

# LITERACY PIRATES

Literacy, Confidence & Perseverance.

2024/25 Annual  
Impact Report





# *Sunset Heaven*

*By Ilayda*

The ocean is as calm as a rainforest.

As the warm sun wraps you in its warm blanket, you put your hand  
in the soft sand as the sun burns your sandy hands.

The waves cool you down in its cool, chilly waves and woosh!

Splash! Goes the calm wooshy waves as the pier makes a howling  
noise and the sunbed umbrellas blow in the soft wind.

I feel as calm as a turtle in the sea as the rocks stay still in the  
ocean. New ones appear.

You dig the sand up and find cute little fossils if you're lucky!

Or maybe even a marble, maybe even dinosaur fossils if you dig  
deep enough and it's all with luck.

As ice cream vans come, you get a chocolate ice cream  
and a cold Coca-Cola that costs £6.75.

From 'Whispers of the World', the compendium  
of Young Pirates work, class of 2025

Illustrations by Beth Tibbles  
Designed and chosen by Young Pirates.



# Ahoy!

Thank you for your support of Literacy Pirates.

We are proud to share the story of a year full of joyful learning, confidence building and huge progress on our ambitions as a growing charity. In 2024–25, we helped 542 Young Pirates build the skills and confidence in reading and writing they will need to succeed in school and beyond. The data in this report describes the remarkable journey our young pirates have been on this year, powered by creativity, determination and community spirit.

While as a charity we have been busy readying ourselves for the next big stage in our journey – our expansion out of London. Our goal is to become a charity with national reach, serving children and families anywhere in the country. In September 2025 we will welcome our first cohort of young people from Cornwall, with schools in the North and Northwest of the country joining us later in 2026. In this report we also describe our strategy for full national expansion over the next five years.

Our mission is clear: to transform the literacy, confidence, and perseverance of children navigating educational disadvantage. As this report shows, our model works – and works extremely well. This year, over 88% of Young Pirates made progress in literacy, while families and teachers told us how their children's self-belief and resilience had come on by leaps and bounds.

Our Young Pirates now see themselves as readers, writers and successful learners.

The impact on their educational attainment and success in future life, cannot be overstated. Our online programme, the Virtual Ship, continues to grow from strength to strength, with demand increasing by 19% during 2024/25 as we reached children in schools right across the capital.

It is the immense potential of our online programme to deliver the highest quality literacy support to children wherever they are located, that is underpinning our expansion into Cornwall in September and across the North later in 2026. The online programme will bring our joyful, rigorous programme to children not just in inner cities, but also in rural areas where the need is great and support too often out of reach.

Across all our work, our values – ambition, inclusivity, joy, expertise and transparency guide every session, every story, and every step forward. None of this would be possible without our incredible volunteer Crewmates, generous supporters, committed teachers, and brilliant families. You've helped make this year's voyage unforgettable and the journey ahead so very exciting. From all of us at Literacy Pirates: thank you for joining us. Let's keep sailing, together.



*Jude Williams*  
Chief Executive/Captain

*Nick Canning*  
Chair of Trustees



# Vision 2030

Since 2011, Literacy Pirates has transformed the educational trajectories of over 3,000 children aged 9–13 who are falling behind in literacy and face socio-economic barriers to their educational success.

Recognising the persistent educational gap linked to socio-economic disadvantage, we harness robust, evidence-based pedagogical methods to help children become successful learners.

Our work specifically targets children who, due to socio-economic barriers, have fewer opportunities and are falling behind academically.

Our vision is ambitious: by 2030, Literacy Pirates aims to reach 3,000 children annually, dramatically increasing our current impact and closing the literacy gap across London and nationally.

Around 170,000 children from low-income households attend school in England and Wales each school year. Many live in rural, isolated communities, frequently experiencing compounded socio-economic and educational barriers, which limit their access to supportive learning environments and exacerbate literacy attainment gaps.

Literacy Pirates' Virtual Ship can uniquely address this by delivering joyful, evidence-based literacy intervention online to those who are otherwise underserved due to geographical isolation.

## Our strategic building blocks:

### 1. Grow our reach nationally

We'll boldly expand beyond London by 2030, prioritising communities with the greatest need and highest isolation levels.

### 2. Supercharge our impact

We'll enhance our unique teaching approach, continually innovating and leveraging cutting-edge technology to inspire even greater outcomes for children.

### 3. Transform digitally

We'll invest in robust digital infrastructure to efficiently scale our impact, powering growth without increasing core costs

## Our Five Year Goals for Growth:

	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
<b>Young People p.a.</b>	<b>650</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>1,300</b>	<b>1,600</b>	<b>3,000</b>
<b>UK regional clusters</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Annual Revenue</b>	<b>£1,100,000</b>	<b>£1,300,000</b>	<b>£1,500,000</b>	<b>£1,700,000</b>	<b>£2,000,000</b>

## Why literacy

Literacy is a powerful driver of change and social mobility. It opens the door to learning, self-expression, and lifelong opportunity. When children read and write confidently, they thrive academically, socially, economically, and emotionally.

*“Poor literacy doubles the risk of unemployment by age 34 and triples the likelihood of adult mental health issues (National Literacy Trust, 2020).”*

The move to secondary school is pivotal. It’s when learning gaps either widen or close, depending on the support given. Our programme builds not just skills, but also self-belief, confidence, and perseverance – traits that help children push through challenges. Confident learners take risks, ask questions, and grow faster.

## Why digital works

Effective online learning is more than uploading classroom content; it requires design that fosters engagement, connection, and autonomy.

We understand concerns about digital provision for children—worries that it may be passive, isolating, overly screen-based, or reliant on tech access and adult help.

Our online programme, built specifically for primary-aged learners, puts engagement, support, and impact at its heart. Years of refinement have created a highly interactive, relationship-focused approach.

## Focus on disadvantage and hard to reach

In 2024–25, 83% of children on our programme received pupil premium, 76% had SEND, and 42% spoke English as an additional language. 75% were Black, Asian, mixed heritage or from other racially minoritised groups.

These figures reflect our roots in inner London and our focus on children with the highest social needs. While the causes of low attainment are complex, our targeted digital literacy programme proves highly effective for those underserved by mainstream education.

As we expand beyond London, we remain committed to helping those who struggle most. In London, this often means children from ethnically diverse communities; elsewhere, it may be those in rural, coastal, or isolated areas.



# Who we worked with

We work with children who are both falling behind in literacy and have fewer opportunities in their personal circumstances.

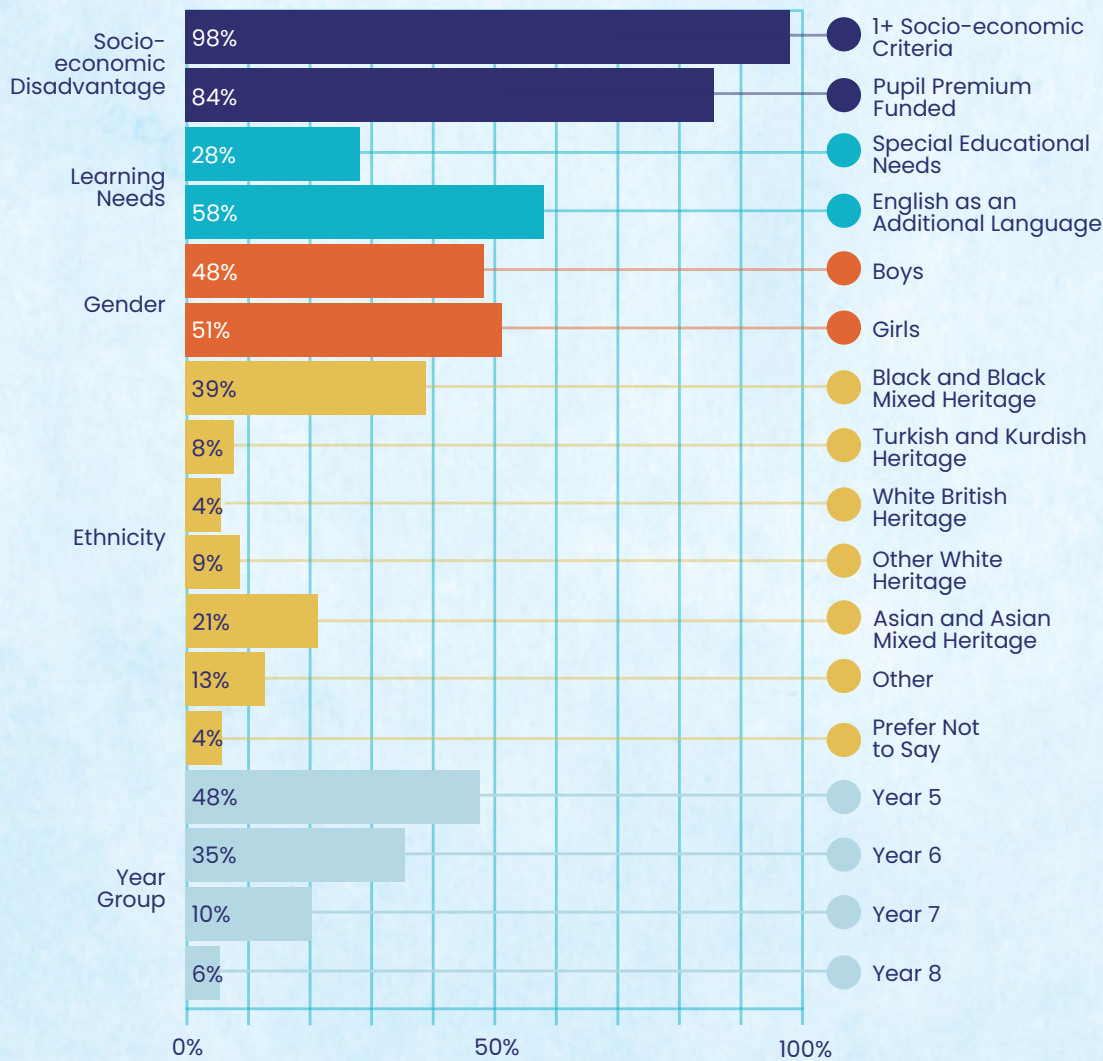
The link between socio-economic disadvantage and education is persistent in the UK, as is the correlation between literacy and life outcomes.

Children are nominated by their teachers and schools. The majority qualify for

Pupil Premium Funding (additional government funding for children who are from low-income households or who have experienced the care system).

Many of the children we work with speak English as an Additional Language or have a Special Educational Need. These groups are overrepresented in low-income families and form a more complex picture of intersectional disadvantage.

## Children Supported in 2024/25<sup>1</sup>

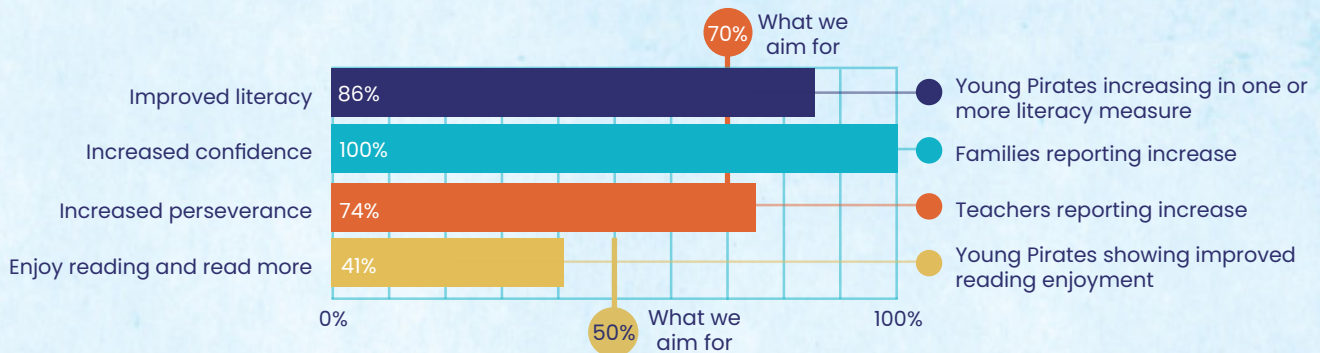


*“Whatever pupils’ socio-economic background, making sure that they become engaged with reading from the beginning is one of the most important ways to make a difference in their life chances.”* *The Reading Framework, Department for Education 2023*

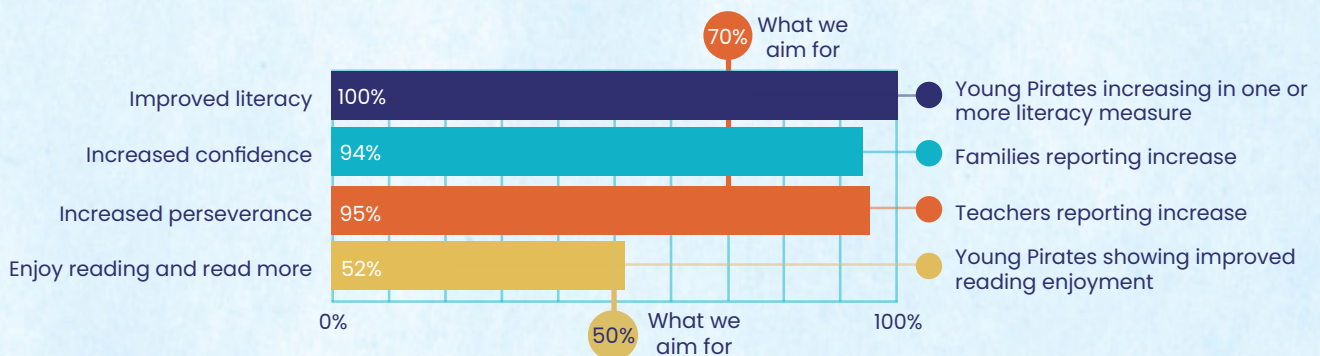
<sup>1</sup>Total number of children 542

# What does impact look like?

## Virtual Programme 2024/25



## In-Person Programme 2024/25



## Reading for Pleasure

Reading for Pleasure is both a pedagogic approach and an outcome we measure.

### Why it's important

It's linked to a multitude of outcomes. A National Literacy Trust's Report<sup>2</sup> survey showed that children who enjoy reading were twice as likely to have above average reading skills.

### Why it's challenging

Rates of enjoyment are falling nationally, and there is a historic drop between primary and secondary, which is one of the reasons we focus on this age group.

### What we're proud of

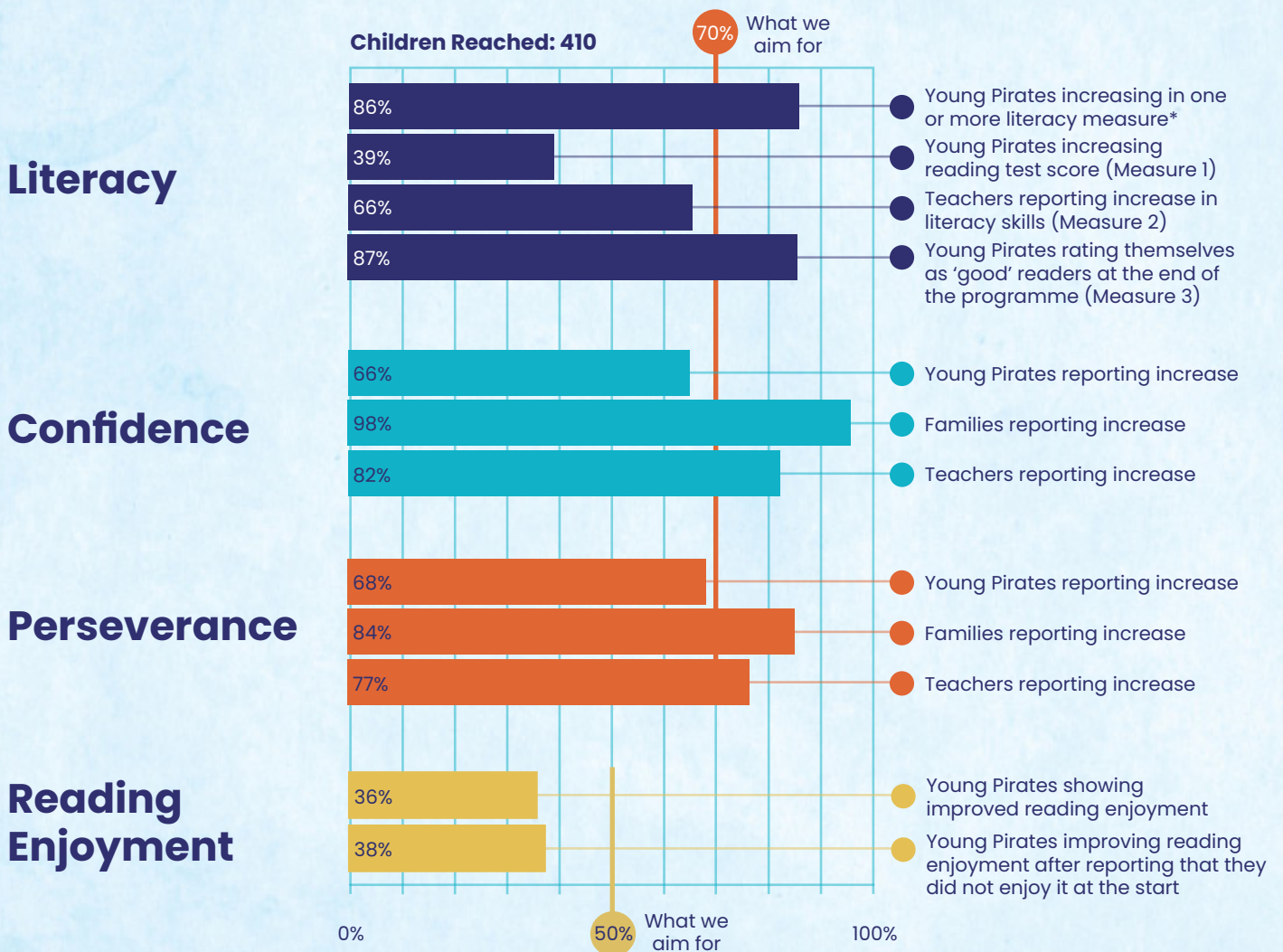
According to a National Literacy Trust report only 32% of children enjoy reading in their free time. 47% of our Young Pirates enjoy reading at the end of the programme.

<sup>2</sup><https://literacytrust.org.uk/reading-for-pleasure/>

# 2024/25 Impact



## Virtual (10 week programme)

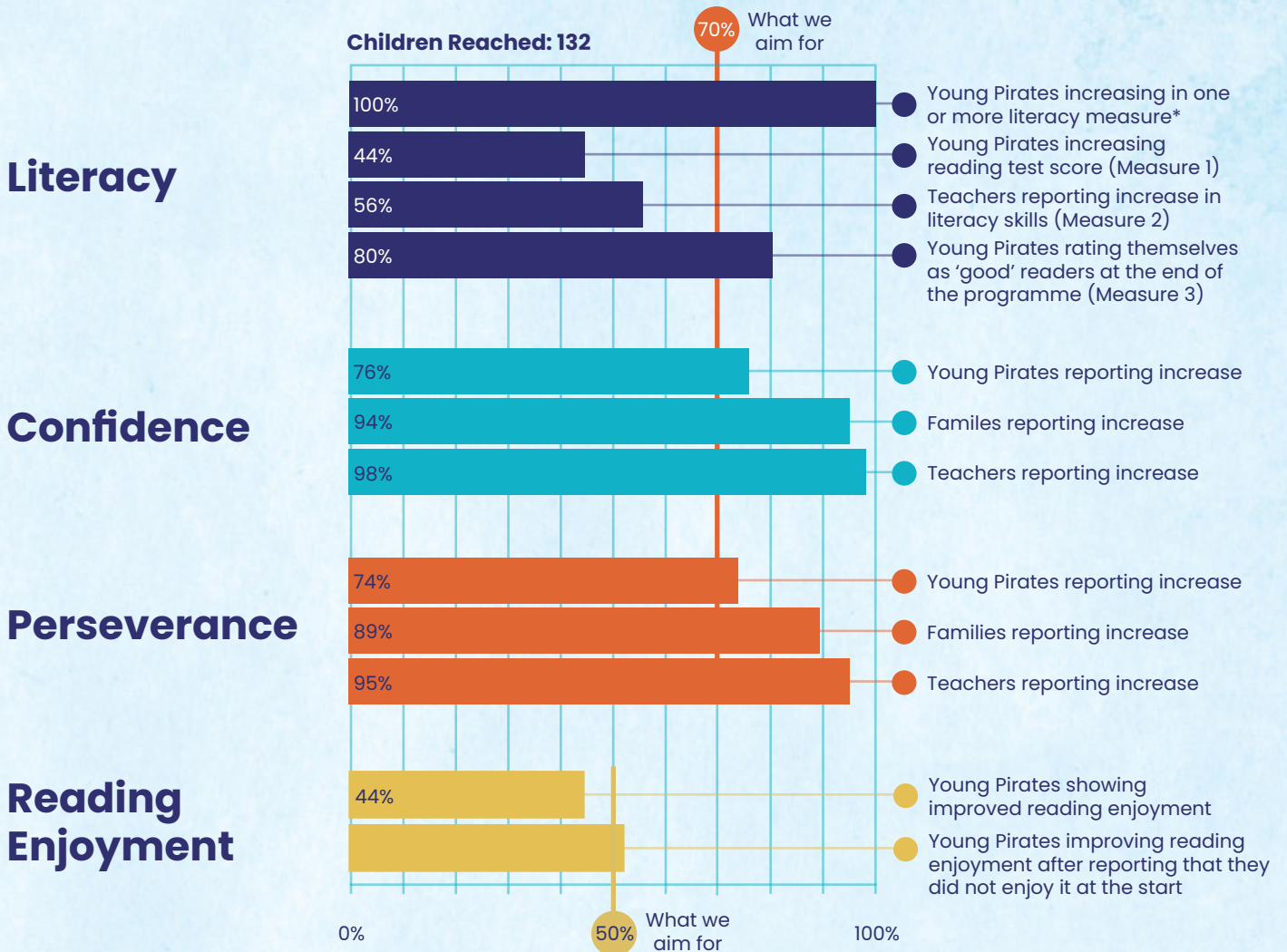


### Literacy Measure 1: Young Pirates increasing reading test score (STAR test, Norm Referenced Standardised Score)

At the beginning and end of the programme, Young Pirates take a reading test. The results are 'normed' and compared against national data of children the same age.

A child who maintains the same score over time is making progress at a rate expected for their age. An increase in score shows that they have progressed faster. On average, where a score of 100 points is age-expected, Young Pirates' scores increased by 3.6 points by the end of the programme.

# In-Person (34 week programme)



## Literacy Measure 2: Teachers reporting increase in literacy skills

*(DePerna and Elliot)*

Teachers are asked to report on Young Pirates' key literacy skills, including: decoding, fluency of reading, reading comprehension, and problem solving. On average, Young Pirates increase all literacy skills by 27%.

## Literacy Measure 3: Rating themselves as good readers by the end of the programme

*(Clark and Douglas)*

We ask Young Pirates at the beginning and end of the programme to rate themselves on their reading ability. 88% of Young Pirates rated themselves higher by the end of the programme.



# Young Pirate Story

Jevelle was referred to Literacy Pirates by his teacher in April 2025. At the time, he was working below his expected reading age, with particular challenges in cohesion, grammar, and spelling in his writing. His teacher hoped the programme would help him build confidence and develop stronger literacy skills.

Jevelle took part in the 10-week virtual programme during summer term, and during that time, he made fantastic progress. From the beginning, he brought a warm, uplifting energy to sessions, something that had a positive impact on his peers, Crewmates, and staff alike. Whether in whole-group activities or small breakout rooms, Jevelle was consistently encouraging and supportive of others, helping fellow Young Pirates feel comfortable and confident in sharing their ideas.

While Jevelle occasionally needed a little reassurance to get started, this gentle

support was often all he needed to spark his creativity. Once engaged, his ideas flowed, and he showed a growing ability to structure and develop them in his writing. He also asked thoughtful, curious questions that showed a real willingness to explore topics in depth and improve his work.

Over the course of the programme, Jevelle's reading confidence also grew. He became more fluent when reading aloud, learning to stay calm, pace himself, and sound out unfamiliar words with increasing ease. This helped improve both his fluency and overall engagement with reading.

Jevelle's time on the programme highlighted not only his potential, but also his kindness and team spirit. He finished the summer having made clear progress as a reader and writer, and even more importantly, as a confident and supportive learner. We're incredibly proud of everything he achieved.

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*"Jevelle was fantastic onboard the virtual ship this year. You can really see the boost in confidence with your reading, particularly those longer trickier words! I loved your story 'The Alien Ship' which used onomatopoeia and great pace - which made for a really exciting read! Congratulations on being wonderful at Literacy Pirates Jevelle."*

*Emilie, Jevelle's Session Leader*

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# *The Alien Ship*

*by Jevelle*

It was a normal, boring day at my office  
when the clock hit zero. Boom!

A greenish-greyish alien ship invaded earth.  
The sound of the boom shocked me!

When I heard the sound of the boom, I went outside the office and  
looked up at the sky to see a mysterious alien ship.

I was getting lifted up by aliens, and the next minute  
I got taken away like the force of a superhero.

Inside the alien ship, they locked me inside a dark and creepy room.  
All I could see was control pads.

I had to get out of here, so I fought them and stole their alien ship  
and drove off and got back to earth.

I got back to earth and landed and was so relieved, and then...  
I saw ANOTHER alien ship!

From 'Whispers of the World', the compendium  
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@LiteracyPirates

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