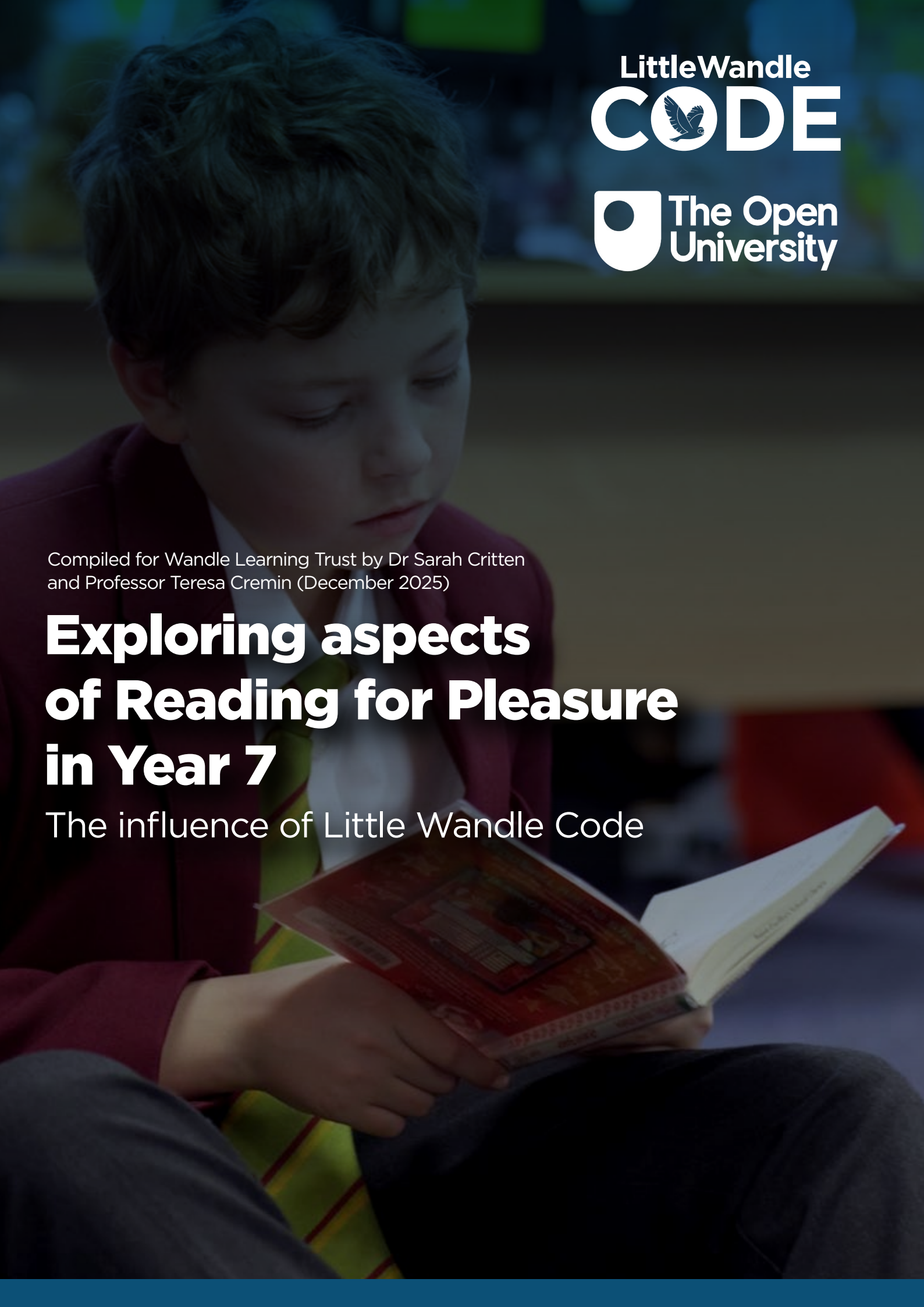

Little Wandle CODE

The Open University

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Exploring aspects of Reading for Pleasure in Year 7

The influence of Little Wandle Code

Contents

Introduction

In the light of concerns about young people's declining attitude to reading, both internationally and nationally (Clark et al., 2025; OECD, 2021), this report focuses on over 4000 adolescents' dispositions and practices as readers and summarises the related findings from the Little Wandle Code reading intervention UK data set. The report was commissioned by Wandle Learning Trust and undertaken by The Open University team.

Commencing in 2024, the work first involved designing the attitudinal aspects of the survey (see Appendix 1: 'You as a Reader' survey) in collaboration with Wandle Learning Trust, and creating the categories of readers used for the analysis, as detailed in the methodology. Second, resources and recommendations for schools were developed to support their own provision to nurture reading for pleasure amongst adolescent readers aged 11–12 (see Appendix 2: School report template). Third, the survey data was analysed and findings are presented in this report with the related conclusions and recommendations.

The report commences with a focused, context-setting literature review. Initially, the notion of reading for pleasure is considered, and then the parlous state of play regarding teenagers' desire to read, their often-negative attitudes, reading behaviours and favoured genres as reported in national surveys, are summarised.

The report then turns to synthesise the substantial body of research literature which indicates the advantages associated with being a reader in childhood. Whilst acknowledging that much of this evidence is correlational not causational, the breadth of evidence from around the globe corroborates the frequently asserted OECD (2002) claim that that 'the will to read influences this skill and vice versa'.

Evidence of the reciprocity between being able to read (being capable of so doing) and choosing to read (being motivated to make the time) is also presented and discussed with particular reference to the age phase of the Little Wandle Code work, which research suggests is a most efficacious age in relation to the bi-directional nature of reading motivation and reading comprehension.

The review then considers the salience of young people's identities as readers and the concept of motivation, before finally turning to the far smaller body of research into pedagogical approaches that has been shown to foster teenagers' engagement in reading.

Following the literature review, the methods deployed to examine young people's attitudes are detailed and the analytic process is outlined. The 'You as a Reader' data, drawing on the survey results both before and after the Little Wandle Code intervention, is then presented and discussed. The report closes with a reflective summary of the insights and offers some recommendations, not only in relation to the Code work per se, but for adolescents' reading more broadly.

Literature review

Considering the concept

Different terms are used around the world to capture the dispositions and motivations of those young people who read in their own time and do so regularly. Young readers who exercise their agency and engage in 'free voluntary reading' (Krashen, 2004) are also seen to be participating in 'recreational reading' (Ross, McKechnie and Rothbauer, 2006) which the International Literacy Association assert is the right of every child (ILA, 2018).

Additionally, this is described as 'volitional reading' – undertaken for the personal satisfaction of the reader in their own free time (Powell, 2014) – and as 'spontaneous pleasure reading (ludic reading)' (Nell, 1988). Such reading is frequently perceived as a proxy for 'engagement', the term used by the OECD in their international PIRLS and PISA surveys. They recognise that engaged readers are motivated to read and identify four features of this engagement:

- interest in and enjoyment of reading
- a sense of control over what one reads
- involvement in the social dimension of reading
- diverse and frequent reading practices

(OECD, 2019, p. 29)

Historically, reading has been researched predominantly as an act of cognitive engagement, particularly in the early years, but over time the multidimensional nature of reader engagement has begun to be more widely acknowledged and examined. A recent review of this literature notes that the four strands of reader engagement – cognitive, behavioural, affective, and social engagement (Lee, Jang and Conradi Smith, 2021) – combine in dynamic interactive ways within and across different social contexts. However, this meta-analysis of 60 papers on reader engagement since 2011 indicates that engagement tends to be considered from a behavioural perspective – few studies have examined students' volitional engagement in social cultural contexts and school communities.

In England, the term 'reading for pleasure' is widely used alongside the term 'a love of reading'. The former was mandated in the National Curriculum back in 2014 (DfE, 2014), remains in use in current policy guidance (DfE, 2023) and is embedded within the discourse of Ofsted and NPQLL training materials. However, in some policy and practice contexts, the term reading for pleasure has proved problematic.

Readers respond to texts with a diverse range of emotions, and the content of a text, be it print or digital, will not necessarily induce pleasurable engagement. Instead, the reader may feel frustration or even anger at what they read, e.g. about climate change or loss and sorrow in the context of a novel. Nonetheless, if they choose to complete the article or the book, they are actively seeking some kind of satisfaction – increased knowledge, understanding, coherence, perhaps.

Additionally, whilst school-based provision for reading and the teaching of skills may be perceived as enjoyable in the moment by some children, it is not likely to be directed towards the development of students' own reading for pleasure, that is their volitional reading of choice at home. So conceptual clarity is necessary. For the purposes of the Code study and this report, the following definition has been used.

Reading for pleasure is seen as:

> **Volitional reading, driven by readers' own goals and interests – which may include social and relational ones – in anticipation of some form of satisfaction.**
>
> (Cremin and Scholes, 2024, p. 4)

Nonetheless, in national contexts where a focus on standards and performativity holds sway (Ball, 2000), such reading is often viewed as an optional extra within a crowded curriculum, a focus that can only be attended to once the core teaching and learning has been completed. In part, this stems from conceptions of reading – it is commonly perceived as a personal, solitary experience and accordingly viewed as a cognitive skill that is individually taught and tested. This tends to eschew the inherently social aspects of reading and the experience of being a reader, which are increasingly being researched and more widely acknowledged (Boyask et al., 2022; Cremin et al., 2014, 2024; Ivey and Johnston, 2023).

The decline in reading for pleasure

International surveys consistently document a decline in the number of teenagers who express enjoyment in reading. For example, the 2018 PISA results reveal a continual and growing disinterest in reading for pleasure among 15-year-olds and it is commonly noted that such reading decreases with age. Country-specific studies affirm this, for example Adelson et al. (2019) in America, and Clark et al. (2025) in the UK – the NLT data indicates that reading for pleasure is at its lowest level in 20 years. The most recent data (n: over

100,000) indicates that between 2024 and 2025, the enjoyment of reading amongst boys aged 11 to 16 dropped markedly (Clark et al., 2025).

Indeed, it is worth noting that 64% of their survey data was derived from 11–14-year-olds, indicating considerable concerns about this age group whose attitudes to reading are predominantly negative, and are likely to have skewed the findings.

Large-scale surveys also offer insights into the frequency with which teenagers choose to read and include attention to what is being read. Whilst the 2018 PISA survey indicated a slight increase in the amount of time students gave to reading (OECD, 2021), this did not involve sustained periods of immersion in texts and was not coupled with increases in enjoyment.

These results also indicated that disengaged teenagers were less likely to read long-form fiction or non-fiction and were more likely to read to fulfil practical tasks (OECD, 2021), often using digital devices such as laptops, tablets or smartphones to find and read information. Unsurprisingly, there is evidence that young people are engaging with more digital reading activities for functional purposes and are using digital devices and accessing online content, such as news or websites containing practical information (Sizmur et al., 2019).

Young people's use of digital devices is influenced by multiple factors. Such devices are more likely to be used by those with an immigrant background (20% of immigrant students compared to 14% of non-immigrant students), from low SES backgrounds (16% low SES backgrounds compared to 13% high SES backgrounds), and by boys (15% of boys compared to 14% of girls) (OECD, 2021).

Although there is an increased usage of digital devices, reading through paper formats continues to be important. The PISA 2018 data indicates print-based texts continue to be an important choice when reading for pleasure (OECD, 2021). Indeed, those 15-year-olds who chose to read print-based texts not only performed better in reading assessments but also spent more time reading for enjoyment.

Other differences between young people's reading attitudes, achievements and confidence along socio-economic lines are also notable. The PIRLS and PISA data shows that children and young people from advantaged backgrounds reported reading for pleasure more often than their peers from under-served contexts (Mullis et al., 2023; OECD, 2021). Some teenagers face reduced access to texts at home and in their local community due to library closures, financial constraints and so forth, and own far fewer books than their peers, and this has consequences (Evans et al., 2010).

As this research study of 27 nations with over 70,000 cases revealed, those young people growing up in homes with many books (described as the home's scholarly culture) get far more 'schooling' than those from bookless homes. This holds good in both rich and poor nations

and represents as much an advantage as having parents who attended university (Evans et al., 2010). Book ownership and access to books in the home is also seen as beneficial in a meta-analysis of 108 studies, as the researcher (Lindsay, 2010) indicated, a beneficial relationship exists between book ownership and reading attainment.

Gender differences are also noteworthy, with girls reporting enjoyment of reading more than boys, as well as higher levels of reading frequency and reading for longer time periods. In 2018, in all PISA-participating countries, girls reported much higher levels of reading enjoyment than boys (OECD, 2021), and this is seen in the NLT survey also (Clark et al., 2025). As research indicates, there is a relationship between the will to read and the skill (e.g. Sullivan and Brown, 2015; OECD, 2019) and there is a related gender gap in reading attainment at this age phase also (OECD, 2019). In school settings, boys can perceive reading as 'for boffins' and may associate anti-reading sentiments with popularity (Scholes, 2019a). However, as Scholes (2021) notes, this view of reading has also been discerned in girls.

Assumptions about reading and the myths that surround it also shape the attitudes and interests of young people. These include, for example, the view that boys don't read, that young people should only read novels, that reading is solitary, and that reading only matters in the primary years (Loh et al., 2025). Such myths deserve to be challenged as they hinder effective action. Nonetheless, they are highly prevalent and derived from multiple influences, including social media and wider society, and affect parents' and teachers' views, impact on the school curriculum and pedagogic practice, and shape teenagers' engagement in volitional reading.

The benefits of reading for pleasure

Regularly and frequently volitionally engaging in reading is longitudinally associated with a range of benefits, both academically and socially (e.g. Mak and Fancourt, 2019; Sullivan and Brown, 2015; Sun et al., 2023) which is why governments around the globe are affording it new attention. A 'reading for pleasure turn' (Cremin and Scholes, 2024: 2) in both policy and practice has been triggered by these and other results which indicate the associated advantages of the habit of reading. The OECD (2021), underscoring this, assert that engagement in reading can help mediate the effects of gender and young people's socio-economic status – it is arguably a matter of social justice.

Evidence of the reciprocal relationship between the will to read and the skill – between recreational reading and children's assessed reading achievement – has been documented, within and across the OECD's international data set and in national surveys (e.g. Cheema, 2018; Gilleece and Eivers, 2018; Malanchini et al., 2017; Troyer et al., 2019; OECD, 2019).

Engagement in reading can help mediate the effects of gender and young people's socio-economic status – it is arguably a matter of social justice

These and many other similar studies demonstrate a correlation between those young people who choose to read and enjoy it, and thus read frequently, and their assessed levels of reading comprehension. Whilst this is correlational data, not causational, the plethora of studies indicating this relationship deserve to be recognised. In particular, studies show better academic outcomes (e.g. Sullivan and Brown, 2015; Torppa et al., 2020), greater engagement in learning (OECD, 2019) and enhanced psychological wellbeing (e.g. Mak and Fancourt, 2020; Sun et al., 2023) accrue to those young people who read for pleasure frequently and in their own time.

Nonetheless, it is claimed that it is only from the age of around nine that the amount of time that children spend independently reading predicts a growth in reading skills (Van Bergen, Vasalampi and Torppa, 2021). Allington and McGrill-Franzen (2021) also conclude that the relationship between reading volume and reading achievement only appears once children have acquired adequate proficiency as independent readers. They highlight that it is only once children can read proficiently that they can read more frequently with ease, and that if and when they choose to do so, then reading volume predicts wider reading achievement.

This indicates the significance of supporting young readers not only to develop the skills of reading, but also to nurture their desire. Torppa et al. (2020) also argue that the reciprocity between leisure reading and reading comprehension is most evident in 12–15-year-olds, which has high significance for the Code work. Their study highlights that leisure reading is influential but notes that not every genre of reading is equal in this regard.

The presence of a 'fiction effect' (Jerrim and Moss, 2019) is evident in several studies which show the positive impact of fiction as an intrinsically motivating force that impacts on reading comprehension. For example, in large scale regression analyses of PISA data (e.g. Jerrim and Moss, 2019), in the Finnish longitudinal study of children aged 7–16 years (Torppa et al., 2019) and in school-based intervention

studies in England with adolescents (Westbrook et al., 2019), these tend to show that reading fiction books (rather than comics, magazines or newspapers) for pleasure most effectively supports reading attainment.

However, the reading of 'classic literature' has been seen to correlate negatively with adolescents' reading motivation (Locher, Becker and Pfost, 2019), re-asserting the need to pay attention to nuanced details within the complex set of studies in this field.

Recently too, research has begun to reveal that young people who read regularly report higher levels of psychological wellbeing (e.g. Kennewell et al., 2022; Vaknin-Nusbaum and Tuckwiller, 2023). One US national cohort study of 10,000 plus teenagers, indicated that early reading for pleasure is not only longitudinally associated with better mental health, but also with advanced brain structure and higher levels of cognitive performance in adolescence (Sun et al., 2023).

Cognitive growth in adolescence is also associated with early childhood reading in the 1970s British cohort study (Sullivan and Brown, 2015). Listening to the voices and views of teen readers, researchers have found that, for many, reading represents a form of relaxation, immersion, a place to escape everyday challenges and the constant performance of their identities; it offers them entertainment, agency and opportunities to connect with others – both in person and online (e.g. McGeown et al., 2020; Reddan et al., 2024; Wilhem et al., 2016).

In an Israeli study, correlations between reading motivation and wellbeing (interpreted as covitality – including gratitude, optimism, zest and persistence) were documented, as well as between reading motivation, covitality and reading skills (Vaknin-Nusbaum and Tuckwiller, 2023), once again evidencing the mutually enhancing relationship between the will and the skill of reading alongside psychological benefits.

Given that teenagers in England are the unhappiest in Europe, according to the Good Childhood Report (2024), and that they report school being a critical factor in their low levels of wellbeing (Good Childhood Report, 2025), there is an urgent need to support them as readers – enabling them to experience periods of calm, flow and deep engagement in texts of interest to them, as well as nurturing connections to peers and adults around reading.

In sum, reading for pleasure has considerable power and potential. It affords and is linked to academic, social and emotional benefits, as well as cognitive ones. For a fuller review of these associated benefits, see Cremin and Scholes (2024).

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Readers' identities and motivation

Whilst there is a wealth of research that draws on large-scale surveys of adolescents' attitudes and engagement as readers, as noted above, there are far fewer studies that focus on readers' motivation and identities as enacted in classroom contexts, in homes and in communities. In part, this is due to the profile afforded to volitional reading at this age phase, and also to the time and resource needed to observe, to track and to understand the changing needs, reading habits and sense of self-efficacy of individual readers over time.

Reading competence develops in response to the lived experience of reading and is closely related to reading self-efficacy, and it shapes teenagers' sense of themselves as learners, impacting on their engagement across the curriculum. When young people experience success as readers, receive positive affirmation about their views about a text for instance, and are positioned and recognised as readers by adults and their peers, this supports the development of enhanced self-efficacy, self-competence and confidence (De Naeghel et al., 2012). This not only increases their willingness and ability to discuss texts (Hall, 2012b; Ho and Lau, 2018) but also supports their wider learning.

Young people's reading identities are not fixed – they are fluid and responsive to context, influenced by the environment, the current text, their past experiences of reading, and by the identity positions as readers that are made available to them by parents, peers, teachers and others, as well as those that they choose to adopt in any given context (McGeown et al., 2020; Scholes, 2019).

Studies have shown that teenagers may hold markedly different understandings of what it means to be a reader from their teachers (Frankel, 2017). These diverse views created challenges and held some of the learners back as they were positioned as struggling readers in their teacher's eyes. Being positioned as a struggling, reluctant reader or even an able reader – or positioning oneself in this way – will dictate the types of interactions offered or participated in, thus constraining or expanding teenagers' reading

skills and sense of self-efficacy as readers (Protacio, 2019). So, their identities need to be considered within and beyond the boundaries of all reading interventions.

Understanding the ways in which individuals position themselves as readers – as disengaged, avid and so forth – can help to reveal why some do not choose to read of their own volition. Often this relates to their own desire for participation in particular groups of peers (Cremin and Swann, 2017; Ivey and Johnston, 2023). Their social connections with peers impact upon the flux of young people's identities as readers. Sellers (2019), through researching the perspectives of 13–14-year-olds, identified four categories of readers, each of which influenced the adolescents' reading habits in their social groups.

- *Resistant* readers who were affected by the dominant view of reading as something that is individual. This involved reading books in isolation. Consequently, they viewed reading as anti-social and resisted reading for fear of being socially excluded and seen as 'uncool'.
- *Indifferent* readers who viewed reading as non-social and while they did not see that as a problem, felt they didn't have time for it and more social activities took priority.
- *Outsider* readers who used reading to actively position themselves in opposition to norms.
- *Social* readers who experienced reading as a social activity integral to their social participation as their peer group were reading and talking about books.

(Sellers, 2019, paraphrased in Cremin et al., 2025, pp. 81–82)

This study not only suggests there is potential for positive social influence on teenagers' reading identities, but also that paying more attention to the way teenagers experience reading and are enabled to reflect upon it could be useful for educators seeking to motivate them to read. Other studies also seek to centre adolescents' views, for example in involving them in interviewing each other to establish what might motivate them to read. A recent study of 13–15-year-olds (Webber et al., 2025) recommended that the following elements would enhance their volitional book reading.

1. Access to quality books aligned with their interests.
2. Knowledge and skills to choose books aligned with their interests.
3. Autonomy over reading choices.
4. Reading promotion messaging which resonated with them and their ways of communicating.
5. Social reading practices which were personally enjoyable, meaningful and enriching.
6. Quality space and time to foster and sustain book reading practices.

(Webber et al., 2025, p. 79)

Their views align closely with other studies which highlight the need for text access, agency and choice, space and time to read, and opportunities to engage individually and socially around reading with texts that tempt the young people themselves and relate to their own goals and interests (for a review of the field, see Cremin et al., 2025). The nature

of RfP-oriented, school-based practice is considered in the following section, although it is worth noting here.

Regarding the multidimensional nature of reading motivation, the evidence indicates that the intrinsic motivation to read is more closely associated with reading frequency and skill than extrinsic motivation (e.g. Miyamoto, Pfost and Artel, 2018; Orkin et al., 2017). Intrinsic motivation and reading competence are recognised as reciprocal. For example, Froiland and Oros's (2014) study of nearly 9000 10–14-year-olds indicated that readers' intrinsic motivation and perceived competence, alongside teacher-reported classroom engagement, combined to predict reading achievement at 14 years of age.

The work of Miyamoto, Murayama and Lechner (2020) also longitudinally shows that the decline in students' intrinsic reading motivation between primary and early secondary schooling was associated with a smaller growth of reading proficiency. These researchers assert that positive and supportive feedback is essential in order to give students a sense of competence, encourage engagement and nurture their intrinsic motivation to read. Few studies explicitly examine the social motivation to read, although the year-long work of Ivey and Johnson (2013, 2023) in secondary classrooms, has shown the motivating power of connections and friendships around reading.

In the recent NLT survey, readers aged 8–18 were categorised into mindful, curious and social with regard to their motivations for reading (Clark et al., 2025). The numbers reported for the 11–14-year-olds were 38% mindful, 37% curious and 35% social. Interestingly, as they note, 'marginally more boys than girls identified as social readers, indicating a slightly higher inclination among boys to read for awareness and connection to issues or causes' (Clark et al., 2025, pp. 20–21). It is worth noting this conception of reading as framed by the analysis does not really relate to reading as a socially interactive practice, but more to reading for connection to wider societal causes.

Reading for pleasure practice

Relatively few studies focus on classroom practices which serve to motivate teenagers to read, compared to the number which focus on reading skill interventions (Webber et al., 2020). Nonetheless, whole-school approaches to advancing reading for pleasure pedagogy have been documented, and a range of practices noted, in studies which variously serve to develop young people's autonomy, competence and relatedness as readers. Many reading researchers draw upon these three core interrelated psychological needs which were

first articulated in self-determination theory by Ryan and Deci (2000, 2017).

Applying this to reading, researchers argue that students need a high degree of agency, volition and choice (autonomy), a sense of self-efficacy and a positive literacy identity (competence), and to feel part of a network of readers with whom they can connect (relatedness) (e.g. De Naeghel et al., 2014; Neugebauer and Gilmour, 2020). De Naeghel et al. (2014) argue that attending to each creates 'an optimally motivating classroom climate' for reading (p. 1549).

Other qualitative studies similarly identify agency, assurance and reader relationships as critical to the development of recreational readers (e.g. Cockcroft and Atkinson, 2017; Cremin et al., 2014, 2025; Francois, 2013; Ivey and Johnston 2013, 2023; Neugebauer and Gilmore, 2020; Sellers, 2019).

These investigations all confirm the positive impact of knowing individual readers and offering increased agency and choice, supporting the development of readers' assurance and self-efficacy, and enabling readers to make connections with others around reading through a socially oriented ethos and environment that includes adult role models and seeks to build reading communities.

Additionally, studies show the salient role of the responsively involved adult who not only gets to know individual readers but respects their need for time and space to read silently (Cuevas et al., 2014) as well as their potential desire to interact around reading.

Young readers' autonomy is enriched by the opportunities offered to them or created by them to exert a sense of ownership over their reading and to engage agentically. As Ivey and Friddle's (2025) classroom work highlights, even those with historical challenges around reading can develop positive reading identities when classroom interactions are meaningful and their autonomy is nurtured.

Key to this is text choice and a rich range of texts that reflect their own interests and realities (Ivey and Johnston, 2013, 2015) and relaxed conversations between peers and/or adults which can support wise choices that engage and satisfy individuals (e.g. Ng, 2018; Ross, McKechnie and Rothbauer, 2018). Choice relates to being able to choose to read formats and text types that are of interest to individuals and adult support is often needed to help teenagers find texts that match their interests (Cockroft and Atkinson, 2017; Ives et al., 2020).

Studies demonstrate that staff knowledge of young people's literate identities and any difficulties can enable them to tailor a more learner-led, autonomy-focused offer, which motivates engagement (Cremin et al., 2014; Ivey and Johnston, 2023). Interaction with young people around their own interests and connecting to their literate identities and practices beyond school, can enable relational reading connections to be made with teachers which have been seen to impact upon their desire to read and their sense of competence and self-efficacy (Cremin et al., 2025).

Studies also show that supporting young readers' connection to and acceptance by others – their relatedness – can also enhance their sense of competence as readers and lead to more positive attitudes to and interest in reading (e.g. Cockroft and Atkinson, 2017; Cremin and Swann, 2017; De Naeghel et al., 2014; Ivey and Johnston, 2013, 2023; Neugebauer and Gilmour, 2020; Sellers, 2019). In one study through multi-level modelling based on a survey of 4269 Flemish 15-year-olds, De Naeghel et al. (2014) found that although both autonomy and/or competence were significant, perceived teacher involvement in reading was more strongly associated with students' intrinsic reading motivation.

Teacher investment in and acceptance of the young as readers, their interests and making connections with them, was seen to be critical. This is also seen in an intervention study that aimed to help disengaged adolescent readers – when their teachers got to know them as readers and enabled them to explore and challenge their own ambivalence towards reading, this positively shaped the time the young people spent reading (Cockroft and Atkinson, 2017). Through the process, the teenagers felt noticed and believed their self-efficacy and confidence as readers improved.

The impact of personal relationships around reading and the need for relatedness and affiliation to others – both peers and adults – has perhaps been underrated in the field of reading. Recently, research has shown that children derive pleasure from informally chatting about self-chosen books, making text recommendations to others, and using texts to make connections, both social and textual – although this interactive focus as a motivating force has been studied more at the primary

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The evidence indicates there is value in developing young people's autonomy, competence and relatedness as readers

phase (Alexander and Jarman, 2018; Coakley Fields, 2018; Cremin et al., 2014, 2024) than secondary (Francois, 2013; Ivey and Johnston, 2015, 2023; Ng, 2020).

In one study of 13–14-year-olds, Ivey and Johnston (2015) found that offering autonomy and freedom of choice from a carefully curated list of contemporary and 'edgy' fiction which the teenagers could read at their own pace, with others or alone, created very considerable conversational connections. This talk occurred not only between peers but also between teachers and parents, as the teenagers experienced these highly engaging narratives and sought to reflect on them with others. In the reading aloud study of Westbrook et al. (2018), relaxed conversation was also triggered in response to the text, although this aspect was not closely examined. However, interactive read aloud, with student-led questions and extensive discussion, is a key feature of the reading aloud practices documented by Batini and Toti (2024) and Batini and De Carlos (2025).

Book clubs, both in-person and online, have been researched with teenagers and appear to trigger conversations which nurture social connections and reading enjoyment as well as enhance comprehension (Gan and Loh, 2024; Whittingham and Huffman, 2009). This has also been documented by Tijms, Stoop and Polleck (2018) who found that book clubs not only improved teenagers' attitudes to reading, but that they enhanced their social and emotional competencies and reading comprehension. The social affordances of informal book clubs deserve more attention for their potential to foster reading for pleasure.

To summarise, the evidence indicates there is value in developing young people's autonomy, competence and relatedness as readers. Various classroom-based studies indicate this can happen through developing individually oriented approaches, such as enabling choice, adults getting to know readers, supporting text choices and nurturing their sense of self-efficacy. These are seen to be supportive, alongside more socially oriented approaches, such as reading aloud, book clubs and relaxed reading environments in which talking about self-chosen texts, sharing views and making recommendations within the wider community of readers is normal.

The role of the adults in enabling this dynamic combination of individually and socially oriented approaches to function successfully is critical. In addition, the adolescents' access to diverse and tempting texts and time to read them is recognised as critical (Cremin et al., 2025).

Present study

As part of the piloting process for their Little Wandle Code reading intervention, Wandle Learning Trust screened the reading abilities of all Year 7 children from the participating schools. Those children who didn't achieve a certain threshold of skill were invited to take part in the Code intervention and are henceforth referred to as the Code group in this report. The remainder of the children who scored above the threshold of skill did not take part in the intervention and proceeded as usual with their standard curriculum. Henceforth, they are referred to as the No Code group in this report.

The Code intervention was delivered over approximately 33 weeks by specially trained staff in each participating school. Each week was designed with four 25-minute teaching sessions, mainly delivered in small groups of 2–8 children (depending on their level of need). Each week followed a specified structure, and the teachers were provided with detailed guidance for delivering the lessons.

The first two lessons focused on phonics – teaching GPCs through curriculum vocabulary. The third and fourth lessons focused on applying phonics into reading a matched decodable book and then doing a short assessment before having 'read aloud' time.

The 'read aloud' time was not only designed to support skills of decoding, fluency and comprehension, but to nurture reading for pleasure in the children by encouraging their enthusiasm and enjoyment in sharing the texts with others and to validate their own experiences of the text by inviting their opinions and feelings about the content.

Wandle Learning Trust then carried out a TOWRE assessment in July 2025 with the Code group, as well as with a sample of students below the threshold, to see if the Code group had shown improvements in their reading skills following the intervention compared to the No Code group.

Concurrent to this piloting process, Wandle Learning Trust asked the OU team to contribute to the project in two ways. First, to examine whether there was an effect of the intervention on the Code group's dispositions and practices as readers over time compared to the No Code group. Second, to support the participating schools in how to nurture Reading for Pleasure via practice-based techniques.

Aims of the OU team project:

1. To design a questionnaire, 'You as a Reader', to compare the Code/No Code groups on their RfP dispositions and practices.
2. To develop recommendations for schools to enhance their RfP provision.
3. To analyse data from the September 2024 and July 2025 questionnaires, comparing children from the Code/No Code groups on the 'You as a Reader' measures over time.

Research questions

1. Is there a difference between the Code/No Code groups on reading dispositions and behaviours?
2. Is there a difference between the Code/No Code groups on fiction and non-fiction genre preferences?
3. Is there a difference between the Code/No Code groups in the social interactions they have about books and reading?

Methods

Design and participants

As part of the 2024–25 pilot cycle of the Little Wandle Code reading intervention for 11–12-year-olds in KS3, Wandle Learning Trust recruited over 50 schools across England to trial the programme. At the start of the academic year in September 2024, over 10,000 children who had just started Year 7 were given a screening assessment of their reading skills. Those who scored below specified thresholds for decoding and listening comprehension were then invited to participate in the Code reading intervention for the remainder of the school year. In July 2025, the TOWRE was repeated to track the progress of the Code group and how they compared to the children who did not receive the intervention, termed the No Code group.

The OU team developed a questionnaire, 'You as a Reader', to measure several aspects of RfP that was similarly given to the children in September 2024 and then again in July 2025

to track their progress and compare the two groups. A total of 4479 children completed both questionnaires (N = 602 Code group, N = 3877 No Code group). This data is analysed in the Results section of this report to address the research questions of the project.

Measures

The 'You as a Reader' questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was designed to cover key tenets of attitudes towards RfP across nine questions. Drawing on the research literature, questions were designed, the first five of which comprised of the children's dispositions and behaviours towards and access to reading, specifically enjoyment, self-efficacy, frequency (both paper-based and online) and their home book environment.

For questions on enjoyment and self-efficacy, the children were asked to answer via a Likert-type scale, with five simple emoji-style drawings of faces arranged in a horizontal line. The mouths of the faces varied from very upturned (indicating very happy) to very downturned (indicating very unhappy).

For example, for 'Do you enjoy reading?', the ends of the rows of faces were anchored with the words 'I enjoy it very much' versus 'I don't enjoy it at all'. For questions on frequency of reading, the children were provided with 5-point Likert scales anchored from 'every day' to 'never'.

For the question about the number of books they have at home, the children were provided with a 5-point Likert scale anchored from 'more than 50' to 'none'. Questions six and seven focussed on the children's preferences and choices when selecting books to read. Question six provided a list of 12 examples of fiction genres, e.g. horror, while Question seven provided a list of 10 examples of non-fiction genres, e.g. history, and for each the children were asked to select three they would like to read the most.

The final two questions focussed on the nature of social interactions the children were having around reading and books. For each, the children were provided with a list of people, e.g. family, teacher, etc. and asked to select who they would talk to if they wanted to find a book to read and to talk to someone about reading. In both cases, the children were provided with a negative option in case they didn't talk to anyone about either.

Procedure

Children completed the 'You as a Reader' questionnaire online in their schools. Teachers were provided with guidance and a script to read out as the children were completing the questionnaire. Teachers were asked to read each question and the possible answers aloud, so it was accessible and to ensure all children were

ready before moving on to the next question. Children were reassured that there were no right or wrong answers.

Following the initial Little Wandle Code reading skill assessment and delivery of the 'You as a Reader' questionnaire in September 2024, Wandle Learning Trust analysed the data for each school to produce a personalised report (see template example in Appendix 2). The report highlighted the general trends in children's reading skills and attitudes/characteristics of RfP and, in conjunction with the OU team, identified the names of three targeted groups of children who needed further support. First, those who were struggling with decoding (and invited to participate in the Code reading intervention); second, those who could decode but didn't particularly like/choose to read; and finally, those who didn't have access to texts at home.

Based on the OU team's expertise and drawing from over 20 years of RfP research and supporting of schools to develop an RfP culture, they developed the recommendations included in the report (Appendix 2) to support these three targeted groups of children. The pertinent research base linked to secondary phase readers is detailed in the literature review above (e.g. Cockcroft and Atkinson, 2017; Howard, 2011; Sellers, 2019).

For both the children struggling to decode, and who would be receiving the Little Wandle Code intervention, and those who were reluctant to read, the key focus in the recommendations was to encourage development of a love of reading and to see themselves as readers, e.g. building on their interests and supporting choice, inviting and honouring their opinions on texts, and providing relaxed informal spaces to read and talk about books with teachers and peers (Cremin et al., 2025). For the children who had little or no access to books at home (irrespective of whether they were Code/No Code), the recommendations included making use of the school library and encouraging and modelling book choice.

For both the children struggling to decode, and who would be receiving the Little Wandle Code intervention, and those who were reluctant to read, the key focus in the recommendations was to encourage development of a love of reading and to see themselves as readers

Data analysis

In July 2025, Wandle Learning Trust made available to the OU team the data (anonymised) from the September and July 'You as a Reader' questionnaires. The OU team transferred the data from Excel to SPSS and compared the children from the Code and No Code groups on each of the nine questions, at each time point, using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques.

Results

Reading dispositions and behaviours

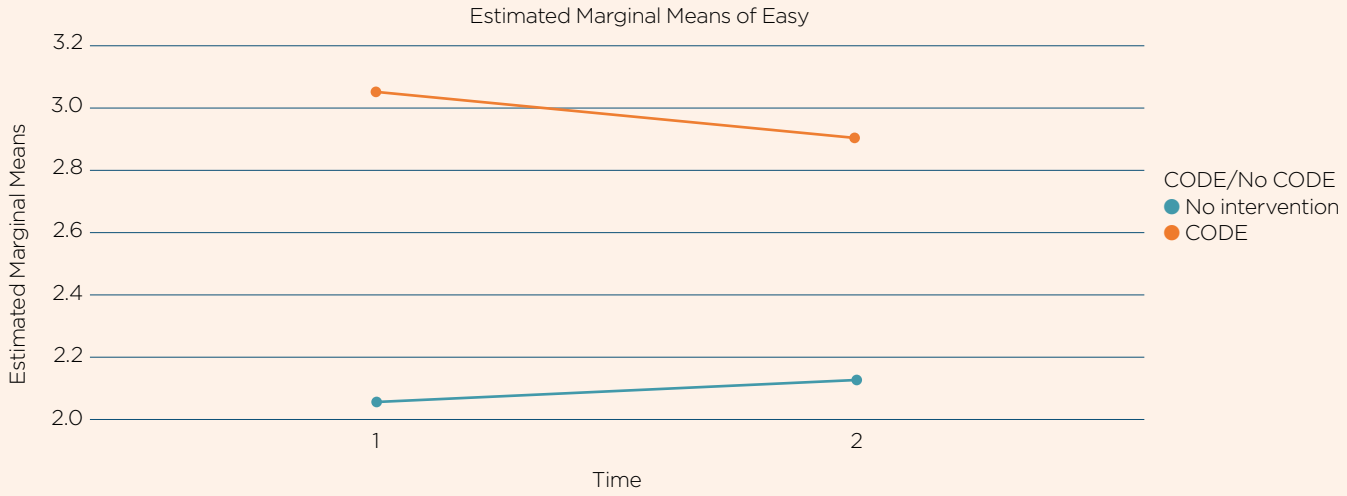
A series of Mixed ANOVAs, with group as the between-subjects factor (two levels, Code, No Code) and time as the within-subjects factor (two levels, Time 1 and Time 2), were conducted with the five dependent variables – enjoyment, self-efficacy, frequency of reading on paper, frequency of reading on devices and estimated number of books that the children own. Table 1 below shows the descriptive statistics.

Table 1: Means (and standard deviations) for enjoyment, self-efficacy, frequency of reading on paper/devices and estimated number of books per group (Code/No Code) and per Time points 1 and 2

Reading measure*	Code		No Code	
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2
Enjoyment	3.01 (1.14)	3.13 (1.19)	2.44 (1.14)	2.73 (1.21)
Self-efficacy	3.05 (1.08)	2.91 (1.03)	2.06 (.93)	2.12 (.98)
Freq on paper	3.34 (1.27)	3.56 (1.22)	2.91 (1.31)	3.21 (1.32)
Freq on devices	3.19 (1.49)	2.96 (1.52)	3.31 (1.43)	3.16 (1.43)
Number of books	2.66 (1.28)	2.89 (1.29)	2.13 (1.14)	2.28 (1.22)

*Please note that all measures are scored from 1–5 where 1 denotes the most positive or highest score and where 5 denotes the least positive or lowest score

Figure 1: Interaction effect of self-efficacy per group (Code/No Code) and per time point (1 and 2)



For enjoyment, there was a main effect of group (F(1, 4407) = 106.104, p<.001, η_{p^2} = .024), where the Code group reported lower enjoyment of reading compared to the No Code group. There was also a main effect of time (F(1,4407) = 79.09, p<.001, η_{p^2} = .018), as overall reading enjoyment was lower at Time 2 compared to Time 1.

However, crucially, there was also a significant interaction (F(1,4407) = 13.51, p<.001, η_{p^2} = .003) which indicated that the decrease in enjoyment over time was to a lesser extent for the Code group compared to the No Code group.

For self-efficacy, there was a main effect of group (F(1,4358) = 522.15, p<.001, η_{p^2} = .107), where the Code group reported finding reading more difficult compared to the No Code group. There was also a main effect of time (F(1,4358) = 4.20, p<.001, η_{p^2} = .001), where overall the children reported finding reading easier at Time 2 compared to Time 1. However, a significant interaction (F(1,4358) = 26.17, p<.001, η_{p^2} = .006) shows a key nuance here as this improvement in the ease of reading is actually specific to the Code group and driven by their data and not the No Code group (see Figure 1 above).

For frequency of reading on paper, there was a main effect of group (F(1,4410) = 58.2, p<.001, η_{p^2} = .013), where the Code group reported reading on paper less frequently compared to the No Code group. There was also a main effect of time (F(1,4410) = 99.07, p<.001, η_{p^2} = .022), where overall the children reported a decrease in how often they read on paper at Time 2 compared to Time 1. There was not a significant interaction.

For frequency of reading on devices, there was a main effect of group (F(1,4355) = 9.66, p = .002, η_{p^2} = .002), where the Code group reported reading on devices more frequently compared to the No Code group. There was also a main effect of time (F(1,4355) = 25.32, p<.001, η_{p^2} = .006), where overall the children reported an increase in how often they read on devices at Time 2 compared to Time 1. There was not a significant interaction. For the number of books that the children report owning, there was a main effect of group (F(1,4391) = 137.39, p<.001, η_{p^2} = .030), where the Code group reported having fewer books compared to the No Code group. There was also a main effect of time (F(1,4391) = 67.00, p<.001, η_{p^2} = .015), where overall the children reported a decrease in the number of books they owned at Time 2 compared to Time 1. There was not a significant interaction.

Genre

In the next section of the questionnaire, the children were provided with a list of fiction genres and asked to select the top three that they would choose to read.

Table 2 opposite indicates that horror and mystery genres were very popular for all children, irrespective of group. The only noteworthy difference is that children from the Code group also really liked funny books while children from the No Code group liked

Table 2: Percentage (and number) of children who reported they would choose to read a genre of fiction books per group (Code/No Code) and per Time point (1 and 2)

Fiction genre	Code		No Code	
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2
Horror	47.58 (286)	51.58 (310)	44.56 (1727)	45.68 (1770)
Graphic novels	9.15 (55)	9.15 (55)	14.04 (544)	14.99 (581)
Fantasy	21.13 (127)	18.96 (114)	27.46 (1064)	28.23 (1094)
Adventure	31.94 (192)	34.10 (205)	45.32 (1756)	45.63 (1769)
Mystery	34.44 (207)	37.77 (227)	44.80 (1736)	44.62 (1729)
Science fiction	7.15 (43)	7.49 (45)	9.57 (371)	11.28 (437)
Funny	49.58 (298)	46.59 (280)	40.25 (1560)	39.07 (1514)
Relationships	12.61 (76)	13.98 (84)	14.40 (558)	18.22 (706)
Animals	20.29 (122)	18.30 (110)	11.43 (443)	12.08 (468)
Sport	28.61 (172)	30.28 (182)	22.19 (860)	24.10 (934)
Comics	25.96 (156)	28.78 (173)	26.09 (1011)	25.88 (1003)
Poetry	6.98 (42)	6.66 (40)	5.18 (201)	5.47 (212)

Table 3: Percentage (and number) of children who reported they would choose to read a genre of non-fiction books per group (Code/No Code) and per Time point (1 and 2)

Non-fiction genre	Code		No Code	
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2
History	38.6 (232)	25.62 (154)	39.35 (1525)	32.49 (1259)
Science & Tech	14.31 (86)	14.48 (87)	18.58 (720)	18.66 (723)
Sport	41.26 (248)	44.26 (266)	40.59 (1573)	42.14 (1633)
Famous people	26.96 (162)	26.46 (159)	34.84 (1350)	35.64 (1381)
Puzzle books	20.79 (125)	16.97 (102)	18.99 (736)	19.79 (767)
Nature	21.46 (129)	25.62 (154)	25.06 (971)	24.46 (948)
Art & Craft	33.28 (200)	29.78 (179)	30.71 (1190)	25.83 (1001)
Magazines	13.31 (80)	12.48 (75)	17.01 (659)	18.68 (724)
Facts	20.63 (124)	22.96 (138)	25.01 (969)	25.42 (985)
Activities/Games	35.77 (215)	42.59 (256)	37.55 (1455)	38.06 (1475)

adventure. Similarly, the children were then provided with a list of non-fiction genres and asked to pick the top three they would choose to read.

Table 3 above indicates that sport and activities/games books were very popular irrespective of group. Interestingly, while the history genre was similarly favoured at the start of the study, the percentage of children choosing it decreased over time, with the Code group more likely to opt for art and craft and the No Code group for books about famous people.

Social interactions

In the final part of the questionnaire, the focus turned to people that the children reported they would talk to about books and reading. First, the children were provided with a list of people they might potentially ask if they wanted to find a book to read and asked to select all that applied. Table 4 overleaf indicates that at the start of the study, family was the most popular choice irrespective of group. However, there was a slight shift over time to librarians for the Code group and looking online for the No Code group.

Table 4: Percentage (and number) of children who reported they would ask the following people if they wanted to find a book to read per group (Code/No Code) and per Time point (1 and 2)

Person to ask	Code		No Code	
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2
Librarian	40.59 (244)	42.26 (254)	50.43 (1954)	43.46 (1684)
Friends	36.12 (217)	32.61 (196)	45.63 (1768)	37.96 (1471)
Teacher	38.77 (233)	32.61 (196)	34.94 (1354)	25.63 (993)
Family	48.92 (294)	38.6 (232)	55.54 (2152)	49.45 (1916)
Look online	27.29 (164)	32.45 (195)	41.68 (1615)	50.01 (1939)
Don't know	15.81 (95)	20.79 (125)	11.25 (436)	13.12 (508)

Table 5: Percentage (and number) of children who reported they would talk to the following people about reading per group (Code/No Code) and per Time point (1 and 2)

Person to talk to	Code		No Code	
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2
Librarian	9.48 (57)	11.65 (70)	11.09 (430)	10.17 (394)
Friends	23.29 (140)	20.79 (125)	32.77 (1270)	27.23 (1055)
Teacher	13.31 (80)	17.30 (104)	14.89 (577)	11.48 (445)
Family	39.93 (240)	32.45 (195)	49.39 (1914)	39.61 (1535)
Don't talk about reading	45.26 (272)	49.91 (297)	40.10 (1554)	49.49 (1918)

A fairly sizeable proportion of children from both groups (10–20%) said they didn't know who they would ask.

Finally, the children were provided with the same list of people and asked to select (all that applied) who they would talk to about reading. Table 5 above shows a somewhat concerning pattern that the most popular choice across both groups by the end of the study (49%) was that they don't talk about reading with anyone. The second most popular choice was they would talk to family.

Discussion and recommendations

The findings will now be discussed to address each of the three research questions and provide recommendations for Wandle Learning Trust in moving forward, both in terms of the Little Wandle Code project and for engaging adolescent readers more generally.

1. Is there a difference between the Code/No Code groups on reading dispositions and behaviours?

In considering the findings in relation to this question, we focus initially on the young people's enjoyment in reading. The Code group compared with the No Code group reported less engagement/enjoyment of reading at Time 1, which was to be expected. Countless studies record that readers who are more skilled and have a higher degree of self-efficacy, read more frequently and report enjoying it more than their peers who are less skilled (OECD, 2021).

Nonetheless, across Time 1 and Time 2, both groups reflected a decrease in enjoyment. Significantly however, the Code group's decrease in enjoyment over time was not as significant as the No Code group. This is an intriguing finding. It is possible that the intervention represents a form of protective factor here, reducing the adolescents' decline in reading enjoyment. If this is the case, this may be due to their sense of enhanced competence and self-efficacy over time, *and* because of sustained committed adult attention and engagement in them as readers. We consider each in turn.

In relation to their sense of self-efficacy, the Code group reported finding reading more difficult compared to the No Code group as expected at Time 1, and overall, reading was reported as easier at Time 2 compared to Time 1.

However, this improvement in the ease of reading was actually driven by the data of the Code group. Children who received the Code intervention had a significantly increased sense

of self-efficacy at Time 2, but the No Code group did not show a significant change.

This links to the work of Ryan and Deci (2000, 2017), and the argument, frequently applied to reading research, that autonomy, competence and relatedness all contribute to young people's determination to read. The weekly sessions in small groups, with support and focused praise and encouragement, are very likely to have fostered an increased sense of competence and self-efficacy in the young Code readers.

Whilst the data regarding the adolescents' phonic knowledge, fluency and confidence tackling longer texts was not the focus of the Wandle Learning Trust's data collection, this finding that the Code group found reading less difficult at Time 2 suggests the support has at least been effective at influencing their sense of themselves as readers.

The beliefs students have about themselves as readers matter, and reading competence is very closely related to reading self-efficacy (Guthrie et al., 1999) and develops in response to the lived experience of reading. With more successful experiences of reading within the Code intervention, and with more support, these young people appear to have developed their self-efficacy and consider reading to be less difficult.

In addition, relatedness is key in motivating readers and, as the work of de Naeghel (2014) revealed, adult involvement is highly significant. The Little Wandle Code intervention programme offers regular interaction with a constant adult who, from observations and feedback, demonstrates commitment and engagement with each of the young people in the pairs or small groups.

The adults teaching the programme are trained to deliver 'read aloud' sessions that encourage students to engage in informal book talk and relate the content of the texts to their own experiences, so it's about more than an opportunity for testing comprehension. This approach, designed to foster interaction and connection with an adult who by implication cares about the young person's reading, is likely in our view to have helped reduce the Code group's relative decline in enjoyment compared to the No Code group.

Furthermore, in the read aloud sessions which are integrated into every unit, the potential for pleasure in reading will have been modelled to the young people with the strong selection of cutting-edge but accessible and potentially engaging Barrington Stoke books being read.

This experience may have subtly reframed the young people's view of reading from a

The weekly sessions in small groups, with support and focused praise and encouragement, are very likely to have fostered an increased sense of competence and self-efficacy in the young Code readers

solitary, individual act of assessed engagement, to a more encompassing social interactive experience with a teacher and their peers. In this regard, there is value in having small groups engaging in this programme.

Recommendation

It is thus recommended that all the adults involved in the programme retain the personal focus and investment in the individuals and are further supported to emphasise the enjoyment of reading, to share something of themselves as readers and to emphasise the safe space that the read aloud session represents, enabling the young people to position themselves as readers, and be positioned as readers with each other. The focus on book discussion and personal resonance has a key role to play in these sessions which, from our understanding, foreground the will to read.

Frequency of reading

In relation to frequency of reading, there was an interesting contrast in terms of reading on paper and reading on devices. As might be predicted, the Code group reported reading less frequently on paper compared to the No Code group and both groups showed a decline over time, reflecting current trends in the UK (Clark et al., 2025). It could be speculated that this decline in reading frequency over time mirrored the concurrent decline in enjoyment discussed earlier. However, when examining the reading frequency on devices, the Code group reported reading more frequently than the No Code group and both groups increased over time.

This echoes previous findings that reading on devices and accessing content online is becoming increasingly popular amongst young people (OECD, 2021; Sizmur et al., 2015) and becomes increasingly dominant in the middle years (11–16 years), while concurrently print reading declines (Clark et al., 2025).

It is not clear exactly what children are reading on their devices from the present data – it could be books or other online materials that reflect their interests, so further research is needed here. However, it is a very positive finding as it reveals a motivation to read on devices even for children who struggle to read.

Recommendation

It is thus recommended that using devices/ onscreen materials, where relevant, could be a useful addition to the programme, as this reflects increasingly how children like to read and will perhaps engage their interest further compared to always using paper-based materials.

Number of books

Finally, in relation to number of books, the Code group reported having fewer books at home compared to the No Code group, replicating findings from other studies showing a relationship between book ownership and enjoyment/attainment in reading (Evans et al., 2010; Lindsay et al., 2010).

Access to books for children who struggle to read, that both interest them and are appropriate for their abilities, is an ongoing issue and the agency provided by enabling children to choose from a range of books is so important for their engagement (Ivey and Johnston, 2015; Webber et al., 2015). Schools can play a valuable role in providing access to books and the discussion of the genre findings below provides a useful indication of what children in this age group like to read.

Recommendation

It is thus recommended that the programme continues to work with schools to provide access to books that are appropriate in terms of interest and difficulty for children who may not have access to many books at home.

2. Is there a difference between the Code/No Code groups on fiction and non-fiction genre preferences?

Studies consistently show that children are motivated to read books that are relevant to them, i.e. reflect their interests and hobbies (e.g. Webber et al., 2025) and, perhaps surprisingly, this is also true for those who, as a general rule, do not enjoy reading (Clark et al., 2025). The present results have already shown that children in the Code group tend to enjoy reading less than the No Code group so understanding their genre preferences is important for informing the relevance of the programme in future.

In many respects, genre preferences were similar across the groups. Both groups liked horror and mystery books from the fiction genres, and sports and activities/games books from the non-fiction genres. Where they contrasted slightly is that the Code group also really liked funny books (fiction) and art and craft books (non-fiction).

Uncovering this level of nuance in preferences is very important. For example, while a 'fiction effect' on motivation is documented (Jerrim & Moss, 2019) and supported by Ivey and Johnston's (2014) study employing contemporary, 'edgy' fiction, other fiction genres such as classic literature may have a de-motivating effect (Locher et al., 2019).

It's therefore useful to reflect on what might be particularly attractive about funny books and art and craft books for the Code group. They share

In many respects, genre preferences were similar across the groups. Both groups liked horror and mystery books from the fiction genres, and sports and activities/games books from the non-fiction genres

characteristics of enjoyment, promoted by the humour of the funny books and the development of skills via the art and craft techniques.

Arguably, there are also shared characteristics of design and style, as both types of books are likely to include short, bite-size texts which are more manageable for children who struggle to read and are likely to be visually appealing in terms of the cover graphics and the inclusion of illustrations/photographs, which are both known to be important in this age group (Clark et al., 2025).

Recommendation

It is thus recommended that the programme incorporates, where relevant, and works with schools to provide access to horror, mystery and funny books from the fiction genre, and sports, activities/games and art and craft books from the non-fiction genre.

3. Is there a difference between the Code/No Code groups in the social interactions they have about books and reading?

With regard to the social interactions around reading, the children were invited to respond to two questions. The former offered them a list of people they might ask if they wanted to find a book to read and asked them to select all that applied; the latter invited them to reflect on who they talk to about reading.

With regard to the former, both groups commented that they would turn to their family around reading at Time 1. These received 48% and 55% respectively for Code and No Code groups at Time 1. The 'You as a Reader' survey was undertaken at the beginning of the autumn term, so this is the most likely group for interaction around reading.

Additionally, it is noteworthy that over time, the Code group may have begun to recognise the value of librarians, as this increased. The percentage uplift is small compared with Time 1, but it may be that the placement of the intervention group in the library, or regular visits to the library with their Year 7 class, indicated to them that the librarian had text knowledge expertise and potentially could help them choose a book.

This role may also be a novel one and therefore was more memorable for them, as the numbers of librarians in the primary phase is perceived to be very small (libraries in primary schools are usually run by teachers, helping parents or teaching assistants). Nonetheless, this is an encouraging finding – albeit descriptive, it is indicative.

With regard to whom the young people perceived they would talk to about their reading, somewhat worryingly a large proportion of both groups reported they 'did not know' at Time 1 and 2, potentially implying they do not desire or do not expect to discuss their personal reading with others.

By the close of the study, 49% reported that they don't talk about reading with anyone, and the second most popular choice was that they would talk to family. It may be in the KS3 classrooms represented in this study, reading is still perceived as a solitary and individual act of engagement and teenage readers are only expected to respond to reading in writing or to answer teachers' questions in the context of reading instruction in English or in intervention classes.

Indeed, teenagers have commented that they are rarely encouraged to read for enjoyment in the same way they were as children (Wilkinson, 2020). It seems possible that informal social interaction around volitional reading practices, interests, favoured genres and authors through peer-to-peer book recommendations and conversations for instance, are not explicitly encouraged nor deemed to be part of being a reader in their schools. Perhaps limited time and space is set aside for this kind of informal book chat between readers. Given the OECD (2021) definition of motivated and engaged readers includes participating in the social dimension of reading, this represents cause for concern. As the literature review highlighted, keen readers tend to be socially interactive about what they read and are supported as readers through this social interaction.

However, those young people who do not like to read may not have experienced the social and relational connections which reading can afford and are thus unlikely to report being motivated by the social aspects of reading. They may not yet have found what reading is good for with regard to building relationships, connecting to others, developing a sense of belonging and membership of social and cultural groups.

Their lack of assurance as social readers, and the potential lack of a social reading environment in their schools, may well be preventing them from accessing an understanding or experience of reading as a social and relational practice. It is not known how the Code group view the intervention facilitators. Do they see them as pedagogues and instructors? Do they see them as someone to ask and/or to talk to about reading?

This is an issue worth exploring, especially given our perception that the relational connection between the facilitator and the adolescents may have stemmed the decline in reading and enjoyment. Furthermore, the absence of a social reading environment and culture to support volitional reading within some of these schools is likely to have contributed to the decline in reading enjoyment in the No Code group.

Recommendation

It is thus recommended that more explicit opportunities might be woven into the programme for relaxed conversations around self-chosen texts, enabling the adolescents to listen to and converse with one another as readers. It is recognised that the read aloud discussion may encompass some of this, but it may be more oriented towards answering questions and be controlled by the adult. There is potentially more scope for discussions that enhance the informality and sociality of reading in this session, for example giving and receiving text recommendations or support for browsing and choosing. It may simply be a matter of tenor and tone, but also space for the Code youngsters to lead these interactions could be valuable in helping motivate them as readers. There is also potentially value in encouraging schools to make more time for children to interact with school librarians if they have them.

Conclusion

This report has confirmed that the Little Wandle Code intervention has had a positive effect on several aspects of reading for pleasure, namely reducing the decline in reading enjoyment that proliferates in this age-group, increasing the sense of self-efficacy, and supporting an increase in reading frequency on devices for children who struggle with reading.

Furthermore, it has highlighted the importance of providing access to a range of appropriate texts and the specific types of fiction and non-fiction genres that children in this age-group find most engaging. Finally, it has suggested that further consideration needs to be given to developing the nature of the social interactions between the intervention facilitators and the children, and among the children themselves, so they perceive their peers and the facilitators as fellow readers.

To summarise, it is recommended that:

- In relation to enjoyment and self-efficacy, that all the adults involved in the programme retain the personal focus and investment in the individuals and are further supported to emphasise the enjoyment of reading, to share something of themselves as readers and emphasise the safe space that the read aloud session represents, enabling the young people to position themselves as readers, and be positioned as readers with each other. The focus on book discussion and personal resonance has a key role to play in these sessions which, from our understanding, foreground the will to read.
- In relation to frequency, that using devices/onscreen materials, where relevant, could be a useful addition to the programme, as this reflects increasingly how children in this age group like to read and will perhaps engage their interest further compared to always using paper-based materials.
- In relation to book ownership and access, that the programme continues to work with schools to provide access to a range of books that are appropriate in terms of interest and difficulty.
- In relation to genre, that the programme incorporates, where relevant, and works with schools to provide access to horror, mystery and funny books from the fiction genre, and sports, activities/games and art and craft books from the non-fiction genre.
- In relation to social interactions, that more explicit opportunities might be woven into the programme for relaxed conversations around self-chosen texts, enabling the adolescents to listen to and converse with one another (and the intervention facilitators) as readers. There is also potentially value in encouraging schools to make more time for children to interact with school librarians if they have them.

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Appendix 1: You as a Reader survey

Introducing the test

- **Say:** I am going to read nine questions aloud to you. After each question, you need to choose the answer or answers that you feel are true for you. This is not a test, so please be honest and don't worry about there being a right or wrong answer.
- **Say:** Wait for me to read each question and then tell you to click the 'Next' button.

Running the test

- Read out each question and all the possible answers.
- Allow enough time for all students to answer before moving on to the next question.
- Ensure all students click 'Yes' when prompted in the Are you sure? box in order to save their test.

Timings

- Allow approximately 10 minutes.

Questions

1. Do you enjoy reading?

				
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I enjoy it very much	I enjoy it a bit	It's ok	I don't enjoy it much	I don't enjoy it at all

2. Is reading easy or difficult for you?

				
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Very easy	Easy	It's ok	Difficult	Very difficult

3. When you think about reading at home, how often do you choose to read at home on paper-based things, e.g. books and comics?

◯ Every day
◯ 2–3 times a week
◯ Once a week
◯ Not very often
◯ Never

4. When you think about reading at home, how often do you choose to read on a device, e.g. a phone, tablet, gaming console?

- ◯ Every day
- ◯ 2–3 times a week
- ◯ Once a week
- ◯ Not very often
- ◯ Never

5. How many books do you have of your own at home?

- ◯ More than 50!
- ◯ Many
- ◯ Some
- ◯ A few
- ◯ None

6. Choose the three types of fiction books that you would like to read the most:

- ◯ Horror
- ◯ Graphic novels
- ◯ Fantasy
- ◯ Adventure
- ◯ Mystery
- ◯ Sci-fi
- ◯ Funny books
- ◯ Books about relationships
- ◯ Animal books
- ◯ Sport books
- ◯ Comics
- ◯ Poems

7. Choose the three types of non-fiction books that you would read the most:

- ◯ History
- ◯ Science and technology
- ◯ Sport
- ◯ Famous people
- ◯ Puzzle books
- ◯ Nature
- ◯ Art and craft
- ◯ Magazines
- ◯ Facts
- ◯ Activities and games

8. If you want to find a book to read, who would you ask? (Tick all that apply)

- ◯ Librarian
- ◯ Friends
- ◯ Teacher
- ◯ Family
- ◯ I would look online
- ◯ I don't know

9. Do you talk about reading to any of these people? (Tick all that apply)

- ◯ Librarian
- ◯ Friends
- ◯ Teacher
- ◯ Family
- ◯ I don't talk about reading

Appendix 2: School report template

LittleWandle CODE

_____ [insert school name]

'You as a Reader' leadership report

This report summarises the results from the You as a Reader survey from the Little Wandle Code online screening assessments. It provides an overview of your Year 7 students' attitudes to Reading for Pleasure.

Why should you prioritise Reading for Pleasure?

International evidence reveals the power and potential of young people's engagement as readers – the frequency with which they choose to read in their own time. Reading for pleasure is volitional in nature and driven by the reader's own goals and interests, including social ones, such as connecting to friends. It is strongly associated with academic, cognitive and social-emotional development, specifically: higher reading attainment (Mullis et al., 2023), enriched vocabulary (McQuillan, 2019) and better mental health and intellectual advancement (Sun et al., 2023). The will to read and the skill mutually reinforce each other. Reading for pleasure is a mediator of gender and socio-economic status and can help leverage social change (OECD, 2021). Adolescents who cannot read well, or who can read, but do not choose to do so, are disadvantaged. So, developing the habit of reading is crucial. It enriches access to the curriculum, enhances learners' confidence and helps to redress inequalities.

Do your Year 7 students enjoy reading?

		
____%	____%	____%
enjoy reading	think reading is ok	do not like reading

How can you develop a Reading for Pleasure culture in your school?

The National Curriculum (DfE, 2013) states that KS3 students should 'develop an appreciation and love of reading … choosing and reading books independently for challenge, interest and enjoyment.'

We cannot make students read for pleasure; however, we can inspire, model and engage young people in reading widely, building on their interests, preferences and practices. Nurturing the habit of reading is the collective responsibility of all staff. It involves a strategic approach to creating and sustaining an evidence-informed and genuinely inclusive school-wide culture of reading. We need to ensure students have the time and motivation to read and talk about self-chosen texts in relaxed student-led contexts.

Research evidence indicates that to motivate readers, staff need to know individual readers, build self-efficacy, model being readers and use key RfP pedagogies. These include:

- adults reading aloud
- informal book talk, including recommendations from peers and adults
- time to read
- sociable reading environments (Cremin et al., 2014, 2022).

Provision of these interrelated practices, recommended in the Reading Framework (DfE, 2023), is essential for *all* students (for ideas, see: https://ourfp.org). Research suggests these need to be learner-led, informal, social and with texts that tempt – this RfP pedagogy checklist supports the development of reciprocal reading communities.

Whole Year 7 cohort analysis

In this section, we provide you with insights into the reading interests and habits of your whole year group and recommended leadership actions.

What types of books do your Year 7 students want to read?

Fiction				**Non-fiction**			
horror	%	funny books	%	history	%	magazines	%
graphic novel	%	books about relationships	%	science & technology	%	famous people	%
fantasy	%	animal books	%	sport	%	facts	%
adventure	%	sport books	%	puzzle books	%	activities & games	%
mystery	%	comics	%	nature	%	art & craft	%
sci-fi	%	poems	%				

Recommendations:

- Review your book stock and ensure *all* Year 7 students have sufficient access to these types of books in the school library and elsewhere.
- Involve Year 7 students in co-curating orders and displaying these popular book types around the school.

Do your Year 7 students have access to books at home?

> 50	**many**	**some**	**a few**	**none**
%	%	%	%	%

Recommendations:

- Promote local library membership, showcasing online availability, e.g. Borrowbox, for eBooks and audiobooks.
- Establish termly book/magazine/text exchanges to swap reading materials.

Who are your Year 7 reading role models?

Who do your Year 7 students ask to help them find a book?		Who do your Year 7 students talk about reading with?	
librarian	%	librarian	%
friends	%	friends	%
teacher	%	teacher	%
family	%	family	%
I would look online	%	I don't talk about reading	%
I don't know	%		%

Recommendations:

- Ensure staff regularly share their own enthusiastic engagement in reading a range of text types, including young adult novels and non-fiction to tempt Year 7s.
- Plan frequent opportunities for peer-led informal book talk and recommendations (pairs and small groups).

Target students' analysis

In this section, we provide you with insights into the reading interests and habits of targeted groups of students and recommended leadership actions.

Students who struggle with decoding

These students were flagged for the Code intervention by the online screening. Your Pilot Lead will have selected which students will receive the intervention.

[insert names of students receiving the intervention]

Recommendations:

- Get to know them as readers, build on their interests and support choice from high-interest low-challenge texts, and not just books – access to diverse texts, e.g. comics, magazines and graphic novels, matters. *Knowing and respecting readers' own choices is key.*
- Invite and honour their views about reading and specific texts, offer supportive feedback and develop their self-efficacy and confidence. *It is vital to develop positive reader identities.*
- Read aloud regularly, offer challenging choices and open spaces for discussion, questions, puzzles, and connections. Keep this low key, non-assessed and interactive. *Reading aloud inspires and builds community.*
- Establish Book Buddies – students interested in the same subject, genre, author, etc. and encourage reading together – sharing, taking turns and chatting, alongside wider book talk opportunities. *Informal book talk socially motivates readers.*
- Create relaxed reading spaces in which students can choose to read silently, listen to others/audiobooks or talk about texts. *Reading time helps build student stamina.*
- Ensure adults model their passion for reading a wide range of texts, sharing their reading, inviting students to do the same and broadening what counts as reading (Reading Teachers: teachers who read and readers who teach – Reading for Pleasure). *Modelling and sharing positive reader identities matters.*
- Develop a high-profile interactive culture of reading, strategically supporting all readers. Visit the Open University Reading for Pleasure site. *Sociable reading environments and communities support the habit of reading.*

Students who can decode, but choose not to read

These students did not meet the threshold to receive the Code intervention, indicating they have developed the skill of decoding, but report not to like reading and/or read infrequently at home. These children need support to develop a love of reading.

[insert names of students who can but do not read]

Recommendations:

- Explore their personal interests, enabling them to develop text preferences over time supported by texts you suggest (not just books) that might intrigue them. *Knowing and respecting readers' own choices is key.*
- Ensure they experience read aloud – it is highly interactive, non-assessed, and promotes related texts on the same theme/author/poet to support wise choices. *Reading aloud inspires and builds community.*
- Connect them to others by creating regular opportunities for low key reading interaction, in Book Blethering sessions, a Book Buzz, peer recommendations, and so on. For more details and ideas, see: Informal book talk, inside-text talk and recommendations - Reading for Pleasure. *Informal book talk socially motivates readers.*
- Offer regular time and a relaxed space for choice-led reading, including Read with a Friend, where with two copies, students read and chat about their chosen book. *Reading stamina needs support.*
- Explore Reading Histories in a group. Adults share theirs from childhood (e.g. in a PowerPoint collage) triggering memories. Use both individual and class texts from primary to create displays. *Modelling and sharing positive reader identities matters.*
- Develop a culture of reading, strategically supporting all readers. For more strategies, visit the Open University website section on reading communities (Reading communities – Reading for Pleasure). *Sociable reading environments and communities support the habit of reading.*

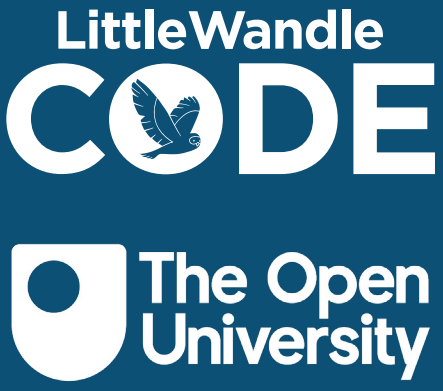
Student who don't have access to texts

These students have few or no books of their own.

[insert names of students who can but do not read]

Recommendations:

- Schedule regular school library visits for each class with assigned time for supported book selection and peer recommendations. *Knowing and respecting readers' own choices is key.*
- Encourage local library membership and online access in groups of keen readers who can read, share and discuss chosen text with friends. *Informal book talk socially motivates readers.*
- Ensure staff across the curriculum enthusiastically share their Young Adult choices and recommendations of personal and subject specific texts. *Modelling and sharing positive reader identities matters.*
- Establish book exchanges, maximising local giving from businesses, faith organisations, community groups and older classes. See the Open University's suggestions on finding and funding quality texts (Funding-and-Finding-Books-for-RfP-1.pdf). *Book access and ownership influence the skill and the will.*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