

A message from our Executive Director, Emma Bell

Welcome and thank you for volunteering with Chapter One!

The generous 30 minute, weekly commitment that you're making with the Chapter One Online Reading Volunteers programme is going to help transform the reading confidence and skills of young, disadvantaged children across the UK.

At Chapter One we believe that learning how to read is a basic right and that all children should be confident, proficient readers by the age of seven. To achieve our goal, we have amassed thousands of volunteers who, just like you, believe that early literacy is a priority for long term success and fulfillment in education and in life.

We know from Department of Education data that 69% of children who aren't reading to the expected standards of age 7 don't manage to do so by 11 either. And 38% of children from disadvantaged communities currently leave primary school in England not reading as well as they need to. Getting pupils reading confidently at the expected level requires that they learn phonics and the fundamental strategies of reading skills taught in every Year 1 and Year 2 classroom. But learning reading strategies isn't enough on its own. Children must also spend time reading out loud with someone who can encourage their progress and gently guide them in learning successful reading habits.

As you coach your student each week, you are helping them develop in three vital ways - building the ability to decode the English language and its nuances, increasing their reading confidence, and last but very much not least, inspiring a love and a joy for reading.

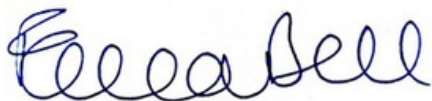
Teachers really appreciate the one to one support and consistent regular practice you provide their pupils each week as part of the Chapter One team. You are a precious asset in the classroom and also act as a positive role model.

It may not always be easy. Pupils come to school from many different circumstances and with many different learning abilities. Some of the children may come from backgrounds where books and reading are not a part of their home lives, or they may be learning in English for the first time.

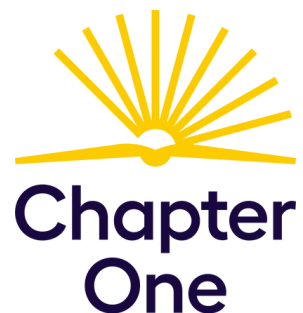
Research has shown that students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds often have been exposed to almost 32 million fewer words than their peers by the time they start school. That translates into a large learning gap in both oral language development and word vocabulary. Your participation in the Chapter One Online Reading Volunteers programme will help close the early learning gap by giving children extra opportunities to be exposed to new words, new experiences and much needed practice.

Initially, many children may struggle from a lack of confidence and you may encounter children who are very shy and hesitant to read out loud. Some may appear to be uninterested, others may be easily distracted, and some may even tell you they don't want to read. Please stick with them and offer them encouragement and praise. We will provide you with training and resources that you can revisit to give you ideas on how to engage with and build the confidence of reluctant readers. Do enter into the volunteer reader-student relationship with an open mind. It's your opportunity to give a young reader a safe place to learn and grow. Don't underestimate the impact you will have on your pupils. Something as simple as sharing your own enthusiasm and love for reading is a powerful tool.

With your encouragement and consistent reading support, you're giving your students the greatest gift possible. A future of possibilities.



Emma Bell
Executive Director
Chapter One



It all starts with literacy