



THE LEICESTERSHIRE
Virtual School

2021/22
Year of
Reading

2021-22 Year of Reading

2020 was a year unlike any other and 2021 looks likely to continue in the same vein. So while things are topsy-turvy, we're starting our exciting year of reading in March!

In October 2019 we published our super-successful "Superheroes!" book featuring over 40 inspiring short stories written by Leicestershire children in care. We were so proud of the children who took part in the project and saw how much it raised their confidence and self-esteem. This time, we are promoting an interest in reading amongst all our primary-aged children through a variety of projects during the next year.

We will be working closely with the Communities and Wellbeing team, as well as our own virtual school officers, to deliver the project. We are also really keen to engage with not only our children, but their carers, to enhance their knowledge and confidence in supporting children to develop a love of reading and books.



Steve Cole, acclaimed children's author who launched the "Superheroes!" book, sends this message:



Whatever life throws at us, a good book is a shelter for our souls, a light for our minds and a world of excitement for our senses.

But we need to SMASH the old idea that books are a private business to be read quietly. For children and for adults, time spent sharing stories builds layers of good times in the memory, because reading aloud encourages chat, laughter, boisterous argument about what you did and didn't like together – and what you'll read next.

The more we read and are read to, the deeper we delve into other lands and other lives.

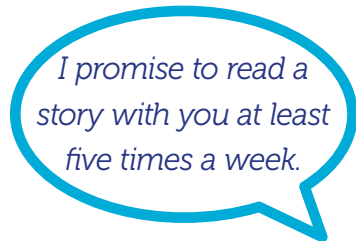


There are so many benefits of reading with children. It promotes:

- Wider vocabulary
- Progress in learning
- Development of imagination and creative skills
- Empathy
- Understanding of their world
- Concentration
- Good adult-child relationships
- Cognitive development
- Social skills and interaction

All things we would want for our children!

We are excited to launch our 2021-22 Year of Reading, but to make it the success our children deserve, we need you, their carers, to become involved. A good starting point is to make a pledge for 2021 to read or share a story with your child at least five times a week.



Story Champions

You too can be a superhero in our eyes, by becoming a Story Champion!

“Story Champions” is a new project that launched in September 2020. Reading for pleasure is extremely important to the potential future success and happiness of children. Research shows that engaging in reading is a bigger contributory factor to success than being from a privileged background. For children in care, this is an incredibly powerful message.

Carers are invited to learn more about reading for pleasure, develop their skills and gain an insight into the realities of instilling a love of books in the children in their care. This will enable us to create a new training package that will be shared with foster carers throughout the county.

Find out more by visiting the Participation Service’s Story Champions page here:

<https://www.cultureleicestershire.co.uk/projects/storychampions/>

"Children are made readers on the laps of their parents."





Blooming Books

The Participation Team and the Leicestershire Virtual School have worked in partnership to produce a series of six short films for foster carers. The films, named 'Blooming Books', are centred around the importance of reading for pleasure and sharing stories when learning to read. As such, they are aimed at foster carers looking after children who are at any stage in learning the mechanics of reading. Although this is the primary focus, there are other topics featured in the films, such as motivation and digital resources, that will support foster carers with more accomplished readers.

The videos can be accessed on the Blooming Books web-page:

<https://www.cultureleicestershire.co.uk/projects/blooming-books/>

The foster carers' Facebook page and the Virtual School website will share the link too. Please watch them as they remind us all why it is so important to share stories and to start that journey of a lifelong enjoyment of reading.

My Books, My Story

A new project called 'My Books, My Story' will be launched. The project aims to build up a body of work by children and young people in care that has been inspired by a book they remember, enjoyed or were influenced by in some way. This work will be made into an exhibition and a film that will be co-curated by a working party of 4-6 young people.

- Submissions will be encouraged from any child/young person currently or previously in care, up to the age of 25 (this can be flexible).
- The working party will be made up of young people aged between 14-21 (although again, this can be flexible depending on individuals)

The MORE
that you read,
the MORE things
you will know.
The MORE that you
Learn,
the MORE places you'll go.



Reading/Cultural Festival

Planned for May/June (If Covid 19 restrictions allow)

This is yet to be arranged but will include;

- A story champion training event for carers
- My Books, My Story exhibition
- An author event for children and young people to attend

Book Parcels

Leicestershire Virtual School will continue to deliver book parcels to primary-aged children in the form of Bookworm, Letterbox and Boomerang and to early years children in the form of Dolly Parton Imagination Library Books. The content of these books is constantly reviewed, and this year, will include books that reflect the wonderful diversity in our society.



“If you are going to get anywhere in life you have to read a lot of books.”

– Roald Dahl



These are a few of our other exciting activities which we hope to offer or share during the year:

**Author
Events**

**Reading
challenges
with prizes**

**Year 5
online
reading
group**

**Regular
Information
and links
from the
Library
Service**

**Story sessions
Online and
face-to-face**

**Monthly reading
lists shared on our
website and in
newsletters**

It is important that as many carers as possible take part in this project and support children's involvement. Now, let's get reading...



