

# Booktime Evaluation



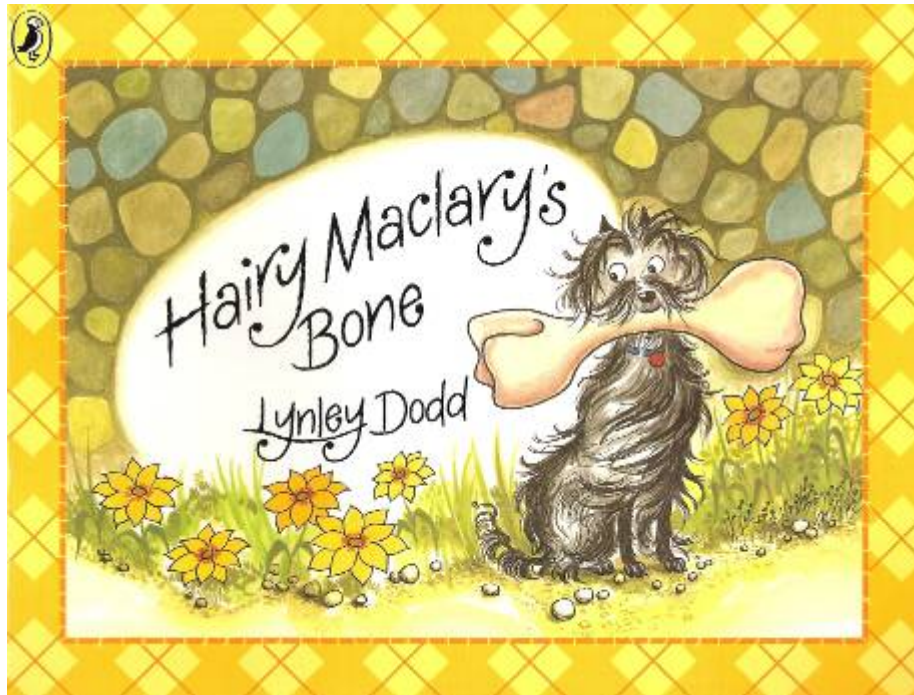
**Summary Report (March 2007)**

Prepared by Hugh Hope-Stone

# Contents

# Project Overview

- **Booktime is a scheme to encourage parents and children to read together.** Launched in October 2006, it provided a free book pack to over 260,000 children (aged 4-5) in local authorities across England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. It contained a children's illustrated book '*Hairy Maclary's Bone*' by Lynley Dodd and a guidance booklet for parents and carers on reading with their child.
- Supporting materials were also provided to local authority and library services and schools.
- The **aim** was to promote the pleasure of books and shared reading, by encouraging parents and carers to set aside some time each week to read aloud with their child.
- The **objectives** were to enhance the skills and confidence of parents and carers and support family reading, particularly in deprived areas.



# Evaluation Objectives

- The **objective of the evaluation** was to assess and demonstrate the benefits of the programme for stakeholder groups, and to discern the ways in which various aspects could be changed or improved upon. It focused on the following areas:
- **The logistics of distribution**
  - Did the book packs get to the right people, at the right place at the right time?
  - What could be changed to make distribution better?
  - Were the supporting materials and resources of value?

**The value of the book and accompanying guidance booklet to the three stakeholder groups:** 1) Local authority and library services; 2) teachers,; 3) parent/carers and children covering...

- **Engagement and enjoyment**
  - Did the children enjoy it?
  - Did they seem inspired by or engaged with it?
  - Did the parent/carer or teacher read the book with the child?
- **Guidance**
  - Was the 'Reading with your Child' guidance booklet of value to teachers, parents and carers?
  - What could be changed to make the guidance more effective?
  - Is the 'Reading with your Child' guidance booklet appropriate, how well does it work as a reading resource?
  - Should the guidance notes provide more or less ideas and information?
  - Is the format and presentation right?
- **Project aims**
  - Did local authority and library services and teachers understand the aims of the programme?
  - Did they think the project was worthwhile?

# Evaluation Method

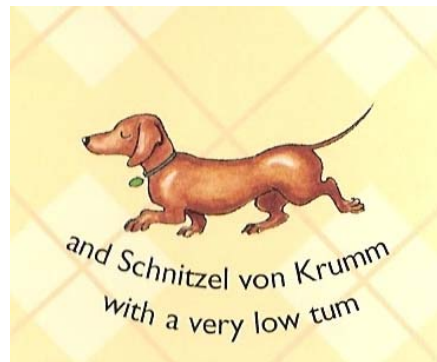
- This report is based on the findings from self completion questionnaires distributed following the delivery of the book packs during October 2006. Local authority and library service managers, teachers and parent/carers were asked to complete the questionnaire and by the end of 2006 the following number of questionnaires had been returned:
  - 194 parent/carers
  - 127 teachers
  - 18 local authority and library services
- The samples of teachers and parent/carers are unevenly distributed as the survey relied on individual local authority and library services and schools to distribute copies for completion. Consequently we have a relatively high number of parent/carer and teacher returns from Scotland as compared to other parts of the UK, with particularly a low response from London and the South East.
- In addition sampling was based on self selection and we cannot be certain that the respondents are representative of parents and carers or teachers in the local authorities where the Booktime programme took place. However, there does not appear to be any particular bias in the responses as a result of geographical location of the respondents.
- Local authority and library services returns were more evenly distributed and although a small sample it covers nearly a third of the 62 authorities where the programme took place, making it fairly representative of the potential sample as a whole. However, given the small number of returns, we have used whole numbers rather than percentages when presenting their responses.

## **A note on the quotes used:**

- Overall the feedback on this programme is very positive. However in this report the author has tried to illustrate all opinions given with suitable quotes; consequently the reader should not take the number of quotes included as an overall indicator of the strength of feedback on any particularly point, particularly where negative comments are given.
- Key findings in the report are highlighted in **Blue**.

# Main Findings

# PROGRAMME AIMS



# Programme aims

## Local authority and library service feedback:

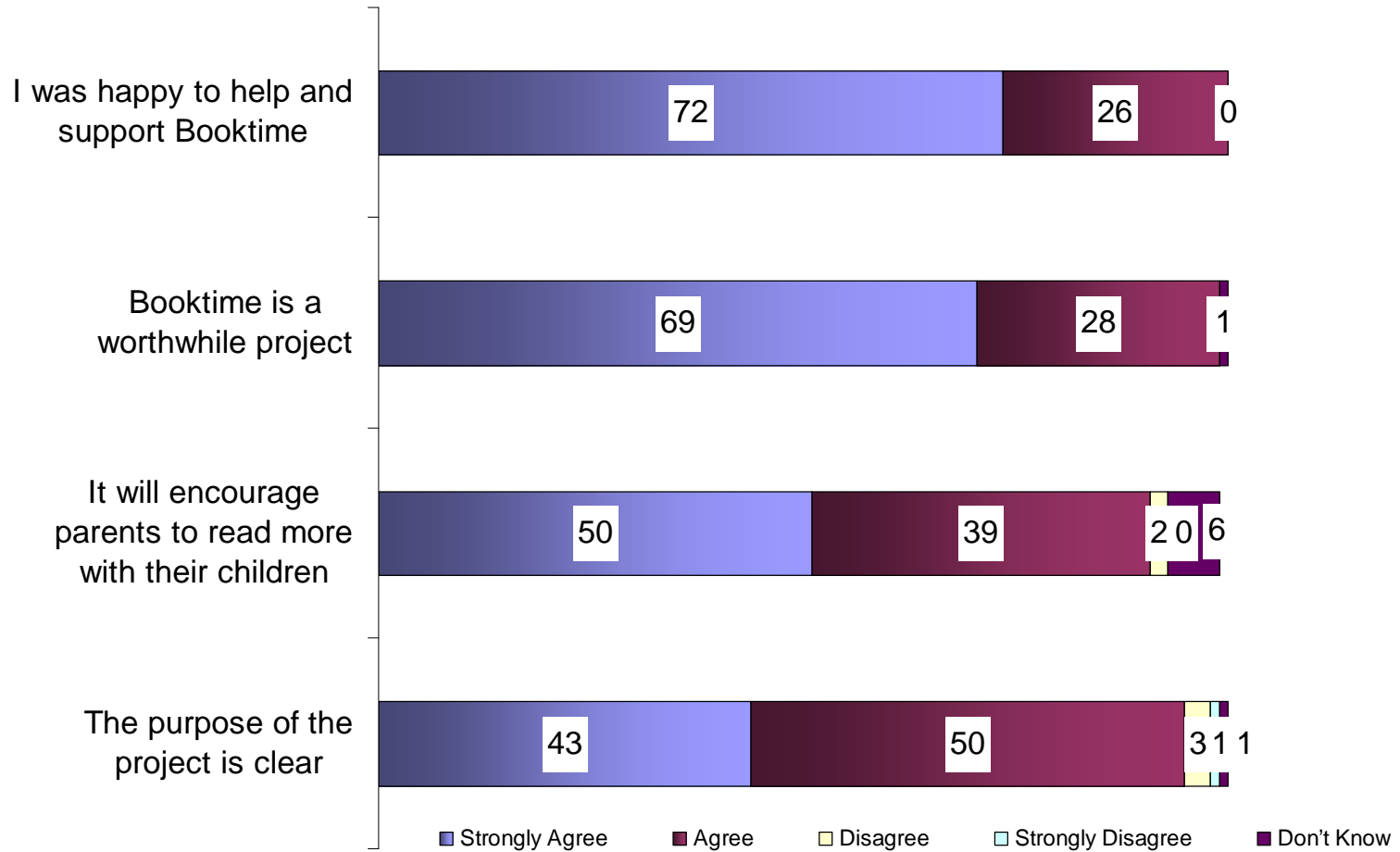
- **All 18 local authority and library service respondents said they understood the aims of the programme.**
- **They also all agreed that the programme was worthwhile and targeted towards the right age group.**
  - *Many children receiving the books will come from homes with few books in and this is a great way to give reading the prestige it deserves. (LA/Library Services, West Yorkshire)*
  - *We would welcome the opportunity to take part in this programme on a yearly basis. We have used the programme to further raise the profile of family reading with all of our coordinators. (LA/Library Services, Nottinghamshire)*
  - *Wigan has been delighted to be involved in Booktime, and schools have been very supportive of the initiative...overall we have been very impressed in the way that they (the Booktime managers) have helped us to bring the scheme to our area. (LA/Library Services, Lancashire)*
- **All local authority and library service respondents thought that Booktime would encourage parents and carers to read more with their children;** 5 strongly agreed, 13 agreed.

# Programme aims

## Teacher feedback:

- **This enthusiasm extended to teachers – all teachers who responded said they were happy to help and support Booktime, and considered it a worthwhile programme, the purpose of which nearly all (93%) understood.** (See next page) For many it fitted in well with current teaching programmes. (See page 11)
  - *It fits in well with our literacy programme and the fact that children receive a book of their own increases the appeal and makes it easier for parents to access reading material* (Teacher, Stirlingshire)
- A small number (6%) of teachers questioned whether it would inspire parents to read more with their children
  - *Parents who already read with their children will no doubt participate fully with the programme but am doubtful it will 'convert' some others.* (Teacher, Clackmannanshire)
- **Although not explicitly an aim of the programme, greater sales and/or public library loans of Hairy Maclary books might come about; the popularity of the book will no doubt drive children to want to hear more, and teachers to obtain more, books from the series.**

# Programme aims: Teacher feedback

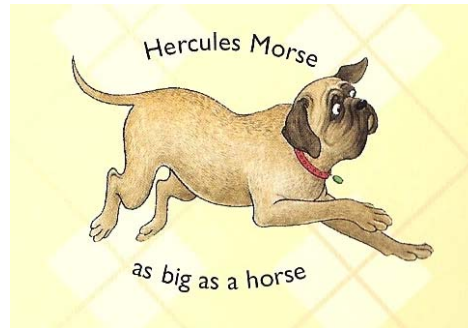


% of teachers: n=127

# Working with existing literacy programmes

- 16 of the 18 Local authority and library service respondents agreed that Booktime helps to support and enhance the work already being done to promote reading for pleasure and family engagement. 2 did not comment.
- The same number agreed that Booktime helps to create or build on existing links between the local authority and library services, schools and families in their region.

# PROGRAMME LOGISTICS



# Programme logistics

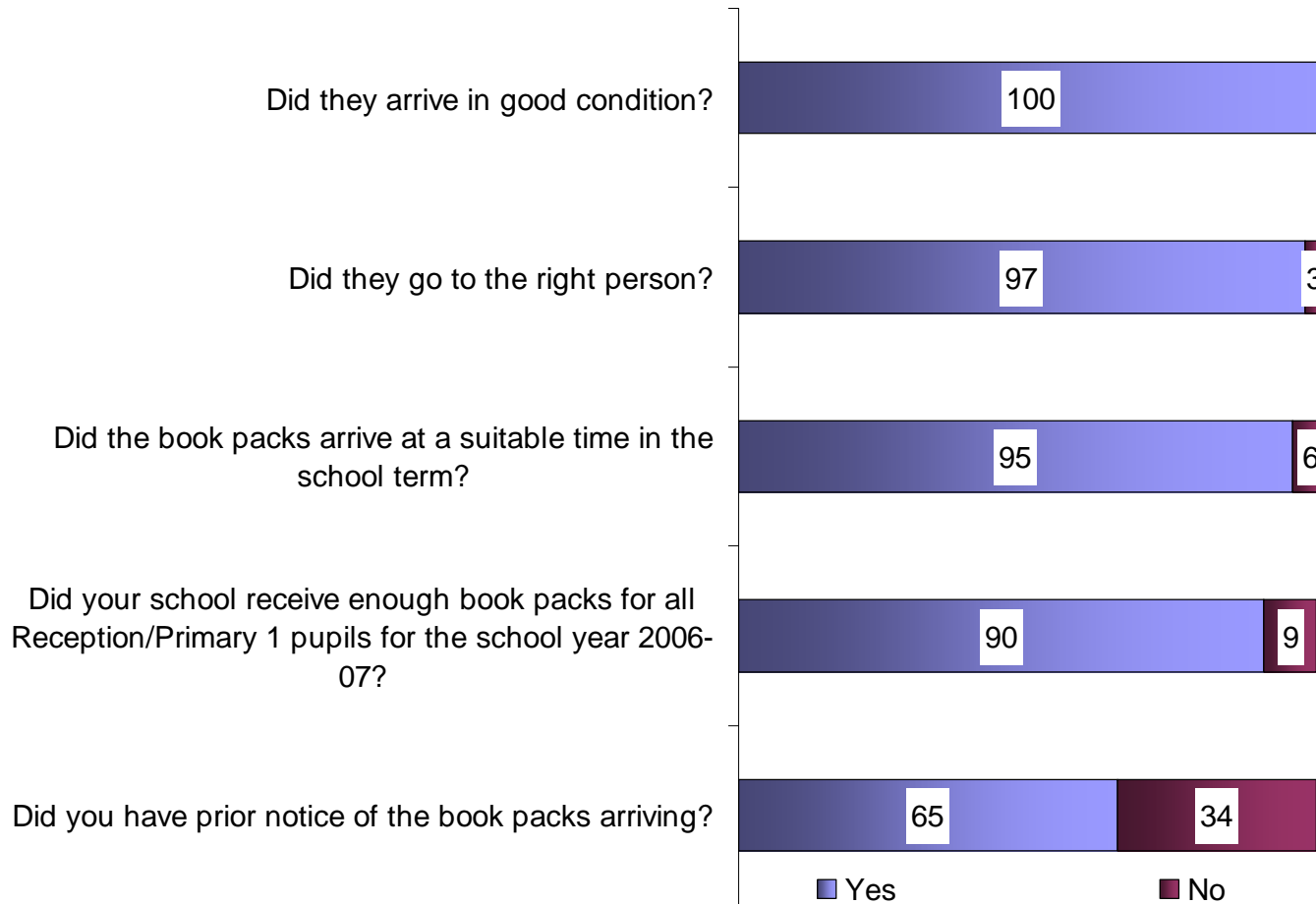
## Programme logistics:

- Booktime relies on LA/Library Services to provide school orders: primary school addresses, contact details and the number of pupils expected to start school during the year (2007-08).
- **From a logistical perspective Booktime has run very smoothly. All books arrived in good condition, and virtually all (97%) went to the right person and arrived at a suitable time in the school term.** (See next page).
- Among teachers, local authority and library services there were a few issues around the timing of the distribution; either in receiving sufficient notice of delivery or catering for pupils starting school later in the year:
  - *Lots of schools have a January intake also, could the delivery be split?* (LA/Library Services, Cornwall)
- **The most salient problem for teachers was a lack of communication about the programme or the delivery of materials - 34% said they didn't have prior notice** and there were shortages of books in around 10% of participating schools.
  - *The delivery of the books without any prior knowledge of the books contained made it difficult to include activities as themes and blocks of work had already been allocated.* (Teacher, Nottinghamshire)

## Communication and advocacy:

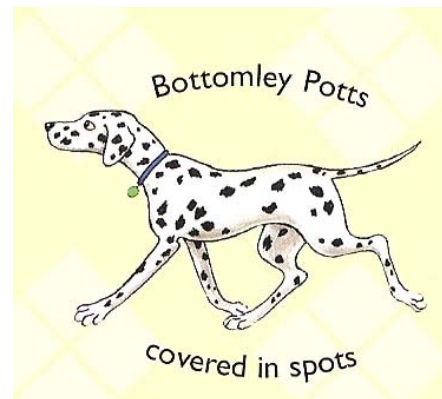
- Booktime relies on local authority/library services to supplement the advocacy provided by Booktrust to schools and families, and to publicise the programme locally.
- Booktime also relied on Head Teachers to pass on email notification to teaching staff.
- **Improved communication, advocacy and publicity could resolve the above logistical issues.**

# Programme logistics: Teacher feedback



% of teachers: n=127

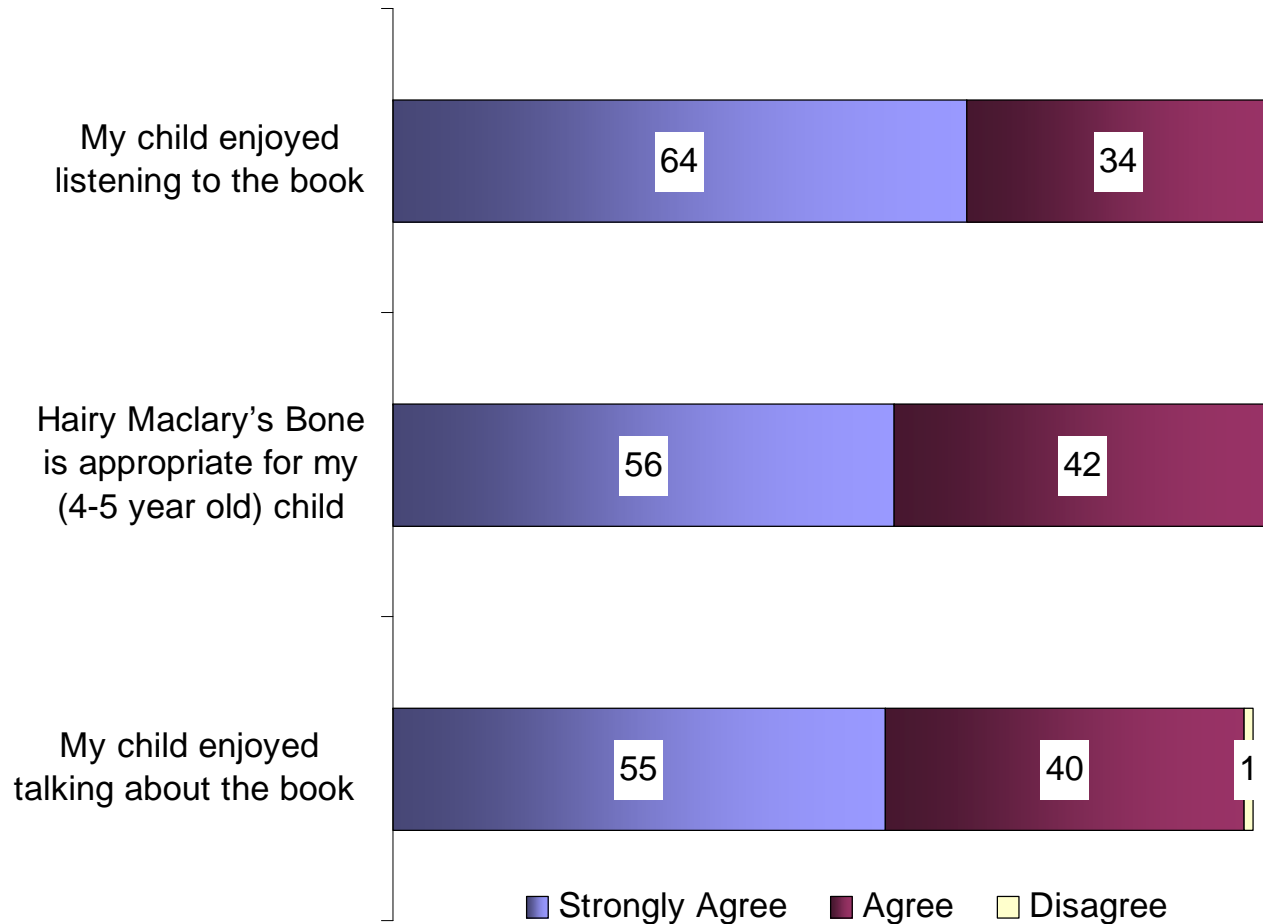
# THE BOOK PACK



# The book pack: Reading the book at home

- **Virtually all ( 94%) parents and carers said they had read *Hairy Maclary's Bone* to their child and nearly all (89%) said they enjoyed reading it.**
  - *My four year old thought it was fantastic receiving his very own book. It's a great idea.* (Parent/Carer, Nottinghamshire)
- Overwhelmingly they thought that their child enjoyed listening to and talking about the book
  - *The Hairy Maclary stories are an excellent choice.* (Parent/Carer, East Yorkshire)
  - *I think that the programme is really good. It encourages my little boy to choose a book and then we read it together. He is more interested now when we go to the library.* (Parent/Carer, East Renfrewshire)
- **18% of parents said they would be likely to read more to their children than before as a result of the Booktime project.**
- **Consequently there was a high level of expectation that their child would read other books in the series – 55% thought it very likely, 39% thought quite likely.**
- 6% said they had not read the book to their child – the main reasons for this were:
  - My child wasn't interested: 1% (2 respondents)
  - Filled in the questionnaire before reading the book: 1%
  - Only had it a few days: 1%
  - Only one respondent said they didn't like the book

# The book pack: Reading the book at home

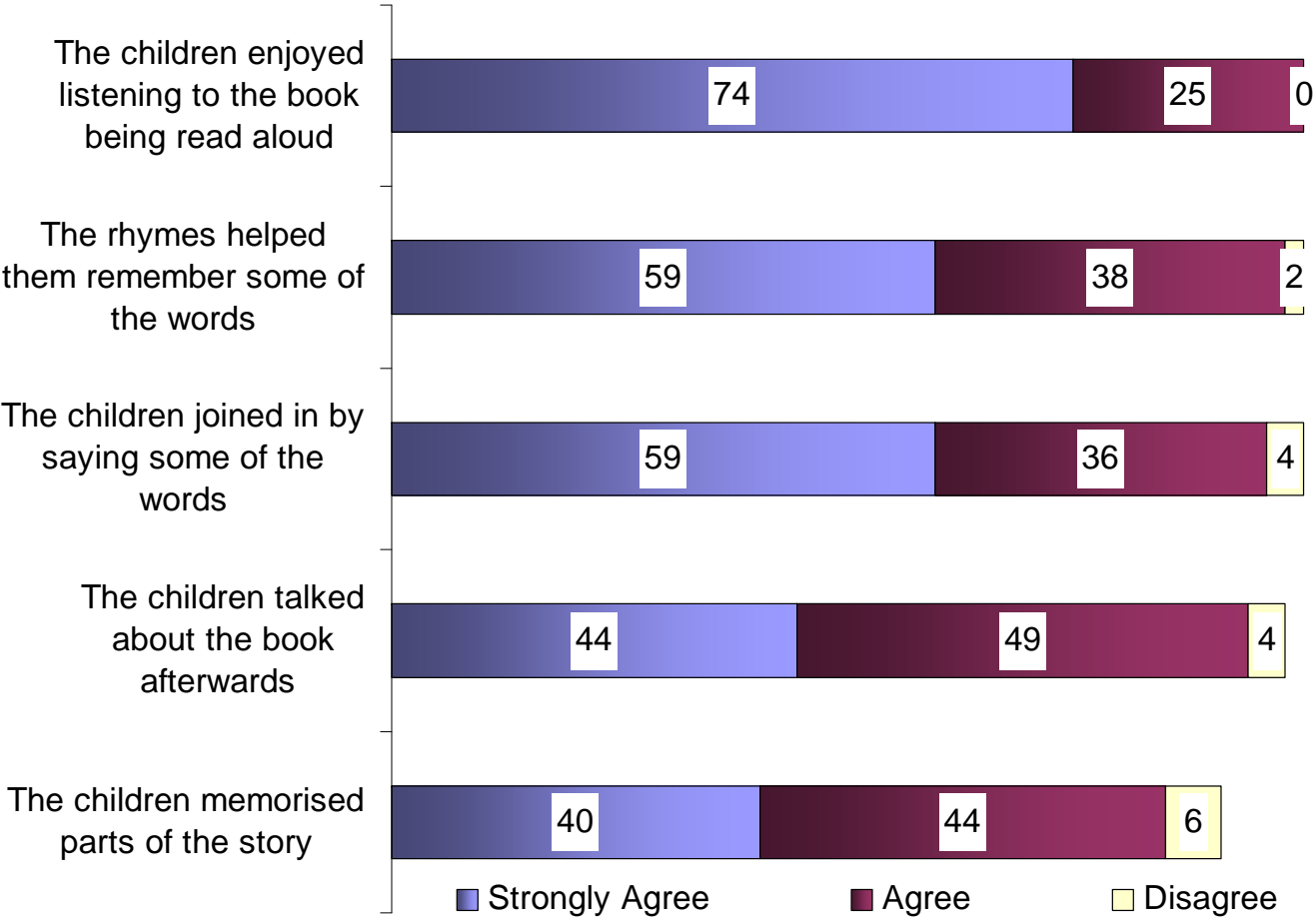


% of parents/carers: n=194

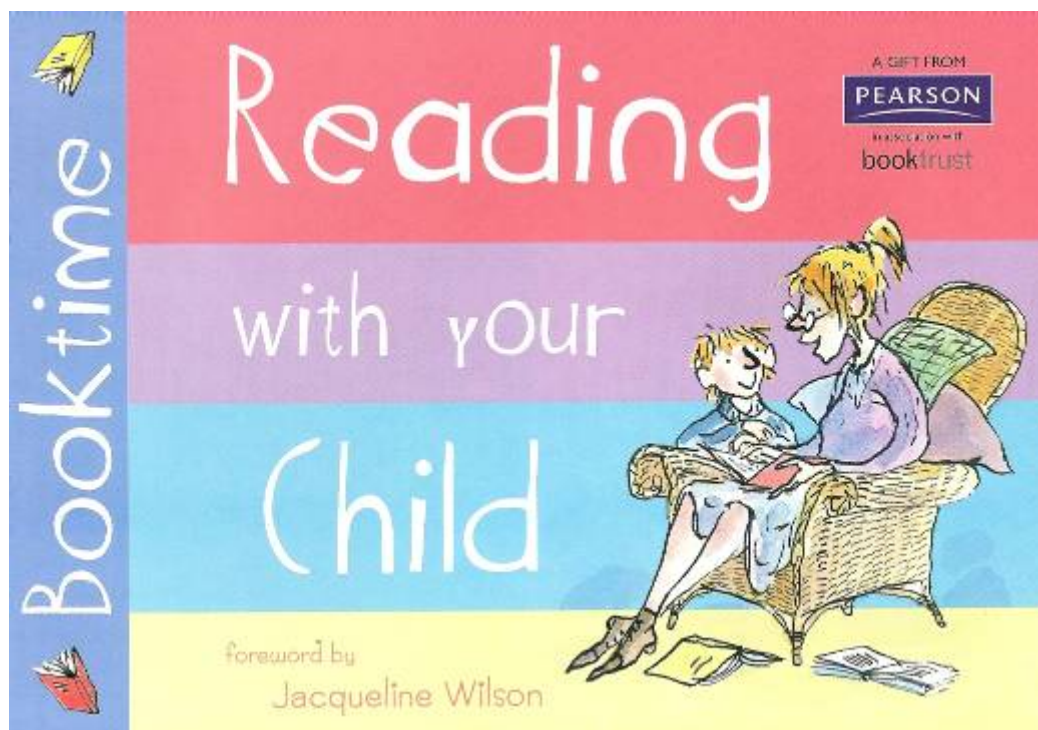
# The book pack: Reading the book at school

- **86% of teachers said they had read the book with their pupils.**
- 54% said they had, or planned to, run classroom activities linked to the book.
  - *We based the weeks' work around the book – made a reading game, wanted posters, own versions of the story, own books, read other Maclary books, re-enacted the story with 'small world'. Looked at a variety of dog books etc.* (Teacher, London)
- **Nearly all teachers (99%) thought that children enjoyed listening to the book** (See next page).
- **A similar percentage (97%) agreed that the rhymes helped the children remember and join in saying some of the words.**
  - *Children gained such satisfaction from being able to join in.* (Teacher, South Lanarkshire)
  - *Very enjoyable, pupils enjoyed interacting with the rhyming words. Good discussion about children's dogs and rhyming dogs' names.* (Teacher, Stirlingshire)
  - *The pupils in my class thoroughly enjoyed the story and were eager to stay the rhyming words when we read the story for a second time.* (Teacher, Stirlingshire)
- **Nearly all teachers who responded thought the children had talked about the book to some degree. Likewise they thought that children had memorised parts of the story.**

# The book pack: Reading the book at school



% of teachers: n=127



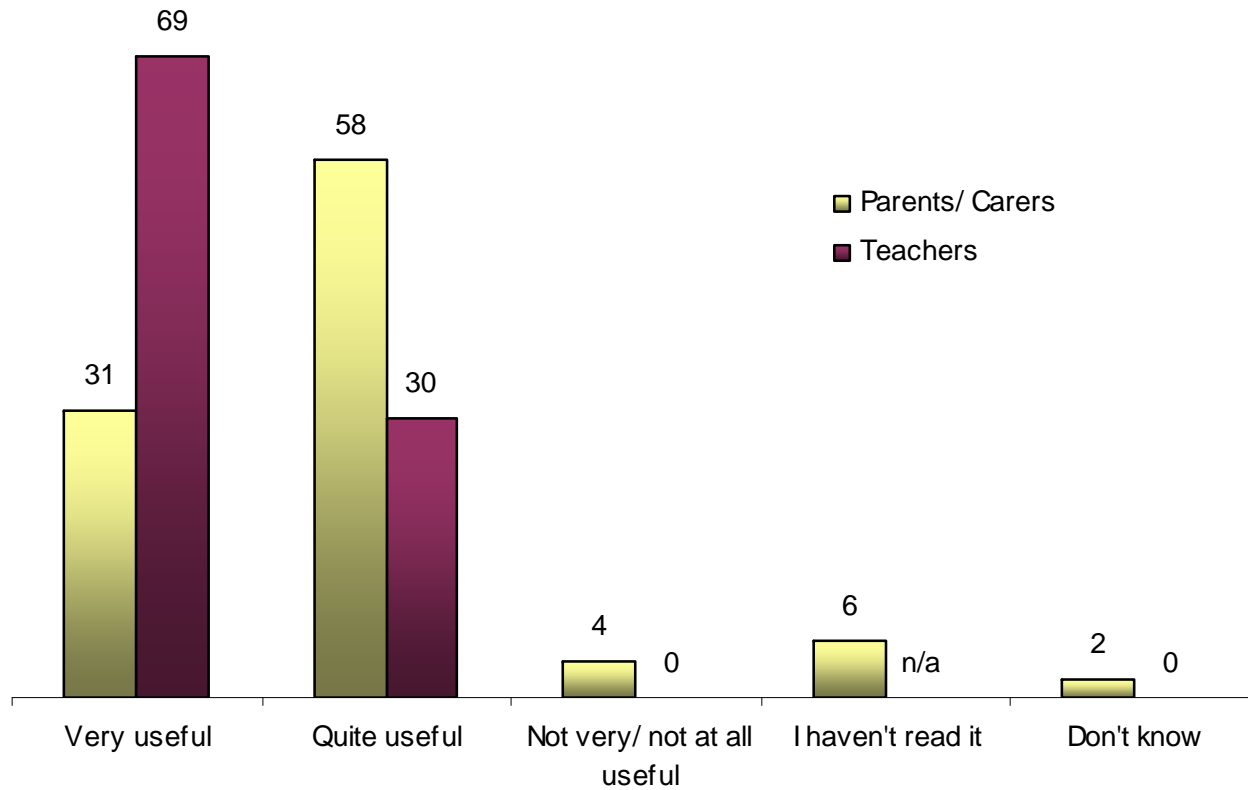
## GUIDANCE BOOKLET

# Guidance booklet

- **Teachers (69%) were much more likely than parents and carers (31%) to consider the guidance booklet 'very useful'.**
  - *It compliments what we already provide to parents about reading with their child.* (Teacher, Brighton & Hove)
- **This difference in response may be a reflection of the parents and carers who responded, many of whom claimed to frequently read to their children already, whereas teachers felt the guidance booklet would be helpful in encouraging those who don't read to them so often.** (See next page)
  - *I think the booklet was great. Very easy to understand with lovely illustrations. The booklet gave me advice and reassurance that I am doing the right things.* (Parent/Carer, Nottinghamshire)
  - *For those people that do not read much to their children it is probably a useful book, but I think we already do much of what is in the leaflet and have had similar pamphlets before .i.e. Bookstart* (Parent/Carer, West Yorkshire)
  - *Include some suggestions for parents who already read to their children.* (Parent/Carer, Tameside)
- Nearly all (96%) parents and carers thought the length was about right, with a similar percentage (93%) of teachers agreeing.
- **All Parents and carers and 95% of teachers said the guidance booklet was easy to understand.**
- Just over half (55%) of Parents/Carers thought the illustrations were good and helped explained the words although 40% simply thought they were okay. Only 3% felt they needed some improvement.
- Teachers were more positive; 66% considered the illustrations very good, 32% okay and just 1% felt they needed improvement.

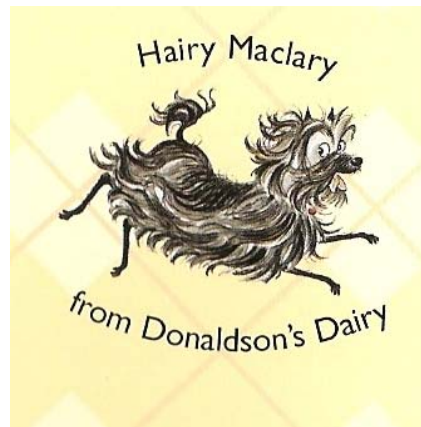
# Guidance booklet

How useful was the guidance booklet?



% of Parents/Carers : n=194/ % of teachers: n=127

# SUPPORTING RESOURCES



# Supporting resources

- The project provided local authorities and library services with a range of supporting resources (see next page).
- **The response to these resources was also very positive, with most local authority and library service respondents agreeing that they were helpful in setting up the programme** (See next page).
- A significant number were unable to comment, suggesting that these respondents may not have seen and/or used some of the resources (for example 5 for the video and 5 for the teacher's card).
- Only two respondents didn't feel the press brief was helpful and only one felt that the Dispatch Letter (containing the aftercare helpline and email details) wasn't helpful, because it was left out of the delivery.
  - *None of our packs [boxes] had a letter in with the helpline.* (LA/Library Services, Cornwall)
- **Most suggestions for improvements in resources focused on the need for more sample packs.**
  - *We needed more for councillors/ local library staff etc for raising awareness and training.* (LA/Library Services, Lewisham)
  - *A contingency of packs delivered to the authority would have been invaluable in helping with advocacy of the project, promptly addressing the minority of cases where packs were not complete and promptly meeting the additional needs of schools who required only a limited number of additional packs.* (LA/Library Services, Lancashire)

# Supporting resources

Were the **supporting** resources listed below helpful in setting up the programme?

[Number of LA/library service responses: n=18]

	Yes	No	Don't Know/ Not stated
"Introducing Booktime" brief	15	0	3
The film of the pilot (via CD-ROM/weblink)	13	0	5
Sample Booktime book pack	15	1	2
"The Benefits of Booktime" advocacy document	14	0	4
Template School Order form (Excel spreadsheet)	12	0	6
Partnership Agreement	14	0	4
Email Memo to Head Teachers (to alert schools)	13	2	3

Were the **additional** resources listed below helpful in following up the programme?

[Number of LA/library service responses: n=18]

	Yes	No	Don't Know/ Not stated
Press brief	14	2	2
Evaluation questionnaires for teachers & Parent/carers	12	0	6
Booktime website	13	0	5
Aftercare helpline and email	12	1	5

# CONCLUSIONS



# Conclusions

- It is clear that Booktime has been very successful.
- It has provided an appreciated gift for reception aged children that facilitates reading with their parents or carers.
- It has provided a focus for teaching material; and teachers are always looking for new ways to inspire reading among their pupils.
- While there have been a few critical comments on the book and the accompanying guidance booklet these have been very minor in comparison to the praise received overall.
- The logistics appeared to have worked smoothly overall, with only sporadic problems of lack of supply and short notice of delivery.
- Local authority and library services appear to have been well serviced with the package of supporting resources.
- Some questions do remain about timing to coincide with reception intake as well as teachers receiving sufficient notice of the pack to ensure they can plan lessons around it.
- Most striking has been the enthusiastic reception of the book pack by children and the 18% of parents and carers who claim that they will read more to their children as a result of Booktime. While this may be an over claim it is still an indicator of the kind of inspiration and impact a programme like Booktime can make.