

Fort Kinnaird hosts storytelling events at local schools

More than 190 children from Edinburgh have taken part in storytelling sessions designed to inspire a love of reading, as new research reveals that reading for enjoyment among 8 – 18-year-olds in the UK is at its lowest since 2005 – for almost two decades.

According to the National Literacy Trust, reading for enjoyment is proven to build a child's confidence as well as make them feel happy and relaxed**, yet only 41.5% of children and young people from Scotland say they enjoy reading in their free time.

The events have been organised by Fort Kinnaird as part of the Young Readers Programme, an award-winning initiative between its co-owner British Land and the National Literacy Trust, that aims to encourage children to read outside of the classroom.

Children from Castlevue, Niddrie Mill, and Brunstane primary schools enjoyed a performance from a professional storyteller and took part in a range of fun activities including a bookmark making workshop. Each child was also given a book of their choice to take home for free, the third book this year gifted as part of the wider programme.

2024 marks the thirteenth year of British Land's partnership with the National Literacy Trust, and since the programme launched at Fort Kinnaird, it has supported more than 2,700 school children and seen more than 8,200 books donated across Edinburgh.

The Young Readers Programme is especially designed to provide additional support and help with the development of children in under privileged areas by giving them better access to books. The National Literacy Trust research revealed that fewer young people who received free school meals (FSM) said they enjoyed reading when compared to their peers who did not receive free school meals (39.5% FSM vs 43.8% non-FSM).

Liam Smith, centre manager at Fort Kinnaird, said: “Supporting our community is at the heart of what we do, so we are incredibly proud of the Young Readers Programme and all the local children and families we have been able to support over many years.

“It’s such a rewarding initiative, hearing how the children are inspired by the stories and activities and seeing just how excited they are to take their own book home. This is a programme that really makes a difference and we’re so pleased to be a part of it for another brilliant year.”

Martin Galway, Head of School Programmes at the National Literacy Trust, said: “Sparking a love of reading can change a child’s life. It can inspire children’s imagination, provide comfort and escape, build confidence, and support improved literacy skills which are the foundation for all learning.

“Through the Young Readers Programme, we have partnered with British Land for the last 13 years – giving children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds the opportunity to experience enchanting storytelling events, and to choose and keep books that speak to their interests and passions.

“Our goal is to inspire a love of books and reading that will stay with them forever, which in turn will provide them with essential literacy and life skills they need to succeed and reach their own goals.”