

Written evidence submitted by Reading Recovery Europe

The case for working with the Reading Recovery Community during this Covid-19 crisis to ensure schools deliver the very best possible literacy teaching for all of our children, especially those who are disadvantaged

We write this document in response to the commitment made by Gavin Williamson, Secretary of State for Education

“..... that I will do everything I can to make sure that no child, whatever their background, falls behind in their education as a result of coronavirus” (Gavin Williamson)

As a community of Reading Recovery Teacher Leaders, from schools and LAs across England, we offer our expertise in tackling the issues schools now face as a consequence of Covid-19. In particular we are concerned that the gap in literacy achievement is not only closed but closed **quickly** between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children. The hardest to teach are often also the hardest to reach as the current school closures have confirmed. Schools need to be able to access the highest level of expertise for these children with the greatest need.

We train Reading Recovery teachers to provide high quality one to one tuition for the lowest attaining children in years 1&2 who have been identified as being in danger of failing to read or write. More than 65% of those children are from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Data confirms that Reading Recovery teachers succeed in bringing more than 8 out of 10 lowest attaining children to age appropriate levels of literacy within 12-20 weeks. This represents accelerated progress of four to five times the rate of average progress. This level of accelerated learning will enable a child to access the curriculum and not fall behind because of the Covid-19 crisis.

Our teachers are experienced in sharing their expertise in teaching reading and writing that supports all teaching staff and parents within their school setting and often within networks of schools that impacts literacy achievement across all phases.

Currently we have more than 20 Teacher Leaders working in England supporting in excess of 200 experienced Reading Recovery teachers working in schools. These teachers teach Reading Recovery to approximately 1700 children in an academic year. Research shows that the gains these children make have long term benefits for each child and society as a whole.

The ASCL final report ‘The Forgotten Third’ noted that Pro Bono economics reported on research which found that children who succeed in Reading Recovery in Year1 are twice as likely to attain 5+ good GCSEs including Maths and English (Hurry, J.& Fridkin L, 2018).

As the Children’s Commissioner, Anne Longfield states in a recent report, *“Intensive support for vulnerable children – to protect them now and to help them do well at school and in life in the future – must be a key part of the ‘new normal’”* Our trained Reading Recovery teachers can provide that intensive support. These highly trained accredited Reading

Recovery teachers have used their teaching skills to ensure everything is done to mitigate the impact of Covid -19 on the disadvantaged from the start of this national crisis.

Reading Recovery Teacher Leaders and Reading Recovery teachers are already contributing to this national effort to get children back on track.

During lockdown ~ Reading Recovery schools have used Reading Recovery teachers to work in flexible ways in their response to the lockdown and have been committed to continuing to support the children on the Reading Recovery programme together with their families through innovative practice including online lessons, personalised work packs, digital reading, to name just a few, in order to minimise the impact of Covid-19 on these children and their learning.

Anticipating reopening of schools ~ The interaction between well-being and literacy has been well researched and documented. Reading Recovery teachers are well versed in lifting struggling readers into confident independent learners. In response to the government's plan to reopen schools for R, Y1 & Y6 the skills of the 200 or more Reading Recovery Teachers will be used flexibly as appropriate to the different school contexts in which they work, according to need. Again, by using their expertise, the teachers will provide layers of intervention for children and staff support:

- Using diagnostic assessment to identify where children are now in their literacy learning
- Quickly identifying gaps in literacy skills and knowledge
- Ensuring that literacy provision matches need with personalised teaching
- Providing focussed professional development and mentoring for staff
- Liaising with parents to provide guidance to confidently assist their children with reading

As we move towards normality ~ As more year groups return to school, we anticipate that Reading Recovery Teacher Leaders' expertise is disseminated more widely into more schools to skill up more teachers and support staff through training and mentoring in order to make effective provision for more children who are in danger of falling behind across years R- Y8.

Building capacity ~ In order to maintain & increase the capacity needed to ensure the gap is closed for as many children as possible using the expertise of Reading Recovery teachers across primary schools in England we would need to request government backing in the form of funding for training and mentoring:

- To support schools to maintain current levels of 200 Reading Recovery teachers presently practising
- To reactivate a significant number of Reading Recovery teachers not currently practising
- To recruit and to train up to 500 new Reading Recovery teachers. This would provide Reading Recovery for at least an additional 3500 pupils in the first year rising to 4000 or more thereafter

We need the support from central government to achieve this.

It is a time to come together to achieve the best outcomes for all our children. We all want the same thing ~ **to make sure that no child falls behind in their education as a result of**

coronavirus. We have the capacity and infrastructure within the Reading Recovery community to make a significant contribution to that intent. We owe it to the children we serve.

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