

## Improving children's reading: Research informing practice

This project was designed to develop teachers' knowledge and understanding of research-informed approaches to improve their students' reading skills, motivation and engagement.

To achieve this, teachers from 22 primary schools across six local authorities in Scotland participated in four research-informed professional learning workshops. During and after each workshop, teachers reflected on the research shared and considered the implications of the research for their classroom practice. Following the workshops, a website was developed to share details of the research and host resources developed by the teachers. See [www.readresearch.ed.ac.uk](http://www.readresearch.ed.ac.uk)



In our evaluation, teachers reported statistically significant increases in their knowledge and understanding across 16 topic areas (e.g., knowledge of cognitive skills underpinning early word reading success) following participation in the workshops. Furthermore, teachers provided examples of how the newly acquired research findings could impact on their practice: *“plan to develop an enjoyment of reading topic next term and will put the focus on enjoyment”*; *“will develop better connections between nursery and P1 to track literacy development”*.

Long term insights were also gathered via an online questionnaire, completed 15 months later by 11 of the primary schools. In these, teachers provided examples of how the project had had a positive impact on them as a professional, in addition to their practice, students and school. For example: *“we invested in more interesting and motivating decoding books, phonic readers series, as many of those with literacy difficulties are boys and are more difficult to motivate: we have had some huge success with many pupils greatly improving their reading and thus improving their self-esteem and ability to access more effectively other areas of the curriculum”*; *“through this project a core group of staff were keen to put reading success at the heart of teaching and learning. We have had discussions about improvements that we can make together and are moving to a new organisational model for teaching reading this year - ditching streaming in favour of reading in class to promote integrated, richer and more flexible reading teaching and learning”*.

To summarise, **teachers can readily make connections between academic research and practice when research is shared in an accessible manner**. However, while research-informed practice is often promoted in education, we also **need to better connect research and practice** from the outset, **to ensure research being conducted is useful and relevant to practice and policy needs**. This is the purpose of LALco, our new multidisciplinary network, established to bridge the gap between language and literacy research, policy and practice.