

PEN PICTURE: Scottish Book Trust and the First Minister's Reading Challenge

At Scottish Book Trust, we believe that reading has the power to change lives. Through the First Minister's Reading Challenge we aim to help children and young people between the ages of 5 and 18 develop a love of reading, which can have a huge impact on educational attainment and future wellbeing. We support schools, libraries and communities across Scotland to develop reading cultures and give every child in Scotland the opportunity to experience the benefits – and the fun – of reading for pleasure.

The Challenge has been up and running for two years, during which teachers have been able to register and gain access to a wide range of resources. Towards the end of the school year, they are also able to submit to a number of challenges, some of which recognise individual progress, and some which recognise whole school or community efforts. These achievements are presented to the First Minister herself in our **annual celebration event**, which is livestreamed across Scotland.

The Pupil Reading Journey for Primary 7 was won last year by Kieran from St James' Primary School, in recognition of his transformation from a reluctant reader to someone who has developed a love of books and writing and is considering a career in journalism. His teacher commented that *'Kieran's Reading Journey encapsulates everything the First Minister's Reading Challenge sets out to achieve, changing a non-reader into a reader. Kieran now realises the power that reading has in opening doors to his future.'*

In recognition of the positive impact the Challenge has had on primary schools, the Challenge has been expanded to include secondary schools, libraries and community groups which work with young people, such as Brownies or Scouts. Engaging older readers presents its own challenges, but there has already been some fantastic work undertaken by our pilot secondary schools, who ran the Challenge last year.

Renfrew High invited Magic Torch Comics to the school to run workshops, during which students created and published their very own graphic novel. The initiative was a huge success, with 84% of pupils who took part saying they would read more for enjoyment as a result of their work on the project. It's also a great example of how the Challenge can have an impact across the curriculum. Pupil Jennifer McCafferty reported that *'through my time working with magic torch, I feel my art has improved.'*

'I know that reading inspired me during my childhood. And I know what a love of reading led to in terms of opportunities in my life.'

- Nicola Sturgeon
First Minister



We want as many children and young people as possible to reap the benefits of reading for pleasure – from performing better at school to improving creativity and helping promote good mental health.

If you would like to know more about the Challenge, you can find out and sign up on our website - <https://www.readingchallenge.scot/>



'Through my time working with magic torch, I feel my art has improved.'

- Jennifer McCafferty
Pupil at Renfrew High

Image: Pupils from Renfrew High present their comics, created during workshops with Magic Torch Comics.