



Dear all,

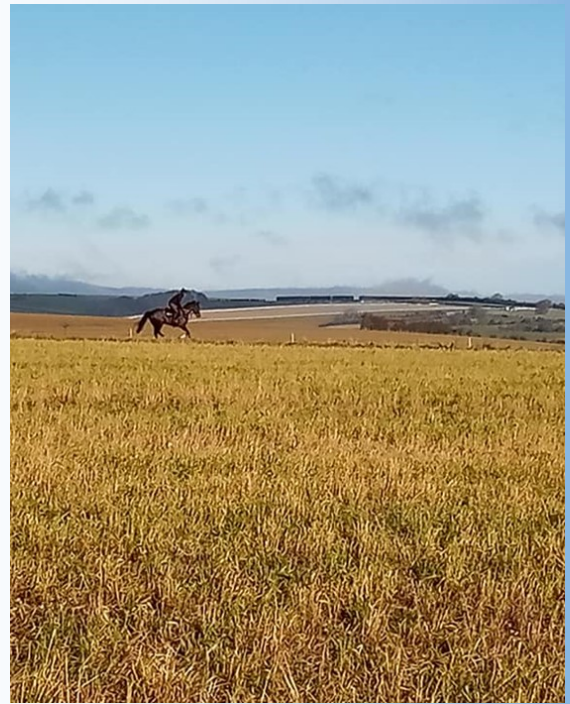
The recent announcement is a long-awaited boost!

With the clear government guidance for schools, we are hoping that many of our volunteers will be able to return to schools around the 8 March. We are aware that some volunteers are already back in schools. Please do let your fieldworker know if you are ready to return to school so that we can start revisiting the placements and getting organised, as well as letting your fieldworker know whether you have already made arrangements with your school directly and have a return to school date planned or are already back!

The recent government guidelines to schools are that volunteers may be used to support the work of school as would usually be the case.

The last year and regular lockdowns will only increase the need for our services, and we have embarked on a volunteer recruitment plan. Could you help us by writing to local publications about your volunteering in schools and how fulfilling it is for you? We also want to make sure our local MPs are aware of all the wonderful volunteers ABC to read has – could you write to your local MP to tell them about your work and the support that we are able to provide within our community?

One of the most common questions we have faced during the pandemic is 'how do parents engage with their children's reading?' We are in the process of adapting our Ready to read workshop so that we can offer it to families online and show them how they can support their children at home including support for those parents who find difficulties with reading themselves and dealing with children's anxieties to foster a love of reading.



Above: Lambourne; **Below:** the river in Pangbourne



Online resources

Thank you to Karen Heffer for sharing this useful online resource: *Brainbox Games* help to improve concentration, short term memory and observational skills and from this link you can print free games as well as use them for any online sessions that you are running: <https://www.brainbox.co.uk/blog/article/try-our-games-for-free>. There are also some online phonics games for early readers which make for a good starter warm-up at the beginning of sessions: <https://www.topmarks.co.uk/> In addition some useful information and free training is available here: <https://connect-the-spots.madebydyslexia.org/>

WE'VE BEEN NOMINATED



THAMES VALLEY AWARDS
BUSINESS & COMMUNITY

**Charity of
the Year**

We have been nominated for helping children gain a life skill and adapting our services during the pandemic! @GBExpos recognises the achievements of businesses, charities and inspirational individuals throughout the region

The winners will be announced at the virtual awards evening ceremony on Wednesday 31st March.

Our volunteers are critical to the success of ABC to read and you are truly valued. We have been blown away this year by the support and patience that you have given us whilst we plan for the resumption of our services and develop the charity further so that we are able to give more children a love of reading.

Our virtual reading programme

Thank you to all of you who have embraced tech and helped us support over 160 children before half term, such an amazing achievement – who would have thought that we would be offering our help via tech this time last year! We have fully embraced technology which means more children are gaining support and more volunteers are able to volunteer with us as we can offer a flexible opportunity. We do know that our one to one, face to face support is the best method but are still helping our schools so that all children have access to our support at home. If you would like help with virtual sessions then do please let us know as we still have children who are waiting for our help.



We will be looking to build on this support, and we are considering adding it as a part of our services going forward in order to give children every opportunity to develop their reading. We hope to evaluate the online sessions soon so that we can find out how much of an impact they have had.

New volunteer welcome!

We would like to welcome the many new volunteers that have joined us this year. We appreciate that some of our new volunteers joined us when we were faced with the very first lockdown and have yet been allocated a school to support; we will be prioritising a place for you as soon as we can. Please do keep being patient as you are very much needed. Following on from the school closures we are now in the process of re-establishing relationships with our partner schools which can often take time. Also some staff changes throughout the year mean re-building some of our connections. And of course, schools are extremely busy getting used to new ways of working and may just not have the spare time to speak with us. Those schools that truly do value our support are easier for us to communicate with than those that don't always see us as an essential and vital service.

Safeguarding training

Thank you to those of you who were due to refresh your safeguarding training and have taken part in the online safeguarding training. Safeguarding is an essential part of every ABC to read volunteer's training. Awareness is key so that we can be alerted to any signs of abuse and know how to report any concerns.



Office closure - Easter holiday

The office will close on Thursday 1st April and re-open on Monday 19th April