



Dear all,

We hope you all enjoyed the bank holiday and had a good week of what would have been half term. The weather certainly behaved – unusual for a bank holiday!

Since returning to schools, we are finding that our volunteers are working with lots of children in their first year of primary and learning at a slower pace than others.

Phonics involves matching the sounds of spoken English with individual letters or groups of letters. For **example**, the sound k can be spelled as c, k, ck or ch. Teaching children to blend the sounds of letters together helps them decode unfamiliar or unknown words by sounding them out. This website is a wonderful example of pronouncing phonemes: <https://lettersandsounds.org.uk/for-home/overview>

The volunteers who returned to their schools last term have been very positive about the experience. Schools have all had to reorganise their spaces; many children no longer move freely around the school but are kept in their classrooms in their bubbles. The advantage of this has been that many schools have allocated our volunteers a specific place to work, there are no disturbances and there is no longer the challenge of having to roam the school to track children down when it is time for their session!

"I went in yesterday and it was great to see the children again. They weren't massively keen to read, but they really wanted to talk! It was strange but lovely to be back at school yesterday."

"I went back on Thursday; it was lovely to see my 3 children again and they seemed reasonably happy to see me which is always a plus."

Kate, one of our volunteers from East Berkshire recommends this site for some useful ideas and books: <https://www.thereaderteacher.com/>

If you have not yet arranged a return to school date, do please contact your fieldworker to organise your placement. Or, please let your fieldworker know that you have returned to school if you have not already done so.

We do have many bags, boxes and books that we fear are sitting in schools not being used and will go missing or be thrown away. If you have seen our resources in schools or you have unused ABC to read items in your homes, can you please return to our book exchanges so we are aware of what resources we have, this includes the boxes and bags. Thank you.

UPCOMING EVENTS

AGM - 22nd June

10.30-noon

Crowne Plaza, Reading
Refreshments on arrival and parking on site

Volunteer workshop - 5th October

10.30-noon

Crowne Plaza, Reading
Refreshments on arrival and parking on site

Safeguarding refresher—1st July

(INVITE ONLY for those whose training is due to expire this year)

9.45—12.15pm

St Marks Church Hall

"One benefit of summer was that each day we had more light to read by"

Jeanette Walls

Upcoming events

AGM - 22nd June

You should have all received an invite to our AGM which hopefully will be able to go ahead this year! Please do ensure you register via the link provided as we do need to keep a record of names and numbers.

Details: 10.30-noon— Crowne Plaza, Caversham Bridge, Richfield Avenue, Reading. Refreshments on arrival and parking on site.

The Berkshire High Sherriff will be presenting certificates to our long-serving volunteers and we have a guest speaker, Alex Butler, Headteacher from St Mary and All Saints CE Primary School, sharing how the ABC volunteers make a difference in schools.

If you would like to attend please ensure that you register by going to: <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/abc-to-read-registered-charity/t-oklyjy> You do not need to print your ticket.

Once you have registered, please let us know if you are subsequently unable to attend so that we do not incur unnecessary costs for refreshments.

VOLUNTEER WORKSHOP - 5th October

This workshop will be based on children's anxieties. As our children have had to adapt to a life increasingly away from friends and their usual activities, we are finding that they have renewed and different anxieties. We have all been through a great deal of stress and have, naturally, felt anxious and uncertain at times, however the book world has united and since the beginning of lockdown offered support to families with some of our best-known authors hosting story times and workshops. We will be purchasing lots of new books based on how to encourage children to learn more about themselves and about the world; we have also invited a speaker to chat to us all about wellbeing. 1030-noon Crowne Plaza, refreshments on arrival and parking on site. Invites will be sent out nearer the time.

SAFEGUARDING WORKSHOP - 1st July - BY INDIVIDUAL INVITE ONLY

This event is for volunteers who are due to refresh their training. You should have already received your invites to this if you are due for a refresher, please do RSVP via the link provided.

Congratulations

Steve & Linda!

As with all our volunteers, Mr and Mrs Duke are committed volunteers with ABC to read, dedicated to improving children's literacy and increasing self-confidence. Steve and Linda are based at Thatcham Park Primary School and, during the pandemic, adapted their sessions so that they could still reach young people who needed support and were recognised by their local council. The Thatcham Town Council Awards recognise amazing people and groups who do great things in and for the town. A maximum of three Gold Awards are presented each year to people or groups who have either achieved a significant milestone that year, or who have done something special for the community in the past 12 months. Congratulations to the both of you.



Results of the amazing work of our volunteers!

As many of you will know, each year charities should demonstrate their impact and assess their work to show supporters, funders and beneficiaries what they are achieving. With the school closures this year it meant that many of the children we supported were only able to experience a short time with an ABC to read volunteer, however, at least 120 children still managed to gain our support face to face whilst 160 children were able to take part in our new online programme and our evaluation has therefore been adjusted to focus solely on the impact of our online sessions.

From the parents and teachers surveyed following on from our online reading programme:

- ◆ 100% of children improved their reading ability and reading confidence
- ◆ 100% of children's self-esteem improved
- ◆ 98% found the set up easy
- ◆ 98% of parents found the one-to-one attention beneficial for their child
- ◆ 100% of children now enjoy reading more often
- ◆ 100% of schools were very satisfied with ABC to read's sessions

There is no way to begin to quantify how our volunteers make a difference within our charity and I hope the above results can give you a snapshot of the improvements that you help to make.

Our annual report will soon be available at our AGM, on our website, and shared amongst all volunteers and supporters. This shows more about what we have achieved over the last year and explains our charitable purpose, as well as containing a summary of our accounts. You can view the document here:

<https://www.abctoread.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/annual-report.pdf>

There is also a snapshot video of our annual report. Find out how you have supported children's literacy and the impact you have made on reading attainment and enjoyment over the last year <https://youtu.be/wE4nNwZouGQ>



Above: Dog walk at Sulham Woods, near Reading. A beautiful 2.4-mile loop in all weathers but especially this time of year



A fond farewell

We are sad to report that Clare, our Wokingham and Bracknell fieldworker, is moving to pastures new at the end of this academic year. We would like to welcome a new member to the staff team. Claire Tootill. Claire is excited to be joining ABC to read and I am sure will be in touch with the area team very soon. She will be shadowing Clare Meldrum, until the end of term starting from mid-June and will be joining us at our AGM.

“My daughter loved her reading sessions with [volunteer]. She was able to bond well with the mentor and always looked forward to the session.”



Office closure - Summer holidays

The office will close on Tuesday 20th July and re-open on Monday 6th September

