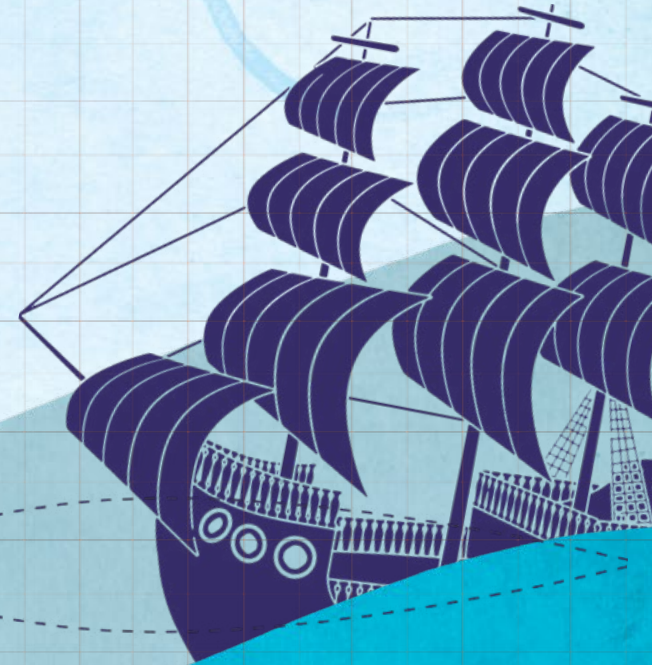
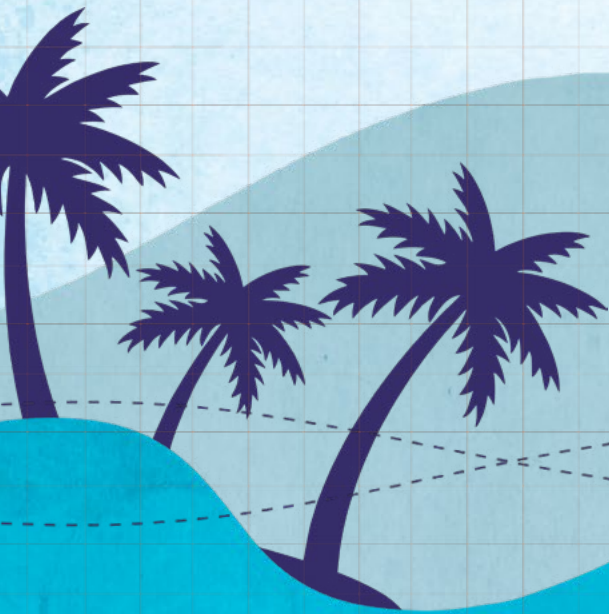


LITERACY PIRATES

Literacy, Confidence & Perseverance.



Theory of Change

How we make our impact



Taking children on voyages as readers and writers since 2011.



What we do

Our after-school programmes, led by teachers, offer positive personal attention from trained Volunteer Crewmates, giving children aged 9-13 the confidence to unfurl their sails.

By welcoming them as Young Pirates into our joyful spaces, publishing their work in the real world, and celebrating everything they do, we develop their literacy, confidence and perseverance so that they can succeed at school and beyond.

Vision

Every child has the literacy skills, confidence and perseverance to succeed at school and beyond.

Mission

The Literacy Pirates improves the literacy, confidence and perseverance of children who are falling behind in class and who have fewer opportunities in their personal circumstances so they can succeed at school.

The Voyage So Far

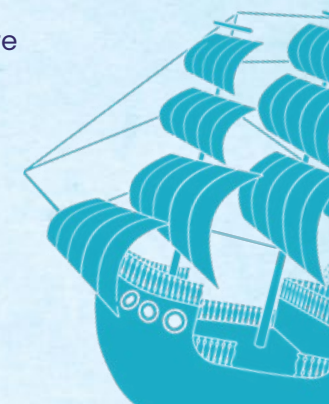
In 2011, our founder, Catriona Maclay, was a teacher in North London. She realised that some of her pupils needed more support than she and her colleagues could offer during the day.

She was determined to build a programme that focussed on supporting schools, helped children catch up and The Literacy Pirates was born.

In 2020, the pandemic struck and we moved our work online so that we could continue supporting the children who needed us during lockdown. Seeing that the children we supported virtually were reading and writing more than they had before, we saw the potential for a far-reaching, digital programme.

In the years that followed, we rebuilt our in-person programme in Hackney and worked to build a new virtual programme alongside. We developed our online pedagogy, invested in a learning platform, recruited more Volunteer Crewmates and built a Virtual Ship with the hallmark Literacy Pirates joy and impact.

We are now on a voyage to reach as many children as possible through our digital offer, the Virtual Ship.



The problem we address

We work with children who are facing socio-economic and educational barriers.

In the UK there is a clear link between socio-economic disadvantage and educational success. Social Mobility Commission data¹ shows a persistent gap between pupils from lower socio-economic backgrounds and their richer peers by the end of secondary education, and the Education Policy Institute's annual report cards² reveal that this gap is widening at all stages of education.

The effect of the literacy attainment gap deepens and extends into adulthood where literacy correlates with a range of life outcomes, such as lifetime earnings³, health⁴, and imprisonment.⁵

Children we work with are nominated by their teachers and identified by specific socio-economic criteria, with the majority qualifying for Pupil Premium Funding (additional government funding for children who are from low-income households or who have experienced the care system). In addition, many of the children we work with speak English as an Additional Language or have a Special Educational Need. These groups are over-represented in low-income families and form a more complex picture of intersectional disadvantage.

Providing these children with an enjoyable, effective educational programme helps to prevent them from falling further behind, giving them tools to thrive in education and beyond. The Literacy Pirates is part of the solution.

Our assumptions that underpin the way we work

Our experience as teachers and evidence from research created the foundations for our pedagogic approach.

1. We focus on literacy because literacy is linked to educational success across the curriculum.⁶
2. We use trained volunteers aged 16+ in session because small group and one to one support from trained volunteers accelerates progress.^{7,8}
3. We use a Reading for Pleasure pedagogy because of its strong correlation with literacy attainment.^{9,10,11}
4. We use well-evidenced Reading for Pleasure approaches to create an interest and love of reading.¹²
5. We use Writing Islands, a drafting and redrafting model to experience the writing cycle.^{13,14}
6. We celebrate the children as readers and writers to build self-efficacy.^{15,16}
7. We create a low-risk, relentlessly positive environment.^{17,18}
8. We use meta-cognition activities to help children understand and regulate their learning.¹⁹

Theory of Change

We plan and deliver a rich range of activities during weekly sessions online and in-person, in which:

Qualified teachers design and lead the programme.

Trained Volunteer Crewmates act as cheerleaders and give instant, personal feedback.

The environment is low stakes and relentlessly positive.

Children practise reading and writing in a social environment.

Children make choices and form opinions on what they read.

Children are offered a wide range of high quality and diverse texts that tempt.

Children have extended creative writing opportunities about things they care about.

Children practise drafting and redrafting their written work.

Children's written work is published into high quality products like books.

Children share their work aloud and often.

Children attend celebration events with family and teachers.

Children use meta-cognitive tools and reflect on what helps keep them going.

This creates the conditions for children to:

Attend regularly.

Enjoy reading in session.

Reflect on and engage with the writing cycle.

Experience success as a reader and writer.

Build confidence in their abilities.

Practise using tools to try hard and keep going.

See themselves as readers and writers.

So that by the end of the programme, children:

Improve their literacy.

Increase their confidence.

Increase their perseverance.

Enjoy reading and read more.

Line of accountability

And in the long term:

Children reach age-related expectations in literacy and succeed at school.

Pedagogic Approach & Evidence Base

Reading for Pleasure

Learner Led: Choosing books, talking about books, giving feedback and building a library of 'books I enjoy'.

Social and Supported Reading Spaces: Reading aloud with small-group or 1:1 support of an adult. Activities that encourage in-text talk rather than comprehension. Encouraging relatedness through talking activities and text choices.

Texts that Tempt: Diverse range of texts with an emphasis on positive representation of a variety of ethnicities, genders, abilities and other experiences.

Reading for Pleasure is an evidence-based pedagogic approach that significantly cultivates both academic success and a lifelong love of learning, making it a crucial pedagogic approach.

Key research backing up our approach includes:

- As part of the highly recognised Open University department working on Reading for Pleasure, Cremin et al. demonstrated that children who read for enjoyment tend to develop better empathy, imagination, and emotional intelligence. They can engage with diverse perspectives, which enhances their social and cognitive skills.²⁰
- The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development found that Reading for Pleasure is a stronger predictor of future academic success than socio-economic background, particularly in areas such as vocabulary development, reading comprehension, and critical thinking.²¹
- Guthrie & Wigfield found that children who read for pleasure develop a positive attitude towards reading, which boosts intrinsic motivation and leads to higher engagement and sustained reading habits.²²



Everyone a Writer

Space for Imagination: Open-ended stimuli that encourage Young Pirates to use their imagination. Personal choice about the topic of writing.

Real World Published Projects: High quality tangible products, like books. Ability to input into their production.

Creative Community: Sharing writing experiences with others. Instant positive feedback from peers and adults.

Active Engagement with the Writing Process: Setting writing goals. Explicit teaching of the writing process: we use writing islands (small writing activities) and redrafting work.

Creating enjoyment in writing for children requires pedagogic approaches that foster motivation, creativity, and a sense of ownership over the writing process.

Key research backing up our approach includes:

- Flower & Hayes indicated that personal relevance in writing tasks leads to deeper engagement and enjoyment in the process, as students feel more connected to their work.²³
- Graham & Perin highlighted that when children write for meaningful, authentic purposes, they experience greater satisfaction and see the value in writing, like our published projects.²⁴
- Cremin emphasised that creativity in writing allows children to explore ideas freely, boosting their intrinsic motivation.²⁵
- Cremin and Myhill discussed creative writing pedagogies that encourage children to generate writing in non-linear ways. This aligns with multi-modal and creative approaches that emphasise iterative thinking and problem-solving in writing.²⁶



Confidence

Social Space: Shared reading and writing, and making and talking about personal choices, supports independence.

Positive Feedback: Helps children develop the belief that their skills can improve with effort. Increased confidence in their abilities.

Low Risk Environment: Offering free style writing-or-reading for pleasure helps students build confidence in their abilities.

Building confidence in children's reading and writing involves pedagogic approaches that: promote a positive learning environment, scaffold learning, and encourage gradual skill development.

Key research backing up our approach includes:

- Carol Dweck's research on growth mindset demonstrated that encouraging effort and persistence rather than focusing solely on ability fosters resilience in reading and writing.²⁷
- Research by Atwell stressed the importance of creating a supportive, low-stakes environment where children can experiment with reading and writing without fear of failure.²⁸
- Lave and Wenger's concept of 'communities of practice' highlighted the power of social learning. Collaborative activities, like peer reading or writing groups, allow students to share ideas and gain confidence from their peers' support and feedback.²⁹

Perseverance

Explicit Meta-cognition: Reflecting on their own learning process. Thinking about how Young Pirates plan for their best work.

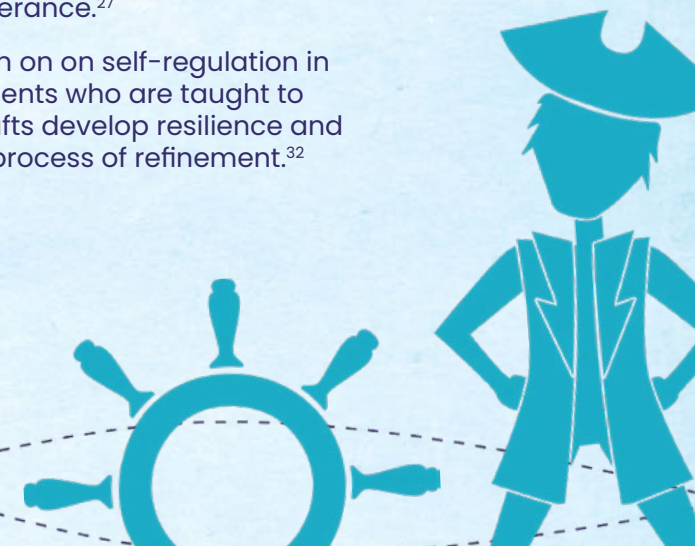
Goal Setting: Importance of self-regulation and monitoring progress.

Drafting and Redrafting Written Work: Returning to redraft. Talking about how to improve and revise their work.

Building perseverance in children's reading and writing involves fostering self-regulation, reflective thinking, and resilience in overcoming challenges.

Key research backing up our approach includes:

- Flavell, a key figure in metacognitive theory, emphasised that children need to be taught to reflect on how they learn best.³⁰
- Zimmerman highlighted the importance of self-regulated learning, where students set specific goals, monitor progress, and reflect on outcomes.³¹
- Carol Dweck's work on growth mindset showed that encouraging children to view challenges as opportunities fosters perseverance.²⁷
- Graham and Harris' research on self-regulation in writing highlighted that students who are taught to revise and improve their drafts develop resilience and view writing as an ongoing process of refinement.³²



How we monitor and evaluate our impact

What does impact look like?

Outcome	What we aim for
Have improved literacy.	Young Pirates to go up in at least one literacy measure.
Have increased confidence.	Young Pirates to show an increase in confidence in their reading and writing. Young Pirates, teachers and families report improved confidence at the end of the programme.
Have increased perseverance.	Young Pirates to show an increase in perseverance skills. Young Pirates, teachers and families to report improved perseverance at the end of the programme.
Enjoy reading and read more.	Young Pirates to show an increase in their reading enjoyment either on their own or compared to their peers.

How do we select our tools?

Across all our tools we have some key considerations:

- **Well-evidenced, validated tools:** To ensure we have well-evidenced approaches and data-sets to compare to we use a set of validated questions and scales.
- **Thorough and holistic insights:** Our programme looks at literacy as a multi-faceted skill. This is also why we look at improvement through families, Young Pirates and schools so that we can triangulate a thorough picture.
- **Simple and scalable collection methods:** We measure impact remotely and across large groups. The tools we use need to be simple.
- **Accessible for all:** It's important our tools are simple to use for Young Pirates, teachers and families. We prioritise tools that are at an appropriate level of complexity for the time and ability each user group has.



Data Collection Points & Tools

Method	Literacy Measure	Confidence Measure	Perseverance Measure	Reading Enjoyment Measure
Young Pirates take a reading test at the start, end and three months after the programme.	STAR test . The score is 'normed' against all pupils of the same age from the 10k children using the Renaissance programme. Standardised scores are more accurate than reading ages.			
Young Pirates take a questionnaire at the start and end of the programme.	Clark and Douglas' tool for perception of self as a reader (1 question) ³³ . Self-reports of improvement have been shown to be a good predictor of literacy attainment. Young Pirates also report their perceived increase.	Bandura's multi-dimensional scales of self-perceived efficacy (1 question) ³⁴ , indicating how their confidence has improved. Young Pirates also report their perceived	Duckworth et al's perseverance sub-scale (6 questions) ³⁵ , looking at a range of perseverance behaviours. Young Pirates also report their perceived increase.	National Literacy Trust's question on reading enjoyment ³³ , and Rojas et al's question on reading enjoyment compared to peers ³⁶ . In the age group we work with, reading enjoyment can be overreported so we use and compare both questions to mitigate this.
Teachers take a questionnaire at the start and end of the programme.	DiPerna and Elliot Academic Competence Evaluation Scale (5 questions) ³⁷ , looking at a range of literacy skills, indicating improvements transferring to school and beyond. Teachers also give a below/at/above rating linked to in-school assessments and report their perceived increase with qualitative examples.	Teachers report on their perceived increase with qualitative examples.	Sturman and Zappala-Piemme Grit Scale ³⁸ . The 0-100 scale is sensitive and allows us to see changes in perseverance. Teachers also report their perceived increase with qualitative examples.	
Families take a questionnaire at the start and end of the programme.	Families report their perceived increase with qualitative examples.	Families report their perceived increase with qualitative examples.	A simplified version of the Sturman and Zappala-Piemme Grit Scale ³⁸ , to see changes in perseverance. Families also report their perceived increase with qualitative examples.	

*Validated Measure

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