

Wizards of Words (WoW) is a paired literacy programme for primary school children, involving older people who volunteer directly with children in their local community throughout the academic year.

It focuses on four key areas of reading: phonics, vocabulary building, reading comprehension and reading fluency.

Age & needs of children

WoW is targeted at children aged 7-9 years who are:

- Reading approximately 12 months behind their age.
- Do not yet require structured reading supports, but are nonetheless falling behind.
- At risk of remaining unsupported in their literacy development and ultimately their ability to complete their education.



How it works

- The programme is coordinated by Barnardos staff who have a professional background in education.
- Barnardos acts as the key liaison between the volunteers and the participating schools in the delivery of the programme.
- The trained volunteers meet with their child three times weekly for 30 minute sessions during school hours over an academic year.

140 volunteers - 150 Children - 15 DEIS schools annually

Outcomes for children

The child benefits from having individual literacy attention, as well as the development of a positive relationship with an adult who also acts as a role model within their own community. Having the opportunity to bond with a caring, supportive adult is extremely beneficial to the child.

WoW has demonstrated positive outcomes both for children's reading ability and confidence, and for the social and cognitive health of older people.

Pre-participation in WoW

- Lacking in confidence and self-belief
- Limited ability to decode words
- Limited reading comprehension
- Identified as at risk for early school leaving
- May display disruptive behaviour in class

Post-participation in WoW

- Improved confidence
- Increased reading exposure
- Increased reading ability
- Increased willingness to read aloud and assist peers
- Improved school attendance
- Improved classroom behaviour

"The Wizard of Words programme is one of the most effective literacy initiatives I have ever witnessed in schools. WoW days are very special in St Finian's as pupils are excited to meet their reading partner, they have a quick chat and then get to work. What a buzz there is in the wizards room! It is a joy to see."

*Maureen Fitzpatrick, Home School Liaison
Coordinator*