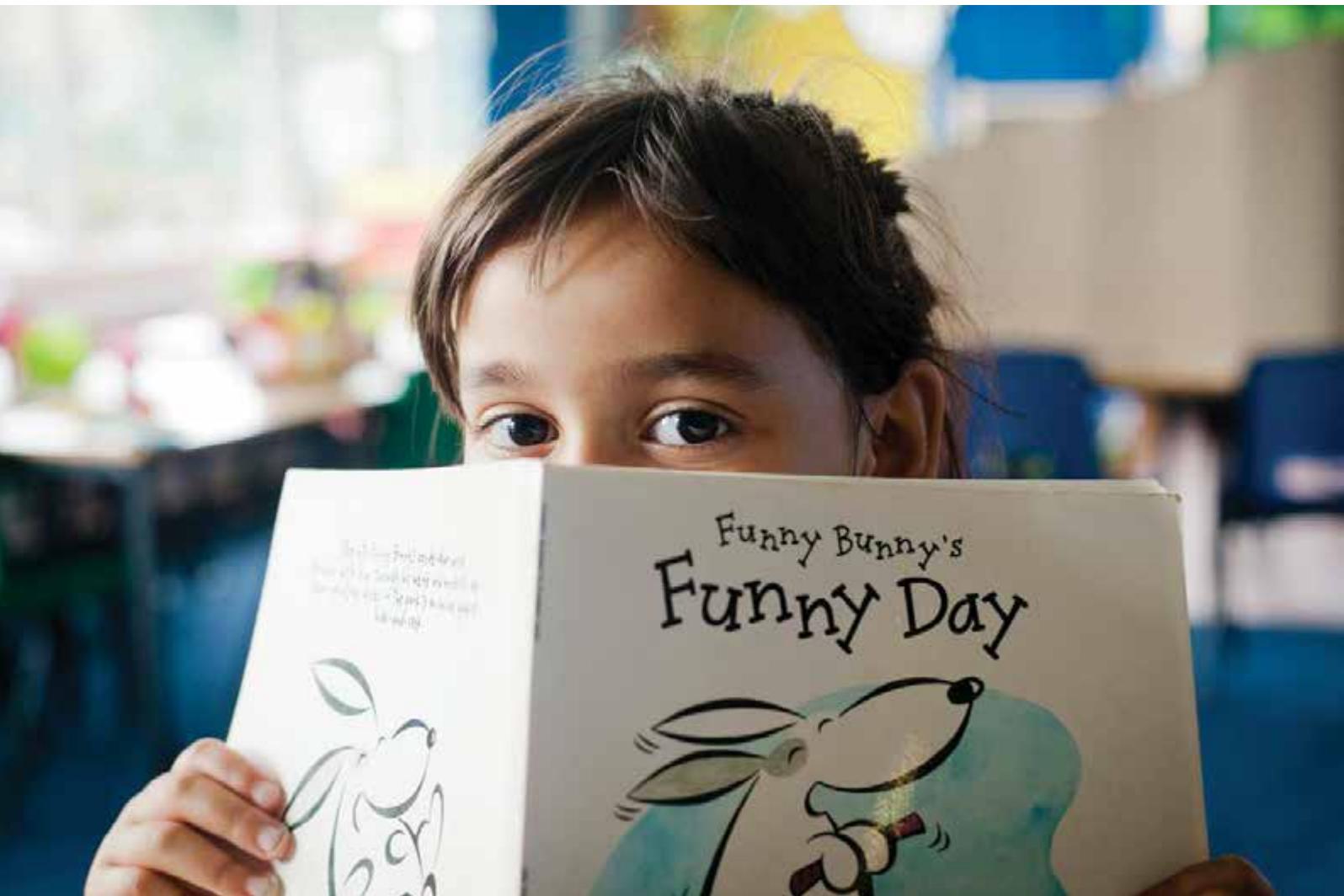


READ ON
GET ON



How reading can help children
escape poverty

Front cover: Alexandra enjoys reading with a volunteer helper each week. Her school is part of the Born to Read programme. (Photo: Jo Metson Scott/Save the Children)

The *Read On. Get On.* campaign would like to thank all those, both within the campaign and from outside it, for their invaluable input into this paper. The report has benefited immeasurably from the expertise of core campaign members: the work of Christina Clark and Joe Morrisroe at the National Literacy Trust has been of particular value. However, we have also received important feedback, advice and support from many others. Particular mention should go to Jean Gross, the former Government Communications Champion, James Law and Thomas King, from Newcastle University and Chris Paterson. We would also like to thank all those who have contributed important original analysis to the report. As well as Newcastle University and CentreForum, this includes the National Foundation for Educational Research and Dr Rebecca Allen. Finally we would like to thank Hollie Warren and Will Paxton for the drafting of the report and Jamilla Hinds-Brough for her support during that process.

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READ ON. GET ON. CAMPAIGN CHAIR'S FOREWORD

In Britain primary education for children has been compulsory for at least the last 150 years. Yet to our shame, thousands of children leave primary school each year unable to read well enough to enjoy reading and to do it for pleasure, despite the best efforts of teachers around the country.

We know that young children who enjoy reading independently will have had the door opened to new discoveries and wide interests, to knowledge, creativity, and confidence. Reading is the critical route to other subjects as well as a provider of wider opportunities for giving more and getting more from life and work.

However for those children living in the poorest families and the most deprived communities the situation is even worse. Four out of ten children on free school meals are not able to read well by the age of 11.

For any of these children, entering secondary school without the ability to read well can engender a crippling lack of confidence and confusion. This in turn can lead to humiliation and despair at precisely the moment when raised aspirations and the enjoyment of achievement should be creating a positive future for every child. This is the unacceptable consequence of child poverty in the UK which is exacting both a life sentence on many of these children and a terrible toll on our society. The recently launched Fair Education Alliance highlights the gap in literacy and numeracy by the age of 11 as one of the most critical challenges for the UK.

New research published here shows starkly that the UK has the strongest link among developed nations between poor literacy and unemployment. This is a ticking time bomb for our long-term competitiveness. We know too that the die is cast early. By the age of 3 we can already see the clearest correlation between family income and the vital language development that leads to reading. This is not just a task for our schools – vital as they are.

What can be done to reverse the trend and raise our game? We have not gathered together the huge range of organizations signed up to this report just to

rehearse the problem, but with the aim of building a coalition for change. This report casts the challenge and the case for practical action in the clearest possible light. Its intention is not to lay the problem at the feet of the government of the day or to cast blame on those who preceded them. Although much effort has been expended this is a task for us all.

Our task is to enlist all those who can help to achieve a most ambitious but vital goal. We want to get every child reading well at the age of 11 across the whole of the UK by 2025. That means to be able to enjoy stories like *Treasure Island* or *Harry Potter*, as well as confidently to enjoy reading in a wide range of subjects. We know from the successes of schools and communities around the country that reading levels can be transformed and that there is no level of poverty, or special educational need where a profound positive difference cannot be made. Well-trained and inspirational primary teachers are achieving great literacy results and are a critical resource in poor communities. In addition to this families who encourage just ten minutes of reading a day with a child can make a huge difference.

To achieve this goal we need the energy and determination of headteachers and teachers working not just with parents and carers, but also with community champions in health and social care, football clubs, corporate workers and retiree volunteers. We need to mobilise people on social media and educational evaluators, we need to look to corporate support and employee incentives. The campaign also needs the charitable sector – national and local – to collaborate, raise resources, benchmark successes and measure our progress to goal.

Above all else, we must together put reading and the joy of reading at the heart and the head of our culture. We can do little that makes more difference for children in poverty nor that contributes more to the society that we need to build in the UK.

Dame Julia Cleverdon

Chair, *Read On. Get On.* campaign

CHILDREN'S FOREWORD

"The first time I came to this school I was in nursery and I wasn't very good at reading and it was really difficult. I always got stuck on the words. I even got stuck on the word 'the'. I couldn't really say the words properly.

"Some people found it difficult and some people found it easy because they were better at reading than me. It made me feel like I didn't have a brain. I couldn't read the book and everyone else did and they laughed at me because I didn't know how to read.

"The last time I'd read out loud in assembly people took the mickey out of me because I didn't know how to read. It felt like I should have known how to read because I wasn't a baby any more. I was growing up. It made me feel useless, embarrassed, dreadful, and I felt like I had nothing inside me to keep me going.

"Because I'm in Year 5 they teach you how to read and how to do more stuff for bigger children. In nursery they didn't teach you hard words.

"If you had to read and you didn't know how to read people would embarrass you.

"You say the letters to try and figure out the word and you try and say it but you still can't recognise the word.

"There's a book I've got at home called *Sticky Endings* and I can read it all and I don't get stuck on hard words. I like reading because when you read you have the opportunity to speak to someone about it."

Jade, 10, Tunbridge Wells



"At first I wasn't comfortable at reading; but now I have a lot of confidence even to read a Harry Potter book. I've read half of one.

"I used to get my brother's books given to me, and didn't read them much. I didn't ever buy them. Until I got my own books – *Captain Underpants*. When I first read *Captain Underpants*, I didn't really get it, but now I pick up on the jokes. I get it when the narrator makes a mistake and there's a joke.

"I wasn't confident at all before this. I was told I would need to gain two reading levels. I used to read like a robot for a while. Now I add more expression and I find it a lot more exciting, more fun reading. I know a lot more words now and as I read them they become more familiar and my reading levels got better.

"It makes me feel proud of myself and ready for secondary school because my brother, he doesn't read any more. He's moved on, but I'm not going to move on. This is what I do. When I'm not reading a book, I'm playing a computer game, so I put subtitles on so I can read it as well."

Aiden, 11, Northamptonshire

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Each year we leave thousands of young children, very many of them poor, behind in their reading. They then struggle for the rest of their education and career.

This report sets out who we're leaving behind and why. We set out a bold ambition: to get every child reading well by 11 in 2025.

Everyone can do something – just ten minutes a day reading with a child makes a huge difference – but it will take *all of us*, parents, grandparents, business, volunteers, teachers and role models like footballers and others, to crack this problem for once and for all.

Reading well is essential to tackling the effects of poverty on children. And for all children it is the keystone of a good start in life...

Reading is the key to unlocking every child's full potential and opens up a world of possibilities. A good education is of course about much more than just reading. But being able to read well is the foundation on which so much else depends: children first 'learn to read' and then they 'read to learn'.

...but the UK fails more children and allows many thousands of poorer children to fall behind in reading...

Children living in poverty are less likely to be able to read well at school than their classmates – and this has the potential to be devastating for their future lives.

The past decade has shown some progress, but it has been too slow and we must do more.

If we don't act now we are on track to leave around 1.5 million children behind by 2025.

Last year a quarter of all children left primary education without reading well each year, rising to **two in five poorer children**. Other disadvantaged groups are also likely to be failed:

- 45% of low-income, white British boys were not reading well by the age of 11.
- Low-income, white British boys, who have English as their first language, are even less likely to be reading well by the age of 11 than many low-income groups for whom English is not their first language.
- The reading gap between boys and girls in England is one of the widest in the developed world: boys are twice as likely to fall below even a very basic reading level.

England has a particular challenge with educational fairness. On average children do well – but, unacceptably for a wealthy country, we allow hundreds of thousands of children to fall behind.

- **New analysis in this report demonstrates how only one other country in Europe, Romania, has more unequal reading attainment among ten-year-olds.**
- The gap between the best and worst ten-year-old readers in England is broadly equivalent to seven years of year 4 or 5 schooling.

...which cuts short individuals' chances in life, and makes the UK less fair and less prosperous...

Each child left behind at 11 is a child facing a difficult time at school and potentially a future cut short before it has started.

- New research for this report shows how, if a child does not learn to read well when young, they can turn away from education as they get older, get poor qualifications and struggle in the world of work.

- In England, struggling to read is more closely linked to low pay and the risk of being unemployed than in any other developed country, including the USA.
- Around one in four people earning less than £10,000 were not functionally literate – this compared with fewer than one in 25 of those earning over £30,000.

In short, reading and poverty are directly linked. This is not fair. Moreover, the cost of this squandered talent could be over 2% of GDP by 2025.

...and this is why, as a nation, we need to turn things around by setting a historic goal for the United Kingdom...

We must act to ensure all children are reading well at 11. All those behind this report and working as part of the *Read On. Get On.* campaign, as well as in the wider literacy sector and in schools across the country, are already working hard to improve children's reading and to foster reading for pleasure. There is much to build on. But we believe that as a nation we can and should do better. We represent a unique coming together of organisations and individuals from schools to early years professionals, from language and literacy charities to children's charities, and from business to local libraries and civil society.

We have all come together to set and work towards achieving a historic goal for our country. We are reaching out far further to parents, carers, grandparents, and anyone with the power to put the importance of reading at the centre of our national life, in high streets and football stadiums, as well as in libraries, with business leaders and with authors playing their part.

...our ambition is that all children will be reading well by the age of 11, by 2025...

By setting an achievable but hugely ambitious goal and by rallying people and organisations across the nation behind it, we aim to make the UK a fairer nation for every child. While it is ambitious, we show how, if each pupil made the progress expected of them at the beginning of their school career, with some additional tailored help for the poorest pupils and extra help in the early years, we could get to the goal.

Achieving this goal would mean that every single child born this year would be able to read well by the time they finish primary school in 11 years' time.¹ In order to ensure we are making progress, we are also setting two interim goals. Because the early years of a child's life are so critical and because early language development is the building block on which later reading develops, we are setting the 2020 goal of:

All children achieving good early language development by the age of five by 2020.

And because we need to ensure that we are on track for achieving the ultimate 2025 goal, our second interim goal will be:

To be at least halfway to achieving the 2025 goal for 11-year-olds by 2020.

The group behind this report is simply the starting point. There is space for all under the banner of getting every child reading well at 11 by 2025. Parents, employers, volunteers, role-models, and champions from across society are needed.

...achieving this level of ambition will require action on all fronts...

Achieving the step change necessary will require a new way of working. We are urging government to sign up to the ambition: policy and funding matter. But achieving such a historic goal will require action and a sense of ownership of the goal from a wide range of organisations. It will require action across four main fronts.

1. In all our communities: celebrating the enjoyment of reading

There is a virtuous circle between enjoying reading and being a good reader. Research for this report demonstrates that children who do not enjoy reading are ten times more likely to have fallen behind at school by 11.

Many of the organisations within the Read On. Get On. campaign already work extensively in communities across the country. The campaign will work to harness these activities and to build a movement in towns and cities that will bring together teachers, mums, dads, grandparents, local business leaders, MPs and wider civil society, in order to celebrate and promote the enjoyment of reading.

2. Before children start school, ensuring all children have strong early language skills

Children's early language skills are the foundations on which reading well at primary school is based. Research for this report found that at the age of three there was already a gap, measured using 'months of development', of almost a year and a half between children from the best-off and poorest families.

Achieving the 2025 goal will not be possible without improvements in early language development, to ensure children are not behind when they start school simply because of their background. Our interim 2020 goal, of all children having good language skills by the age of five, will be a big initial focus for the campaign.

3. In primary schools

Great schools make an enormous difference. Many schools have achieved impressive results for their pupils in very challenging circumstances: they have demonstrated that while poverty often makes it harder for a child to learn and achieve, it should not be an excuse for low ambitions.

Analysis for this report has found that, were all schools to improve at the rate the best have achieved over recent years, then by 2025 close to 100% of pupils could be reading well.

The Read On. Get On campaign will work with schools across the nation, supporting them to engage parents in their local communities. The campaign, including teachers and headteachers, is itself coming forward and setting the ambitious 2025 goal, rather than waiting for government to take the lead. Schools themselves can take control of this agenda and sign up to the goal, setting their own ambitious goals at local level.

4. In homes: supporting mothers and fathers

What happens beyond the school gates and in homes is critical. New work for this report shows that reading to and with children matters for both mothers and fathers, but the impact of fathers reading – to children after they have started school – appears even greater. Children whose fathers read with them less than once a week at the age of five had, by the time they were seven, a reading level half a year behind those who had been read to daily.

The Read On. Get On. campaign has reviewed the expert literature on what mothers and fathers can do to support their children's reading. This work found that parents have an incredible ability to have a positive impact on children's ability to read. This need not be an onerous activity – just ten minutes a day can make a big difference.

...all of which can only be delivered through a national mission.

There is clear agreement across the political spectrum, from business to civil society and in communities across the UK, that children should have a fair chance to succeed in their education and later life, whatever their background. An ambition to ensure that every single child born this year is able to read well by the time they leave primary school at the age of 11 in 2025 is bold – but achievable. Just like the eradication of more concrete ills, such as polio and cholera, achieving this goal will need a comprehensive and sustained approach. It will require high ambitions and long-term sustained action from a wide coalition of people and organisations and clear communication to the UK public so that all can play their part.

In short, we need a solution as broadly based as the challenge: a new sort of approach and a new sort of campaign, in order to get all children reading within a generation and to make the UK a fairer country for every child.

READ ON. GET ON. CAMPAIGN ACTIONS

Reading: Parents, carers and anyone with a child in their life can make a huge difference by reading for just ten minutes a day.

Volunteering: People can give their time across the whole of the UK to schemes that help children with reading and language. Employers and schools can play a vital enabling role.

Innovating: The voluntary sector, schools, policy-makers and the private sector should look to develop programmes, interventions and partnerships to help all to read.

Leading the way locally: Schools, often working in partnership, across the country already make a huge difference – they can sign up to the 2025 ambition and set their own ambitious local goals.

Driving across government: All parties can embrace the 2025 goal in their manifestos, setting out how they would support its achievement.

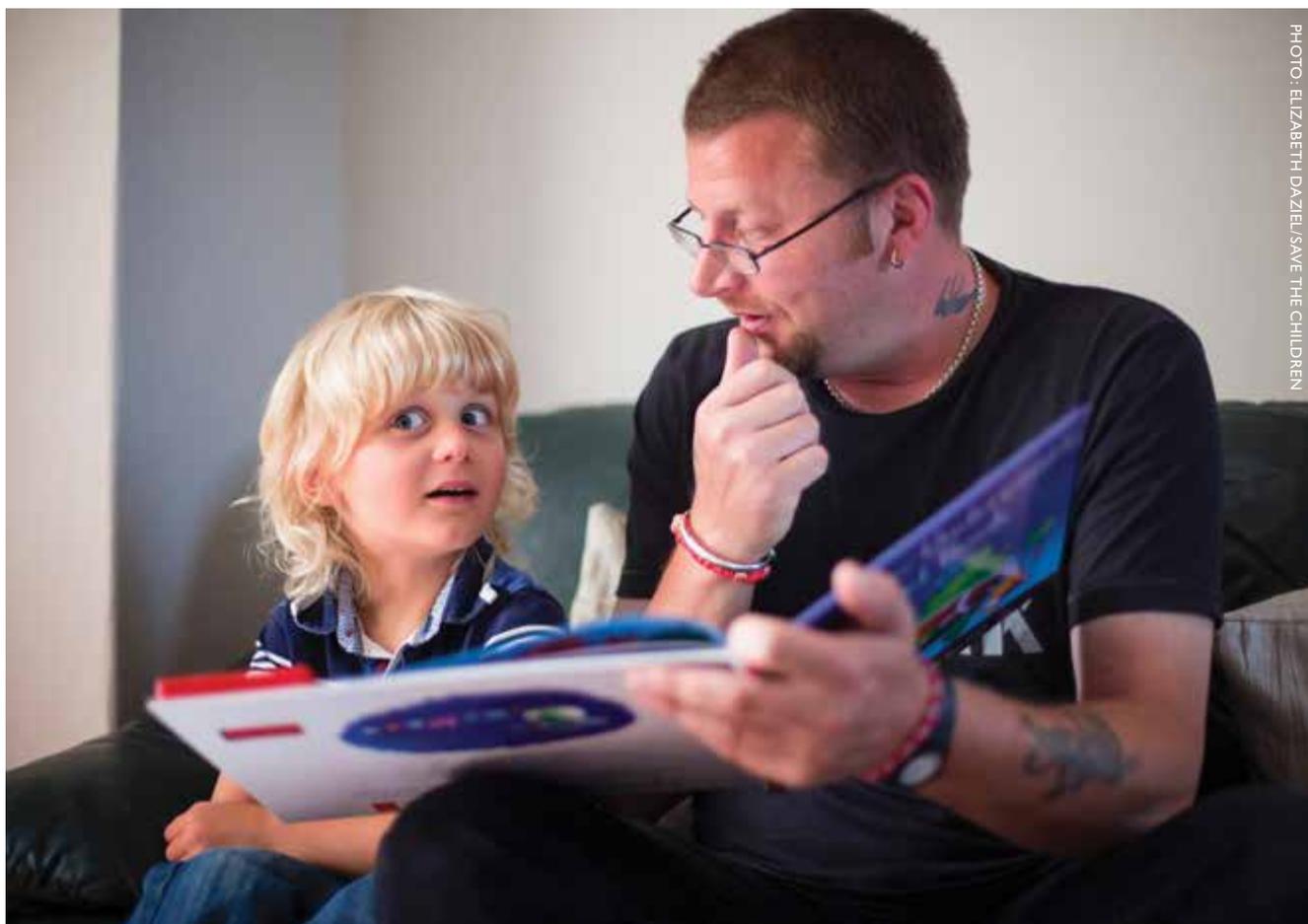


PHOTO: ELIZABETH DAZIEL/SAVE THE CHILDREN

Damien reads to five-year-old Regan at home in Sheffield. The family is involved in Save the Children's FAST programme.



Jade, ten, chooses a book from her school library. Her school in Tunbridge Wells is part of the Born to Read programme.

I NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

The UK is one of the most unfair countries in the developed world. Family background matters more to an individual's life chances in our country than in almost any other rich nation. High levels of child poverty and a lack of social mobility are associated with the UK's stubborn history of educational inequality, with the lottery of birth mattering more than a child's efforts at school or their talents.

Firm foundations in reading are critical to breaking the cycle of educational inequality – and to improving the wider life chances of the poorest and most disadvantaged children. Ensuring that all children are reading well by the age of 11 would make a game-changing contribution to making Britain a more socially mobile and fairer country.

UNFAIRNESS AND INEQUALITY IN THE UK

“If Britain is to avoid being a country where all too often birth determines fate, we have to do far more to create more of a level playing field of opportunity.”²

The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2013

The UK is one of the most unfair countries in the developed world. As a nation we continue to waste the potential of hundreds of thousands of people.

As the UK emerges from recession, a stark reality remains: the influence of family background on how far people get on in life is, on some measures, greater in the UK than in any other rich country.³

Even more worrying, as a country we risk moving in the wrong direction. Some evidence suggests social mobility has gone into reverse in recent decades.⁴

Today, improving social mobility is a cause that resonates across the political spectrum. All the main political parties have made clear their commitment to creating a country where the talents and efforts of each individual determine their chances in life, not where they were born and who their parents are.

“What I want to see is a more socially mobile Britain. I want to see a Britain where no matter where you come from... you can get to the top.”⁵

David Cameron, Prime Minister and
Leader of the Conservative Party

“How can it be that in a modern, open society like ours a child's destiny is still determined by their background? ... We must never forget that this gap between poorer and richer children hurts everyone.”⁶

Nick Clegg, Deputy Prime Minister and
Leader of the Liberal Democrats

“[social mobility] must be about helping everyone improve their life chances. The Promise of Britain is that the next generation does better than the last. We must fulfill the promise of all our young people and of our country.”⁷

Ed Miliband, Leader of the Labour Party

Forging a more socially mobile country is not only a matter for politicians. It is of concern to all of us. Many charities have long campaigned on these issues. Thousands of teachers and other professionals – from children's services, to the voluntary sector, to local libraries – work day in, day out, often in difficult circumstances, to make a difference to the most disadvantaged children. Businesses too are

concerned about the huge waste of potential that occurs as a result of educational unfairness and low social mobility. The Confederation of British Industry leader, John Cridland, has argued that we suffer from “a kind of cult of relativism that says it is OK for a certain percentage of young people to fail. This must be challenged. A broader, bolder approach has the potential to be transformational.”⁸

It is only with this kind of ambition for every child and by being prepared to challenge unacceptable inequalities of opportunity that the UK will move from being one of the worst places to be born poor in the developed world, to being the kind of fairer country we all aspire to live in.

A CAMPAIGN FOR THE WHOLE UK

The *Read On. Get On.* campaign covers all four nations of the UK. The ambitions that we set out in the final chapter will involve action being taken in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. This report focuses mainly on the Westminster context. We will publish specific work on the other nations as the campaign develops. The steps needed to make progress on children’s reading will need to reflect the particular circumstances of the four nations, not least because education policy is devolved.

EDUCATIONAL UNFAIRNESS FUELS WIDER INEQUALITIES

Many factors contribute to the UK’s low levels of social mobility. One of them is poverty: 3.5 million children are growing up in poverty in the UK.⁹ Not having enough money makes it harder for parents to pay for the opportunities and the support children need to flourish, from educational trips to books. Struggling to make ends meet increases stress, particularly among parents of younger children.¹⁰ The situation is predicted to get even worse: recent projections suggest that 5 million children could be trapped in a life of poverty by 2020.¹¹

Potentially, the most critical driver in tackling social immobility and opening up opportunities for children

in poverty is education. A good education is key to enabling every child to reach their potential. Yet the hard truth is that the UK – despite the efforts of governments of all colours – still has a highly unequal education system. The last time the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) compared the educational attainment of secondary school pupils, in 2012, the UK was one of the most unequal countries: the gap in reading ability between high-achieving 15-year-olds and low achievers of the same age was equivalent to over eight years of schooling.¹² Fewer than 3% of children who grew up poor in the 1990s and early 2000s went to a top university, compared with close to 10% of those who grew up better off.¹³

Rather than being an engine for greater social mobility, our education system – despite years of efforts – too often still entrenches disadvantage and inequalities.

LEARN TO READ – THEN READ TO LEARN

A good education is, of course, about much more than being able to read. At school, children need a broad and balanced curriculum that ensures each child finds and nurtures his or her particular talents. But being a good reader is crucial for every child. It is the key to developing much of their potential. Children first learn to read; then they read to learn.

Without first developing good early language skills and then being able to read well, children will not be able to benefit from all the other opportunities that a good education offers. Many children who struggle to understand what is going on in a classroom switch off from education: it is similar to an adult trying to work in a foreign language of which they have only limited knowledge.

Reading well *by the age of 11* is particularly important. The first 11 years of a child’s life are the period when most learning of literacy happens.¹⁴ In the early years – a major focus of this report and of the *Read On. Get On.* campaign – children need solid foundations in early language and emergent literacy, including knowledge of sounds and letters and understanding how books work. Many start to read before they begin primary school.¹⁵ The primary school years that follow are just as critical to developing good reading skills.¹⁶

This age is also when children develop a love of reading, of books and of stories. Reading can open children's imaginations and expose them to new worlds, cultures and ideas, whether through a book or other media, such as blogs, magazines or song lyrics.

If children do not read well by the age of 11 and do not enjoy reading, they are far more likely to have poor literacy as adults and for their lives to be severely constrained. Basic literacy is still the skill employers most often cite as being of concern when they are recruiting.¹⁷ Booktrust and the National Literacy Trust have highlighted why struggling with reading can mean social, economic and cultural exclusion as adults.¹⁸ Booktrust has also shown how not reading well makes social mobility less likely.¹⁹

In short, reading is probably the most fundamental skill that any person needs to get on and to achieve their potential.

A HISTORIC GOAL: ALL CHILDREN READING WELL BY THE AGE OF 11

Recognising the foundational importance of reading well by age 11, a wide coalition of organisations has come together to launch the *Read On. Get On.* campaign. Teachers, headteachers, businesses, reading charities, children's charities, publishers, local libraries and many more have joined together to work towards a historic goal for the UK: **that all children should be reading well by the age of 11 by 2025.**

This is a very challenging, concrete ambition. But, with the right action and ambition, it can be achieved. It is possible to ensure that children born this year, in 2014, will be the first of a generation of children in which all children are reading well by 11. The impact for these children will be profound. The impact on the UK could be transformational.

One of the reasons achieving this ambition has so much potential is that the goal we are setting is not simply basic literacy: it is much more demanding.

The box on page 4 sets out what we mean by 'reading well'. Essentially, this is a level of reading that is necessary not just to get by, but to get on – and to succeed. It is the level that, evidence suggests, children need to reach by the age of 11 in order to have a good chance of getting good qualifications by age 16. It is also the level that ensures social inclusion as an adult.²⁰

NO CHILDREN BORN THIS YEAR SHOULD BE BEHIND BY THE TIME THEY FINISH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Breaking the cycle of intergenerational disadvantage which scars the UK will not happen overnight. We have set the goal of all children reading well by the age of 11 by 2025 in recognition of the scale of the challenge. Transforming the lives of young adults will take even longer. At least one in six adults in the UK has a literacy level which is below that expected of an 11-year-old.²¹ In 2013 the OECD found that England's 16–24-year-olds have literacy levels no better than those of their grandparents' generation.²² Turning this scandalous situation around will take time.

But in the medium term – in little more than a decade – it is possible to ensure that no child in the UK grows up struggling to read. By the time children born this year are 11 and about to start out at secondary school, the UK can be a country where every child, regardless of their background, has the essential foundation for life that reading well provides.

In subsequent sections of this paper we set out why this goal is so important and how it can be achieved. First we set out the scale of the challenge, then why achieving this 2025 goal matters so much. We then show how achieving our goal will require action across a number of fronts, including:

- within our communities – celebrating the enjoyment of reading
- before children start school – ensuring all children have strong early language skills
- in primary schools
- in homes – supporting mothers and fathers to help develop their children's reading skills.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'READING WELL'?

RAISING THE BAR FOR READING

The measure of 'reading well' that the *Read On. Get On.* campaign advocates is equivalent to the level of reading that the government will introduce as the new 'expected level' for 11-year-olds from 2016 onwards.²³ This new measure – in educationalists' terms an equivalent to a current 'level 4b' – is a significant step up from the current expected level (known as level 4).

This level of reading has been shown to give children a solid chance of going on to get good GCSEs. It is not the point at which a child can be said to be literate; rather, it is the level that education experts believe children need to obtain to go on to do well at secondary school and to prosper in life: only half of those children who achieve the current expected level go on to get five good GCSEs including English and maths.²⁴

A NEW DEFINITION

Our core definition of 'reading well' is as follows:

*“‘Reading well’ by the age of 11 means that children should not only be able to read the words that are written down, but they should also have a wider understanding of the meaning behind stories and information and be able to talk about them and comment on them. As well as being able to read and understand books such as *Treasure Island* or *Harry Potter*, they should also be able to read a range of different materials, including magazines and newspapers, relevant websites, letters and dictionaries.”*

Under this definition, if children are 'reading well' then they can accurately identify features, themes and conventions of a range of fiction and non-fiction. They can draw on evidence within texts to explain how themes emerge and conventions are applied in a range of genres and conventions of fiction and non-fiction. They can make developed inferences from the text drawing on evidence, for example, identifying relevant parts of a story or

plotline and interpreting the actions of characters.²⁵ And they can recognise the difference that context makes to the meaning of the story, such as its historical context or geographical location.

Children should be able to make comments on the structure or the organisation of the story, such as, *“He describes the accident first and then goes back to tell you why the child was in the road,”* or *“The writer uses bullet points for the main reasons.”*

Children will be able to comment on features of the writer's language, such as, *“All the questions make you want to find out what happens next,”* and *“Disgraceful’ is a good word to use to show he is upset.”* They can also say what effect they think different words and language have on the reader, for example, *“The way she describes him as ‘rat-like’ and ‘shifty’ makes you think he’s disgusting.”*²⁶

It is important to stress that reading well in this way is also strongly associated with good wider language skills. The number of spoken words a child understands, for example, is a predictor of how well they will be able to read. This is one reason why the report, while focused on reading, does include assessments of oral language.

READING WELL AT 11 AND ADULT ILLITERACY

Reading well by the age of 11 ensures that children are reading above what is considered the basic level of functional literacy for an adult. It means children are able to read lots of different materials – including books, letters and short articles in magazines and newspapers. People reading at this level are able to read and follow written instructions where each step contains up to three short sentences, and to look at graphical resources, such as a town map or a price list that is up to a page long. If people are reading at this level, then they are able to consult reference books or a dictionary to be able to look up information.²⁷

2 AN UNFAIR AND UNEQUAL COUNTRY

To achieve the goal of all children reading well by age 11 we cannot afford to leave any children behind. But this chapter raises the prospect that, on current trends, we could see many hundreds of thousands of children still not reading well by the age of 11.

Children growing up in poor families are at greater risk: two out of five poor children are not reading well by the age of 11 – that is, they are not reading at the level that will allow them to succeed later at school, and beyond. Looking more closely at which children are more likely to fall behind, we highlight:

- the stubborn difference in reading abilities between boys and girls
- how low-income, white British children, particularly boys, are lagging behind
- how some minority ethnic groups continue to be a cause for concern.

This chapter then situates inequality in children's reading levels within an international context. While comparative international studies have shone a light on educational inequality in the UK at secondary school level, much less attention has been paid to younger children. This chapter draws on international data on children's reading at the age of ten to show that England is close to the bottom of the international reading inequality league table.

HOW ARE OUR CHILDREN READING?

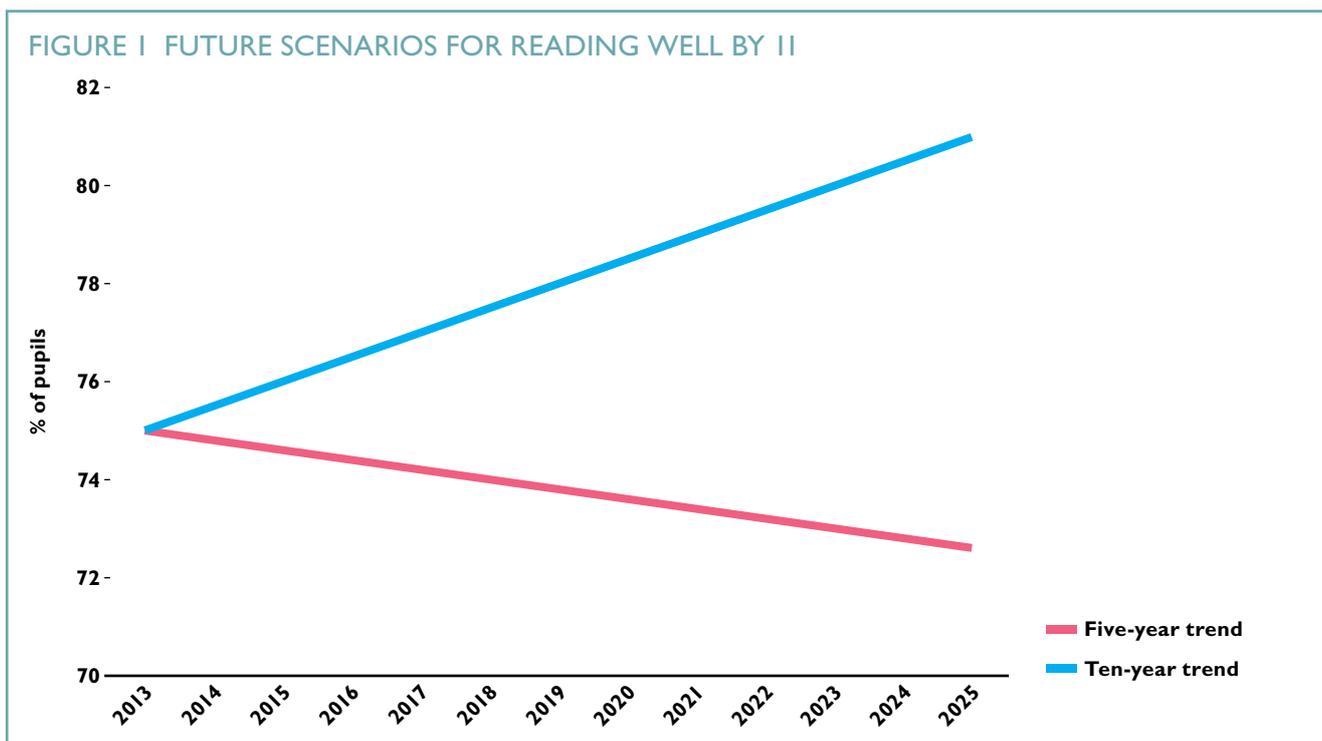
WHY 'BUSINESS AS USUAL' IS NOT AN OPTION

While many schools and communities have made good progress in helping children read well in recent years, if we continue as we currently are, we will still fall a long way short of all children reading well by the age of 11 by 2025. Business as usual is not an option. It would leave another generation of low-income pupils with curtailed life chances and restricted horizons.

Recent trends show how big the challenge is. The average rate of improvement in children's reading in England over the last decade, using the current 'expected level' (level 4) rather than the new, more demanding measure (level 4b), has been just 0.5 percentage points a year. But, between 2008 and 2013, the proportion of children reading well by the age of 11 on the government's official measure has essentially flat-lined; with a modest fall of one percentage point.^{28, 29}

Based on these recent trends Figure 1 shows two potential future scenarios:

- the more optimistic scenario assumes the same average rate of progress seen over the last decade. Even in this case, by 2025 almost one in five children will still not be reading well. This would mean just over 120,000 children a year (accounting for demographic change) would still not be reading well by 11 in 2020 and 2025.
- The more pessimistic scenario assumes that future rates of progress match those from between 2008 and 2013. In this case, there will be an *increase* in the proportion of children not reading well by the age of 11, from 25%, the current figure, to 28%. In terms of numbers of children, on this more pessimistic scenario more than 150,000 11-year-olds a year would not be reading well by 2020, increasing to more than 175,000 a year by 2025.



Note: This chart is based on recent trends in level 4 reading attainment, which are derived from National Curriculum Assessments at key stage 2: 2012 to 2013 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-assessments-at-key-stage-2-2012-to-2013>). These rates of progress are then applied to the 2013 baseline figure for Level 4b achievement. This assumes that the same rate of progress would have been achieved in recent years at level 4b as at level 4. It is meant as an indicative assessment of potential future scenarios.

In terms of overall numbers of children who would have reached the age of 11 without a solid foundation in reading, even on the more optimistic scenario between 2013 and 2025 close to 1.5 million children would have reached the age of 11 without being able to read well. This gives an indication of the scale of the challenge we face – and the potential injustice for children – if we do not raise our ambitions.

WHICH CHILDREN ARE FALLING BEHIND?

POOR CHILDREN

All too often, being born into poverty limits children’s life chances. Despite persistent efforts over many years from government, schools and civil society, disadvantaged children continue to have significantly less chance of doing well at school than their better-off classmates.

Research carried out for this report by Newcastle University shows just how far behind their better-off peers children from poor families can fall. It found that, using a measure of oral language rather than reading, by the age of 11 children from the poorest families are on average 19 months behind their better-off peers.³⁰

Official government data also paints a disturbing picture. In 2013, using level 4b, the equivalent to the new, more demanding measure of ‘reading well’, it shows:

- one in four of all children are not reading well by the age of 11 – more than 130,000 pupils a year
- two in five poorer pupils are not reading well by 11 – almost double the rate of their better-off peers
- while poor pupils represent two out of ten pupils, they make up three out of ten who are not reading well by 11.³¹

COMPARING CHILDREN FROM DIFFERENT ETHNIC GROUPS

The number of children from different backgrounds who are falling behind at the new level of ‘reading well’ has not been examined in detail before. New analysis shows that, in addition to poverty, other factors may increase pupils’ risk of falling behind.

One of these is ethnicity. Figure 2, which charts the chances of different low-income ethnic groups not reading well by 11, reveals that low-income, white British boys are the worst-performing group: alarmingly, 45% were not reading well by the age of 11. In comparison, more than four out of every five higher-income, white British girls were reading well by the age of 11.

Low-income, white British boys who have English as their first language are even less likely to be reading well by the age of 11 than many low-income groups who have English as an Additional Language (EAL). The chart below shows that low-income, white British boys are less likely to be reading well by the age of 11 than both low-income, black and low-income, Asian children for whom English is not their first language. The EAL groups are mixed in terms of how long they have been in the country: a proportion will be recent migrants and a proportion will be part of long-established communities. However, this comparison does serve to highlight continuing concerns about low-income, white British children.³² This group demands particular attention, given how large it is and that these children perform so badly.

This is not to suggest that all other ethnic groups are doing well; they are not. As Figure 3 shows, low-income, black Caribbean boys are almost as unlikely as poorer, white British boys to be reading well by the age of 11. These different communities will often require a particular focus and we need to recognise the different needs of each.

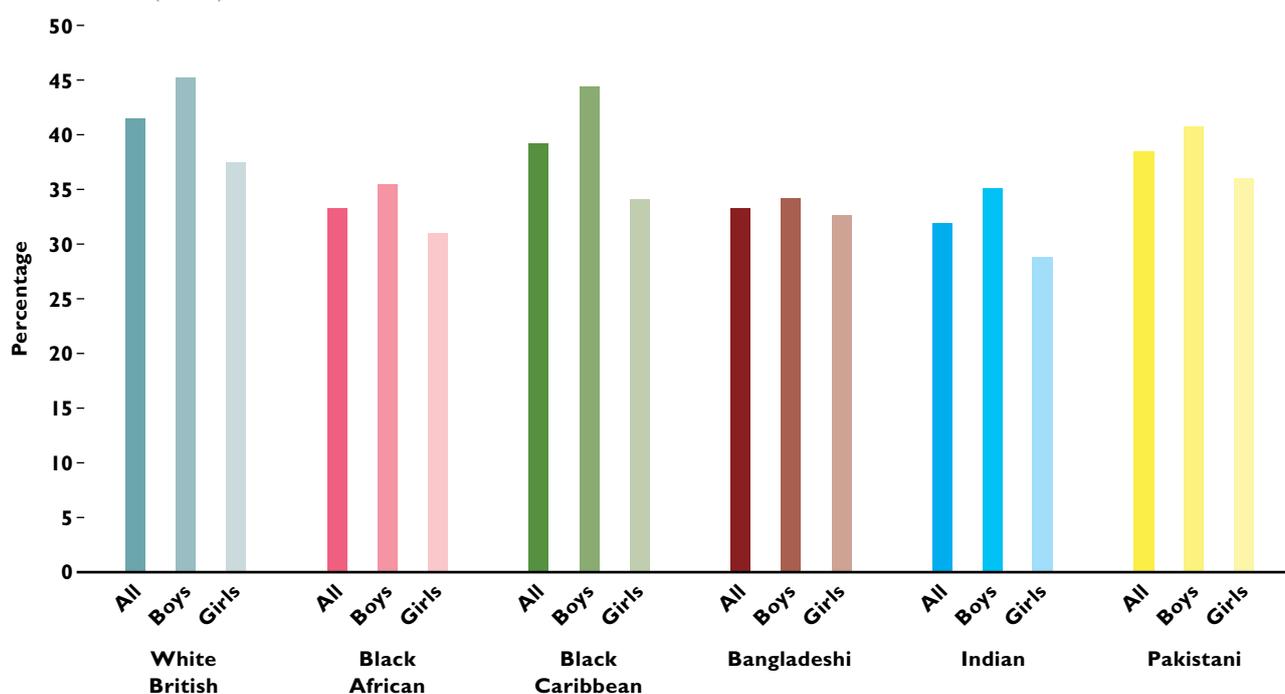
THE STUBBORN GAP BETWEEN GIRLS AND BOYS

Boys, as a group, continue to read less well than girls. In 2013, 78% of girls were reading well by the age of 11 compared with 72% of boys. The gap between boys and girls has been 5–7 percentage points over the previous five years.³³

Figure 4 shows new analysis of how the gender gaps in England are particularly large by international standards. It represents the gender gap at different levels of reading ability between the average level of a wide sample of developed countries (called here the ‘international average’) and England. Bars above the x-axis indicate that boys are overrepresented; where bars are below the x-axis, girls are more likely to be achieving at this level.

Internationally, girls do better than boys – they are less likely to fall behind and more likely to reach the highest levels of attainment. England follows this pattern, but in a particularly stark manner. Looking at those children who do not even read at the ‘low’ benchmark (see page 12), there is a 3 percentage point gap between boys and girls in England, compared with just over 1.5 percentage points for

FIGURE 2 CHANCES OF NOT READING WELL FOR DIFFERENT LOW-INCOME ETHNIC GROUPS BY AGE 11 (2013)



Source: CentreForum analysis for the *Read On. Get On.* campaign of the National Pupil Database

Note: This pattern is confirmed when looking at areas of deprivation, as opposed to household income levels: 36% of white, British children living in the poorest 20% of areas did not read well by the age of 11 in 2013, which was four percentage points worse than among Asian children and six percentage points worse than for black children.

the average of all other comparison countries. The actual percentages for England are 6% for boys and 3% for girls: boys were twice as likely to be at this very low level. In only four other countries – Romania, Norway, New Zealand and Australia – is this gap so pronounced.

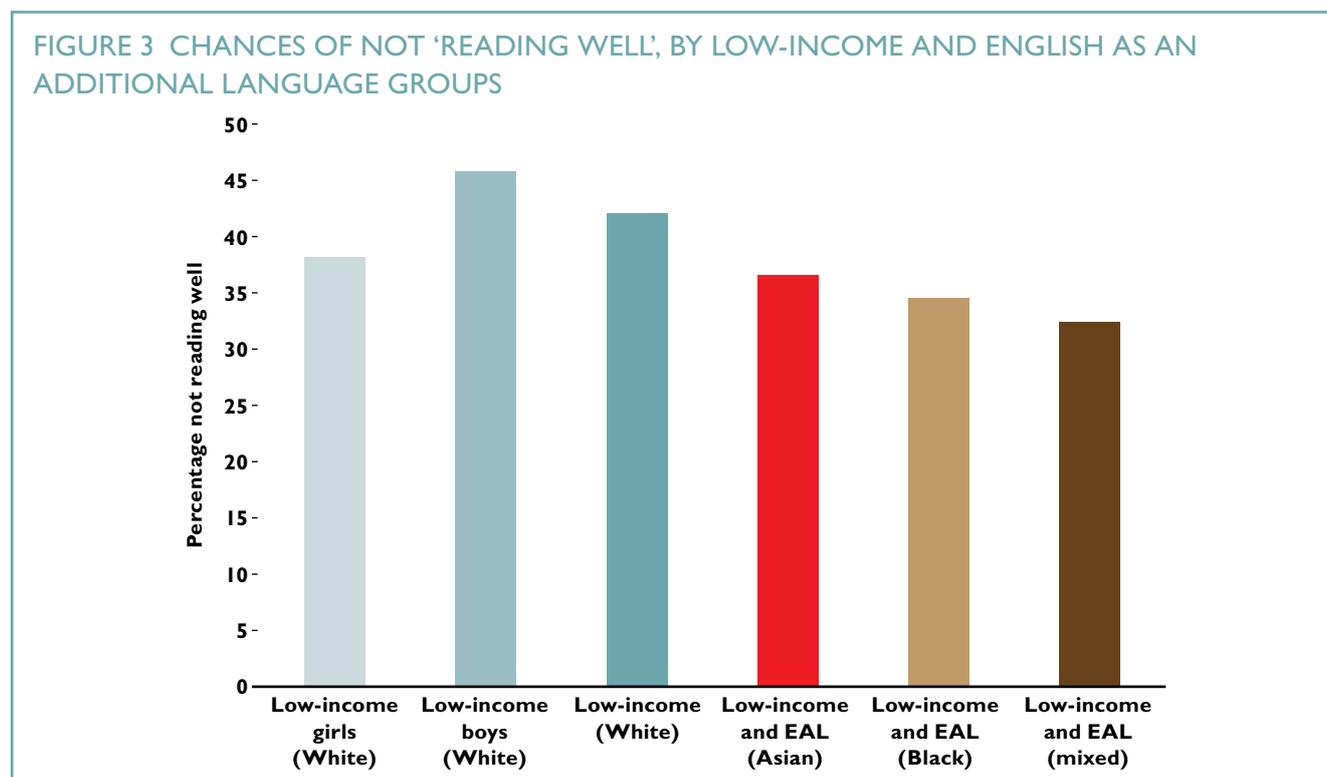
At the other end of the spectrum, looking at the ‘advanced’ level of reading, girls outperform boys across all countries, but the extent of girls’ advantage is far greater in England, where 22% of girls are reading at this level in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), compared with 14% of boys. This gap of over eight percentage points is the largest of all countries surveyed, with the single exception of Finland.

These trends in attainment in reading are repeated when looking at attitudes and behaviour. In general, girls enjoy reading more than boys, read more often, hold more positive attitudes towards reading and are more likely to seek out opportunities to read – for example, by visiting the library. Previous research published by Booktrust has attempted to explain this difference in reading attitudes. It suggests that boys’ reading interests are not fully valued by the curriculum, which may ‘fail’ boys by not recognising the value of their home reading choices.³⁴ While boys have a tendency to prefer information-based

books and digital formats, debates about reading for pleasure often privilege the kind of reading associated with print fiction to the exclusion of other genres and formats.³⁵

New research for this report by the National Literacy Trust confirms the differences in attitudes towards reading between girls and boys.³⁶ This analysis reveals that 8–11-year-old boys recognised the importance of reading for their later chances in life – 67% agreed with the statement, “If I am a good reader it means that I’ll get a better job when I grow up.” This was higher than the figure for girls, which was 63%. But despite this, in 2013, this research with 8–11-year-olds revealed:

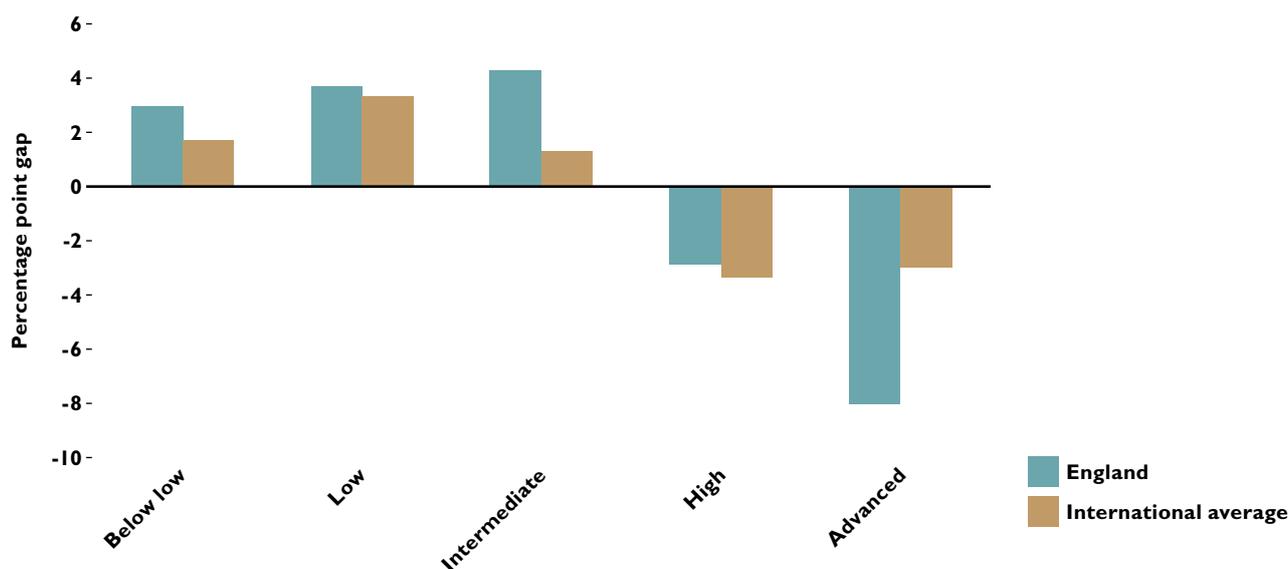
- 73% of girls said they enjoyed reading compared with 59% of boys
- 24% of boys read less than once a week, compared with 13% of girls
- twice the proportion of boys reported that they never read outside the classroom: 17% of boys compared with 8% of girls
- only 51% of boys said they saw reading as ‘cool’ compared with 62% of girls
- girls are more likely than boys to read all forms of reading materials – from books to e-books – with one exception: comics, which boys are almost twice as likely to read.



Source: Centre Forum analysis of National Pupil Database

Note: Low-income is measured using the free school meals measure. This equates to approximately 20% of all pupils.

FIGURE 4 GENDER GAPS IN READING AT 10: ENGLAND COMPARED WITH THE INTERNATIONAL AVERAGE (PIRLS INTERNATIONAL BENCHMARKS)



Source: National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) analysis of the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) for the *Read On. Get On.* coalition

See page 12 for details on the PIRLS international benchmarks.

The international average is based on 29 developed countries from PIRLS.

HOW FOOTBALL FAN SAJID BECAME A READING FAN

Sajid, 11, was easily put off reading by the covers of books and had trouble finding books he liked. “My teacher picked me to do Premier League Reading Stars because he knows I’m into football,” he says. “I hated reading before; I would just watch TV. But football got me into it. When we did the sessions we would first talk about our books, read a bit of our book, do a quiz or a game. I liked doing the activities and getting stickers – I know quite a lot about football so it was easy for me. My teacher read to us and I liked it. That made me think, ‘Let me try reading.’”

Sajid now says he is more talkative in class and excited about the prospect of reading more in his own time. To his surprise, as well as playing and watching football, he has come to enjoy reading about it. “My favourite book was Sol Campbell’s autobiography,” he says. “I also read more magazines about sport, as well as newspapers. The programme has helped me with my lessons and my reading tests.”

Source: National Literacy Trust

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Children with a Special Educational Need are less likely to be able to read well by 11. Forty per cent of pupils with a recognised Special Educational Need are reading well by the age of 11, compared with 85% of children not recognised as having a Special Educational Need.³⁷

There will always be some children for whom there will be different definitions of ‘reading well’. For example, those classified officially as having ‘severe learning difficulties’ and ‘profound and multiple learning difficulties’ will read at a level appropriate to their special educational need.³⁸

However, we should still have high aspirations for all children. Some children are identified by their schools as having a Special Educational Need simply because their attainment is low, rather than because of any intrinsic impairment or disability; the label can become an excuse for lowered expectations.³⁹

Many pupils with Special Educational Needs can read well on the *Read On. Get On.* campaign’s core definition. For example, in 2013 half of all pupils with a hearing impairment, close to 60% of those with a visual impairment and just under half of pupils with a physical disability were reading well by the age of 11.⁴⁰ A large number of pupils classified as having ‘speech,

language and communication needs' can also learn to read well, although they do often face specific challenges along the way.⁴¹

We should not give up on any pupil, whether or not they have been identified as having a Special Educational Need. The focus in schools is increasingly on the progress that every child makes regardless of their starting point. Furthermore, there is strong evidence from intensive catch-up programmes, such as Reading Recovery, that even many of the children who face the most challenging barriers to learning can learn to read well.⁴²

DIFFERENCES BY GEOGRAPHICAL AREA

There are significant differences in how well children do depending on where they live in the country. It has been well documented that London has been more successful in recent years in making good progress in children's education – especially for the most disadvantaged. A recent report from

education experts CfBT found that London schools have improved dramatically since 2000 and that this is due to a number of 'enabling' factors, such as resourcing, as well as teacher recruitment and the quality of school buildings.⁴³ While much of the focus has been on improvements in secondary schools, a report from the Institute for Fiscal Studies found that much of the recent improvements at the secondary level came on the back of improvements in primary school education in the capital.⁴⁴

The example of London goes to show that even areas with big challenges and high levels of poverty are able to support their children to achieve well at school. In contrast, poor children appear to be falling behind in areas that are typically seen as 'well off'. A 2013 report from Ofsted, *Unseen Children*, highlighted that coastal towns and parts of the south-east of England are continuing to let down some of the most disadvantaged children.⁴⁵



PHOTO: TOM PRICES/SAVE THE CHILDREN

Connor, six, reads at school in Ashford. His school is part of the Born to Read programme.

READING INEQUALITY IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

The UK has a sorry history of educational inequality. For many children, this country provides enormous and rich opportunities. At the top end of our education system we rival the best in the world. But it has long been recognised that we let down too many children who are allowed to fall behind. Many of them are condemned to restricted horizons and limited opportunities.

HOW ENGLAND COMPARES WITH OTHER DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

The *Read On. Get On.* campaign commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) to assess how England compares with other developed countries in reading levels among children as they reach the end of primary school.

In terms of its overall average performance, NFER's research found England to be one of the best performing countries. As a wealthy country with a good education system, that is to be expected.

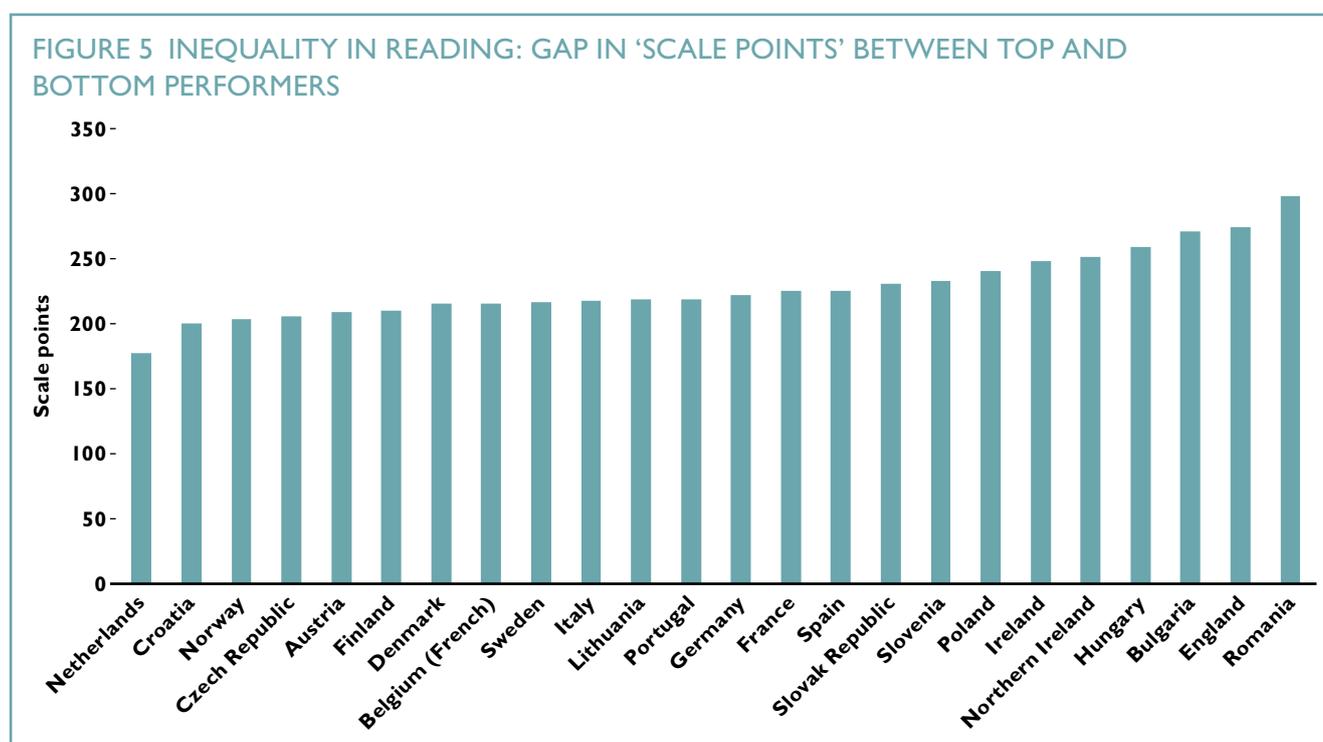
However, the research showed that England is one of very few countries that combines good overall

performance with the scandal of leaving hundreds of thousands of children behind. In this report we present new analysis which shows for the first time just how unequal reading outcomes are for children as they approach the end of primary school in England.

NFER's research used the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) – an international survey of 48 countries which focuses on children's reading abilities at around the age of ten, which is around the same age that the *Read On. Get On.* campaign is focused on.⁴⁶ For this analysis NFER selected 29 of the PIRLS countries which were either in the EU or were non-EU OECD countries.⁴⁷ The rationale for this was that we wanted to compare England to other developed countries – if we want to do the best for all our children, including the poorest, then we want to be doing as well as other developed countries. The last survey took place in 2011.

Bottom of the class for reading equality

The degree of inequality in reading levels for children aged around ten is higher in England than in almost all other developed countries. Figure 5, which focuses on European countries in the PIRLS survey, shows the gaps in reading levels – measured by 'scale points',



Source: NFER analysis of PIRLS for the *Read On. Get On.* campaign

Notes:

1 The top performers are measured at the 95th percentile and the bottom performers at the 5th percentile. This is a better measure of the spread of attainment than the very top or very bottom, where results may be unreliable.

2 The gap between England and Bulgaria is not statistically different: Bulgaria would also be rounded to translate to seven years of schooling.

which represent a measure of reading between 0 and 1,000 – between the top performing pupils and those at the bottom of the distribution. As the graph shows, in the case of England the gap is over 270 scale points, whereas for the Netherlands it is under 180.

It is possible to estimate how many scale points equate to one year's worth of education progress. While it is not an exact measure, a rule of thumb is that approximately 40 scale points are the equivalent to one year of schooling.⁴⁸ Based on this, there are approximately seven year 4 or 5 school years between the weakest and the strongest performers in England at the age of ten. In contrast, the gap for the Netherlands is under four and a half years, for Lithuania it is five and a half and for the Czech Republic it is around five. Of all the European countries only Romania has a greater degree of inequality than England.

Looking beyond Europe, non-European OECD countries also had a narrower gap than England. For example, the gap in the USA was just over 240 scale points – equivalent to approximately six years of schooling. Israel and New Zealand were the only other comparison countries in the survey, besides Romania, with a higher degree of inequality in reading.

Children falling behind international benchmarks

Another way of making international comparisons is to look at the proportion of children in different countries falling below a given level of reading at the age of 10. The PIRLS study distinguishes between 'low', 'intermediate', 'high' and 'advanced' thresholds. Because these international assessments of reading are different it is not possible to directly equate these thresholds to the official government measures in England. However, in broad terms the intermediate international benchmark, for example, could be thought of as being similar to the government's current expected level (level 4) for 11-year-olds. It is, therefore, slightly below the *Read On. Get On.* campaign's measure of 'reading well'.

PIRLS describes the low and intermediate thresholds as follows:

- Children on the low international benchmark can locate, retrieve, and reproduce explicitly stated details or information in literary or informational texts.

- Pupils on the intermediate international benchmark can make straightforward inferences about attributes, feelings and motivations about characters in literary texts or locate and reproduce two or three pieces of information from an informational text.⁴⁹

As pointed out above, we would expect England, a prosperous country with a good school system, to do well for many children. But how many children do we allow to fall behind compared with countries with similarly good average results? To answer this question, NFER compared England with other countries with similar or better average levels of performance. (These countries are the first batch presented in Table 1.)

England does very poorly for the lowest-attaining children: it leaves more children behind than countries with similar or better overall levels of average attainment.

England has a relatively high proportion of children who do not even reach the *low international benchmark*, with statistically significantly higher numbers of children falling behind than the USA, Finland, Denmark, Croatia, the Netherlands, Northern Ireland and the Czech Republic. The percentage of pupils not reaching this low level of reading in England is even similar to some lower performing countries, with proportions of children not reaching this level of reading similar to Lithuania, Bulgaria, Slovenia and Hungary (also included on Table 1).

Turning to the proportion of children who reach the low benchmark, but not the intermediate one, again England compares poorly with the other higher-performing countries. The NFER analysis shows that England has a relatively high proportion of children who are only able to achieve at this level – 13%, which in the raw data is higher than any of the countries with similar or better levels of average performance. It is statistically significantly higher than Finland, Croatia and the Netherlands.

In total, England has more children falling below the *intermediate international benchmark* (around one in six) than all the other higher-performing countries. This is evidence of how many children are still needlessly allowed to fall behind in England, given that other countries are able to achieve so much more. It is also evidence of the high level of inequalities in England. Our country is characterised

TABLE 1 INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS IN THE PROPORTION OF CHILDREN FALLING BEHIND DIFFERENT PIRLS BENCHMARKS

Country	Below 'Low International Benchmark'	At 'Low International Benchmark'	Total below 'Intermediate International Benchmark'
Average performance similar to or better than England's			
Finland	1	7	(7.9)
Netherlands	0	9	(9.9)
Croatia	1	9	(10.2)
Denmark	1	10	(11.7)
Czech Republic	2	11	(12.7)
Northern Ireland	3	10	(13.4)
USA	2	11	(13.9)
Canada	2	12	(14.3)
Ireland	3	12	(14.9)
England	5	13	(17.3)
Worse average performance than England, but similar proportion of children left behind			
Hungary	5	14	(18.9)
Lithuania	3	17	(20.1)
Slovenia	5	16	(20.5)
Bulgaria	7	16	(22.9)

Source: NFER analysis of PIRLS for the *Read On. Get On.* campaign

by a large group of children who do very well, but an equally large group who are left behind. In contrast, Finland also has a large proportion of children who do very well – 18% achieve the PIRLS advanced benchmark – but only 1% fall below the low international benchmark.

Educational inequality and wider inequalities

These international comparisons give a sense of the scale of the challenge we face. England – and to a slightly lesser degree, Northern Ireland – languish

near the bottom of the international class on educational inequality. We have wide educational inequalities and allow a large proportion of children to fall behind.

In Chapter 3 we return to these international comparisons – to explore how educational inequality at the end of primary school leads to educational inequality by the end of secondary school and unequal incomes and chances in adult life.

3 WHY READING MATTERS

When children, particularly the poorest, have fallen behind in reading by 11, the impact can last for the rest of their lives. They are less likely to go on to secure good qualifications. Their chances of getting a good job and pulling themselves out of poverty are severely diminished. And there are substantial wider costs, such as increased risks of poor health or of ending up in prison.

Research conducted by the National Literacy Trust for the *Read On. Get On.* campaign has demonstrated how low literacy affects individuals' health and employment prospects, as well as being a risk factor associated with criminal activity.^{50, 51} This section sets out how hundreds of thousands of children's horizons are narrowed when they fail to learn to read well. And it shows how it affects not just these children but us all: the economic cost of this wasted talent means lower prosperity for the whole country.

INEQUALITY IN READING AT 11 AND WIDER INEQUALITIES

The UK is a highly unequal country, with low levels of social mobility and highly unequal income and wealth distribution. There are many complex causes of these wider inequalities. But one critical contributing factor is the continuing inequality in our education system.

Failing to ensure all children are reading well is a significant contributing factor to low earnings and wider inequality. If the UK made progress towards all children reading well by age 11 this would help narrow these wider inequalities.

READING, EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS

A considerable body of research documents the links between literacy and how well people do at work – their employment rates and incomes. On average, adults with functional literacy – just below the definition of the level of 'reading well at 11' used in this report – earn 16% more than those without this level of literacy.⁵² Taking the current national minimum wage of £6.31 an hour, an increase of 16%

in the earning potential of someone who is able to read well represents an additional £1.01 and an hourly wage of £7.32. And applying this increased earning potential to the national average salary of £26,500, would give a salary of £30,740. The government's Skills for Life survey shows:

- approximately one in four people earning less than £10,000 was not functionally literate – compared with less than one in 25 of those earning over £30,000⁵³
- around one in four (24%) of those not in work was not functionally literate – compared with around one in ten (11%) of those in work.⁵⁴

Employers have long been concerned about the lack of basic skills among many young adults in the UK. A recent Confederation of British Industry (CBI) survey of employers found that 85% of firms thought that ensuring a solid grounding in literacy and numeracy should be the focus of primary schools.⁵⁵ Furthermore, in 2014 the UK Commission for Employment and Skills stated that economic growth and recovery may be constrained by skill shortages. Almost three in ten vacancies are reported to be hard to fill.⁵⁶

On top of this, international comparisons demonstrate that low levels of literacy have a closer association with low earnings and unemployment in England than in other countries.

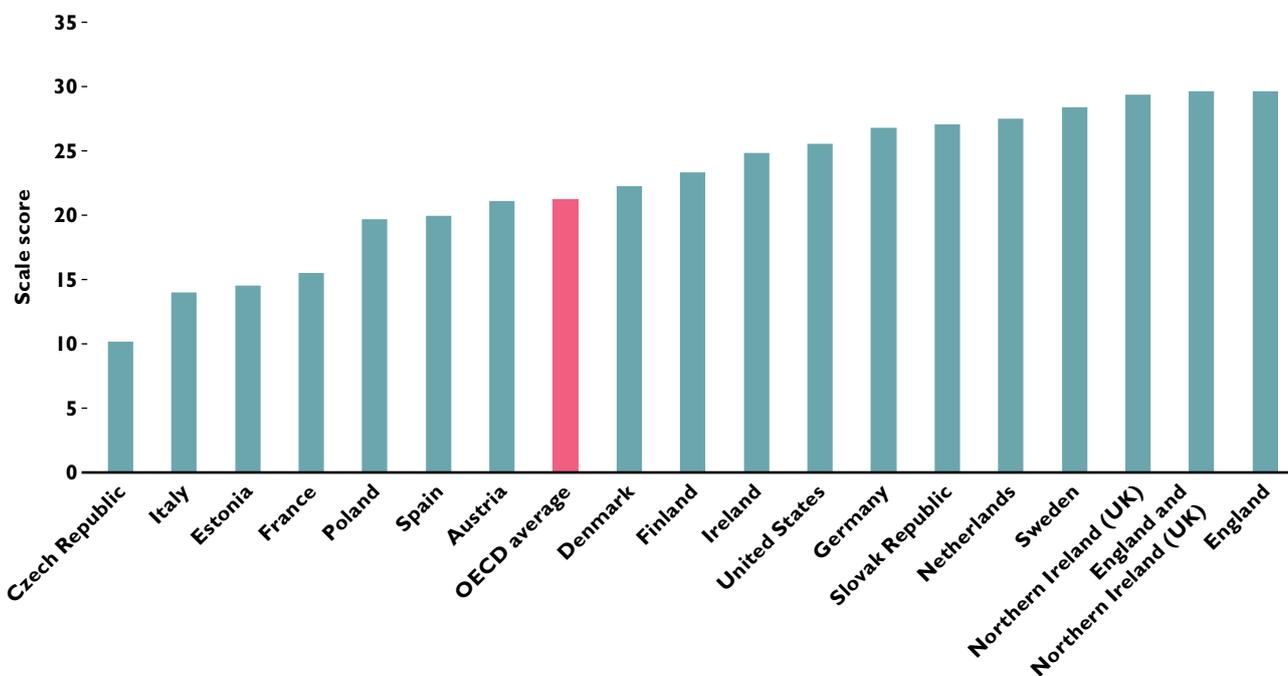
New analysis carried out by the National Literacy Trust for the *Read On. Get On.* campaign shows England and Northern Ireland as outliers when compared with other countries. They both have particularly strong associations between literacy and labour market outcomes such as low pay and unemployment. This analysis is based on 'score points' in the OECD's PIAAC survey, which measures adult literacy levels. A rule of thumb is that seven points equates to the completion of one extra year of education or training.⁵⁷

Figure 6 shows that the gap in literacy levels between those in work and those out of work for a selection of OECD countries is greatest in England, followed by Northern Ireland. In England the 30-point difference between those in full-time employment and those unemployed would equate to approximately 4.3 years' difference in education levels. The OECD average is three years.

Figure 7 shows the gap between the literacy level of someone with an income equivalent to working full time on the national minimum wage in the UK and those in the richest 10% of the income distribution. Again, England is an outlier with high inequalities in literacy across the income distribution: poor literacy is more strongly associated with lower pay in England than in other developed countries. In England the 55-point difference between those in the bottom and top pay brackets equates to approximately 7.9 years of educational difference, in comparison with the OECD average of 5.1 years.

We already know that the UK has a high proportion of workers with very low skills compared to many other countries. Some have previously argued that this helps to explain differences in poverty rates.⁵⁸ But what this analysis shows is that in the UK inequalities in core skills, such as reading, are significant drivers of wider inequalities. We have highly unequal educational outcomes at 11 (see Chapter 2) and this feeds through into highly unequal attainment for older children. This, in turn, creates inequalities in the skills of adults in the UK, which drives unfairness in the labour market.^{59, 60}

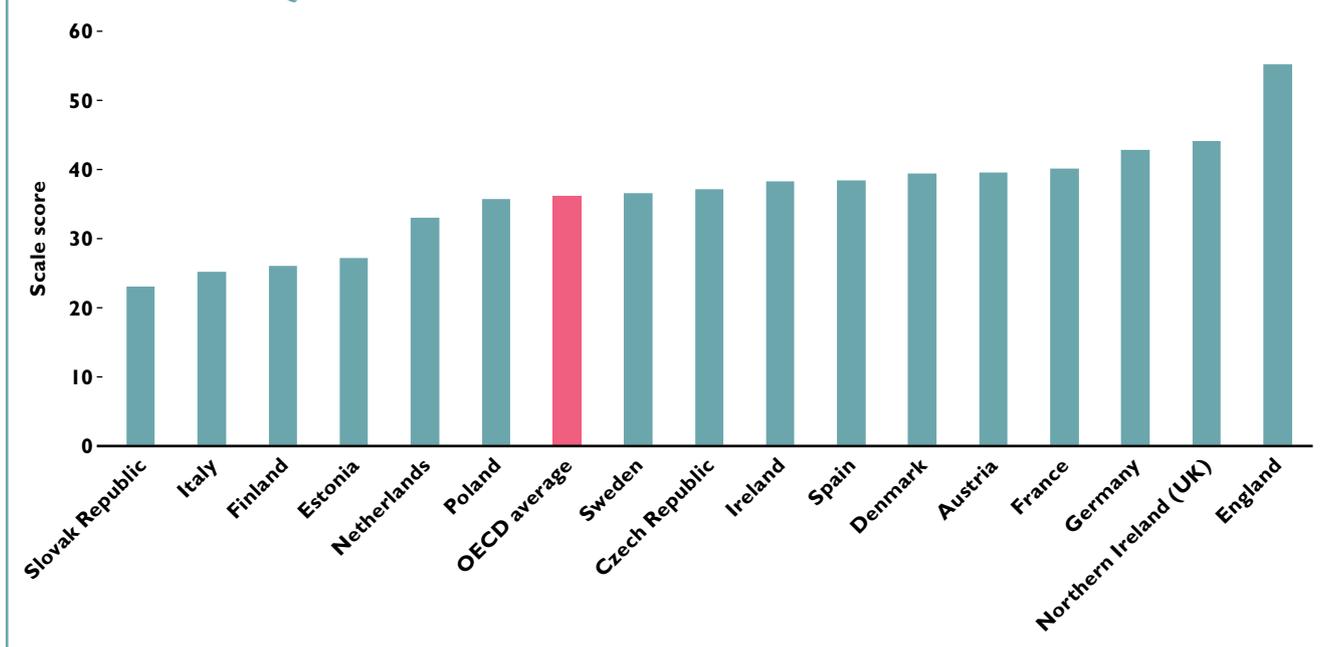
FIGURE 6 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LITERACY SCORES OF FULL-TIME EMPLOYED AND UNEMPLOYED



Source: National Literacy Trust analysis of OECD PIAAC data; *Literacy Changes Lives 2014: A new perspective on health, employment and crime*. For source data see http://skills.oecd.org/documents/OECD_Skills_Outlook_2013.pdf

Note: In the survey on which this is based, literacy is measured using a scale score of 1–500.

FIGURE 7 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LITERACY SCORES BY INCOME – GAP BETWEEN MINIMUM WAGE EQUIVALENT AND HIGHEST INCOME GROUP



Source: National Literacy Trust analysis of OECD PIAAC data; *Literacy Changes Lives 2014: A new perspective on health, employment and crime*. For source data see http://skills.oecd.org/documents/OECD_Skills_Outlook_2013.pdf

Note: In the survey on which this is based, literacy is measured using a scale score of 1–500.

READING AND HEALTH

As with employment outcomes, the association between some measures of health and literacy is strong. Of those who rated their health as ‘very good’ in the government’s 2011 Skills for Life Survey, 11% did not have functional literacy. Of those rating their health as ‘very poor’, 37% were not functionally literate.⁶¹ A recent study by psychologists from the University of Edinburgh and King’s College London, which followed 1,900 identical twins over nine years, found that early reading among children could make children more intelligent, more creative and also healthier in later life.⁶²

Much of the explanation for the effect of literacy on health is likely to be indirect: poor literacy contributes to earning less and the risk of being unemployed which, in turn, affects people’s health. However, there is also another more direct potential impact. Not being able to read well puts more immediate barriers in the way of getting effective treatment and an individual’s ability to understand preventive health literature and health awareness campaigns.

A number of studies have indicated that low levels of literacy affect an individual’s ability to correctly take and understand prescriptions as well as to access information about healthy lifestyles. One study in Canada identified daily reading habits as having the strongest single effect on health literacy, which in turn had a major impact on health.⁶³ Research, largely from the USA, has found:

- Patients with low literacy are ten to 18 times more likely to be unable to identify all their medications compared with those with adequate literacy skills.⁶⁴
- Nearly half (47.5%) of adults with inadequate literacy skills incorrectly described the timing of medication doses when looking at a pill bottle, compared with one in nine with adequate literacy skills (11.5%).⁶⁵
- Nine out of ten (92%) patients with good literacy have been found to know what a high blood pressure reading was, compared with just over half (55%) with the lowest reading level.
- Of patients with diabetes and adequate functional health literacy, 94% knew the symptoms of hypoglycaemia, compared with 50% of those with inadequate literacy.⁶⁶

READING AND CRIME

Poor literacy can also be a risk factor associated with criminal behaviour. Disaffection with school and turning away from education can be important contributing factors to later delinquent and criminal behaviour. One argument is that criminal behaviour does not just emerge in adolescence or adulthood, but has foundations in a set of lifetime experiences, one of which could be struggling to read when younger.⁶⁷ This is reflected by evidence that just over half of offenders at the peak period for offending – in the middle teens – have reading skills below the expected level for an 11-year-old.⁶⁸

For adults, research studies have found that, after controlling for a range of other factors, low literacy has an impact on the likelihood of a person being involved in risky behavior or criminal activity:

- A study by the Institute of Education concluded that, for men, “of the many known risk factors of crime explored in our analyses, having poor literacy skills ... directly increased the risk of offending”.⁶⁹
- There is evidence that young people who are not in education, employment or training are 20 times more likely to be convicted of a crime.⁷⁰
- Literacy levels among prison populations are far lower than the general population: 48% of offenders in custody were found to have a reading age at or below the expected level of an 11-year-old.⁷¹

FUTURE PROSPERITY: WHY CHILDREN’S READING MATTERS TO ALL OF US

It is not only disadvantaged children and adults who pay the price for the UK allowing children to fall behind in reading. There is a significant economic cost to the country.

There is long-standing evidence that improved education systems and more skilled young people lead to higher levels of economic growth. Using this evidence, it is possible to make broad estimates of the likely impact on Britain’s economic growth of making further progress in improving the education of the poorest children. Based on work from Stanford University, which assessed links between education levels and economic growth in 50 countries over four decades, and an approach developed by McKinsey, new analysis carried out for this report has assessed the potential impact of achieving a number of reading fairness goals.

In a more cautious scenario, our analysis shows that if the UK had, in recent decades, taken action to ensure that all children, regardless of background were reading well by the age of 11:

- GDP in 2014 could have been around an extra **£13.8 billion or 0.9% higher**
- GDP in 2020 could be around an extra **£23 billion or 1.5% higher**
- GDP in 2025 could be around an extra **£32.1 billion or 2.1% higher**.⁷²

THE READING WELL – BOOKS ON PRESCRIPTION PROGRAMME

Last year The Society of Chief Librarians and The Reading Agency launched the ‘Reading Well – Books on Prescription’ programme. This was developed with health partners, is endorsed by leading health organisations and has a strong evidence base, working within National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidelines.

The goal is to open up access to book-based cognitive behavioural therapy to help people

understand and manage their mental health. The programme makes available a set of professionally endorsed books. In the first three months there has been a 145% increase in loans of these books. This has helped public libraries to reach more than 400,000 people with mild to moderate mental health issues.

Source: The Reading Agency

Based on 2013 Office for National Statistics data, this would equate to over £500 per household in 2014, nearly £900 in 2020 and by 2025 over £1,200 per household.⁷³

On a more optimistic scenario, which assumes that very close to 100% of children are reading well by 11 and that improvements in reading translate directly into wider educational attainment, the impact on GDP could be even larger. In this scenario, GDP could have been 1.2% or £18.4 billion higher in 2014, an extra 2% or £30.6 billion higher in 2020 and an extra 2.8% or £42.9 billion higher in 2025. (See Appendix 2 for full details of this analysis.)

Of course, many factors affect economic growth and these numbers are indicative only. There is a

wide range of possibilities around the scenarios presented above. They do, however, give a sense of the high price we all continue to pay for failing our poorest children.

One way of putting these figures into context is to look at current levels of government spending on education. In 2014/15, the Department for Education's entire budget in England is £53.5 billion, while the budget for schools in England is around £30 billion a year.^{74, 75} Across the UK, in 2010, the percentage of GDP allocated to primary and secondary schools and further education was 4.9% and the spending on pre-primary just 0.3%, according to the OECD.⁷⁶

4 FOUR KEY DRIVERS OF READING WELL: IN COMMUNITIES, BEFORE CHILDREN START SCHOOL, AT SCHOOL AND AT HOME

All children should have a fair chance to succeed in their education and in later life, whatever their background. However, as the previous chapters have shown, huge numbers of children are left behind.

Responding to the scale of the challenge will require a high level of ambition and coordinated action across many settings and from many organisations and individuals. While schools are critical, they cannot achieve a national goal of all children reading well by 11 on their own. Equally, government will be key to what we want to achieve, but it will not be able to achieve lasting change alone. Others in schools, other public services, business, civil society and local communities must also be fully behind the ambition.

Action will be needed to support children's reading across four key areas:

- **Celebrating the enjoyment of reading in all our communities** – When children enjoy reading they are far more likely to learn to read well.
- **Support for very young children before they start school** – In the critical early years of a child's life, what happens before he or she even sets foot inside a classroom can shape their life for ever.
- **The right support for schools** – While thousands of headteachers, teachers and schools already make a huge difference, in order to achieve even more, they need support, resources and the right degree of autonomy.
- **Support for parents** – While mothers and fathers can be the most important teachers and want the best for their children, some need more support and help.

The following sections look at each of these four key drivers in turn and the nature of the challenge. The *Read On. Get On.* campaign will work across all four of these areas in the coming years to realise the goal of all children reading well by the age of 11, by 2025 (see Chapter 5).

I. CELEBRATING THE ENJOYMENT OF READING IN ALL OUR COMMUNITIES

This section looks at why enjoyment of reading is so important to ensuring all children learn to read well.

New evidence for this report shows that children from poorer households are least likely to enjoy reading, least likely to be reading for pleasure outside school and least likely to think that reading is cool. Ensuring all children, from all backgrounds, are reading well by the age of 11 will require us as a nation and in our local communities to celebrate the joy of reading.

READING FOR ENJOYMENT MEANS BETTER READERS

When children are young, a love of reading for pleasure can run parallel with an eagerness to learn to read better and confidence in their ability to do so.^{77,78} Moreover, reading habits ‘rub off’ in the home and are passed on through the generations. A recent ‘reading habits’ survey, carried out by Booktrust, found that children who are encouraged to read and who enjoy reading at school go on to read more as adults – and also read more to their own children.⁷⁹ Previous research has found that regularly reading for pleasure can be linked to better progress in maths, vocabulary and spelling between the ages of ten and 16.⁸⁰ The same research found that reading for pleasure is more important for children’s cognitive development between ages ten and 16 than their parents’ level of education.⁸¹

New research from the National Literacy Trust for this report shows how strong the virtuous circle is, where children who enjoy reading are more likely to read well:

- 8–11-year-olds who enjoy reading very much are four times more likely to read at the expected level for their age than children who do not enjoy reading at all
- of those children who never read outside school, just 6% are above the expected level of reading for their age
- children who don’t enjoy reading at all are ten times more likely to have fallen behind and be reading below the expected level for their age than children who enjoy reading.⁸²

ATTITUDES TOWARDS READING

Given how important for learning to read well it is that children enjoy reading, it is worrying that poorer children appear to be typically less likely to read for pleasure. Booktrust’s reading habits survey has shown that people who never read books tend to live in deprived areas where more children live in poverty.⁸³ As reading habits are passed on through the generations, this suggests that children in poorer families are less likely to have the opportunity to develop a love of reading than children from other backgrounds.

New National Literacy Trust research, which for the first time focuses on the reading habits of 8–11-year-old children as they reach the end of primary school, finds that children from poorer families see the importance of reading: more low-income than higher income 8–11-year-olds see the link between being good at reading and getting a good job when they are older (over 70% compared with 64%).⁸⁴ However, it also finds that children from poor families are less

‘READING WAS TORTURE’

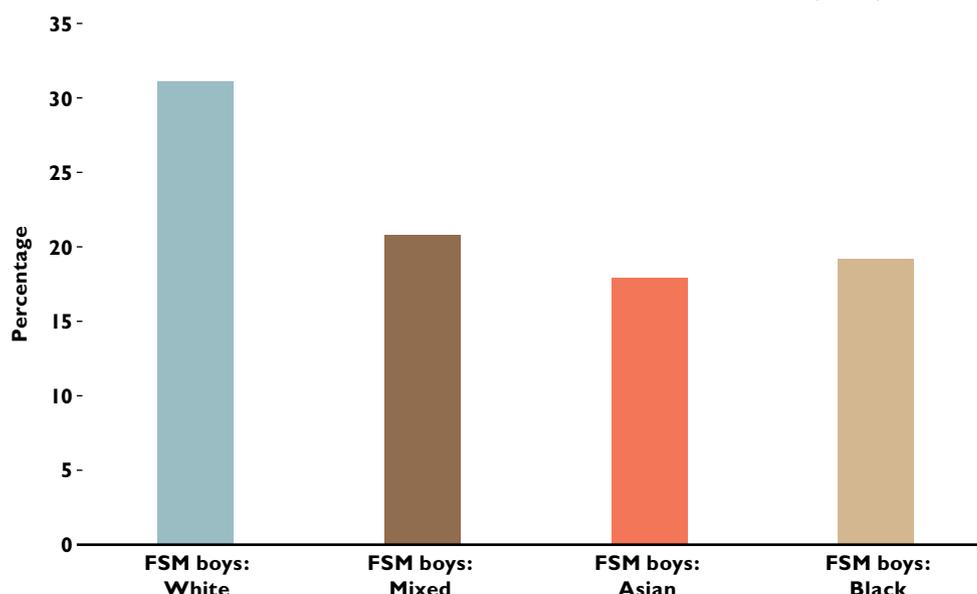
Lily, 10, attends Surrey Square Primary in Walworth, London. Thanks to volunteer reading support, the joys of reading have been opened up to her:

“Reading was torture. I preferred to write stories, play Minecraft on the computer, draw. Words looked jumbled up and I was envious of my friends who enjoyed it, so felt bored by it. I would make up excuses why I couldn’t read out loud. Then my friends convinced me to read Jack and the Beanstalk and it got me interested.”

Lily says having a volunteer reading helper has improved her writing as well as helping her to be able to read better. She now wants to go on to be a journalist or a software developer. She says the first Harry Potter book is her favourite and that she is also reading *The Hunger Games*.

Source: from Beanstalk, Read On. Get On. campaign

FIGURE 8 PERCENTAGE OF BOYS READING LESS THAN ONCE A WEEK (2013)



Note: FSM = free school meals

Source: National Literacy Trust survey of children and young people. *The Reading Lives of 8–11 year olds 2005–2013*.

likely to read frequently outside of school; less likely to have books of their own; and less likely to read as broad a range of materials – books, magazines and technology-based materials such as text messages and emails – as other children.⁸⁵

These negative reading behaviours are more prominent among particular groups. Low-income boys are less likely to read regularly outside the classroom than girls from poorer families. For poor boys as a whole, the proportion reading less than once a week is just over 30%. This is particularly pronounced among low-income white boys, as Figure 8 shows.

As well as some groups of children reading less, attitudes towards reading are also more negative among poorer children:

- Children from poorer households are significantly more likely to say that they would be embarrassed if their friends saw them read than their better-off counterparts (25% compared with 17%).
- Poorer children are more likely than better-off children to think that their parents do not care whether they are reading or not (38% compared with 25%).
- Poorer children are less likely to enjoy reading: of all 8–11-year-olds, around two-thirds enjoy reading either ‘very much’ or ‘quite a lot’ (66%), but for boys the figure falls to 59% and for poor boys it falls to 54%.

Figure 9 shows how, among low-income boys, white boys least enjoy reading the least – with close to half not enjoying reading.

KAYLM UNDERSTANDS THE IMPORTANCE OF READING WELL

Kaylm, 10, attends Surrey Square Primary School in Walworth, London. He struggles with reading, but understands just how important it will be in his life.

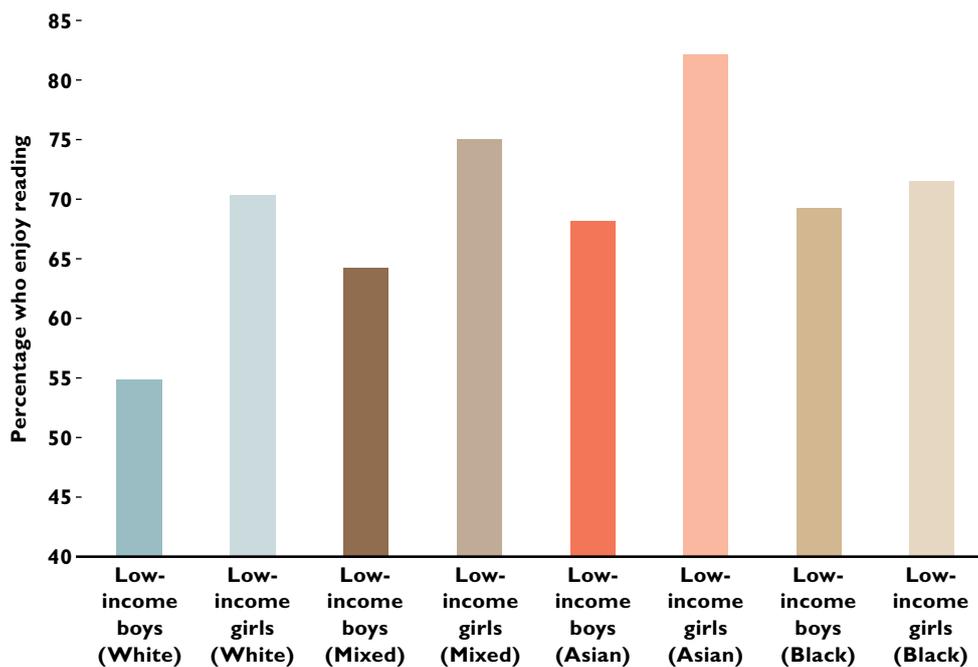
“I used to hate it and I wasn’t good – I didn’t understand it and the words were the hardest bit. I saw all my friends reading and wanted to try to make [my

Source: *Read On. Get On.* coalition

reading] better. So I read in my head every day – books like Diary of a Wimpy Kid because it’s funny with lots of action. And I like comics and football magazines.”

Kaylm loves football and is a big Liverpool and Luis Suárez fan. He wants to play for Barcelona when he grows up – but knows he would need to be able to read the contract.

FIGURE 9 ENJOYMENT OF READING BY INCOME AND ETHNICITY



Source: National Literacy Trust survey of children and young people. *The Reading Lives of 8–11 year olds 2005–2013*.

READING IN A CHANGING WORLD

Achieving the goal of all children reading well will require us to recognise the changing world in which children are growing up. Three factors in particular provide important context.

READING IN A DIGITAL AGE

Technology has changed the nature of and access to reading. For example, the internet has replaced the need for reference books in the home.

New research from the National Literacy Trust for the *Read On. Get On.* campaign shows that, while just three years earlier, in 2010, children were most likely to be reading books if they were reading outside of school hours, by 2013, while books remain popular, the most commonly read material was text messages.

Figure 10 reflects this growing importance of new technology. While books – whether fiction or non-fiction – remain prominent, they show modest falls. In contrast reading e-books, text messages and online has increased significantly. In just three years, the use of e-books by 8–11-year-olds almost

doubled. This trend looks set to continue and will have important implications for efforts to promote reading.

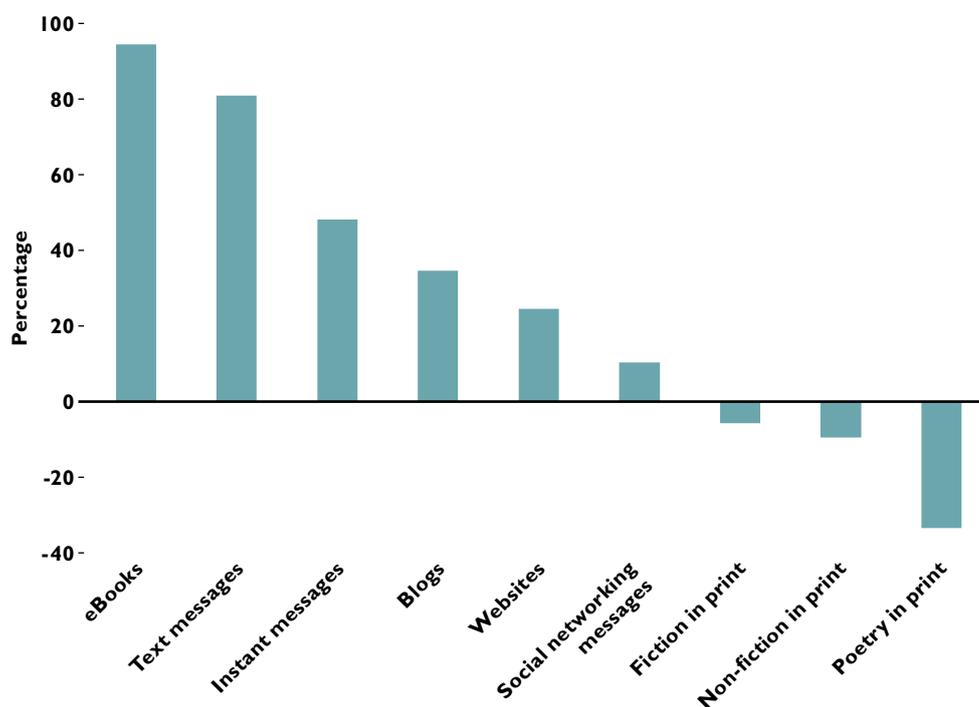
These trends are confirmed in forthcoming National Literacy Trust research, which finds that among 8–16-year-olds in 2012, more were reading on a computer (67%) than were using paper-based materials, such as books, magazines and newspapers (62%).⁸⁶ This work also finds that while the majority of children and young people use their devices to browse websites (85%) and to use social networking sites and instant messaging (81%), they also use their devices to read more traditional types of text, such as fiction. For example, 36% of children who had a tablet, 30% of those with a laptop or personal computer and 23% of those with a smartphone used these devices to read fiction.

While these trends present challenges, new technology can also be an opportunity to increase children’s access to books and their

continued opposite

READING IN A CHANGING WORLD *continued*

FIGURE 10 WHAT CHILDREN ARE READING: PERCENTAGE CHANGES BETWEEN 2010 AND 2013



Source: Clark, C (2014). *The Literacy Lives of 8 to 11-year-olds: 2005–2013*. Work carried out for the Read On. Get On. campaign.

excitement and enthusiasm about reading through a medium other than a physical paper book. Close to 95% of 8–11-year-olds have access to a computer at home and almost two-thirds – 65% – have a computer of their own.⁸⁷ Seventy-three percent of children have access to a touch-screen device at home, and 26% of children use a touch screen to look at or read stories in a typical week.⁸⁸

TIME PRESSURED PARENTS?

Reading is also not necessarily an activity that time-pressured parents will choose to do with their children. A qualitative study undertaken among parents suggested that reading for pleasure was seen by many as an unsociable activity that they did not have time for and that was not necessary or relevant to their lives.⁸⁹ In a survey by Quick Reads, 19% of parents with children under eight admitted that they read with them just once a week or less.⁹⁰

Some parents feel that when they are with their children, they would rather be doing something active and fun. Reading for pleasure is not a consideration in many households, and reading primarily had work or school associations, rather than being seen as an enjoyable activity.

READING IS NOT COOL?

Many children do not want to be seen as ‘a reader’. While many 11-year-olds view children who like to read as achievers, being a reader is seen as geeky, uncool and boring by some children. Indeed, research for this report found that despite 65% of 8–11-year-olds making the link between reading and their future job prospects, 18% of those children said that they would be embarrassed if friends saw them reading.⁹¹

INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS ON ATTITUDES TO READING

The research carried out by NFER (see Chapter 2) also looked at 2011 international comparisons in some reading attitudes and behaviour. In particular, it focused on the bottom 25% of readers in each country – we were most interested in how the group in England that is most likely to fall behind fared compared with other countries. Key findings include:

- In England, the bottom 25% read significantly less than in 21 out of 28 comparison countries.
- In England, the bottom 25% of pupils read relatively infrequently outside school – just once or twice a week on average. Only one country – the Netherlands – had a significantly lower frequency of reading. All others were either equivalent or greater than England.
- The bottom quarter of pupils in England is less likely to have a positive attitude towards reading and books. On a measure including views on statements such as, “I think reading is boring” only three countries had a significantly lower score than England.⁹²
- More positively, the bottom 25% in England appear to be as or more likely to read magazines and comics compared with children in other countries. Only four countries scored better on this measure.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Public libraries, in providing free access to books for families who struggle to afford them, have a key role to play in helping to deliver the *Read On. Get On.* campaign. In offering reading activities and materials of all kinds for families, they are places to encourage everyone to read more and to develop a love of reading. A recent review by the Arts Council demonstrated how important libraries can be for local communities and for helping people improve their skills.⁹³

Public libraries have partnered with the Reading Agency to deliver the Summer Reading Challenge – challenging children to read six books over the summer. In 2014, up to 890,000 children will take part. They will be supported in this by 8,000 young volunteers. Protecting free reading programmes such as this one is critical. Yet, too often they are under significant threat of becoming less accessible. This danger was highlighted by a recent parliamentary report, which found that there had been a reduction in the number of school librarians.⁹⁴

2. SUPPORTING CHILDREN TO DEVELOP GOOD EARLY LANGUAGE SKILLS BEFORE STARTING SCHOOL

This section details why the early years of a child's life – before they have even set foot in school – are so important if we are to ensure all children are reading well by the age of 11. When children are very young they are starting to learn communication skills critical to the subsequent development of reading.

This section presents new evidence from Newcastle University, which demonstrates just how important the early years of a child's life are. It shows how wide the gaps in early language development are between children from low-income and higher-income families. It also shows how as poor children move through primary school, too often they are struggling to catch up – if they start behind with their early language skills they are far more likely still to be behind by age 11.

THE EARLY YEARS AND EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITY

The early years of a child's life, before they start school, are critical because at this time children are acquiring the skills that provide a platform from which they go on to read well.⁹⁵ A two-year-old's language development can strongly predict their reading skills on entry into school, as well as their later attainment.⁹⁶

A child's background has a significant impact on acquiring these all-important early language skills: poorer children are far more likely to be behind at a young age. At school entry, low-income children lag behind their high-income counterparts in vocabulary by 16 months – a much larger gap than those for other cognitive skills.⁹⁷ These gaps are key causes of educational inequality in the UK today.

Within this context, the *1001 Critical Days* cross-party manifesto, which highlights the importance of children's early years, asserts that “health and

FOCUSING ON EARLY LANGUAGE SKILLS

Bookstart Corner is a programme for 1–2-year-old children from low-income families run by Booktrust. It supports children's centres across England to work with disadvantaged families, encouraging them to develop a love of stories, books and rhymes. The programme is delivered through four home visits involving resources such as books and finger puppets and reaches up to 75,000 very young children a year. It has been proven to have an impact on reading behaviours in the home, which can improve children's school-readiness.⁹⁸ It increases how much reading is happening, but also improves the way parents read with their children and builds parents' confidence.⁹⁹

Source: Booktrust

One parent said, “It was really good. It gave me more confidence with reading and helped [my son] with speaking as well.”

Professionals have also been impressed with Bookstart Corner. One member of staff at a children's centre said in 2014, “I think it's a brilliant programme. I go into children's homes and some of these children are in real poverty and parents don't read to them so we're showing parents how to look at and share a book with their child.” Another early years practitioner said, “The fact that the parents have more confidence in reading means they are more likely to do it. And the fact that they read to the child means the child is prepared and ready to start school.”

early years professionals should encourage parents to read to their children as an effective and straightforward way of strengthening early attachment and language development”.¹⁰⁰

STARTING BEHIND, STAYING BEHIND

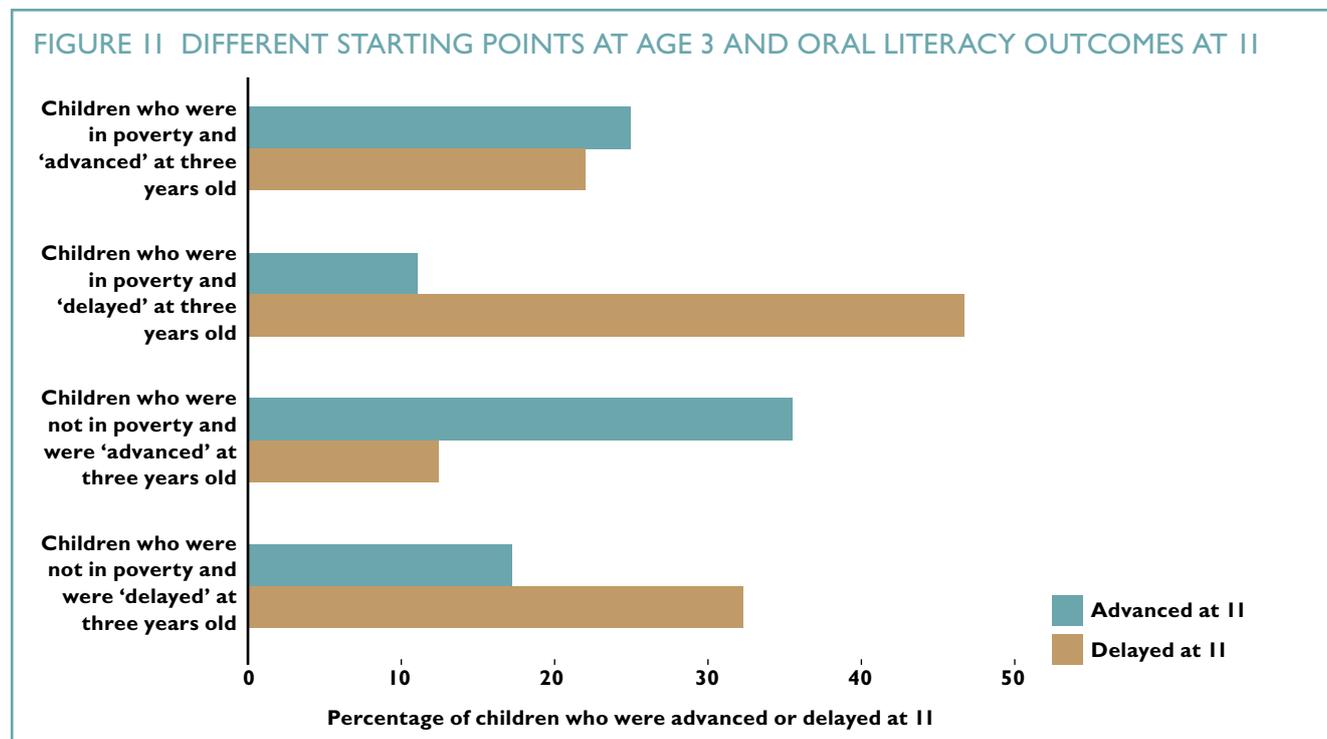
The *Read On. Get On.* campaign commissioned Newcastle University to examine how far some children fall behind at a young age and their prospects of being able to catch up.

This work is based in part on measures of reading, but also includes measures of oral language – reflecting the *Read On. Get On.* campaign’s concern for the underpinning skills that support reading. These skills, which start developing in a child’s first year of life and go on developing throughout childhood and into adulthood, are important in their own right, as well as being fundamental to literacy and other academic subjects. They are, in effect, the building blocks on which literacy is first constructed and go on to be central to a child’s performance in the classroom and influence how well he or she is able to form friendships, access the curriculum and ultimately get on at work and in the rest of their life. (See Appendix I for further details of the measures used.)

One part of this research has examined the prospects for different groups of children with different starting points at the age of three. Children’s language skills using a measure of children’s vocabulary at the age of three were categorised as ‘impaired’, ‘delayed’, ‘typical’ or ‘advanced’.¹⁰¹ The chances of children from each of these starting points achieving different levels of attainment in oral language at the age of 11 (using the same four categories) were then assessed.¹⁰² At the ages of three and 11 the ‘impaired’ group was small, while the typical group was the largest, comprising roughly half of children.

Looking at all children, from all income groups, the research found that it was possible for children to catch up. Only 14% of the children who were in the ‘impaired’ group at age 3 were still in this group at 11, suggesting the potential for ‘movement’ in the child’s abilities and thus for individual children catching up was considerable. However, other findings, which also applied to children from all income groups, showed that this potential for movement should not be over stated.

- Children who had ‘impaired’ early language skills at the age of three were more than four times as likely as those who started at an ‘advanced’ level to have ‘delayed’ oral language at the age of 11.



Source: Newcastle University research for the *Read On. Get On.* campaign.

Note: Starting points at age three are measured using the BAS Naming Vocabulary measure. This includes a division of children into ‘advanced’, ‘typical’, ‘delayed’ and ‘impaired’. In this chart we present ‘delayed’ and ‘advanced’ categories separately for children in poverty and out of poverty. The outcomes at 11 are measured using the BAS Verbal Similarities measure, a measure of language skills that underpins wider literacy and reading.

- Children with ‘delayed’ early language skills were close to three times more likely to be behind at the age of 11 compared with those who started, at age three, with ‘advanced’ language skills.
- Only just over 3% of children who had ‘delayed’ language skills at the age of 3 had ‘advanced’ skills by the age of 11.¹⁰³

When comparing children from different income groups, more striking differences are revealed. Figure 11 shows that among children in poverty who were ‘advanced’ in their language skills at the age of three, over 20% were behind by the age of 11 – around double the figure for children in higher-income households. In contrast, better-off children who have ‘delayed’ language skills at age three have a significantly greater chance of being ‘advanced’ by the age of 11 than poorer children – 17% compared with 11%.

Further analysis also looks at children with different starting points at the age of three, but rather than using the vocabulary measure at three, it uses a measure of pre-literacy or school readiness. See Appendix 1 for full details of these measures. It also divides children into four groups: ‘delayed’, ‘average’, ‘advanced’ and ‘very advanced’. The ‘delayed’ group roughly equates to the bottom 10% of children and the ‘advanced’ and ‘very advanced’ the top 25%.

At the age of three, using this measure of pre-literacy, there are very wide differences in development. The gap, in developmental months, between the

bottom 30% group (‘delayed’) and the top 5% (‘very advanced’) is 37.1 months. Even comparing the delayed group to roughly the top quarter of children – an ‘advanced’ group – the gap in developmental months is 32 months. Children who were ‘delayed’ were over a year and half behind the ‘average’ group. A proportion of this difference will be as a result of natural variation in children’s development – children simply develop at different rates. However, there is a clear income skew as well. The table below shows the different levels of pre-literacy skills by income quintile for this age group. It shows that on average children from the poorest 20% of the population are over 17 months – almost a year and a half – behind those from the highest income quintile at the age of three.

This new research also shows how these early delays in language skills continue through childhood. Table 2 tracks children with different starting points at three through their primary school years and looks at how far behind or ahead of the average they are by the ages of five, seven and 11. It shows that those who are behind when aged three are likely to remain behind. On these measures – which are naming vocabulary at five, single-word reading at seven and then oral language assessment at 11 – if a child starts in the bottom 10% then they will, on average, be just below 14 months behind at age five, just under ten months behind at age seven and over 14 months behind at age 11.

TABLE 2 HOUSEHOLD INCOME AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AT 3 (MONTHS OF DEVELOPMENT)

Household income quintile	Months of development behind the highest income group
Highest	0 – the comparator
Second	1.5
Third	5.2
Fourth	12.4
Lowest	17.4

Source: Newcastle University research for the *Read On. Get On.* campaign.

Note: This is based on the Bracken School Readiness Assessment at the age of three. See Appendix 1 for further details of the assessment used.

Table 3 also shows that the gap between those who were delayed at three and those who were advanced at three *increases* slightly over the primary school years. For five- and seven-year-olds it is between 26 and 27 months, but for 11-year-olds it is over 31 months. The fact that children who start off behind are not catching up during the primary school years, but are on these measures at least falling further behind, raises very serious questions. We need to learn from what

we know about effective interventions: for example I CAN’s Talk Boost can result in up to 80% of children with delayed language catching up with their peers.¹⁰⁴

As this evidence shows, the early years will need to be a major focus of the *Read On. Get On.* campaign as they matter so much for children being able to do well later on at school. This will mean working with early years services, such as health visitors and children’s centres (see box on page 25).

TABLE 3 DIFFERENT STARTING POINTS AT THREE AND SUBSEQUENT PROGRESS (MONTHS OF DEVELOPMENT)

Children’s language skills at age 3	Months of development ahead or behind the average at three subsequent ages		
	5 years	7 years	11 years
‘Delayed’ (bottom 10%)	-13.9	-9.8	-14.1
‘Advanced’ (top 20%)	8.0	8.4	9.5
‘Very advanced’ (top 5%)	13.0	16.4	17.0

Source: Newcastle University research for the *Read On. Get On.* campaign.

Note: This is based on the Bracken School Readiness Assessment at the age of three. The measure used for 5-, 7- and 11-year-olds is from the British Ability Scales (BAS II). See Appendix I for further details of the assessment used.

THE EARLY LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME IN WOODLANDS CHILDREN’S CENTRE

Joe came to Woodlands Children’s Centre when he was four, following concerns about his speech and language – he had no speech, did not make eye contact and did not engage with others.

Joe and his mother were visited at home and gradually encouraged to access universal services at the centre. All the staff were supportive, using the skills they had learned in speech and language training through the Early Language Development Programme. The centre receptionist always greeted Joe with a big smile, used his name and commented on activity rather than asking lots of questions. The family support workers used lots of simple and repetitive language during the activities

along with gestures and facial expressions. I CAN resources were also well used within the setting. Staff helped Joe’s mother develop her skills so she could continue the support for Joe at home.

A few weeks on from his first engagement, Joe arrived at the centre and made eye contact with his keyworker. When she said ‘Hello Joe’ and smiled at him, he replied ‘Hello’ – the first word staff had heard Joe speak. A few months before he started school, Joe still had a significant amount of catching up to do with his language and communication skills, but he was moving forward and in a position to make a positive start, thanks to the skilled input of Woodlands’ well trained staff team.

Source: I CAN

3. PROVIDING THE RIGHT SUPPORT TO PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Schools cannot achieve the goal of all children reading well by 11 on their own. But they are, of course, central to improving children's reading. Thousands of great schools, headteachers, classroom teachers and other school staff are helping turn around children's lives every day. And they are ambitious to achieve more.

This section outlines why we now know more about how schools can improve reading, but also why there is scope for even greater ambition. It sets out why, when schools themselves set ambitious goals, they have more chance of succeeding. Rather than teachers being told what to do by government, it is more effective for schools, working with parents and local communities, to take the lead and to own ambitious goals.

GREAT SCHOOLS TURN AROUND LIVES

Good schools make an enormous difference. In particular, they matter for children from more disadvantaged backgrounds. Many schools achieve impressive results for their pupils in very challenging circumstances: they have demonstrated that while poverty often makes it harder for a child to learn and achieve, it should not be an excuse for low ambitions. Great headteachers and classroom teachers have transformed the chances of millions of children.

We know much more about what works in schools to improve children's literacy. The Education Endowment Foundation – an independent expert group that funds educational innovations – has reviewed the evidence on what works to improve poor children's learning – including a particular focus on literacy. It shows not only the impact that

SCHOOLS ACHIEVING AGAINST THE ODDS

The two schools below both serve poor communities with challenging intakes of pupils. Yet they are both already very close to ensuring that all children are reading well by the age of 11. In both schools, pupils have performed well above what would normally be expected, based on prior attainment.

TRINITY PRIMARY SCHOOL,* WEST MIDLANDS

This community school had a cohort of 37 pupils in its final year group in summer 2013. On the basis of their Early Years Foundation Stage Profile – an assessment of children when they are in reception class that includes a measure of communication, language and literacy skills – the average prior attainment of this group placed the school in the

bottom 10% of all schools in England. Half the cohort was eligible for free school meals – much higher than the average in schools in England of almost one in five. Nevertheless, 95% of this school's pupils went on to read well by the age of 11. Their performance placed the school in the top 20% of schools by reading-test marks.

VICTORIA PRIMARY SCHOOL,* LONDON

This community school had a cohort of 29 pupils in its last year group in summer 2013. This school was also in the bottom 10% of schools by average prior attainment with, again, around half of pupils eligible for free school meals. An impressive 97% of children at the school were reading well by the age of 11. This school was in the top 10% of schools for reading across the country.

Source: CentreForum analysis

* The names of the schools have been changed

great teaching can have, but also the importance of working closely with parents and ensuring children catch up if they have fallen behind in reading.¹⁰⁵ More recently Ofsted has looked at how best to spend the pupil premium in a way that allows children who have fallen behind to catch up.¹⁰⁶

Programmes such as Achievement for All show how even the most disadvantaged children and those with a Special Educational Need can significantly improve their reading.¹⁰⁷ Working directly with more than 100,000 pupils, the approaches of Achievement for All have a proven positive impact, with pupils who are targeted making above-average progress across the board in reading, writing and maths.¹⁰⁸ Much of this success is down to the belief that Achievement for All, in common with many other organisations, has in setting high expectations for what even the most disadvantaged children can achieve.

The two schools described on page 29 and other schools like them achieve so much in large part

because of their teachers and school leaders. One of the reasons we can be optimistic about more schools doing as well as those two schools cited is that we have, as the government has said, the best generation of teachers ever.¹⁰⁹ Initiatives such as Teach First have attracted high-quality candidates to work exclusively in schools serving low-income communities and have shown demonstrable impact in secondary schools. The charity is now attracting a growing number of primary and early years teachers, seeking to triple these numbers in the coming years. Improvements in recent decades have been impressive. Recent research by the Institute for Fiscal Studies suggests that children in London have been doing much better at secondary school in recent years as a result of improvements in primary schooling in the capital.¹¹⁰

However, there is scope to achieve even more. Teachers and schools themselves are often anxious to do better but feel that they lack the tools, support or autonomy. One way of looking at how much more

HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Lydia Gibb is a Teach First teacher working in a north London primary school where half of the students are eligible for free school meals – more than double the national average. When she started at the school, the majority of the pupils were failing to reach the expected level of reading by age 11. Ms Gibb is passionate about improving literacy levels and showing the difference teachers can make. The experience of one pupil, Paul, exemplifies the transformation teachers can make to children's lives. At the beginning of his final year at primary school, Paul, a White British boy had the reading age of a six-year-old. His literacy levels had actually fallen.

Ms Gibb identified the barriers that were preventing Paul from progressing and set him clear milestones so he could overcome these barriers. She also set him an overall goal of exceeding the expected level by the end of primary school.

Ms Gibb discovered that Paul had little room in his house to do homework and lived in an area where many young people have low aspirations.

After assessing his reading, Ms Gibb identified that Paul's biggest challenge to improving his reading was not in comprehension but in decoding words. Once she had a full understanding of what the challenges facing Paul were, Ms Gibb was able to design a tailored development plan for him. The plan included regular meetings between her and his mother, daily one-to-one reading for Paul in school and at home, daily independent reading and taught phonics work. All this was backed up with rigorous assessment against the planned targets.

At the end of Ms Gibb's intervention, Paul excelled, discovering a love of reading and achieving well above the national average. He was not the only one. Across the school, Ms Gibb's approach resulted in a transformation in literacy. It went from being a school where more than half of children failed to reach a good level of reading, to one where over 95% left primary school with strong reading ability, opening up the wonder and opportunities of learning.

could be achieved is to ask how many children would be reading well by the age of 11 were all primary schools able to improve at the same rate as the best 25% have improved over recent years. The impact by 2020 and then 2025 would be large.¹¹¹ If all schools in 2013 were to make that rate of progress each year:

- **by 2020**, around **91% of pupils** in England could be reading well
- **by 2025**, around **97% of pupils** in England could be reading well.

But the frustration for schools is that they often feel held back from achieving more. Too often they feel forced to improve by government and, as the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT)

has argued, “not only have these diktats done little good, they have also caused considerable harm: they have extracted ambition and self-criticism from the teaching profession ...”¹¹² The challenge is to allow schools, working with others, to set ambitious goals and to confidently lead the fight for better educational opportunity for the most disadvantaged pupils.

Another critical point here is that schools cannot work alone. They need to work with others, including families and parents, but also the voluntary sector. For example in the box below, Jean Gross, a former adviser to government on literacy and communication, sets out how schools and the voluntary sector can help address the reading challenges of different pupils.

SUPPORTING SCHOOLS TO RESPOND TO DIFFERENT READING NEEDS

Aside from children having really complex Special Educational Needs or disabilities, which mean they remain at really early levels of development throughout school, there are a number of reasons for children struggling to read. These include:

Children who can read adequately, but don't particularly enjoy reading

These children need a little more support and encouragement, and exposure to different types of reading materials. This might include digital texts, family and community programmes, football club reading programmes such as those provided by the National Literacy Trust, and Booktrust's reading and book-gifting programmes including Bookstart for babies and preschoolers, Booktime for reception children and the Letterbox Club for looked-after children.

Children who have the basics of literacy but don't read very fluently

These children are able to decode words and understand texts adequately but need a little more practice and support. Volunteer programmes, such as Born to Read – a partnership between the charity Beanstalk and Save the Children – can have a positive impact through a trained reading volunteer

spending some one-to-one time with a child to improve their confidence and reading fluency.

Children who can decode words but don't comprehend what they read

These children need intervention programmes to develop their vocabulary and listening comprehension. These might include the sorts of interventions offered by the children's communication charity I CAN, such as Talk Boost small-group language work with a well-trained teaching assistant.

Children who can't decode words well

These children need phonics intervention programmes, to develop their awareness of the sounds in words and the letters that represent those sounds.

Children who can't read at all

These children struggle with both decoding and comprehension, and just can't make a start with reading. They need highly skilled one-to-one tuition delivered early in primary school by specially trained teachers, as is offered through programmes such as Reading Recovery.

Jean Gross, former Government Communication Champion for Children

4. SUPPORTING MOTHERS AND FATHERS TO HELP THEIR CHILDREN'S READING

What happens in the home has a profound effect on children's language development and their reading. In this section some of the existing evidence on the importance of mothers and fathers is set out. It presents new analysis, which points to the particular importance of fathers, especially after children have started primary school.

We also know how poverty can make it much harder for parents to do what they know is the right thing for their children: parents with poor literacy themselves may lack confidence to read with their children and they may not be able to afford the books that better-off families can. They may be on shift work or doing long hours, making it harder to read to and with their children.

BEYOND THE SCHOOL GATES: THE IMPORTANCE OF MOTHERS AND FATHERS

To some, it may seem a statement of the obvious to say that mothers, fathers and carers have a profound influence on children's reading. Yet many parents and other carers, particularly from low-income backgrounds – and particularly if they struggled with reading themselves – are not always aware of just how important their role is. Parents sometimes see reading with their children as something that happens at school and not something that they should be doing at home.¹¹³

This is worrying, as the evidence in favour of mothers and fathers reading with and to their children is overwhelming. Recent data from the Programme for International Student Assessment shows that those pupils whose parents regularly read books to them when they were in the first year of primary school were the equivalent to about a quarter of a school year ahead in reading tests at age 15.¹¹⁴ Reading is one of the areas where most parents normally have the simple facilities – books or other reading materials and simply being able to talk to their children about reading – to get involved and make a difference. Of all subjects, reading has been found to be most sensitive to parental influences.¹¹⁵ Booktrust commissioned research which found that the home and family are

crucial in the development of reading and writing, particularly in terms of reading for pleasure.¹¹⁶

Reading to or with children matters for all children under 11. But the earlier parents start, the more profound the results and the longer-lasting the effects.¹¹⁷ The evidence shows that if children pick up books from a young age, then these are life-long habits that last into adulthood. As Sanacore states, “becoming a lifetime reader is predicated on developing a love of reading”.¹¹⁸ And we know there are successful approaches to engaging parents more in their children's learning. For example, the ‘structured conversation’ model created by Achievement for All – where parents are engaged in a dialogue with teachers that enables them to engage effectively with their child's learning – has shown impressive results.¹¹⁹

However, a worrying finding with regards to parents' engagement with their children's learning came out of the research on international comparisons carried out by NFER for this report. Focusing on the bottom 25% of pupils, it found that parents in England may be among the least engaged in their children's learning. On a measure of ‘parental interest’, which includes how often parents ask about their children's school work or discuss their school work with them, England came out among the worst countries in the PIRLS study. No country scored significantly below England and two-thirds of comparison countries scored significantly better.¹²⁰

THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF FATHERS

It has long been recognised that fathers can play a particularly important role in helping support their children's reading. Children whose fathers spend time with them and read with them do better at school, an impact which lasts into adult life.¹²¹ But we also know that fathers are less likely than mothers to encourage children to read more. In one study, when asked who they thought had taught them to read, children reported that it had been their mother, followed by their teacher, and then their father.¹²² Fathers report being uncertain about their role in their children's learning, for example, deferring to

the mother primarily because they view her as the primary teacher and caregiver or also because of their own low reading achievement at school.

Fathers do read to their children less, particularly low-income fathers. In the Millennium Cohort Study fathers were far less likely to read regularly to their seven-year-old children than mothers were. Over a quarter of fathers read just once or twice a month, or even less frequently. In contrast, only around 10% of mothers read this little. The new Newcastle University analysis for this report shows, for example, that the poorest fathers are more than three times as likely to read less than once a week to a five-year-old child than fathers from the richest families. They were over 14 times as likely never to read to their children.¹²³

The Newcastle University analysis for the *Read On. Get On.* campaign suggests that fathers' reading can be particularly important, especially for children once they start primary school. The table below shows the relationship between language skills at 11 and how much mothers and fathers had been reading with their children when they were aged seven. The numbers show how many developmental months behind different groups of children are compared with those who were read to daily at the age of seven. For example, children who were not read to at all by their father at the age of seven were over a year – 13.1 months – behind those who were read to daily. The overall pattern is one where reading by both mothers and fathers matters, but the impact of fathers reading appears to be particularly significant for this age group.

TABLE 4 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MOTHERS AND FATHERS READING WITH CHILDREN AT AGE SEVEN AND THEIR LANGUAGE SKILLS AT 11 (DEVELOPMENTAL MONTHS)

Frequency that mothers read to their children at age seven	Difference in months in children's language skills at age 11
Daily	0 – the comparator
Several times a week	-0.4
Once or twice a week	-1.9
Once or twice a month	-1.5
Less often than once a month	-6.1
Not at all	-7.3
Frequency that fathers read to their children at age seven	Difference in months in children's language skills at age 11
Daily	0 – the comparator
Several times a week	-0.3
Once or twice a week	-2.1
Once or twice a month	-3
Less often than once a month	-6
Not at all	-13.5

Source: Source: Newcastle University research for the *Read On. Get On.* campaign.

Note: (i) These figures are before controlling for income. When income is controlled for there is a similar pattern. The impact of father's reading is still strong: where fathers read daily to their children when they are seven their language skills will be four months more advanced than if fathers had read less than once a month. Not reading at all, after controlling for income, would leave children almost 10 months behind. (ii) The measure of language skills at 11 is based on the British Ability Scales (BAS II) – see Appendix 1 for further details.

TABLE 5 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MOTHERS AND FATHERS READING WITH CHILD AT AGE FIVE AND THEIR READING SKILLS AT SEVEN

Frequency that mothers read to their children at age seven	Difference in months in children’s language skills at age seven
Daily	0
Weekly	-2
Less often	-3.3
Frequency that fathers read to their children at age seven	Difference in months in children’s language skills at age seven
Daily	0
Weekly	-0.3
Less often	-5.8

Source: Source: Newcastle University research for the *Read On. Get On.* campaign.

Note: (i) These figures are before controlling for income. When income is controlled for there is a similar pattern. The impact of father’s reading is still strong: where fathers read daily to five-year-olds, their children will be almost five months ahead at age seven of children whose fathers only read with them less than once a week. (ii) In the Millennium Cohort Study fathers were far less likely to read regularly to five-year-old children: whereas over half of mothers of five-year-olds read daily, fewer than one in six fathers did so (15.7%). (iii) The measure of literacy at seven is one of single-word reading and based on the British Ability Scales (BAS II). See Appendix I for further details.

This pattern is repeated when looking at slightly younger children. The table above shows that fathers reading with their children when they are aged five also appears to matter more than mothers reading. It shows that where fathers read less than once a week to a five-year-old child, by the age seven they will be almost half a year behind their peers in reading who had been read to daily. Again, mothers’ reading

matters, but the significance of fathers’ reading appears larger.

The story is a little different for mothers and fathers of three-year olds. Looking at the relationship between parents reading with three-year-olds and their child’s own reading at the age of five, there is little difference between the mothers and fathers reading. Both appear to have an impact, but it is

ENGAGING FATHERS IN CHILDREN’S READING

Tim is stepfather to five children. He had not done well at school and was unemployed and reliant on benefits. His stepdaughter was entitled to support from Achievement for All in her Gloucester primary school. Following three attempts by the school to speak to him, Tim met with the deputy headteacher. Through Achievement for All’s ‘structured conversation’ they found a way forward. Tim challenged his own demons about reading. He learned to read and then went on to become a

teaching assistant. Tim supports other parents and children to learn to read. He is often the first to arrive at school in the morning and the last to leave at the end of the day.

Tim is training to support young people with learning difficulties in further education. When asked what the reading programme had meant for him, Tim explained he now understands the value of education.

Source: Achievement for All

about the same – reading less than weekly to a three-year-old is associated with a child being four months behind a child who was read with daily when they were three.

This analysis demonstrates that both mothers and fathers reading with young children under 11 can have a significant impact. But it suggests that fathers reading, particularly when children have already started primary school, could be particularly important. Why? One possibility is that when fathers read there is a ‘cumulative reading impact’ – with both mothers and fathers reading adding up to more reading happening in the family. Another might be that fathers reading to sons may have a particular benefit.

POVERTY, THE HOME AND INTERGENERATIONAL DISADVANTAGE

Raising children on a low income makes it harder for parents to be able to give their children the best start in life. Children from low-income families may have less access to age-appropriate books and toys than those from better off families because of the cost.¹²⁴ This reading resource gap is confirmed by new research for this report which found that in 2011 almost a quarter of 11-year-old children in the poorest families had fewer than ten books in the home. This contrasts with under 4% of the richest families having so few books. Similarly, whereas more than a third of the best-off families had more than

200 books in the home, under 10% of the poorest households has this many.¹²⁵

The number of books in a home reflects something important about the environment in which children are growing up. Table 6 shows the relationship between the number of books and the language skills of children at 11. It shows that children in homes with more than 500 books are on average more than two years ahead of those growing up in households with fewer than ten books. Even the difference between those with 11–25 books in the home compared with 201–500 books is the equivalent to over a year’s progress. The figures presented below do not take into account the effect of income: however, even when this is controlled for, there is a 10-month difference in the levels of language development between the language skills of 11-year-old children in a ‘book-rich’ home (with between 201 and 500 books in the home) compared with those whose home is ‘book-poor’ (with between 11 and 25 books only).

We know there are successful national book-gifting programmes, such as those run by Booktrust, that promote shared reading and book ownership to increase the quality and frequency of reading in the home. Providing parents with the tools and resources for reading, through partnerships with practitioners such as health visitors, early years practitioners, librarians and teachers, can have a significant impact on reading well.

TABLE 6 BOOKS IN THE HOME AND LANGUAGE SKILLS (MONTHS OF DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRESS)

Books in the home (self-reported)	Average number of months of developmental progress compared with baseline at age 11
0–10	-12.2
11–25	-4.7
26–100	0 – baseline
101–200	5.2
201–500	8.9
More than 500	13

Source: Newcastle University research for the *Read On. Get On.* campaign.

Note: (i) The 95% confidence intervals for 0–10 are -14.1 and -10.3; for 11–25 they are -6.4 and -3; for 101–200 they are 3.6 to 6.7; for 201–500 they are 7.3 to 10.6 and for more than 500 they are 10.8 and 15.2. (ii) The measure of language skills is based on the British Ability Scales (BAS II). See Appendix I for further details.

BOOKS IN THE HOME HELP CALUM LEARN TO LOVE READING

Sam and her husband, George, have been foster carers to Calum, aged ten, for five years.

“When we fostered Calum he had missed two years of schooling and was very behind,” says Sam. “He was then completely excluded from school because he was so disruptive. I home-schooled him to begin with, but that was tough because of his behavioural problems and resistance. But I thought it was vital for him to learn to read as there are so many people in borstal and prison with low literacy rates.”

Calum has received six packs of books as part of Booktrust’s Letterbox Club programme: these have gone a long way to help his love of reading and his sense of self-worth.

*Names have been changed.

Source: Booktrust

“The packs arriving in the post, addressed to him was brilliant,” says Sam. “He does get some post but most of it is from social services, which he finds boring and reminds him he is in care, but the book packs arriving made him feel really special. He would pounce on them as soon as they appeared, rip them open and then settle down straight away with a book, so it is a pretty important thing.”

Although he still has behavioural problems, Sam has seen in a big change in Calum’s self-esteem, which she attributes to his improved reading skills.

“As his reading has improved we have seen him really blossom,” she says. “We charted him going from way behind his reading age to beyond it, which was one of the great successes; he was very proud and thrilled about that.”

TEN MINUTES A DAY

The *Read On. Get On.* campaign commissioned education experts, EdComms, to review the evidence on what mothers and fathers should do to support their children’s reading. The main findings were:

- There is good evidence that parents reading with their children for as little as 10 minutes a day can make a big difference.¹²⁶
- A little bit of reading every day appears to be better than less frequent, more extended periods: pupils who read on a daily basis, even for a few minutes, may experience more growth in reading ability than students who read for an extended period once or twice a week.¹²⁷
- Books and stories are important, as they offer a way of expanding cultural and imaginative horizons, introducing children to a wide range of vocabulary and grammatical structures, and introducing the concept of ‘beginning, middle and end’.¹²⁸ But reading anything counts, particularly if it builds on the child’s personal interests.¹²⁹

This more eclectic and inclusive view of reading material is good for children and good for parents. From a child’s point of view, allowing her or him to choose their own materials gives them a sense of ownership, and is more likely to result in them enjoying reading and persisting with it.¹³⁰ Boys in particular benefit from reading being made purposeful in terms of following their interests. And from a parent’s point of view it allows for the opportunity to integrate reading into everyday life, whether while on the bus or looking at the breakfast cereal packet in the morning.

Based on this analysis the *Read On. Get On.* campaign will work with *The Sun* newspaper to promote these messages directly to parents at the launch of the campaign.

5 A COMPREHENSIVE RESPONSE: WORKING ON ALL FRONTS TO ENSURE ALL CHILDREN ARE READING WELL

There is wide-ranging agreement – across the political spectrum, among business and civil society organisations, and in communities across the UK – that all children should have a fair chance to succeed in their education and in later life. It is unfair that we leave so many children behind.

The previous chapters of this report have established that getting every child reading at 11 will substantially address this unfairness. However, there is no magic bullet. As Chapter 4 shows, achieving reading at 11 for all requires action on a number of fronts: children’s language development in the early years, in primary schools, in supporting children to read at home, and in promoting the sheer enjoyment of reading.

This comprehensive response, in turn, requires high ambitions and sustained action from a wide coalition of people and organisations, and clear communication to the UK public so that all can play their part. In short, we need a solution as broadly based as the challenge: a new sort of approach and a new sort of campaign.

This chapter sets out a new national ambition that every single children born this year will be reading well by the time they leave primary school in 2025. Breaking the UK’s cycle of disadvantage will require comprehensive and sustained action. That is exactly what the *Read On. Get On.* campaign will provide.

A NATIONAL MISSION TO ENSURE ALL CHILDREN ARE READING WELL BY THE AGE OF 11

Progress in reading among 11-year-olds has been, at best, steady in recent years. The cost of continuing with ‘business as usual’ will be considerable – to individuals and to society as a whole. As a country, we cannot be content with a situation where a quarter of children and two-fifths of children on free school meals are not reading well at the end of their primary education.

We know that some parts of the country, many schools and some projects have had remarkable success in turning this around. Equally, we know that without the dedication and hard work of teachers and others, the situation would be much worse. This is a challenge that can be tackled – given the right level of ambition.

Indeed, we can and should be more ambitious in the future. The prize is turning this country from one where doors shut in young children’s faces into one where we break the cycle of disadvantage.

Doing even more to ensure children are reading well by age 11 will mean addressing the four drivers of children’s reading identified in Chapter 4 and delivering a comprehensive response that:

- creates a culture that celebrates the joy of reading
- ensures pre-school education and services improve children’s early language development
- provides better support and information for parents to do the best for their children
- supports and enables teachers and schools.

Achieving this comprehensive response requires a new kind of approach and a new kind of campaign.

We cannot afford to fall into the trap of thinking all children will read well simply as a result of decisions by Whitehall-based policy-makers. Government will be critical, but it will not be able to achieve lasting change alone. While the government has an essential and necessary role to play, so do we all.

The organisations behind this report and the launch of the *Read On. Get On.* campaign run from school leadership, to child poverty charities, classroom teachers, publishers, reading and parents organisations, and those focusing on special needs and early years. Working closely together – and

talking to many others – we have formed the nucleus of a national mission to get all children reading.

We need to rally together the entire strength of the community. We need a comprehensive and sustained approach, just as was once needed to eradicate devastating physical ills, such as polio and cholera. While technical underpinning and widespread professional support is necessary we need a headline goal that can be broadly understood, across the nation. That rallying point is the clear ambition to get all children reading well within an ambitious but achievable timescale.

We know that getting every child reading well at 11 cannot happen overnight, but it is possible within a decade; it could be achieved over just two parliamentary terms. That will require working across a broad front of action, employing very different strategies towards the same goal. To take just two examples: public communication to parents about reading with their children and work on early language provision in pre-schools. The first requires the ability to communicate effectively to a wide population, through multiple channels. The second requires detailed policy work, research and programme innovation to develop the right approaches for different areas or demographics.

There is a huge amount of work needed to be done to set the course to achieve the goal but we believe we have demonstrated that the goal on reading is:

- **vital:** it addresses the unacceptable link between a child’s start in life and their chances in life
- **achievable:** our analysis shows that we should not despair – we can be the generation to crack this enduring social ill
- **credible:** it has broad support from organisations working across parenting, reading, early years and language development.

We will build on the findings and analysis presented in this report to develop the policy framework to reach our goal. We will present this before the May 2015 UK general election.

In the meantime, the invitation is open to all to get involved. We have come together to make a start. This report is a call for others to join us. There is also a role for policy-makers of all parties to match the efforts from the wider community and make their own commitments to the goal ahead of the general election.

OUR GOAL

The *Read On. Get On.* campaign will work towards the goal of:

All children to be reading well by the age of 11 by 2025

This would mean every child born this year will be reading well by the time they reach the end of primary school.

The ambition is change: all children reading by 11 at a level which will open up opportunity. We are clear that as a nation we should aspire to getting as close as possible to every single child reading well by 11. As we saw in Chapter 2, there is a small number of children for whom it will not be possible to read well by the age of 11 – for example, because they have severe or multiple learning difficulties or have recently arrived in Britain and are only starting to learn English. However, we believe it is right to have high aspirations for every child and we also know a high level of ambition is vital to achieving dramatic progress. That is why we are aiming to – and why we believe we can – get very close to 100% of all children reading well by 11.¹³¹

Some people will say that our goal is impossible, that a deadline of 2025 is unrealistic. However, analysis carried out by CentreForum for this report suggests that it is achievable within a relatively tight timetable. CentreForum looked at how many children could be reading well by the age of 11 through a combination of three things:

- improving the early language skills of younger children through improved early years provision and support for parents¹³²
- all children making an expected level of progress based on their starting point at the beginning of primary school¹³³

- effective use of pupil premium spending on proven catch-up programmes such as one-to-one tuition.¹³⁴

Table 7 includes the headline findings and Appendix 4 sets out more detail. The combined effect of these three factors suggests that reading levels of over 95% are realistic. These results are, if anything, conservative as they do not factor-in any increased resources from government, for example, for a much-boosted pupil premium or the impact of mothers and fathers being better supported to improve the reading of their children.

Making rapid progress towards this goal would also strongly support the achievement of the Fair Education Alliance’s Impact Goal to “narrow the gap in literacy and numeracy at primary school”. That goal is accompanied by the following statement: “We want to see pupils in low-income communities achieving at the same level as their more affluent peers in English and maths by this age. We want to see this gap close by 90% by 2022.” Many members of the *Read On. Get On.* campaign are leading members of the Fair Education Alliance and support the Alliance’s work to end educational inequality across five key areas in a child’s educational journey from early years to employment.

The target date 2025 gives the country time to achieve a historic goal. But the *Read On. Get On.* campaign will also focus on achieving substantial progress between now and 2020. To be on track to achieve our goal we need to ensure that this generation is doing well at a younger age – before they even start school – and also that we are making progress for children already in primary school. That is why we will set two interim 2020 goals.

The first will also focus on the generation of children born this year, but rather than assess where they are by 11, it will set a goal for them before they

TABLE 7 INDICATIVE IMPACT OF THREE KEY INTERVENTIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS

Current situation	75% of pupils reading well
If all pupils made expected progress	+16% = 91%
Using proven catch-up programmes such as one-to-one tuition	+3% = 94%
If Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scores improve by 15%	+2% = 96%

Source: CentreForum analysis of National Pupil Database. For further details of the analysis see Appendix 4.

start primary school. The chances of children born today growing up to read well by the end of primary school will be hugely influenced by the first five years of their life. It will be affected by what happens in the home – including the quality of the support and advice their parents receive – as well as by how well early education, childcare and children’s services support children’s language development. For this reason, we are arguing for a first interim goal of:

All children with good early language development by the age of five by 2020

This will be critical in order to ensure that we make the progress needed. We know how important this stage of children’s lives is. However, at this stage we are not setting the full details of this goal for five-year-olds. The current measure of communication and language development within the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile will become optional from 2016 when a new baseline assessment at age four is introduced. So, working with early years’ experts and

professionals, the coalition will develop the details of this interim 2020 goal and options for measurement – including the potential for an independent assessment by the *Read On. Get On.* campaign. It will also assess what we should be aiming for by 2025 for five-year-olds. We will publish our assessment and findings next year.

We also need to make progress for the children who are already at school. That is why to ensure that we are on track for achieving the ultimate 2025 goal our second interim goal will be:

To be at least halfway to achieving the 2025 goal for 11-year-olds by 2020

The *Read On. Get On.* campaign believes that by 2020 we should aim to be halfway to meeting the overall 2025 goal. This would mean halving the number of children who do not read well by the age of 11: it would mean approximately 50–60,000 more children in England reading well a year by 2020.¹³⁵

SETTING OUR OWN ASPIRATION

We ask a lot of schools. There is no end of standards, requirements, demands and expectations. What is different about this campaign is that schools are asking a lot of themselves. This is not a government-imposed target. This is the teaching profession working with parents and civil society to set our own aspiration. And it shows that, when government steps out of the way, teachers and headteachers can be pretty ambitious.

Schools often feel dragged in one direction then another by political tides. Yet, unless politicians see that the profession is taking ownership of standards, they have little choice but to intervene. Equally, it is also tempting to blame schools for problems that are deep-seated across society; they are sitting targets in that sense. It will take all of society working together to achieve this goal.

NAHT has stated in its education manifesto, *Owning What is Ours*,¹³⁶ that we want to see professional leadership; we want to see headteachers taking ownership of standards and starting a deep conversation with parents about what we want schools to achieve. There will be little need for political intervention in such a

conversation. We feel that people are ready to trust teachers if they hear them talking honestly and openly about the system, and that teachers and headteachers will then feel in control of their own destiny. That confidence will give them the energy and determination to tackle any problem that stands in their way. We could go so much further than official target setting and ensure that every child can experience the joy of reading to the best of their ability, together with the opportunities that unlocks.

Each school will have a different task ahead of it. A common starting point, however, would be to compare a school’s achievements to schools in similar circumstances. This will help reveal the steps to take and appropriate targets to set. Given the strong foundations already being built in early literacy and technical skills, a key challenge for the project will be to extend the breadth of pupils’ reading for pleasure, to push their fluency and vocabulary. Schools will also want to work closely with parents to encourage more reading at home, engaging therefore with the other elements of the campaign.

Russell Hobby, General Secretary of NAHT

NEXT STEPS: READ ON. GET ON.

These goals have been developed by the core members of the *Read On. Get On.* campaign.

Government has a critical role to play in achieving them and we are urging all political parties to adopt these ambitions and set out how they would work towards achieving them. The next major output from the *Read On. Get On.* coalition will be a major paper, setting out ahead of the next Westminster general election what action is needed to address the four main drivers of the children's reading – in schools, at home, in children's early years, and in our culture.

But the *Read On. Get On.* campaign is also about a genuine national mission with thousands of organisations and millions of individuals coming together to back the campaign's goals – and all working towards their achievement. Long-lasting change and improvements in children's life chances mean schools, parents, other public services, the voluntary sector and government all working together.

While there is still work to be done to develop the policy framework and response, there is no need to wait for the full picture before getting started. We already know that just ten minutes a day of reading helps a child. We know that schools around the country are inspiring the love of reading. We know that brilliant schemes and programmes can help children with even the toughest start in life. And we know that every day and across the UK, inspirational and dedicated volunteers are changing children's life chances.

WHAT CAN WE ALL DO TO GET THERE?

Reading: Parents, carers and anyone with a child in their life can make a huge difference by reading for just ten minutes a day.

Volunteering: Adults across the UK can give time to schemes that help children with reading and language. Employers and schools can play a vital enabling role.

Commissioning: Early years settings, schools and local authorities should look to commission some of the many effective, well-evidenced programmes and interventions that can support children struggling with language and literacy.

Innovating: The voluntary sector, schools, policy-makers and the private sector need to develop programmes, interventions, partnerships and funding mechanisms to help all to read, especially those with the most need.

Leading the way locally: Networks of schools and partnerships across the country have made a difference. While the 2025 goal is UK-wide, towns and communities across the nation can also embrace it as a local priority.

Driving across government: We are calling on all parties to embrace the 2025 goal in their manifestos. Even without additional resources, a clear commitment to get all children reading by 2025 will create additional focus in the education system and, crucially, drive other departments and agencies outside education to play their part.

Donating: The voluntary sector organisations among the signatories to this report and many others will be delivering and innovating towards the 2025 goal. By giving money, individuals, companies and other organisations can support measurable progress towards our vital national goal.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY ANALYSIS OF THE MILLENNIUM COHORT STUDY

THE MILLENNIUM COHORT STUDY

This report presents new analysis by Newcastle University based on the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS), which is a longitudinal survey that has followed the lives of around 19,000 children born in the UK in 2000–01. The study has been tracking the Millennium children through their early childhood years and plans to follow them into adulthood. It collects information on the children's siblings and parents. The analyses here consider the data collected when the children were aged three, five, seven and 11 years of age. Further information can be found at the website: cls.ioe.ac.uk/mcs. In the research presented in this report we have focused on measures linked to reading, literacy and the underpinning oral language skills.

THE MEASURES

The measures used in this report are those related to literacy in the Millennium Cohort Study. These include:

- The Bracken School Readiness Assessment (BRSA) at three years
- Scales from the British Ability Scales (BAS II)¹³⁷ at three, five, seven and 11 years.

The BRSA covers early pre-literacy measures and some early language measures (as well as early numeracy). The relevant specific subtests are:

- Colours – where the child needs to identify common colours by name (ie, red, blue)
- Letters – where the child needs to know lower-case and upper-case letters

- Sizes – where the child must demonstrate knowledge of words used to depict size during Bracken test (eg, 'short', 'long')
- Comparisons – where the child needs to differentiate or match objects based on a specific characteristic
- Shapes – where the child needs to demonstrate knowledge of basic shapes by name.

The BRSA pre-literacy and early language measure allows groups to be divided into four groups, which we use in the analysis in this paper. These are 'delayed', 'average/typical', 'advanced' and 'very advanced'. (There is also a 'very delayed' group but the numbers here are relatively small to be analysed separately given the overall sample size and are thus combined with the 'delayed' group.) In terms of percentiles, these categories translate into conventional psychometric groups – 'very delayed' or 'impaired' being below the 2nd percentile, 'delayed' being below the 16th percentile, 'average' being between the 83rd and the 17th percentile, 'advanced' being between the 84th percentile and below the 98th centile and 'very advanced' being in the top 2% of the population.

The BAS scales used are 'naming vocabulary' at three and five, 'single word reading' at seven and 'verbal similarities' at 11 years. Naming vocabulary and verbal similarities are assessments of oral language abilities, reading vocabulary is a direct measure of reading. For the naming vocabulary scale, the child is asked to name a series of pictures in a book. These range from 'shoe' and 'chair' for children from two years upwards to 'funnel' and 'easel' for children of six years and above. Single-word reading has words presented

in book form: words used range from 'the' and 'up' for five-year-olds to 'mnemonic' and 'facetious' at the top of the test (well beyond the abilities of seven-year-olds). By seven years we would expect children to be able to read the words 'one', 'cup' and 'wood', for example. The verbal similarities scale involves the child being presented with a page on which are pictures of three items. He or she is then asked "What could you call these things?" Thus, in the

ages covered at the 11-year sweep of the MCS, the examiner would commonly start with 'syrup, toffee, cake', and then be asked for the common features for 'water, oil, blood', 'jar, bag, box', and so on.

For further information on technical issues around the MCS see http://www.cls.ioe.ac.uk/library-media/documents/Technical_Report_on_Sampling_4th_Edition.pdf

APPENDIX 2: METHODOLOGY USED IN GENERATING GDP GROWTH FIGURES

This appendix explains the methodology used to develop our estimates of the impact on gross domestic product (GDP) of narrowing different achievement gaps in the UK schools system. We would like to thank Dr Rebecca Allen for her support with this data analysis.

ESTIMATING INCREASED GROWTH RATES

The analysis is based on the work of Hanushek and Wößmann (E A Hanushek and L Wößmann (2008) 'The role of cognitive skills in economic development', *Journal of Economic Literature*, 46(3) 607–68), which is one of the most credible assessments of the impact on economic growth of improvements in skills. Their research is based on 50 countries and assesses the relationship between economic growth and cognitive test scores – from surveys such as the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) – over a long period (1960–2000). Their conclusion is that test scores that are larger by one standard deviation (measured at the student level across all OECD countries in PISA) are associated with an average annual growth rate of 1.4 percentage points. Based on this analysis, it is possible to assess the impact on GDP growth of ensuring that all children are reading well by the age of 11.

The analysis in this paper is based on children reading well at level 4b – the equivalent to the new definition of 'reading well' by the age of 11. In 2013 a level 4b equated to a reading mark of 25 on a scale from 0 to 50. If those who achieved less than 25 marks managed to score 25 on the test, this would improve the overall distribution of reading competencies in the population. It would improve the mean average reading score by 1.67 marks, which is an improvement of 16.5% of a standard deviation of the distribution. Using the relationship between GDP and cognitive test scores measured by Hanushek and Wößmann in international data, we estimated how an improvement in reading competency translates into economic growth.

On the most optimistic assumption, a 16.5% of a standard deviation improvement in reading scores at the age of 11 could translate to a similar improvement in cognitive test scores throughout the rest of school (ie, improving reading also improves other skills such as writing and even numeracy). This could mean a 0.2 percentage point higher GDP growth rate.

This figure of 0.2 percentage points higher growth should be considered an upper-bound estimate for several reasons: for example, there are some children with special educational needs such that it is reasonable to assume they will be able to reach expected reading levels following even intensive intervention, and although improvements in reading competency will improve attainment across all other subjects where reading is needed to access the curriculum, it is optimistic to assume that numeracy and scientific skill levels will improve by the same amount as reading skills levels do. Furthermore, it assumes that the positive impact of an intervention before 11 remains.

Taking these factors into account, a more cautious assumption of an improvement of just three-quarters of this size would produce a 12.374% of a standard deviation improvement in reading scores at the age of 11. This could mean a 0.15 percentage point higher GDP growth rate.

THE IMPACT ON GDP

There is a significant time lag between transforming an education system and achieving economic growth. If an education system is transformed, it will take some time to have a full impact on the educational outcomes of school leavers. Obviously, the length of time depends on the complexity of the reforms, but 10–20 years is a realistic assumption – this is the assumption we make. Even once these school leavers accomplish greater education achievement, they will initially be a small portion of the labour force. It takes at least 40 years to fully transform the cognitive skills of the labour force.

In other words, the estimates in the section above are best thought of as the long-run outcomes of a labour force with improved cognitive skills. In the analysis presented in this report, we are primarily interested in demonstrating the scale of the economic cost that we currently face because of achievement gaps – so we assume that a reform programme to improve reading skills so that all children were reading well by 11 was started around 1980, and we look at how this would have fed through into the impact on economic growth by today and in the near future. Because it would not be until 2035 that the entire workforce would have been affected by improved achievement among the poorest school leavers, if anything our estimates err on the conservative side. The long-term impact will be even higher.

On more optimistic assumptions:

- GDP this year could have been around £18.4 billion or 1.2% higher.
- GDP in 2020 could be around £30.6 billion or 2% higher.
- GDP in 2025 could be around £42.9 billion or 2.8% higher.

On more pessimistic assumptions:

- GDP this year could have been around £13.8 billion or 0.9% higher.
- GDP in 2020 could be around £23 billion or 1.5% higher.
- GDP in 2025 could be around £32.1 billion or 2.1% higher.

APPENDIX 3: ENCOURAGING AND ENABLING PARENTS TO SUPPORT THEIR CHILDREN'S READING

Save the Children commissioned EdComs to assist in exploring options for providing advice and/or information direct to parents in order to help them support their children reading.

This work addressed two key questions:

1. What behaviour/actions by parents best help children learn to read well? What would some clear and simple evidence-based advice to parents look like?
2. How could this advice best be communicated in such a way that maximises the chances of being effective at influencing behaviour?

EdComs recommended that the message of 'Ten minutes a day' is supported by evidence, and would provide a strong message, manageable by most parents.¹³⁸ A 2013 research study in the USA found that significant results have been seen with as little as ten minutes of daily reading, especially with developmental readers. Students who have ten minutes' daily independent reading time in addition to reading instruction have significantly higher scores on the vocabulary subtest of the California Achievement Test than similar students who have reading instruction only.¹³⁹ Similarly, experts at Oxford University Press found that just ten minutes of reading with their child each day is one of the best ways parents can support their children's education.¹⁴⁰

While some campaigns and academic studies have suggested 10–30 minutes a day, or 20 minutes a day,¹⁴¹ or four books a month,¹⁴² there is enough evidence that just ten minutes a day can make a difference, and can be viewed as more manageable by parents, and so is an appropriate message to be used by the *Read On. Get On.* campaign.

A little bit of reading every day is probably better than less frequent, more extended periods of reading. Students who read on a daily basis, even for a few minutes, may experience more growth in reading

ability than students who read for an extended period once or twice a week, even though total reading time is the same.¹⁴³ There is extensive evidence for an association between reading frequency and reading attainment, although it is difficult to establish causality without longitudinal evidence.¹⁴⁴

A further core message from this review of evidence was that talking about books and stories is as important as reading them. It is not just the reading that is important – the type of conversations related to the print and their emotional quality are even more important. It is important for parents and children not just to read the book aloud, but to allow and encourage discussion.¹⁴⁵ Simple books with just one or two words per page are as beneficial as more traditional storybooks. More complex dialogue is stimulating, so less discussion is needed, whereas simpler texts stimulate more complex discussion. Both types of books generate more complex language than a free-play situation.¹⁴⁶

Stories are important, particularly for young children. In international research, the relationship between frequency of reading stories and novels and reading attainment within a country is a positive one.¹⁴⁷ Young children's books consist of a (usually) predictable story with stable visual cues (two-dimensional illustrations). Thus, the child has a number of environmental cues to aid deeper levels of comprehension of the language presented within the text.¹⁴⁸

However, it doesn't just have to be about books – other forms of reading can be a way of encouraging children to read. It is important to make available a wide range of reading materials that are not books, including magazines, newspapers, websites (including blogs) and emails, to stimulate the interest of children and young people.¹⁴⁹ Drawing exclusively on book-related literacy runs the risk of excluding children who are not familiar or comfortable with books.¹⁵⁰

APPENDIX 4: ANALYSING THE POTENTIAL FOR IMPROVEMENT IN READING AT THE END OF PRIMARY SCHOOL

This appendix explains in more detail the analysis carried out by CentreForum to assess the potential for improvement in reading at the end of primary school.

In the context of this analysis, 'reading well' is judged in terms of pupils' performance in the reading test in the summer of their last year of primary school. 'Reading well' corresponds to an equivalent to the more demanding level of attainment set by the government, which will come into effect from 2016 onwards. (The equivalent in the current test is known as a 'level 4b' although the new system will not refer to it as such.)

In 2013, 75% of pupils were already reading well by the 2016 definition, although there were sizable differences in literacy rates by gender and in different income and ethnic groups (see the main body of this report for details).

In order to assess the potential for improvement, the analysis modelled the combined impacts of three different types of interventions which evidence suggests will help underperforming pupils catch up. It is not the intention to specify the precise policy package required to deliver the goal of all children reading well by the end of primary school:

- all pupils making at least the expected rate of progress between the ages of 5 and 11, accounting for their individual starting points near the beginning of primary school
- increased use of well-evidenced interventions such as one-to-one tuition for disadvantaged pupils, paid out of the pupil premium, to improve their reading during their time at primary school
- improved early years provision, to better equip children before they start primary school.

The analysis made use of an extract from National Pupil Database, of all pupils in state-funded schools in England sitting the reading test in summer 2013, to model the effects of the above, and the implications for literacy.

IMPACT OF PUPILS MAKING AT LEAST 'EXPECTED PROGRESS'

The focus of the education system is increasingly on the progress that pupils make from their respective starting points at entry to primary school. While a less able pupil cannot necessarily be expected to do as well as a more able one, all pupils should have access to an education that helps them to fulfil their potential.

The approach to calculating pupils' expected progress follows that proposed for secondary schools.¹⁵¹ By this method, pupils are split into categories of prior attainment based on their scores from the communication, language and literacy component of the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile at the end of the first year of primary school. The expected reading-test score at the end of primary school can then be calculated for each group by taking the average score for all pupils in that group. Pupils making expected progress are those performing at least as well as the average for their prior-attainment group.

Despite the shift in emphasis, towards progress, the implications for the number of pupils able to read well as a result of making just average progress are striking. If all pupils were to make at least the average rate of progress for pupils with similar starting points after their first year of primary school, 91% of pupils could be reading well. (The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile provides an assessment of a child's level of development at the end of their first year of primary school. It is the method of assessment that is closest to the future baseline assessments that will be conducted by schools under the new system. Here, we use the average of the communication, language and literacy assessments.)

ADDITIONAL IMPACT OF ONE-TO-ONE TUITION

The Education Endowment Foundation Toolkit identifies one-to-one tuition as among the most effective interventions to help pupils catch up in reading, by around five months per course. While it is also one of the more expensive interventions available, at around £800 per pupil per term, assuming a one-term intervention it is well within the annual pupil premium allocation. Beginning in autumn 2014, primary schools will receive £1,300 per year for each pupil eligible for free school meals.

If a single course of one-to-one tuition were provided to each disadvantaged pupil who was still not reading well, and if they were to make expected progress, the literacy rate could increase to 94%.

ADDITIONAL IMPACT OF IMPROVED EARLY YEARS PROVISION

The final intervention considered was an improvement in early years provision, in order to better prepare children ahead of primary school. This was represented by an improvement in their starting points, in the form of a 15% increase in their assessment scores near the beginning of primary school, and the subsequent impact on their reading ability were they to make the expected progress from their new starting points.

Combined with the other impacts, this has the potential to raise the literacy rate to 96% of pupils reading well by the end of primary school, compared with 75% now.

There is a range of other interventions that could further improve literacy such that a goal of all pupils reading well should be in reach for 2025.

ENDNOTES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

¹ See box on page 4 for a full description of the definition of 'reading well' used in this report.

I NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

² The Rt Hon Alan Milburn (2013) 'The Chair of the Commission's statement on the launch of the *State of the Nation 2013* report' <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/state-of-the-nation-2013>

³ The Sutton Trust, *The Social Mobility Summit: Report of the Summit*, London 21–22 May 2012, <http://www.suttontrust.com/our-work/research/item/social-mobility-report/>

⁴ J Bladen and S Machin (2008) *Up and Down the Generational Income Ladder in Britain: Past changes and future prospects*, London: London School of Economics http://www.sire.ac.uk/funded-events/mobility/mobility_per_cent20papers/BladenMachin.pdf

⁵ The *Guardian* article, published online on Thursday 14th November 2013 'David Cameron admits ministers must 'do far more' to increase social mobility' <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/nov/14/david-cameron-social-mobility-major>

⁶ Politics.co.uk online article, published Monday 14 May 2012, Nick Clegg 'pupil premium' speech in full <http://www.politics.co.uk/comment-analysis/2012/05/14/nick-clegg-pupil-preium-speech-in-fullm>

⁷ Politics.co.uk online article, published Monday 21 May 2012, Ed Miliband 'social mobility' speech in full <http://www.politics.co.uk/comment-analysis/2012/05/21/ed-miliband-social-mobility-speech-in-full>

⁸ CBI (2012) *First Steps: A new approach for our schools*, http://www.cbi.org.uk/media/1845483/cbi_education_report_191112.pdf

⁹ Save the Children (2014) *A Fair Start for Every Child*

¹⁰ Save the Children (2014) *Too Young to Fail*

¹¹ Save the Children (2014) *A Fair Start for Every Child*

¹² R Wheeler, R Ager, B Burge and J Sizmur (2013, revised 2014) *Achievement of 15-Year-Olds in England: PISA 2012 National Report* (OECD Programme for International Student Assessment) London: Department for Education https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/299658/programme-for-international-student-assessment-pisa-2012-national-report-for-england.pdf Assumes 38 PISA points is equivalent to year of education

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¹⁴ J Gross (ed) (2008) *Getting in Early: Primary schools and early intervention*, London: The Smith Institute and the Centre for Social Justice <http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/publications/getting-in-early>

¹⁵ K Freeman and M Hartshorne (2009) 'Speech, Language and Communication Needs and the Early Years', ICAN Talk Series – Issue 7. London: ICAN http://www.ican.org.uk/~media/ican2/Whats_per_cent20the_per_cent20Issue/Evidence/7_per_cent20Speech_per_cent20Language_per_cent20and_per_cent20Communication_per_cent20Needs_per_cent20and_per_cent20the_per_cent20Early_per_cent20Years.ashx

¹⁶ J Gross (ed) (2008) *Getting in Early: Primary schools and early intervention*, London: The Smith Institute and the Centre for Social Justice

¹⁷ CBI (2014) *Gateway to Growth: CBI/Pearson Education and Skills Survey 2014*, London: CBI <http://www.cbi.org.uk/media-centre/press-releases/2014/07/employers-want-education-system-to-better-prepare-young-people-for-life-outside-school-gates-outside-school-gates-cbi-pearson-survey/>

¹⁸ G Dugdale and C Clark (2008) *Literacy Changes Lives: An advocacy resource*, London: National Literacy Trust http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/assets/0000/0401/Literacy_changes_lives_2008.pdf

¹⁹ R Levy, S Little, P Clough, C Nutbrown, J Bishop, T Lamb and D Yamada-Rice (2014) *Attitudes to Reading and Writing and their links with Social Mobility 1914–2014: An evidence review*, University of Sheffield, School of Education, (Commissioned by Booktrust) <http://fileserver.booktrust.org.uk/usr/resources/1077/booktrust100-final-report-17-march-2014.pdf>

²⁰ Graham Allen MP (2011) *Early Intervention: The next steps* (An Independent Report to Her Majesty's Government), London: Cabinet Office https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/284086/early-intervention-next-steps2.pdf

²¹ D Jama and G Dugdale (2012) *Literacy: State of the nation – a picture of literacy in the UK today*, London: National Literacy Trust http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/assets/0001/2847/Literacy_State_of_the_Nation_-_2_Aug_2011.pdf

²² OECD (2013) *Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) Country Note: England and Northern Ireland* http://www.oecd.org/site/piaac/Country_per_cent20note_per_cent20_per_cent20United_per_cent20Kingdom.pdf

²³ Department for Education (2014) *Reforming assessment and accountability for primary schools: Government response to consultation on primary school assessment and accountability*, London: Department for Education https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/297595/Primary_Accountability_and_Assessment_Consultation_Response.pdf

²⁴ The Rt Hon David Laws MP (2013) *The Schools' Minister speaks at the National Education Trust on Higher Standards: Completing the journey* <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/david-laws-speaks-to-the-national-education-trust-on-raising-standards>

²⁵ Standards & Testing Agency (2014) Key Stage 2 English reading test and framework (draft): National curriculum tests from 2016. Available for download: www.gov.uk/government/publications

²⁶ Department for Children, Schools and Families (2010) *The National Strategies – APP Reading: Assessment Focuses and Criteria*. (Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency) <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110809101133/http://wsassets.s3.amazonaws.com/ws/nso/pdf/44c1317f5bdb02732731cdf2820f45bb.pdf> This material is not currently promoted by government, but is still an accurate reflection of the current levels.

²⁷ <http://www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/mosergroup/Annex.pdf>

2 AN UNFAIR AND UNEQUAL COUNTRY

²⁸ Derived from National Curriculum Assessments at Key Stage 2, 2012 to 2013 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-assessments-at-key-stage-2-2012-to-2013>

²⁹ The analysis of the National Pupil Database is based on the most up-to-date data available at the point of carrying out the research and writing the report. On the 28th of August provisional 2014 results were published. It was not possible to integrate these into this report.

³⁰ See Annex I for further details on the Millennium Cohort Study and methodology used by Newcastle University.

³¹ CentreForum analysis of National Pupil Database for the *Read On. Get On.* coalition. Other statistics from table 8b here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-assessments-at-key-stage-2-2012-to-2013>

³² Ofsted has raised this issue, in relation to secondary school in particular. See <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/unseen-children-access-and-achievement-20-years> More recently the House of Commons Select committee has investigated the worrying trends on the attainment of low-income, white pupils. See <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/education-committee/news/white-working-class-report/>

³³ This is based on a slightly different measure of 'reading well' to that used in the other analysis in this section. It uses trends in Level 4 attainment, rather than 4b. See table 2 here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-assessments-at-key-stage-2-2012-to-2013>

³⁴ Clague and Levy (2013) *Bookbuzz: Evidence of best practice*: <http://files.server.booktrust.org.uk/usr/resources/839/bookbuzz-2012-13-final-report.pdf>

³⁵ Merchant, G. (2013) *The Trashmaster: Literacy and new media*, Language and Education

³⁶ The National Literacy Trust (NLT) conducts an annual literacy survey, which looks at the literacy attitudes and behaviours of 8–16-year-olds and how these impact on their attainment. More than 120,000 children and young people have taken part in these surveys since 2005. NLT conducted bespoke analysis for this report focusing on the enjoyment of reading, reading behaviour, reading attitudes and access to books for 2013 as well as over time since 2005 for the 8–11 age group. In addition, this research examined new analyses of the link between reading and socio-economic background (assessed by Free School Meal uptake) both in 2013 and over time for this age group and how certain subgroups of pupils are potentially doubly disadvantaged.

³⁷ This includes children with a Special Education Need with statements at school action or school action plus.

³⁸ Derived from table 8b from here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-assessments-at-key-stage-2-2012-to-2013>

³⁹ B Lamb (2009) *Lamb Inquiry: Special Educational Needs and parental confidence*, DCSF

⁴⁰ Of those with 'severe learning difficulties' 3% achieved the equivalent to the new expected level in 2013; of those with 'profound and multiple learning difficulties' the figure was also 3%; in contrast 59% of those with a visual impairment, 50% of those with a hearing impairment and 48% of those with a physical disability were reading well at this level by age 11.

⁴¹ S E Stothard, M J Snowling, D V M Bishop, B C Chipcase and C A Kaplan, *Journal of Speech, Language and Hearing Research*, April 1998, 41, 2

⁴² For a general overview see http://www.bestevidence.org.uk/assets/what_works_for_struggling_readers.pdf And for the latest evaluation of Reading Recovery see [http://ilc.ioe.ac.uk/rr/documents/Reading_Recovery_in_the_United_Kingdom_and_the_Republic_of_Ireland_\(2012-13\).pdf](http://ilc.ioe.ac.uk/rr/documents/Reading_Recovery_in_the_United_Kingdom_and_the_Republic_of_Ireland_(2012-13).pdf)

⁴³ S Baars, E Bernardes, A Elwick, A Malortie, T McAleavy, L McInerney, L Menzies and A Riggall (2014) *Lessons from London Schools: Investigating success*, London: CfBT, Centre for London, LKMco Ltd. <http://cdn.cfbt.com/~media/cfbtcorporate/files/research/2014/r-london-schools-2014.pdf>

⁴⁴ IFS (2014) *Lessons from London Schools for Attainment Gaps and Social Mobility* <http://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/7246>

⁴⁵ Ofsted (2013) *Unseen Children: Access and achievement 20 years on – evidence report* http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/a-and-a/Unseen_per_cent20children_per_cent20-per_cent20access_per_cent20and_per_cent20achievement_per_cent2020_per_cent20years_per_cent20on.pdf

⁴⁶ Children are not assessed by age, but by grade in PIRLS. The target sample is 4th grade students, ie, those in their fourth year of schooling. The average age of these pupils is quite different across countries, eg, 10.3 years in England, 9.7 in Norway and 10.9 in Denmark.

⁴⁷ Malta has been excluded from the analysis. It is significantly smaller than other countries surveyed and its results represent a significant outlier.

⁴⁸ In PIRLS approaches for translating differences in achievement, scores into years of schooling are less well developed than they are, for example, with PISA – see <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/keyfindings/pisa-2012-results-overview.pdf> However, in 2006 Iceland and Norway administered PIRLS in two adjacent grades (four and five), which allowed a calculation of the average difference in reading achievement between the two grades in these countries. Research by Martin, Mullis and Foy (2011) suggests that the difference of approximately 40 score points (38 for Iceland, 42 for Norway) could be interpreted as the expected difference in achievement as pupils go from grade four to grade five. See M O Martin, I V S Mullis, and P Foy (2011) *Age distribution and reading achievement configurations among fourth-grade students in PIRLS 2006*. IERI Monograph Series: Issues and Methodologies in Large-Scale Assessments, Volume 4, pp. 9–33. However, using 40 points as an equivalent to one year's schooling should be seen as just indicative given, especially, that they are based on an evaluation of adjacent grade scores in two countries only and because it assumes rates of progress are broadly similar between grades 4 and 5 to the rates of progress between later grades.

⁴⁹ Pupils at the *High International Benchmark* (550 to 625 score points) can typically locate and distinguish significant actions and details embedded across literary texts and make inferences from them to explain relationships between intentions, actions, events, and feelings. In informational texts they can, for example, locate and distinguish relevant information within a dense text or a complex table and make inferences about logical connections to provide explanations and reasons. At the *Advanced International Benchmark* (at or above 625 score points) pupils can, for example, integrate ideas and evidence across a literary text to appreciate overall themes. In informational texts, pupils at this skill level can, for example, distinguish and interpret complex information from different parts of the text, and provide full text-based support. For further details see I V S Mullis, M O Martin, P Foy, and K T Drucker (2012) *PIRLS 2011 international results in reading*, Chestnut Hill, MA: TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, Boston College. Available: <http://timssandpirls.bc.edu/pirls2011/reports/international-results-pirls.html>

3 WHY READING MATTERS

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- ⁵⁹ The contention that low levels of literacy are a significant contributing factor to income inequality and the risk of unemployment is supported by evidence that the pay-offs to investment in better basic skills for adults are considerably higher in the UK than in other countries. See: A Vignoles et al. (2008) *The Value of Basic Skills in the British Labour Market*, London: Centre for the Economics of Education.
- ⁶⁰ See, for example, Thomas Piketty in *Capital in the 21st Century* which argues that greater wage equality in countries such as those in Scandinavia is in large part down to the "fact that their education system is relatively egalitarian and inclusive" (p307). Elsewhere, he argues that "The principle mechanism for convergence at the international as well as the domestic level is the diffusion of knowledge. In other words, the poor catch up with the rich to the extent that they achieve the same level of technological know-how, skill and education." (p73)
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- ⁷³ The per household figures are based on 2013 ONS data on household numbers in the UK. See <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/family-demography/families-and-households/2013/stb-families.html>
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4 FOUR KEY DRIVERS OF READING WELL: COMMUNITIES, PRE-SCHOOL, SCHOOL AND HOME

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- ⁹² In PIRLS 'general reading interest', which is an index score of questions relating to pupils agreement to the following statements: "I would be happy if someone gives me a book as a present", "I think reading is boring", "I would like to have more time for reading", and "I enjoy reading". Answer categories are 1 = disagree a lot; 2 = disagree a little; 3 = agree a little; and 4 = agree a lot.
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- ¹¹⁹ H Aston and H Grayson (2013) *Teacher Guide: Rapid review of parental engagement and narrowing the gap in attainment for disadvantaged children*, Slough and Oxford: NFER and Oxford University
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¹²⁸ T Cameron-Faulkner and C Noble (2013) A comparison of book text and Child Directed Speech. *First Language*, 33 (3) pp 268–279

¹²⁹ C Clark and C Phythian-Sence (2008) *Interesting Choice: The (relative) importance of choice and interest in reader engagement*, London: National Literacy Trust http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/assets/0000/0541/Interesting_choice_2008.pdf

¹³⁰ C Clark, S Osborne and R Akerman (2008) *Young People's Self-Perceptions as Readers: An investigation including family, peer and school influences*, London: National Literacy Trust http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/assets/0000/0558/Self-perceptions_as_readers_2008.pdf

5 A COMPREHENSIVE RESPONSE TO ENSURE ALL CHILDREN ARE READING WELL

¹³¹ Our aim as a coalition and campaign is to get as close to 100% as possible, but we are arguing that a minimum goal of 96% of children reading well by 11 should be set.

¹³² This has been modelled by improving EYFSP scores by 15% and analysing the consequent improvement in reading scores if pupils then made the expected rate of progress from this new starting position.

¹³³ See Appendix 4 for further details on the methodology used by CentreForum to generate this analysis.

¹³⁴ To reflect an increasing awareness of the importance of early intervention, the pupil premium is now to be front loaded in primary schools – from autumn 2014, a disadvantaged pupil will carry an additional £1,300 per year into a school to help 'close the gap'. See <https://www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings>

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APPENDICES

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¹⁴⁶ T Cameron-Faulkner and C Noble (2013) A comparison of book text and child directed speech. *First Language*, 33 (3) pp 268–279

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READ ON. GET ON.

How reading can help children escape poverty

Each year we leave thousands of young children, very many of them poor, behind in their reading. This means they're less likely to experience the joy of reading, and they then struggle for the rest of their education and career. This report sets out who we're leaving behind and why.

Recognising the fundamental importance of reading well by age 11 and optimistic about our chances of turning this situation around, a wide coalition of organisations has come together to launch the *Read On. Get On.* campaign.

Together we will take action to work towards a historic goal for the UK:
all children should be reading well by the age of 11 by 2025.

Helping children read

