

# Sodexo Stop Hunger Foundation

## Supporting Chapter One children in Doncaster



## RYAN, YEAR 1

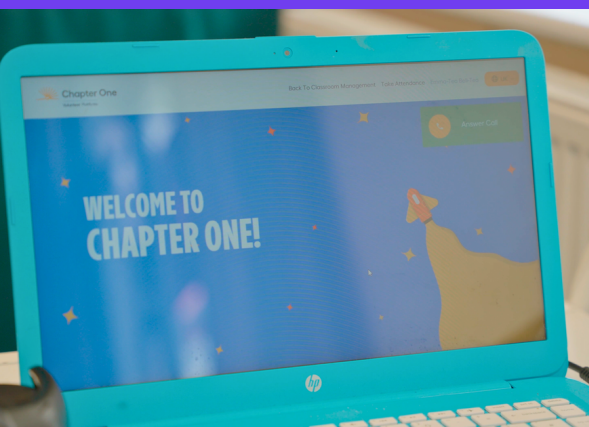
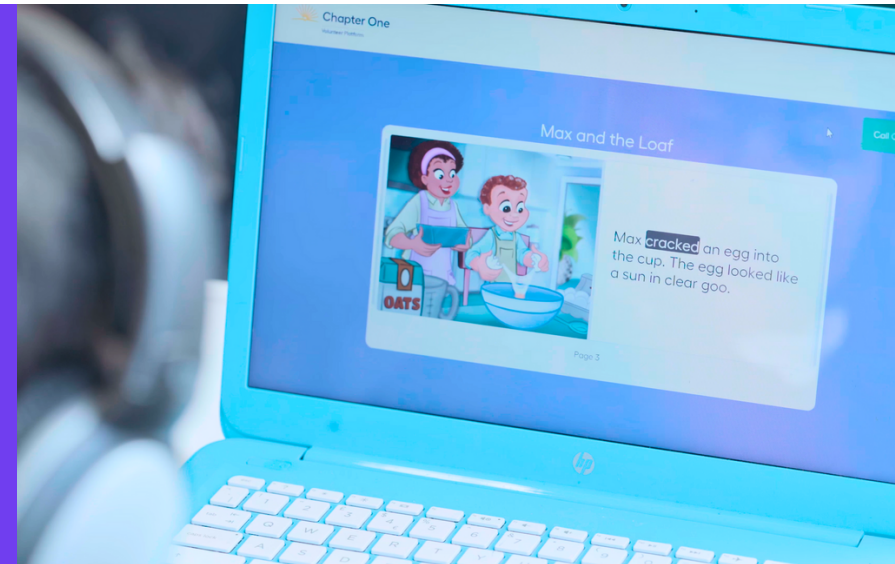
Autumn-Winter term 2023-24



### Child and school background

**Ryan\*** is in Year 1 in a primary school in Doncaster, South Yorkshire. Compared to the national average (23.8%), his school has a higher percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals (32.6%). Ryan is paired with **Emma Smith**, an online reading volunteer from **Sodexo**.

Ryan's teacher **Vicki Wilcox** explained that she selected Ryan for the Chapter One Online Reading Volunteers Programme because he had not met the expected reading standard at the end of his Reception class year. Ryan also does not read at home very often. She felt that Chapter One would offer him "a positive experience every week [so]..he can have one-to-one time to really boost reading for him...[and] know that there's somebody there that's going to constantly and consistently want to listen to him read".



When Chapter One interviewed his teacher and Sodexo volunteer, Ryan had been reading online for 30 minutes a week with his volunteer reader for the first term of the school year.

*\*Ryan is not the child's real name.*

**AT CHAPTER ONE, WE TRANSFORM  
CHILDREN'S FUTURES WITH  
1:1 READING SUPPORT AT THE TIME  
THEY NEED IT THE MOST.**

## RYAN'S EXPERIENCE WITH CHAPTER ONE

Ms Wilcox said that Ryan **looks forward to his weekly reading sessions** with Emma: "When it's his day, he's asking 'what time is it going to be? Can you show me on the clock?' ...It's lovely to hear him on the calls because he's so excited."

Emma the volunteer commented that, at the start, she focused on playing games to connect with and build confidence in Ryan, before practising phonics and reading. Now he still enjoys playing the games on the platform but also chats more about the pictures and stories.

According to Ms Wilcox, the fun element of Chapter One helps Ryan progress too: "It's kind of just that bubble of fun with the reading underneath it, that he might not understand yet that it's actually really helping him read. It's just so fun and the different games and he loves to pick out the games and the different books."

### Benefits of the programme so far

Ms Wilcox and Emma highlighted a range of benefits of the Chapter One programme for Ryan. In terms of **reading attainment**, Emma had already moved up Ryan's reading level on the Chapter One platform. His reading attainment had also improved in class.

At the start of the year, Ryan was working towards reading at the expected level but in the latest assessment, he was now reading at the expected level.

Emma described how Ryan's reading at the start of the programme was slow and laborious at times, with him sounding out every phoneme. More recently, Emma described **an improvement in phonics and reading fluency**, moving from stories with three-letter words to more challenging stories with four-letter words. This was Emma's description of their last session together: "He just blew me away. He just rattled through everything – sounded it out, read every page, understood it all."

Emma highlighted that Ryan's **reading comprehension** has also "come on hugely". Ms Wilcox agreed with this observation and shared what it was about the Chapter One Online Reading Volunteers Programme that benefited Ryan's reading comprehension:

"I think Chapter One is really helping because there's a dialogue with his tutor [volunteer] and they're talking about what they have read and it's fun...it's such a free-flowing conversation that actually he's doing the comprehension work without realising he's doing the comprehension work."

Ms Wilcox also referred to **increased reading engagement in class**. She shared that, at the beginning of the year, Ryan enjoyed being read to, as opposed to engaging in active reading. This was changing - for example, Ryan now talked about the books that he'd read in Chapter One sessions during class.



**“ WHEN HE SEES HIMSELF BEING SUCCESSFUL YOU THEN SEE THE LITTLE BOOST IN HIS BODY, AND WHEN HE COMES OFF OF HIS CALLS HE’S GOT A LITTLE BOUNCE IN HIS STEP AND YOU KNOW THAT HE’S HAD A SUCCESSFUL SESSION BECAUSE YOU CAN SEE IT IN HIS PERSONA.”**

- Vicki Wilcox, Ryan’s teacher

Emma felt that the most noticeable change in Ryan is: “His confidence overall. His willingness to give it a go, even if he’s not too sure. That’s changed from the first time.”

Ms Wilcox attributed the increased confidence in reading in part due to the safe space that the reading sessions offered: “I think the one-to-one sessions build his confidence, because Ryan is quite self-conscious of getting something wrong in front of everybody...that’s his time, it’s his place to make errors... and actually there is no judgement because his peers aren’t there to hear.”

Importantly, Ryan is now developing **belief in himself as a reader**.

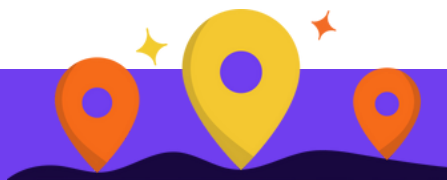
Emma mentioned that through reading, speaking about the stories and exploring vocabulary, Ryan is noticing the improvement in himself: “I think he’s seen that change...He definitely gets a sense of achievement when he tackles something that he thought he couldn’t do – which I think is really powerful.”

**IN DONCASTER, READING IS THE BIGGEST AREA OF CHALLENGE IN KEY STAGE 2 (SCHOOL YEARS 3-6), WITH THE PROPORTION OF PUPILS MEETING THE EXPECTED STANDARD CURRENTLY WELL BELOW THE NATIONAL AVERAGE.**

**32.4%**

of children in  
Doncaster were living  
in poverty in 2021-22

## Literacy and poverty rates in Doncaster



In 2022-23, **40% of 11-year-olds from disadvantaged families (compared to 22% of their more advantaged counterparts)** left English primary schools not reading to the **expected standard**. Budget cuts in schools mean that teachers' time is even more stretched in the classroom and many children do not have an adult at home who practises reading with them. This national picture is similar to the situation in Doncaster. In 2021/22, 32.4% of children in Doncaster were living in poverty, against a UK rate of 29%. Doncaster’s Education and Skills Strategy 2030 states that, despite improvements, reading is the biggest area of challenge in Key Stage 2 (primary school years 3 to 6), with the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard currently well below the national average.