

MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO, EMMA BELL

Welcome and thank you for volunteering with Chapter One!

Early literacy is vital for long-term success in education and life. At Chapter One, we believe that all children should have the same opportunities to benefit from all that reading provides, enabling them to thrive.

Your generous 30-minute weekly commitment with the Chapter One Online Reading Volunteers Programme will help transform the reading confidence and skills of young children in communities facing disadvantage across the UK. With 2026 designated as the **National Year of Reading**, there's never been a more important time to champion reading's transformative power and help every child discover the joy it brings.

Reading for pleasure among children is at one of the lowest levels seen in 20 years, particularly for those aged 5 to 8. And **37% of children facing disadvantage currently leave primary school in England not reading as well as they need to**. Learning phonics and reading skills isn't enough on its own - **children must also spend time reading aloud with someone who can encourage, motivate, excite and inspire them**. The evidence is clear that children truly benefit from having multiple 'reading influencers' in their lives - **to give them both the skill and the will to read**.

One of the fundamental aims of our programme is for children, with your help, to take pleasure in stories and books. **In fact, reading for pleasure is more strongly correlated with academic success in this country than parental background!**

Taking on this role is fun and rewarding, but it's also **a commitment for the entire academic year**. Consistent weekly sessions help children develop as readers, so please make every effort to call your child each week. **As a Chapter One volunteer, you are a precious asset in the classroom and a positive role model.**

It may not always be easy. Some children may lack confidence or be shy about reading aloud. Some 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. Please stick with them, call consistently and provide lots of encouragement and praise! We'll provide training and resources to help you engage with and build confidence in reluctant readers.

Finally, 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 that will help shape their future.**

Thank you!



Emma Bell
CEO

