

## **Beanstalk, Children's Literature Charity**

### **What was the main aim of the measure?**

The volunteers are not reading teachers, per se. Their aim is to engender children's love of reading and to help build children's confidence and self-esteem. They also provide extra opportunities for children to read.

### **When was the measure first started?**

1973

### **What were the conditions and steps taken that have contributed most to the success of the measure?**

- Strategies to raise awareness across communities regarding the challenges of low literacy in England, and to recruit volunteers.
- Media partnerships to support awareness and fundraising
- Partnerships with schools
- Training with reading experts

### **Which stakeholders were involved in identifying needs and in the planning and design of the measure?**

The Beanstalk staff and school and teachers working with the Charity are involved in identifying their needs and in the design of the approach.

Beanstalk has developed awareness-raising campaigns to reach stakeholders in the community and in the corporate worlds Beanstalk partners with UK Save the Children.

### **Who was involved in implementing the measure?**

The school and teachers identify children in need of extra support and manage the reading volunteers. The children identified include those who: speak English as a second language, and or need help with reading challenges, such as decoding, comprehension, vocabulary or other challenges. School engagement and regular communication ensure that volunteers are seen as part of the part of the school community.

### **Who has key responsibility for implementation?**

In each school, volunteers, who are trained by reading specialists, work closely with school leaders and teachers. The volunteers are mostly retirees and parents who work part-time

### **How are the different people involved in implementation being supported (e.g. do they receive specific training?)**

Beginning volunteers are trained over two days and also receive follow-up training after their first term. There are also end-of-term workshops addressing specific issues, such as spotting and helping children with dyslexia, or managing difficult and challenging behaviour. They may also receive training for different techniques they can use. Children's authors may participate in training workshops, which volunteers say helps them to find new ways to be creative with children This is important because the sessions should be enjoyable. Volunteers also have the opportunity to connect and communicate with other volunteers to exchange ideas and experiences, organise book swaps, and so on

**What have been the obstacles to introducing the measure? How have they been addressed?**

Beanstalk (previously known as Volunteer Reading Help) is a well-established Charity in England. A number of media campaigns (partnership with the London Standard, outreach campaigns such as Get London Reading) have helped to maintain broad stakeholder awareness and interest in the Charity and the need to address challenges related to the high levels of low literacy among children in school and school leavers.

**Is there a monitoring/evaluation system in place?**

Yes

**What is monitored?**

- Student engagement with reading
- Student self confidence
- Reading comprehension
- Ability to decode words

**Who monitors and how?**

Beanstalk has developed a web-based system to track children's reading at the beginning and end of the year. The results are averaged for each school. It is possible to track impact and then share the anonymised results online. While it is not possible to identify the specific impact of Beanstalk from other factors, the data do help provide a rough evaluation of impact. Beanstalk also organises observation visits to keep track of how things are going.

**Are further evaluations planned and when will the results be available?**

Evaluations are done on an annual basis.

**What has been the impact of the measure?**

In the 2016 –17 school year, Beanstalk helped 11,000 children across England in 1,300 schools through the help of approximately 3,000 reading helpers.

According to the impact data:

- 82% of children aged 5 to 7 (Years 1 and 2) who were classed as reading 'Below' age-related expectations when they began working with a Beanstalk reading helper moved up to 'Working Towards' (47%) or 'At' or 'Above' (35%).
- 57% of children in Years 1 and 2 who were classed as 'Working Towards' age-related expectations when they began working with a Beanstalk reading helper moved up to 'At' or 'Above.'
- The number of children in Years 1 and 2 able to predict what might happen next in a story without additional support more than doubled from 27% at the beginning of the Beanstalk intervention to 61% at the end.
- The number children in Years 1 and 2 able to use their sounds to work out new words on their own increased from 28% to 67% during their time with their reading helper.
- The number of children in Years 1 and 2 who could talk on their own about a range of books they have listened to and read including stories, poems and factual books increased from 8% to 34% - a 425% increase!
- The percentage of children who were confident when choosing books and games during the session more than doubled - from 26% to 56%.
- Children's confidence and enjoyment also improved; the number of children requiring support in order to maintain a positive attitude throughout the reading session almost halved.

- The impact on children aged 7 to 11 (Years 3 to 6) was less pronounced but significant progress was made - especially in their breadth of reading and engagement in a wider range of genres.

**What resources are involved (material, space, amount of funding)?**

Children leave their main class to work in a separate, quiet room. The Beanstalk book box is an important resource with appropriate books and games.