffolk, Stowmarket)

Finally, parents recognised that new connections were formed, or old ones deepened, because of taking part in Our Little Big Book Club:

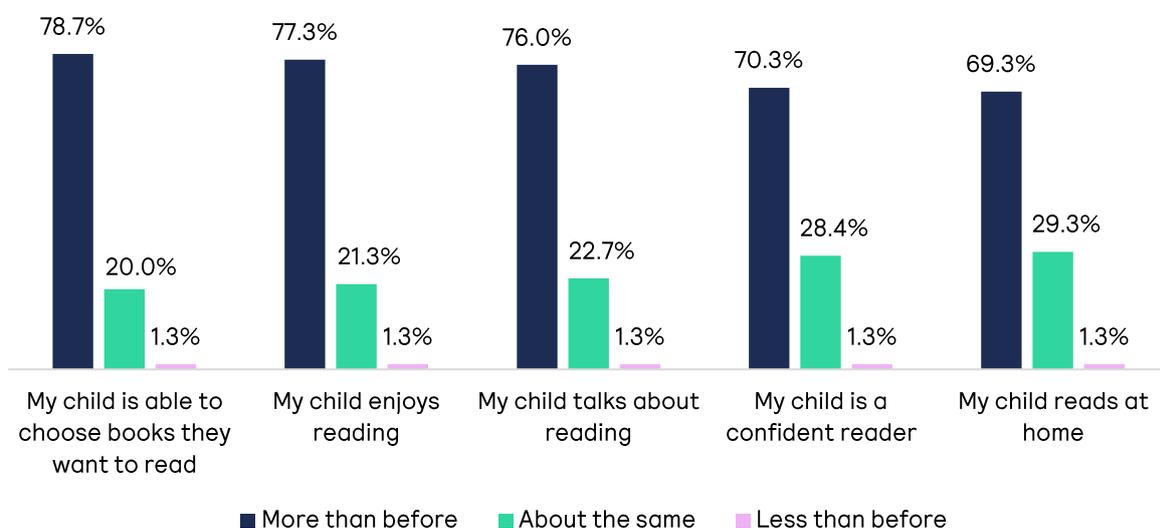
*“I think that my child and I get a lot of enjoyment from it and it’s our time together, [and] others would too.”* (Parent, Birmingham)

*“Doing this as a family unit is fun for both child and parent, and it gives you an opportunity to get to know some of your child’s teachers.” (Parent, Blackpool)*

*“I think this club is a great idea... so many things online for children to do, but it makes a nice change for children to pick up an actual book and engage with other children regarding what is being read.” (Parent, Birmingham)*

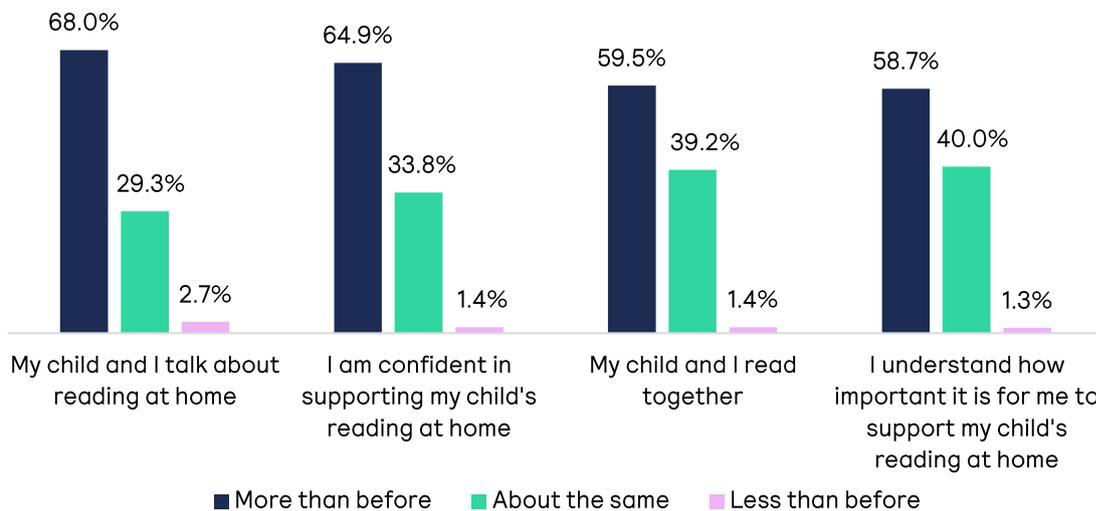
We also wanted to know whether parents had noticed any changes in their child’s behaviour or attitudes since taking part in Our Little Big Book Club. As shown in Figure 3, over 3 in 4 said their child was able to choose books they wanted to read (78.7%), enjoyed reading more (77.3%) and talked more about reading (76.0%). 7 in 10 said their child was a more confident reader (70.3%) and read more at home (69.3%).

**Figure 3: Parents’ perception of changes in child attitudes and behaviours after Our Little Big Book Club**



We also asked parents about changes they’d noticed in the behaviour of their child, or attitudes they had towards the importance of reading (see Figure 4). Over two-thirds (68.0%) said they talked about reading more than before, with 6 in 10 saying they were more confident in supporting their child’s reading at home (64.9%) and were reading more to their child at home (59.5%). 6 in 10 parents also had greater understanding of the importance of supporting reading at home (58.7%).

**Figure 4: Changes in parent attitudes and behaviours following Our Little Big Book Club**



Parents also told us in their own words how the project has been beneficial to their family. We asked them for the biggest change they had seen, and they told us in open text comments. Overwhelmingly, parents said that their children enjoyed reading more, and were reading for pleasure more often:

*“Reading isn’t seen as a chore anymore and it’s opened up his world to books.”  
(Parent, Suffolk, Haverhill)*

*“She is reading more as would not really read before. She feels more confident in trying to sound out words she is unsure of. We have been reading together and she is reading by herself too. She has also found some books she has fallen in love with through recommendations from other children in the book club and herself.”  
(Parent, Dundee)*

*“My child has become excited to read again, he is engaged in the books and interested in the stories.” (Parent, Doncaster)*

*“Lots more talking about our books we read and what we like about them and what kinds of books we would like to try next, encouraged us to join the library!” (Parent, Dundee)*

*“The fun factor of reading rather than it feeling like a chore.”* (Parent, Birmingham)

Beyond reading, parents highlighted that their children had increased confidence:

*“I see how confident [she is] at school with her classmates and teacher.”* (Parent, Birmingham)

*“My son has become a more confident reader.”* (Parent, Suffolk, Stowmarket)

*“Increased confidence.”* (Parent, Peterborough)

*“My child has become a more confident reader by taking part in the book club.”*  
(Parent, Birmingham)

Others noted the increased number of books and genres their children were enjoying:

*“My child has been encouraged to explore different genres and authors.”* (Parent, Dundee)

*“More books available for us at home.”* (Parent, Doncaster)

*“New books and discussions about the books.”* (Parent, Suffolk, Stowmarket)

And a few said it had encouraged them to read more themselves:

*“I am more aware of the importance of reading and encouraging my child to read. I have become more aware of how little my child was reading. Going forward, after taking part in the book club, I will be taking time out to read myself and read with my child. If my child sees me reading, then this will encourage her to pick up a book and read too.”* (Parent, Dundee)

*“It makes me want to read more and find more time to read.”* (Parent, Stoke)

Lastly, some parents highlighted that Our Little Big Book Club had allowed them to spend more time with their child and wider family:

*“More quality time with my son.”* (Parent, Islington)

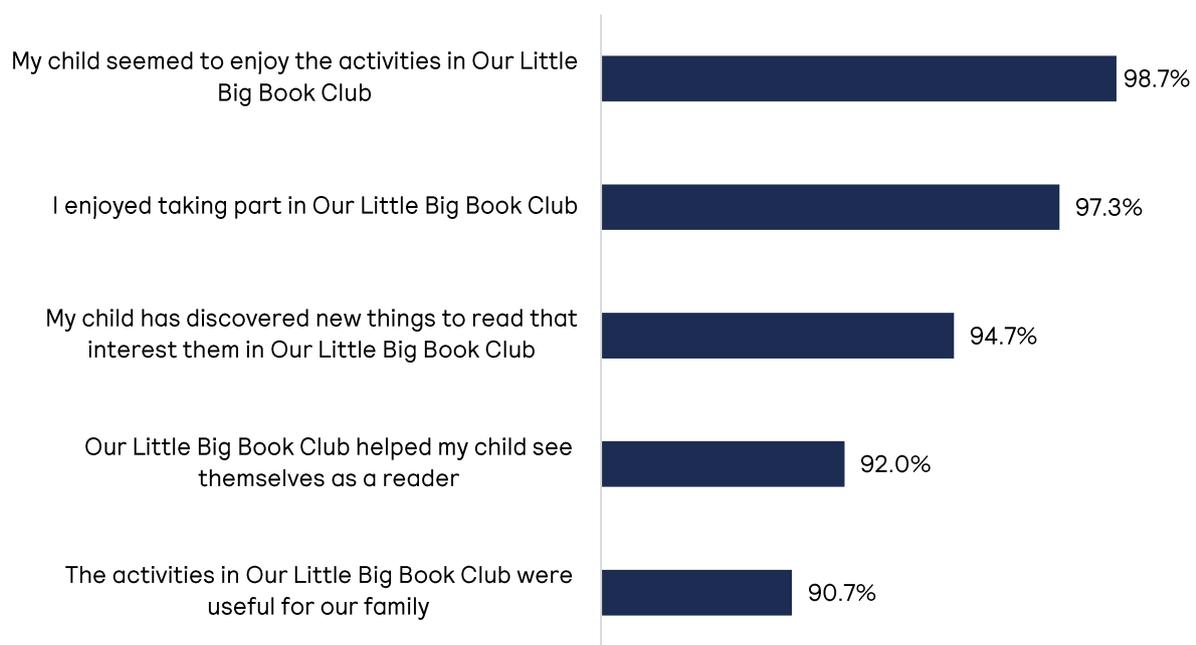
*“Getting to take part in my child’s extra activities has been lovely.”* (Parent, Suffolk – Haverhill)

*“Being able to take time to read together.”* (Parent, Doncaster)

*“Having to partner with my child on this journey has been very useful for both of us and as a family.”* (Parent, Dundee)

Looking in more detail at the experience of Our Little Big Book Club, almost all parents said they (97.3%) and their child (98.7%) enjoyed taking part (see Figure 5). Over 9 in 10 said that their child had discovered new topics (94.7%) and that Little Big Book Club helped their child to see themselves as a reader (92.0%). 9 in 10 also said that the activities were useful for their family (90.7%).

**Figure 5: Parents’ perception of the impact of Our Little Big Book Club**



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# School coordinator insight

21 school coordinators responded to our survey about their experience with Our Little Big Book. Most rated the project as either 'very good' (42.9%, n = 9) or 'good' (47.6%, n =10).

Overall, most school coordinators enjoyed the experience of Our Little Big Book Club, and felt that the children had enjoyed it too:

*"It was easy to organise and resource. Working with parents and children has been so enjoyable. The children have shown great interest and enthusiasm."* (School coordinator, Doncaster)

*"The children loved receiving their book choices. They treasured them. They read the titles immediately."* (School coordinator, Islington)

*"Children loved discussing the books and were thrilled they were able to pick new books for themselves."* (School coordinator, Wales)

*"After school for an hour with the support of a TA, [we] made use of the activities sent in the pack. The pupils could access it quickly and enjoyed it. Challenges were that not all parents were able to attend as they had younger siblings/commitments. Many wanted to leave their children at the club."* (School coordinator, Islington)

One school coordinator commented that the activities required extra input from their staff to make them applicable to the pupil group:

*"We were pleased with the take-up in such a small school. All the children invited had barriers in some form with literacy. The choice of books was excellent. Challenges were the matching of activities to the wide variety of books that children had chosen."* (School coordinator, Suffolk, Lowestoft)

However, when parents were on board, the activities were viewed as beneficial:

*“The children loved the book club. They enjoyed experiencing different books and getting the opportunity to read at home (as some don't have the resources at home). It was great to involve the parents and encourage them to see the importance of reading too.” (School coordinator, Wales)*

*“Children were very keen, parents not so much. Had a lot of interest from children and they loved the books and being able to select their own choices.” (School coordinator, Blackpool)*



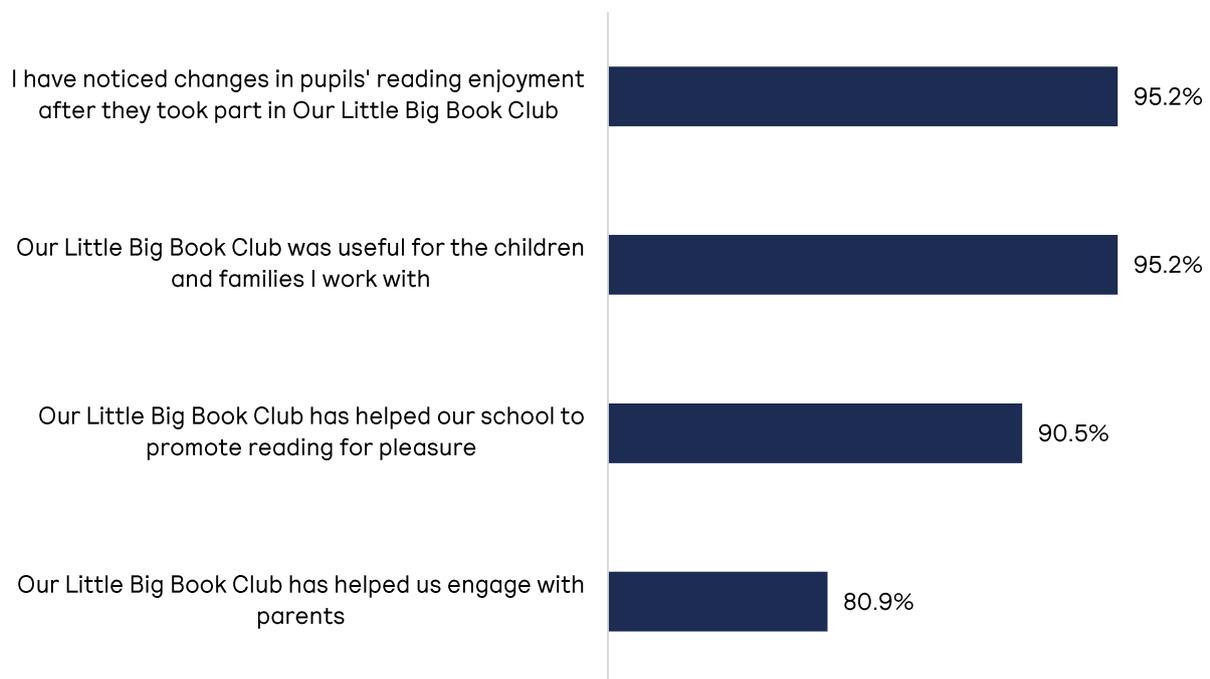
Finally, some coordinators gave us more information as to how the programme was adapted for their school (see case study 1)

### Case study 1: The experience of a school coordinator in Cornwall

*“We amended the outlined programme to target specific needs within our setting. We ran the reading club as an outdoor 'wild reading' book club, incorporating forest school activities and inviting parents to read with their children around the fire. It was challenging at first to engage parents, but over time we found the relaxed atmosphere helped engage parents. We chose to target children who are not reading regularly at home, so there was a little persuasion needed to get the children to sign up, but over time, we saw a great impact. The children have been reading with increased enthusiasm and have been getting through books with increased pace. It has also helped build relationships between teachers and some reluctant parents.”*

School coordinators were asked whether they felt that Our Little Big Book Club was impactful for families and pupils. As illustrated in Figure 6, most reported positive experiences with Our Little Big Book Club. Nearly all (95.2%) agreed that taking part in Our Little Big Book Club led to changes in pupils' reading enjoyment, with the same percentage saying it was useful for the children and families they work with (95.2%). 9 in 10 (90.5%) said that Our Little Big Book Club had helped them to promote reading for pleasure, and 4 in 5 (80.9%) said that the book club had helped parental engagement.

**Figure 6: School coordinator perception of the impact of Our Little Big Book Club**



When asked if participation in Our Little Big Book Club resulted in changes to teaching practice in their whole school or individual classrooms, some coordinators highlighted increasing and continuing with reading events for families:

*“We hope to continue the club in September to engage our less eager KS2 readers who could easily fall behind. We will continue to invite parents into the session and base it outside in an informal environment.” (School coordinator, Cornwall)*

*“Organise more reading events for families to read together.”* (School coordinator, Doncaster)

*“We would like to run [Our Little Big Book Club] with a new set of parents.”* (School coordinator, Birmingham)

One school coordinator said they had reorganised their library space:

*“Reorganised a space in the library for book club and relevant display.”* (School coordinator, Islington)

A number said that they had changed how their lessons engaged with books:

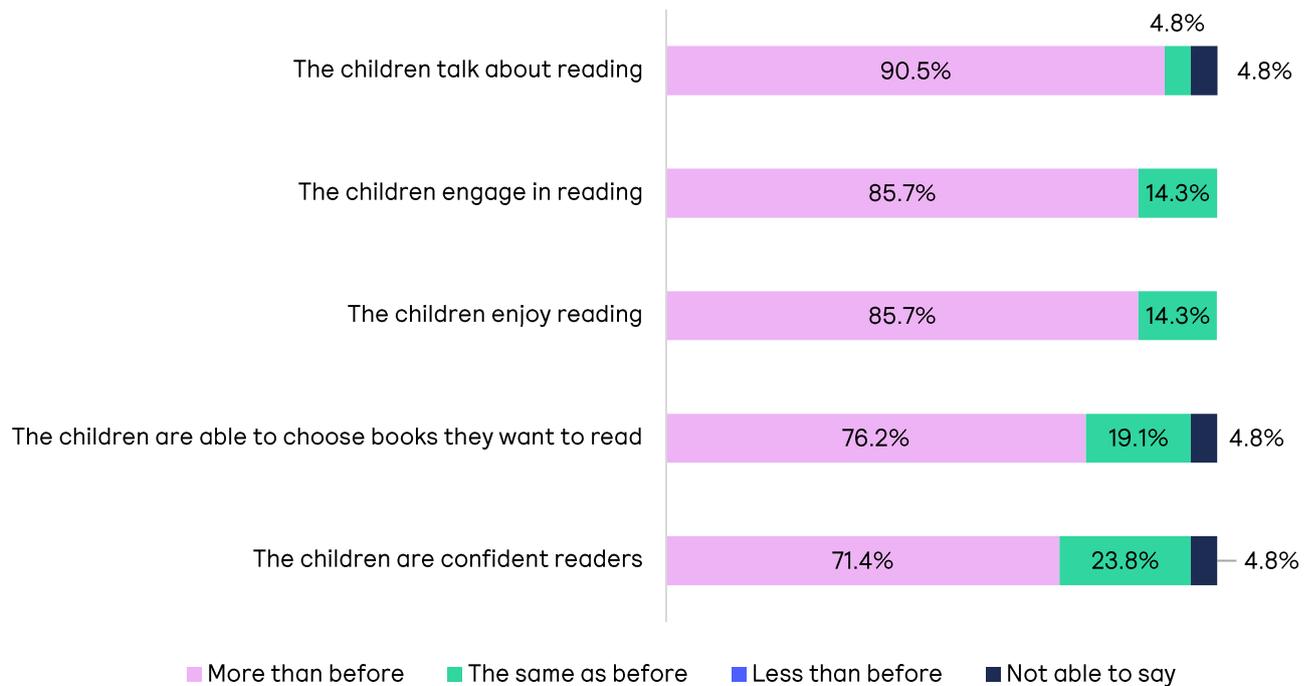
*“When I work with my group, we explore books a lot more.”* (School coordinator, Islington)

*“I let a couple of children come down to the reading room to read with me and they love it. Just reading to children has shown me they love it and sometimes need an adult to just read to them with no time pressures.”* (School coordinator, Peterborough)

*“Have used some of the activities within our Group Guided Reading sessions.”* (School coordinator, Wales)

We also asked school coordinators whether they had noticed a change in their pupils participating in the project (see Figure 2). Most had noticed changes in book talk, with 9 in 10 (90.5%) agreeing that children talked about reading more than before. Additionally, 85.7% of school coordinators said that children engage in reading more and enjoy reading more. 3 in 4 (76.2%) felt that children were better able to choose books they wanted to read, and 7 in 10 (71.4%) reported that children’s confidence in reading had increased too.

**Figure 7: School coordinators' perception of changes in children participating in Our Little Big Book Club**



We asked the school coordinators to give examples of where Our Little Big Book Club had been particularly effective. Some school practitioners said that children were talking about books more and getting more engaged with literature after taking part in Our Little Big Book Club:

*“Children are reading more and making use of the school library regularly. Other children have heard about the book club and want to join in the future. We may run our own version of this, using borrowed books from the library.”* (School coordinator, Manchester)

*“Children are reading for pleasure during break and lunch.”* (School coordinator, Blackpool)

*“More children are having conversations about books with adults, and at home. Really beneficial.”* (School coordinator, Middlesbrough)

Changes were particularly seen for children who were previously reluctant to read:

*“A child that had always been a reluctant reader, never finished a book, now engages in book talk at home and in school. They have become more confident in what they will read - branching out to other genres rather than sticking to one type of text.”* (School coordinator, Middlesbrough)

*“One of our children was reluctant to read with a grown-up at home before, and this has really impacted positively on his engagement with reading in and out of school.”* (School coordinator, Suffolk, Stowmarket)

*“A child who found it difficult to discuss opinions about books or complete book-related creative activities with confidence is now more confident. She engaged with the silly stories and gave a short presentation to the group.”* (School coordinator, Islington)

*“One child is very quiet and withdrawn in class, but in this group, she gained so much confidence and loved sharing her thoughts... she even joined the local library.”* (School coordinator, Wales)

*“I had a child who was uninterested and unengaged with reading. After working with the child and parents, the child’s confidence grew and they are now much happier with reading.”* (School coordinator, Manchester)

Lastly, some coordinators also highlighted the importance of time spent with family for some children:

*“One child has been able to share more with their parents, and has enjoyed time with them, without their siblings, having quality conversations. It is lovely to see hugs given when reading to the group, building bonds between parents and children.”* (School coordinator, Middlesbrough)

*“A child who was a good reader but had little or no books at home was so excited to be reading at home to her parents and to her siblings (younger). This made reading a lovely family activity which the child was so excited to tell the class about.”*  
(School coordinator, Wales)

# Conclusion

Overall, Our Little Big Book Club was a resounding success, with positive feedback from school coordinators, parents and pupils. The project was effective in improving pupil's reading enjoyment, as evidenced by surveys of teachers, parents and pupils. Pupils also reported reading more frequently, reading a wider variety of books, and talking about books more often.

In addition to improving reading engagement, Our Little Big Book Club also provided a bonding opportunity for parents and their children. Parents reported that they enjoyed reading with their child, and that it helped improve their confidence in supporting their child's reading at home.

Finally, Our Little Big Book Club also had a positive impact on the schools involved. Some schools reorganised their library space to fit book club recommendations. Some schools also implemented new ways to explore books as a class, and organised further family reading events. We are confident that Our Little Big Book Club will continue to be a successful programme that inspires children to read for pleasure and fosters a love of reading in families.

