

## Case Study: Pamela McLean, school librarian at St Ninian's High School, Kirkintilloch.

### A Reading School

I've worked in St Ninian's High School in Kirkintilloch for six years. It's a school brimming with positivity and possibility, and for the past few years our school community has engaged in lots of reading for fun activities. Our class library visits from the English department are a key part of this, but we wanted more. Knowing the vital ways that [reading for fun benefits the curriculum](#) and beyond (from raising attainment to promoting a sense of wellbeing and empathy) we wanted to embed this into our school's wider culture. That's why we signed up to the Scottish Book Trust's [Reading Schools](#) accreditation scheme.

Together with our Principal Teacher of Literacy, I built on what was already happening around reading for pleasure, and identified opportunities to build a stronger culture of reading for fun. Going for Reading Schools accreditation helped greatly with this as the framework allowed us to see what we were doing well and identify where we could do better. This is how we were able to run high-impact activities such as our S3 Reading Cafes, where pupils were gifted a book, hot drink and time to read.

I asked one thing of every staff member: become a reading role model. Our staff have embraced this, from having everyday conversations with pupils about what they are reading (sparked by

posters on doors) to appearing on [Book Blether](#), our school's reading podcast. Showing pupils that lots of staff are readers – not just the librarian, not just the English department – had a massive impact. We've had on teachers from PE, Physics and Maths – all talking about different ways of reading for fun being valid, from audio-books to 'non-linear' reading.

For our activities to have an impact on pupils, time had to be given for reading for fun activities. And pupils don't value it if they don't see staff value it. Choice is key, and this was where a current, well-stocked library and book-recommending librarian & staff came in. Visibility and consistency were also important: we posted regularly on Teams, social media, digital screens and on posters around the school, sharing monthly BookFlix recommendation newsletters and quotes from staff who have appeared on our reading podcast [Book Blether](#). This reinforced the message that all reading counts.

For the first time this year I worked with a group of S5 pupils to run a shared reading session on *The Lost Words* by Robert Macfarlane and Jackie Morris. The visits to our local Carers Link monthly meetings were outstanding (see feedback below), showing both our pupils and our local community how stories connect people.

We were accredited as a Silver Reading School in May 2022 and this academic

year we're going for gold. Our long-term goal is keeping St Ninian's a Reading School.

### **What others have said:**

#### Feedback from pupils

"Though I'm not a big fan about reading I've found a few books that I like, such as Marcus Rashford and other football books. They have definitely helped me with getting into reading a bit more. That there alone shows just how helpful the activities have been, not just for a few people but for a lot of people." (S2 pupil).

#### Feedback from staff

- "I think the Drop Everything and Read was fantastic. It gave us the opportunity to talk about books and stories with the pupils."
- "Ms McLean [librarian] and Ms Marks [PT Literacy] have worked tirelessly to cultivate a culture of reading in our school, and their efforts have definitely paid off. Pupils seem more engaged in reading and sharing stories, and their innovative approach and dedication have created meaningful moments for pupils (and staff!)"

#### Feedback from Carers Link group (Reading Schools website)

"At one point the poems and paintings sparked off memories of our childhood which we all shared with the group. Memories of enjoying buttercups, daisies, dandelion clocks and conkers. It

was interesting to note that even though there was a variety of ages present we had all experienced the joy for example of making a daisy chain or playing with conkers which showed us how important these words are to us and to future generations.

The time just flew by. Everyone present had lots to discuss and we all seemed to have a most enjoyable morning. Once the pupils and teachers had left we even continued our own discussion for some time about The Lost Words.

I think this was a very worthwhile enjoyable collaboration with St Ninian's."

#### Feedback from Headteacher Paul McLaughlin:

"From the first time our prospective first year pupils visit Pamela in our school library as part of their transition to secondary, she captures their attention and they know that she has created a space for them to share stories, in their varied format. From that point on, the pupils across the school know that the library is theirs and that Pamela curates with great care a broad range of quality books to pique their interests and encourage their reading for fun. With her knowledge, creativity and efforts, Pamela has managed to build a reading culture that permeates the whole school and involves pupils and staff alike. Having listened to her "Book Blether" podcast, I myself now listen to audiobooks regularly and I thoroughly enjoyed the book that I was gifted in the staff book swap – a book that I would never have picked up before and that introduced me to a new genre."

## Feedback from Scottish Book Trust

“Your evidence was an absolute joy to read and gave us a real flavour of all the amazing things happening across your school. The huge amount of work and dedication you have put into the programme really shone through your application – what an incredible reading environment for your learners.”