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We would also like to thank the Reading Recovery trainers and tutors for deepening our understanding of Reading Recovery and its approach to literacy development. Their contributions have been crucial to this evaluation.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the support of the Ministry of Education, particularly the Curriculum Support team, the Early Learning and Student Achievement team, and the Evidence, Data and Knowledge team for commissioning the evaluation and supporting its implementation across all levels of navigating the system, supporting engagement, and providing review and feedback throughout the process.
Reading Recovery: An executive summary for the 2019 process and outcome evaluation of Reading Recovery

WHAT IS READING RECOVERY (RR)?
- RR was developed by Marie Clay in 1977 and has been available in New Zealand for 40 years.
- RR is a one-to-one intervention targeted towards students with the lowest literacy levels for their cohort after one year of school. It is designed to accelerate students’ reading and writing to the average level of their peers and to identify students who need ongoing and specialist literacy support.
- RR is delivered by specially trained teachers. The training is provided from tutors at RR centres.

WHY EVALUATE READING RECOVERY?
- To understand if RR is supporting today’s schools to meet students’ literacy needs.
- To test the programme’s theory of change and explore the influence of school contexts on RR.
- To provide a rapid review of RR to enable timely evidence for use in decision-making, including decisions related to ongoing delivery and improvements to RR.

HOW DID WE UNDERSTAND SUCCESS?
- A rubric was developed (highly effective – effective – adequate – ineffective) for evaluating the effectiveness of RR through a summative process and outcome evaluation. An economic evaluation was not feasible with the available data.
- Mixed methods approach: programme data, e-assist data, an online survey, site visits and interviews with schools and interviews with stakeholders from the Ministry of Education and National Reading Recovery.

HOW IS READING RECOVERY DELIVERED AT SCHOOLS?
- Six year test testing
- Identification
- Roaming around the known
- Instructional teaching
- Transition
- Monitoring
- Teacher feedback and class assessments
- Student context and socio-cultural background
- Classroom observations
- Widened school activities, classroom teaching and other programmes

WHAT ASPECTS OF SCHOOLS’ CONTEXT AND APPROACHES TO DELIVERY AFFECT RR?
- Differences in students’ literacy levels
- Differences in the approaches to ongoing monitoring following disengagement from RR
- Differences in the integration of RR with other literacy supports

WHO IS BEING REACHED?
- Lower decile schools had a higher proportion of students taking part than higher decile schools.
- RR is effective at reaching its target group with most students having low literacy levels for their age.
- Māori and Pacific students were more likely to receive RR than other ethnic groups.
- RR is ineffective at providing the right dosage to those who need it most.
- Students in low decile schools had lower literacy levels on entry than students in higher decile schools and on average had fewer RR sessions.
- Māori and Pacific students had lower literacy levels on entry, and an average Māori student received fewer sessions.

WHAT INFLUENCES THE REACH OF RR?
- The national algorithm for resource allocation does not ensure RR reaches those with greatest need.
- The perception from some schools that RR is outdated, does not align with their pedagogy and does not provide value due to its limited impact beyond individual students prevents schools from offering RR.
- The inflexibility of the delivery model limits reach (one to one sessions and six years only).
- Student absenteeism meant that students who might benefit from RR were not offered it.
- Delays in accessing other literacy supports for students can result in some students accessing RR while they wait for additional support.

IS READING RECOVERY MAKING A DIFFERENCE?
- RR appears to be effective in increasing the literacy development of children that took part.
- RR data shows more sessions led to more growth in students’ literacy levels.
- RR has a similar effect on average class literacy levels compared to other literacy supports.
- This is evident in e-assist data across years 4-10.
- RR is effective at lifting literacy levels of children with the lowest literacy.
- This is evident in the e-assist data and interview data.
- RR is ineffective at developing literacy capability and culture within schools compared to other literacy supports.
- This is evident in the online survey and interview data.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS
- Revise the national resource allocation to increase the allocation and reach at lower decile schools.
- Adapt the delivery model to include small groups.
- Increase the flexibility of the identification criteria, such as broadening the age range.
- Integrate RR with other literacy development resources or programmes to better support children’s transition back to the classroom.
- When integrating with other literacy development approaches, consider options that recognise and respond to the needs of different children.
- Establish an approach to ongoing monitoring that is feasible within the current school context and less dependent on the RR teacher.
- Consider revising the role of a RR teacher in ways that enable and/or offer RR training to teachers working with the youngest primary school children to support system wide literacy development.
- Put processes in place to support ongoing monitoring, evaluation and improvement of Reading Recovery such as the provision of ongoing student monitoring data; school data to support an economic evaluation of Reading Recovery and other literacy development programmes; and review the model and content delivered in Reading Recovery.
1. **INTRODUCTION**

This report presents a summative process and outcome evaluation of Reading Recovery in Aotearoa. An overview of the findings, evaluative judgements and considerations is presented in Section 4. This evaluation was a rapid review conducted from April to July 2019. There was insufficient data available to support an economic evaluation at that time. The evaluation was designed to address the following key questions on Reading Recovery outcomes and processes:

**Outcome evaluation**
- What is the impact on children’s literacy and educational achievement?
- What is the impact on reduced variation in a cohort’s literacy and educational achievement?
- What is the impact on the school culture and capacity to sustain a focus on literacy development?
- What are the longer-term impacts on adult literacy?

**Process evaluation**
- What is the reach and spread of schools accessing Reading Recovery?
- What is the reach and spread of children accessing Reading Recovery?
- How is Reading Recovery implemented?

The evidence from this evaluation is designed to support decision making about future delivery and/or any potential improvements or adaptations to Reading Recovery.

1.1 **Why evaluate Reading Recovery?**

Reading Recovery has been in New Zealand schools for over 40 years. In that time, new evidence on literacy development has been published. The context of New Zealand’s population, schools, classrooms and students have also changed significantly. Both the availability of new evidence and the contextual changes highlight the importance of evaluating Reading Recovery’s contribution to literacy development.

This evaluation is consistent with the Ministry of Education’s (the Ministry’s) ongoing monitoring and continuous improvement across all interventions and supports. The Ministry was keen to understand schools’ perceptions of Reading Recovery, why they are engaging in it or not, and what other literacy supports they might be using.

1.1.1 **The changing New Zealand context**

Since Reading Recovery was developed 40 years ago, New Zealand’s educational context and demographics have changed considerably. These changes include changes in the numbers, cultures and backgrounds of students in New Zealand schools, declining literacy levels, and a shift in the expectations of schools. More detail on these changes is presented in Appendix 1: Supplementary data and information (page 47).

An important change for Reading Recovery has been the declining rates of literacy in New Zealand school children. In 2000, New Zealand literacy levels rated highly with the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) assessments placing New Zealand second out of all Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
(OECD) countries with a mean reading literacy score of 529 points. New Zealand’s average reading scores have been declining since. Although New Zealand’s literacy score remains above the average OECD scores, there has been a drop of 20 points (to a score of 509 in 2015. This is a steeper decrease in scores than in all but three OECD countries. This change means that the children entering Reading Recovery now have different literacy levels than children entering before.

1.1.2 Declining rates of school participation in Reading Recovery

There has been a substantial drop in the number of schools participating in Reading Recovery over the past decade (Figure 1)

Figure 1: There are declining rates of school participation in Reading Recovery

With the declining rates of participation and the contextual changes that have occurred since the conception of Reading Recovery, the need to understand if Reading Recovery is supporting today’s schools to meet student literacy needs is made clear.

1.2 Report structure

Following this introduction, an overview of Reading Recovery is presented. This is followed by the evaluation approach and methods. Following this, an overview of the findings, evaluative judgements and considerations are presented. The mixed methods data analysis is then used to address the evaluation questions. Subsequently, the report explores the outcomes of Reading Recovery, its reach and the factors influencing reach. The report then focuses on the delivery of Reading Recovery, including the identification of the key barriers and enablers to delivery. The report ends by presenting the stakeholders ideas for improvements.

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Note: PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) surveys started in 2000.
2. **WHAT IS READING RECOVERY?**

2.1 **A literacy intervention with a long history**

Reading Recovery was developed in 1976 to 1977\(^3\) and has been implemented for over 40 years. It became available nationally in 1983 with support and significant funding from the Ministry of Education as part of its Literacy and Numeracy Strategy.

Reading Recovery came about from Dame Marie Clay’s postgraduate studies and research. While teaching special education classes in the early 1970s, Dame Marie Clay identified a barrier to student success; most students attending special classes were 10-year-olds who had experienced five years of failure in mainstream classes. She recognised that the late referral of children out of mainstream classes meant that little attention was paid to their need, and special education teachers were often unsupported and low resourced, working in isolation. After finishing her master’s and gaining insights from various international sources, Dame Marie Clay worked on her doctoral dissertation and academic publications, which led to the conception of Reading Recovery. Reading Recovery emerged as a solution to literacy difficulties then being highlighted as an important social problem\(^4\).

New Zealand saw a changing educational environment in the 1970s\(^4\). Many factors heightened the interest in literacy instruction during this time. The work of Don Holdaway, an influential teacher, had emphasised the role of communication and language in literacy. Growing involvement of parents and literacy educators of that time with international evaluative studies, parent advocacy groups, and the International Reading Association increasingly highlighted reading difficulties as an important social problem. This presented an opportunity for Reading Recovery to emerge as an appropriate solution.

In New Zealand, Reading Recovery is now a franchise free trademark originally held by its developer Dame Marie Clay. Following her death, the trademark is held by The Marie Clay Literacy Trust. The board of the International Reading Recovery Trainers Organization operates to ensure that the researched protocols of Reading Recovery are upheld, and Reading Recovery evolves to sustain its effectiveness\(^5\).

2.2 **An intensive intervention designed to reduce the number of children with literacy difficulties**

The intervention targets children with low literacy levels after their first year of primary school, typically those who fall in the lowest 20% for literacy skills.

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Reading Recovery is designed to:

- Accelerate participating students’ reading and writing achievement level to the average level of their peers, with the intent that this achievement supports them to learn effectively in the classroom without further additional support.
- Identify students who need ongoing and specialist literacy support.

Reading Recovery provides enrolled students daily, one-to-one teaching with a specially trained teacher and is delivered in addition to classroom literacy and teaching. Typically, these teachers have entered the intervention as experienced and successful classroom teachers, having taught children during the first three years of school.

To support successful implementation, a school should form a Reading Recovery Team comprising the Principal, a Literacy Leader, the Deputy Principal/Assistant Principal (Junior Classes), the Reading Recovery teachers, and other members of the junior school staff as appropriate.

Schools with Reading Recovery also contribute teaching hours and resources to deliver the intervention at their school. It is also supported by a nationally funded training programme. Data for every participating student is collected on a national basis and reported annually by the Analytics and Insights team of the Ministry.

2.3 National model of consistent teacher training

Reading Recovery uses a pyramid model of training and delivery. Training is provided from Trainers to Tutors, Tutors to Reading Recovery Teachers, and Reading Recovery Teachers are the ones who provide individualised instruction to children (Figure 2).

![Figure 2: Pyramid model for National Reading Recovery](image)

Nationally, Reading Recovery Trainers play a central leadership role in Reading Recovery. They provide tertiary level training for Trainers and Tutors, and they guide the delivery of Reading Recovery.

Reading Recovery Tutors work from Reading Recovery Centres or Subcentres. They provide year-long in-service training, guidance, and support for Reading Recovery Teachers and schools as well as providing on-going professional development to trained Reading Recovery Teachers. Tutors also assist trained teachers with children who are more challenging to teach.

Reading Recovery Teachers are experienced primary school teachers who have completed a year-long training under Reading Recovery Tutors to deliver one-to-one intensive instruction for six-year old children with

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6 Reading Recovery in New Zealand. [https://www.readingrecovery.ac.nz/](https://www.readingrecovery.ac.nz/)
7 New Zealand Reading Recovery Guidelines, National Reading Recovery. Accessed from: [https://www.readingrecovery.ac.nz/reading_recovery/download/guidelines%202017.pdf](https://www.readingrecovery.ac.nz/reading_recovery/download/guidelines%202017.pdf)
reading difficulties. Six-year old children in schools that participate in Reading Recovery receive their one-to-one intensive instruction from these Reading Recovery Teachers.

2.4 Reading Recovery logic model

Figure 3, on the following page, presents a theory of change for Reading Recovery that was developed during the design and planning phase for this evaluation. This programme logic model reflects the document review and key stakeholder engagement that were undertaken. This theory of change supported the evaluation of the implementation and outcomes of Reading Recovery. Further details on the approach and scope of the evaluation are provided in the following section.
**Activities:** what did we do?

- **Trainers:** Provide training to tutors, delivery of Postgraduate Diploma in Education (Reading Recovery specialisation), involved in ongoing development and quality assurance of RR programme, are part of an international group.
- **Tutors:** Provide training to selected, effective junior school teachers, provide ongoing professional learning to RR teachers, can assist trained teachers with children who are particularly challenging to teach, are part of a community of practice.
- **Teachers:** Provide individualised, one-on-one support daily to identified children outside of the normal curriculum, take a lead in literacy initiatives within the school, monitor progress of children who have been in RR, expected to deliver RR for 4 years before returning to the classroom.
- **Influence occurs directly down with training and intervention and is intended to influence indirectly throughout the school culture.**

**Outputs:** what 'things' were produced?

- Schools participate in Reading Recovery.
- Teachers trained in Reading Recovery.
- Reading Recovery teachers maintain ongoing professional learning.
- Children with lower levels of literacy access support from Reading Recovery.
- Participating children receive a number of daily individualised, one-on-one support relative to their level of need before being discontinued.
- Participating children who do not successfully improve in RR are referred to other specialist help.
- Reading Recovery Tutors provide input on literacy learning to organisations, schools, local Ministry.

**Early outcomes:** what happens because of our activities?

- Teachers: Increased capability and strategies to support improvements in literacy for children with lower levels of achievement.
- Schools: Other staff develop capability and strategies to support improvements in literacy for children with lower levels.
- Environment and culture that supports the development of literacy in children.
- Reduced variation in literacy levels in junior school.
- Children: Children discontinued from RR have improved literacy levels.
- Children discontinued from RR are reading at the same literacy level as the rest of their class/cohort.
- Parents are engaged in their child’s literacy development.

**Context: current situation the programme is responding to**

- Indicators of literacy levels (PISA) in New Zealand are trending downwards and disparities are increasing.
- There is variation in literacy of children within classes/cohorts demonstrated after one year in school.
- Reading Recovery guide book was updated in 2016. The programme is available in English (and Spanish, French and Danish) with only one tool available in te reo.
- There are a large range of “literacy programmes” available to support literacy development.
- Schools have choice to decide what programmes they will use in their literacy plans.

**Inputs: what did we invest?**

- **Ministry of Education:** Ministry resource allocates 271 FTE to Reading Recovery. Allocation of this resource across regions is informed by the equity index. The programme includes investing in Trainers, Tutors, and RR teachers.
- **Participating schools:** RR teacher FTE resource is topped up by participating schools to an estimated total of 340 FTE. Set contribution from schools according to their decile.
- **Children:** Lowest achievers after one year of school (6-6.5yrs old) based on the Observation Survey and Burt Word Reading Test.

**Underpinning assumptions:**

- Intervening early will lead to sustained improvements in literacy levels for children throughout the NZ school curriculum.
- Children require a level of literacy to engage with the NZ school curriculum.
- Teaching in schools is more effective when children in a class/cohort have a similar level of literacy.
- Equity in education is good for all students’ learning, personal development, and social wellbeing.

**Barriers/enablers:**

- High levels of individual school autonomy.
- Diverse academic theories and practice towards improving literacy in children.
- Strong adherence to (and reports of) fidelity to the Reading Recovery guidelines.
- Competing priorities and demands on schools.
- School commitment to Reading Recovery and integration within the school’s broader literacy plan.
- Commitment and circumstances of students, e.g. attendance.
- Different regions have different challenges in terms of transience and absenteeism, large numbers of students with low levels of oral language.
- An abundance of choice in literacy programmes.
- Possibly conflicting information.

**Figure 3: Reading Recovery logic model**

Reading Recovery (RR) aims to: prevent literacy difficulties at an early stage before they begin to affect a child’s educational progress.
3. **EVALUATION APPROACH**

A summative process and outcome evaluation of Reading Recovery was conducted for this report. Our approach was informed by programme evaluation theory, which enabled us to test the theory of change or logic model underpinning Reading Recovery. The evaluation approach was also designed to identify the influence of the different schools’ contexts and needs on the delivery and potential value for schools.

3.1 **Evaluation aim and key questions**

This evaluation aimed to evaluate the implementation and outcomes of Reading Recovery to support a review of its current delivery and impacts and to identify opportunities for improvements. The outcome evaluation supports us to understand the difference Reading Recovery is making. The process evaluation helps us to understand why it makes this difference.

To address this aim, the evaluation was designed to address the following questions:

**OUTCOME EVALUATION:**
- What is the impact of Reading Recovery on children’s literacy and educational achievement?
- What is the impact of Reading Recovery on reduced variation in a cohort’s literacy and educational achievement?
- What is the impact of Reading Recovery on the school culture and capacity to sustain a focus on literacy development?
- What are the longer-term impacts on Reading Recovery on adult literacy?

**PROCESS EVALUATION:**
- What is the reach and spread of schools accessing Reading Recovery?
- What is the reach and spread of children accessing Reading Recovery?
- How is Reading Recovery implemented?

When developing the evaluation, the Evidence, Data and Knowledge team (EDK) and Synergia explored options for an economic evaluation. The data available was not

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robust enough to support a full economic analysis so this was not included in the scope of the current evaluation.

3.2 Evaluation design

The evaluation adopted a mixed methods approach. This supported the evaluation to gather evidence from multiple data sources and stakeholders to enable the integration across data sources to provide comprehensive and credible evidence. For example, the quantitative data provided an overview of the reach of Reading Recovery and its outcomes, while the qualitative data identified the factors that affected reach.

Figure 4 provides an overview of the evaluation design. The components that Synergia led are highlighted in blue and the aspects that EDK led are in green. Further detail on the evaluation methods is presented in Appendix 2: Detailed methods.

Figure 4: Overview of the evaluation design and methods

3.3 Limitations

Key limitations for this evaluation are:

- Lack of consistent national data on children’s literacy across all schools.
- Limited ability to control for differences between schools in the e-asTTle data.
- Selection effects that may bias the e-asTTle data as it is optional for schools to conduct and report to the Ministry.
- Lack of insight into the programmes and supports used to compare with Reading Recovery.
- Inability to conduct an economic evaluation.

Further detail on the limitations are provided in Appendix 2: Detailed Method. Future evaluations may wish to:

- Engage learners, parents, carers or whānau.
- Utilise data on adult literacy through the Integrated Data Infrastructure.
4. **OVERVIEW AND EVALUATIVE JUDGEMENTS**

Overall, the evaluation has identified that **Reading Recovery appears to be effective in improving literacy levels for children engaged in the intervention**. There is some evidence that these benefits are sustained for children with the lowest literacy levels. Few substantial benefits were found at the school level when comparing Reading Recovery’s approach to the approaches taken in non-Reading Recovery schools. The benefits appear to be evident regardless of gender or ethnicity, although girls, Asian and Pacific students and children taught by Reading Recovery teachers with more experience grow more through their time with Reading Recovery. Improvement in literacy also appears to be greater for students who enter Reading Recovery at lower literacy levels.

**Reading Recovery was less likely to be associated with school-level changes in literacy development.** This was associated with its focus on one-on-one instruction and the lack of integration of Reading Recovery into a wider literacy development approach at some schools. While Reading Recovery Teachers were supporting professional development at some schools, this was not a consistent approach and could be strengthened. **Schools’ perceptions of the limited impact of Reading Recovery on class- or school-wide literacy development also prevented some from signing up,** as they were able to invest in other supports that reached more students. The interview data also indicated that **this was more likely to be happening in schools with higher literacy needs and often with Māori and Pacific students.**

While a full economic evaluation was not possible with the data available for this evaluation, the survey findings suggest that **there is little difference in the resources allocated to literacy development programmes and resources between schools using Reading Recovery and those not using it.** This finding would require validation through an audit process as this data was based on estimates from schools. The similarities in the levels across the schools however, give some confidence to the insights.

Reading Recovery is reaching its target group, although the evaluation indicates that **the current approach to delivery and the identification criteria limit the reach of Reading Recovery.** Schools must sometimes choose which children are given the opportunity to benefit from the intervention. These choices are informed by students’ characteristics, such as absenteeism. **This has the potential to limit access to Reading Recovery by those who might need it most, and unfortunately the evaluation indicated that this is most likely to be happening in lower decile schools.**

**Children receiving Reading Recovery at lower decile schools had lower literacy levels on entry to Reading Recovery but received fewer Reading Recovery sessions.** It is unclear if this is driven by the desire to reach more children or a consequence of the focus on bringing children up to the average of their school-level cohort, which might be lower in some lower decile schools in comparison to some higher decile schools.

When exploring reach by ethnicity, **Māori and Pacific children were more likely to enter Reading Recovery with the lowest levels of literacy, and Māori students received fewer sessions.** This highlights the importance of refining the current approach to allocation at a national and regional level to ensure that Reading Recovery is reaching those with the greatest need.
The national funding for Reading Recovery was highly valued and identified as a key enabler for the use of Reading Recovery, although funding was also a barrier for schools. Many schools would have liked an increased funding allocation and sometimes found it difficult to support Reading Recovery with their own resource. Reading Recovery Trainers and Tutors were noted for their skills and expertise and as being a key support of the intervention. Reading Recovery Teachers were also highly valued, as was the national training. Still, some schools found it difficult to access a Reading Recovery Teacher and/or relief teacher to support Reading Recovery. The teacher shortage in the country as a whole was associated with compounding this challenge.

In terms of delivery, nearly all schools indicated that Reading Recovery was being delivered as intended. Ongoing monitoring was the aspect of Reading Recovery that was least likely to be delivered as intended. Reading Recovery Teachers found it difficult to support ongoing monitoring, particularly if Reading Recovery was not well-integrated with the wider school or supported by other teachers. Ongoing monitoring worked best when integrated with a wider school literacy monitoring and development approach.

The focus on one-on-one instruction was frequently noted for its influence on the reach of Reading Recovery. The one-on-one instruction limited the ability to reach children across the school system and was a particular challenge for schools with high levels of need. Broadening the reach of Reading Recovery was the most common recommendation for improvement. School staff wanted reach to be increased through increasing the flexibility of the identification criteria and adapting delivery to enable the provision of small group instruction. This flexibility is also important for responding to the literacy needs of different students and ensuring that such a rigid approach does not see those who need it most missing out.

4.1 Evaluative judgements

To support the transparency of our approach to evaluating Reading Recovery, we used the following rubric (Table 1, following page) to make judgements about the key areas of focus for evaluating the effectiveness of Reading Recovery. It was designed to address the following outcome evaluation questions:

1. What is the impact of Reading Recovery
   a. on children’s literacy development and educational achievement?
   b. on children directly involved in the intervention?
   c. on all six year olds in Reading Recovery schools?
2. What is the impact of Reading Recovery on reduced variation in a cohort’s literacy and educational achievement?
3. What is the impact of Reading Recovery on a school’s culture and its capacity to sustain a focus on literacy development?
4. What are the longer-term impacts on adult literacy?

The rubric was also used to address the following process evaluation questions:

1. What is the reach and spread of schools accessing Reading Recovery?
2. What is the reach and spread of children accessing Reading Recovery?

When reviewing this rubric, it is important to note that the other process evaluation questions had an important role in helping us to understand the outcomes that Reading Recovery is achieving and identifying ideas for improvement.
### Table 1: Guiding evaluation rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance rating</th>
<th>Summary judgement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Highly effective</strong></td>
<td>Performance is clearly strong in relation to the component. Achieving outcomes that clearly exceed the outcomes that would be expected without Reading Recovery. Any weaknesses or inconsistencies are not significant and are managed effectively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effective</strong></td>
<td>Performance is generally strong in relation to the component. Achieving outcomes that are greater than the outcomes that would be expected without Reading Recovery. No significant weaknesses or inconsistencies, and less significant weaknesses or inconsistencies are mostly managed effectively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adequate/Neutral</strong></td>
<td>Performance meets minimum requirements in relation to the component. Contributing to improved outcomes beyond the expected improvements from usual development. Some weaknesses or inconsistencies may be demonstrated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ineffective</strong></td>
<td>Performance is unacceptably poor in relation to the component and does not meet minimum requirements. Not contributing to improved outcomes beyond the expected improvements from usual development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2: Levels of evidence rating and summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence rating</th>
<th>Summary of rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>High</strong></td>
<td>Evidence is consistent across all quantitative and qualitative data sources without major limitations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medium</strong></td>
<td>Evidence is consistent from multiple quantitative or qualitative data sources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low</strong></td>
<td>Limited evidence from one data source.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Insufficient evidence</strong></td>
<td>Evidence unavailable or of insufficient quality to determine or inform performance rating.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 presents a summary of the evaluative judgements. To support this summary, we have identified the level of evidence from the mixed-methods data integration (Table 2) and made a summary judgement for each of the areas of focus for the evaluation (Table 1).

Table 3: Evaluative judgements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>LEVEL OF EVIDENCE</th>
<th>EVALUATIVE JUDGEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children’s literacy development and educational achievement for children taking part</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>EFFECTIVE&lt;br&gt;Reading Recovery appears to be effective in supporting the literacy development and educational achievement of children taking part. Comparable data from schools without Reading Recovery would rule out the influence of other factors or supports creating this improvement in literacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MEDIUM</td>
<td>ADEQUATE&lt;br&gt;At a cohort level, Reading Recovery does at least as well as other literacy programmes and supports in schools without Reading Recovery. The interviews and survey also indicated that Reading Recovery was more likely to provide benefits for children directly taking part.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced variation in a cohort’s literacy and educational achievement</td>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>EFFECTIVE&lt;br&gt;The e-asTTle data indicates that Reading Recovery is effective in supporting a sustained improvement in the literacy levels of children with the lowest literacy scores on a cohort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School culture and capacity to sustain a focus on literacy development</td>
<td>MEDIUM</td>
<td>INEFFECTIVE&lt;br&gt;Consistent feedback from school staff and other stakeholders that Reading Recovery is not consistently influencing a shift in school culture and capacity to sustain a focus on literacy development. For example, Reading Recovery Teachers are not typically returning to the classroom after four years to support school level literacy development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longer-term impacts on adult literacy</td>
<td>INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE</td>
<td>Insufficient evidence was gathered to evaluate the impact of Reading Recovery on adult literacy within the timeframe of this rapid review.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reach and access</td>
<td>LEVEL OF EVIDENCE</td>
<td>EVALUATIVE JUDGEMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaching Reading Recovery’s target group</td>
<td>HIGH&lt;br&gt;Consistent evidence from Reading Recovery data, the surveys and interviews.</td>
<td>EFFECTIVE&lt;br&gt;Reading Recovery is generally reaching its target group, engaging children with low literacy levels after their first year of school. The Reading Recovery data and interviews indicate that some older children and those with higher literacy levels have also taken part in Reading Recovery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaching enough children with low literacy needs</td>
<td>MEDIUM&lt;br&gt;Consistent evidence from the surveys and interviews.</td>
<td>INEFFECTIVE&lt;br&gt;The current criteria and delivery of Reading Recovery does not enable the intervention to respond to the level of low literacy need in schools. The ineffective reach of Reading Recovery was particularly notable for low decile schools, and Māori and Pacific students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing an adequate dosage for students who need it the most</td>
<td>MEDIUM&lt;br&gt;Evidence from the Reading Recovery data. Some evidence from the interviews.</td>
<td>INEFFECTIVE&lt;br&gt;Children in lower decile schools and Māori students were more likely to have lower literacy scores on entry but received fewer Reading Recovery sessions than students in higher decile schools and from other ethnic groups. From an equity perspective, the current approach to delivery and the inflexibility of the model is ineffective in providing an adequate dose of support for those who need it the most.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 **Key considerations**

These evaluative judgements coupled with the process evaluation findings has identified the following key considerations:

4.2.1 **Extend reach to better meet the level of low literacy need in schools**
- Revise the national resource allocation to increase the allocation and reach at lower decile schools.
- Adapt the delivery of Reading Recovery to include small groups.
- Increase the flexibility of the Reading Recovery identification criteria, such as broadening the age range.

4.2.2 **When exploring options to enhance reach ensure student characteristics such as absenteeism and transience do not hinder the opportunity for students to access literacy supports**
- When integrating with other literacy development approaches consider options that recognise and respond to the needs of different children. This could include buddy programmes, lower level literacy supports, initiatives designed to support school attendance and engagement.

4.2.3 **Extend and sustain outcomes by integrating Reading Recovery with other literacy supports, encouraging ongoing monitoring, and using Reading Recovery training to support system-wide literacy development**
- Integrate Reading Recovery with other literacy development resources or programmes to better support children’s transition back to the classroom.
- Establish an approach to ongoing monitoring that is feasible within the current school context and less dependent on the Reading Recovery Teacher.
- Consider the role of Reading Recovery Teachers in a train-the-trainer model and/or offer Reading Recovery training to teachers working with the youngest primary school children to support system-wide literacy development.

4.2.4 **Put processes in place to enable the ongoing monitoring, evaluation and improvement of Reading Recovery to be efficiently conducted**
- Consider the inclusion of the data on ongoing monitoring for students beyond their participation in Reading Recovery as part of the National Reading Recovery dataset that is provided to the Ministry to explore the sustainability of student-level outcomes.
- There is value in collecting additional information from schools to enable the economic evaluation of Reading Recovery and other literacy development programmes.
- Review the model and content being delivered in Reading Recovery in light of emerging research on literacy learning for children.

Future evaluations may wish to explore the longer-term impacts of Reading Recovery by exploring the differences in educational achievement at NCEA level 1 and/or post-school outcomes using the Integrated Data Infrastructure. Future evaluations should also engage parents, carers, whānau and children to establish their views and experiences of Reading Recovery.
5. **READING RECOVERY OUTCOMES**

This section presents the Reading Recovery outcomes identified through the Reading Recovery data, e-astTe data, the online survey, and the interviews.

**Key findings**

| **Reading Recovery is effective in increasing the literacy development of children that took part** |
| **Reading Recovery has a similar effect on average class literacy levels compared to other literacy supports** |
| **Reading Recovery is effective in lifting literacy levels of children with the lowest literacy** |
| **Reading Recovery is ineffective in developing literacy capability and culture within schools** |
| **Data from the survey suggests there are unlikely to be large differences in resources invested in literacy development between schools with or without Reading Recovery** |

5.1 **Reading Recovery is effective in increasing the literacy development of children that took part**

5.1.1 **Reading Recovery appears to have a positive effect on literacy for children in the intervention**

*Reading Recovery appears to have a positive effect on literacy development* for those children who receive direct support from a Reading Recovery teacher. Reading Recovery data shows that the more Reading Recovery lessons a student receives, the larger their improvement in Reading ability gets. The greater effect size found based on number of lessons suggests that dosage matters for the individuals receiving Reading Recovery. There is a non-linear relationship between the number of lessons and the gain in reading levels, with the greatest gains occurring in the first 50 lessons (Figure 5). This is likely due to the design of Reading Recovery, by which students will be successfully discontinued once they reach a reading level that allows them to engage in class literacy learning at the same level as their peers. Average exit scores indicate that this usually happens when a child reaches approximately level 17 (Appendix 1: Figure 23).
Figure 5: Reading Recovery has a positive effect on literacy development

The more RR a student receives, the larger their improvement

The data on the positive effect of Reading Recovery for the individual children who received direct support was consistent with the perceptions of teachers and principals in the online survey. Over half of the respondents from Reading Recovery schools rated Reading Recovery as highly effective at increasing the literacy of children directly engaged in it. In contrast, 25% of the respondents from schools without Reading Recovery rated their additional literacy development activities as being highly effective for children directly engaged in those activities (Figure 6).

11 Reading Recovery service data for 2017. A number of students in the Reading Recovery dataset were recorded as having zero lessons. This could be due to students being initially enrolled but not beginning the programme (for example, because they left the school in the interim), or because their Reading Recovery participation was rolled over into the next calendar year. Removing the students with zero recorded lessons did not have a substantial effect on the results described in this section.
5.1.2 **Characteristics in the Reading Recovery data associated with growth in children’s reading levels**

Results from statistical models indicated that, after adjusting for relevant factors such as entrance scores and number of Reading Recovery lessons received, students had statistically significantly higher exit scores if they were:

- female.
- Pacific.
- Asian.
- attending a school where the Reading Recovery Teacher had a greater number of years of experience.

These results may be consistent with Reading Recovery having a different effect on different student groups, equally it may reflect different rates of learning more generally across student groups. More detail on the statistical modelling of Reading Recovery data is provided in Appendix 1: Supplementary data and information.

5.2 **Reading Recovery has a similar effect on average class literacy levels compared to other literacy supports**

5.2.1 **The e-asTTle literacy levels shows children who had potential access to Reading Recovery are doing at least as well as those who had access to other things**

At Year 4, Reading Recovery appears to have a similar level of effect on average literacy levels for the year group when compared to the literacy programmes and resources available in schools without Reading Recovery. Figure 7 (next page) illustrates the full distribution of Year 4 reading scores and an indication of how the effect size of Reading Recovery would affect the median score compared to the schools without it.
5.2.2 Reading Recovery does not appear to lead to "spill over" effects for the wider class

The evaluation data suggests that the direct benefits of Reading Recovery for those involved do not lead to indirect benefits for the rest of the class. The lack of "spill-over" effects from Reading Recovery into classroom literacy teaching compared to non-Reading Recovery schools is consistent across the e-asTTle data and the interviews and perceptions from the online survey (Figure 8).

---

5.3 Reading Recovery is effective in lifting literacy levels of children with the lowest literacy

5.3.1 Reading Recovery is fit for purpose at the individual student level

Reading Recovery appears to be more effective than alternative literacy development programmes at lifting the level of children with the lowest literacy levels. Further analysis of the e-asTTle data found that children who attended a Reading Recovery school had greater odds of being in the top 80% of e-asTTle scores in comparison to schools without Reading Recovery, i.e. they were not in the lowest 20% of scores. Being a child in the lowest 20% of literacy levels at a Reading Recovery school is associated with a statistically significant positive effect in Years 4, 6, 9 and 10 (Appendix 1: Figure 26).

These results imply that for every 20 ‘at risk’ students (those in the lowest 20% of literacy scores), attending a Reading Recovery school would lift one more student into the top 80% compared to non-Reading Recovery schools. These findings suggest that Reading Recovery is fit for purpose at the individual student level. It is successful in achieving its intended outcome of lifting the literacy levels of children with the lowest literacy levels of their cohort.

Therefore, it appears that Reading Recovery is contributing to the sustained improvements in the literacy development of children in the lowest 20% of literacy levels at that school. These sustained benefits however, cannot be fully attributed to Reading Recovery.

5.4 Reading Recovery is ineffective in developing literacy capability and culture within schools

5.4.1 The teacher capability developed through Reading Recovery does not “spill over” to improve the school capability and culture

Reading Recovery was most commonly associated with benefits to the children taking part in the intervention rather than school wide benefits. While some schools noted the use of Reading Recovery Teachers to support literacy development across the school,
this was dependent on the leadership and integration of Reading Recovery Teachers into the wider life and responsibilities of the school and was not consistent across all schools (see Section 8 on the delivery of Reading Recovery).

When compared to other literacy development initiatives, perceptions from the online survey indicated that Reading Recovery did not support improvements in the literacy development strategy (Figure 9) or capability development of other teachers outside of the specially-trained Reading Recovery Teacher (Figure 10).

**Figure 9: Reading Recovery is ineffective in improving the literacy development strategy at schools when compared to other literacy development initiatives**

Q: How effective has Reading Recovery / your literacy programme been at improving the whole school’s strategy around literacy development?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reading Recovery (n=167)</th>
<th>Additional literacy development (n=67)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly effective</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 10: Reading Recovery is ineffective at developing the capability of all teachers across the school**

Q: How effective has Reading Recovery / your literacy development programme been at increasing the capability of other / all teachers to support children’s literacy development?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reading Recovery (n=168)</th>
<th>Additional literacy development (n=67)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly effective</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This finding aligns with the insights from the analysis of the e-asTTle data and the insights from the interviews. The interviews highlight the variation in integration of Reading Recovery with other literacy development approaches at schools. This suggests that
School-wide benefits of Reading Recovery are more likely to be achieved when it is integrated into an overall literacy development programme.

“We’ve got a buddy reading programme. Some of our children don’t have the family support, so we’ve got seniors linked up with these children who are reading with the children 10 minutes daily after lunch. We also have Rainbow Reading, so for our children that finish we give them at least 10 weeks. It’s a lower level of support but it’s not great to have children [go] from a really high level of support to nothing.”

Principal at a school with Reading Recovery

5.4.2 The Reading Recovery training is valuable for building the capability of the Reading Recovery Teachers involved

Schools do increase their literacy capability through participation in Reading Recovery. That increase is concentrated in the capabilities of their Reading Recovery Teacher. Staff at Reading Recovery schools identified the benefits of the training programme as increasing the capability of the Reading Recovery Teacher, in turn supporting literacy development. Perceptions from the online survey indicated that almost half of the respondents from Reading Recovery schools considered it to be highly effective at increasing the capability of their Reading Recovery Teacher (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Reading Recovery training is valuable for building the capability of Reading Recovery teachers involved

Q: How effective is Reading Recovery / your literacy programme been at increasing the capability of your Reading Recovery Teacher / teacher directly involved to support literacy development?

![Bar chart showing effectiveness of Reading Recovery and additional literacy development](chart.png)

The effectiveness of the Reading Recovery model for training teachers was noted as a strong theme across interviews with National Reading Recovery and schools taking part in Reading Recovery.

“It’s absolutely brilliant training for our teachers. We find that teachers who have taught Reading Recovery actually have a far better understanding around what that would look like in a classroom. The teachers who have done Reading Recovery training come out with a much deeper understanding around how children acquire their literacy skills.”

Principal at a school with Reading Recovery
5.5 There are unlikely to be large differences in resource investment toward literacy development between schools with or without Reading Recovery

The evaluation did not have access to robust data to support a cost-benefit analysis of Reading Recovery. Instead, the online survey explored the funding and full time employees (FTEs) allocated to literacy development at schools with Reading Recovery and those without. When integrating this data with the data available on the funding allocated to Reading Recovery by the Ministry, the findings suggest that there are no major differences in the overall resources allocated to literacy development at schools with Reading Recovery and those without (Figure 12).

**Figure 12: No major differences were identified in the cost of literacy development resources in Reading Recovery schools compared to other schools**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost per student</th>
<th>Cost to Ministry</th>
<th>Cost to school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1,000</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1,500</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$2,000</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$2,500</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data on FTE and funding allocated to literacy development required a large amount of cleaning and this data should be treated with caution. However, the data is likely to be sufficient to rule out any major differences in costs. Based on the data available, it is unlikely that either Reading Recovery schools or non-Reading Recovery schools spend substantially more on literacy resources. A review of schools’ audits would provide greater confidence here.

13 The cost to the Ministry is calculated as $2,596 (Ministry cost per participant) × 9,463 (RR participants in 2017) / 41,086 (total 6 year old enrolments in RR schools in 2017) = $598 per 6 year old student.
6. **NATIONAL ALLOCATION OF READING RECOVERY HOURS**

Key findings for 2018

239,726 Reading Recovery hours were funded by the Ministry

44% of Reading Recovery hours were funded by schools

The Ministry allocated more hours to lower decile schools than high decile schools

Lower decile schools have a higher contribution of Reading Recovery hours than high decile schools

6.1 **Lower decile schools are allocated more hours from the Ministry and make the greatest contribution in terms of hours**

Reading Recovery is supported and funded by the Ministry with all schools potentially having access to some level of resourcing. This national funding was highly valued by Reading Recovery schools who took part in the evaluation.

In 2018, the Ministry funded 239,726 Reading Recovery supplementary allocation hours to support the delivery of Reading Recovery. On average, schools received funding for 238 Reading Recovery hours from the Ministry and contributed an additional 186 Reading Recovery hours. Overall, 44% of the hours were funded by schools. The Ministry allocates more hours to lower decile schools.

When analysing school contribution by decile, lower decile schools were making the greatest contribution to Reading Recovery in terms of actual hours (Figure 13). While this is to be expected given the greater proportion of students accessing Reading Recovery in lower decile schools, it does raise questions about the current approach to national allocation and its ability to reach those students with the greatest level of need at a national level.
6.1.1 Ministry funding is allocated using a national formula and regional offices use their local knowledge to influence regional allocation

Ministry funding distribution is based on a national formula that considers aspects including decile rating, achievement levels, and role size. This funding is accessed by schools through an application to the Ministry. The national Reading Recovery resource is then allocated across the regional offices. Following this, regional staff engage with local Reading Recovery Tutors to review and refine the allocation.

The interviews indicated that the regional decision-making processes were informed by the Tutor’s knowledge of the literacy needs at each school, as well as pragmatic choices relating to the feasibility of recruiting for small FTE allocations, travelling between rural schools, school size and the ability for the school to contribute additional resources to Reading Recovery:

“We just have an allocation meeting day where we sit and allocate. We use a spreadsheet that has a calculator on it. NAME sits in and manipulates the spreadsheet with what we’re allocating, whether they’re training a teacher or not, the calculator just works. We have to keep within the allocation. We look at other factors like decile, deprivation index this year.”

Regional Ministry Office staff (location not included to preserve anonymity)

“I’m usually talking with the tutors really closely so that allocation process, when we do it, we work with the tutors to, to make sure that we’re using their knowledge of what’s happening out there too.”

Regional Ministry Office staff (location not included to preserve anonymity)
7. **READING RECOVERY’S REACH**

Data on the delivery of Reading Recovery for the 2018 calendar year was analysed to identify the reach of Reading Recovery. A descriptive analysis was used to identify the schools and students participating in Reading Recovery. Insights from the interviews with Reading Recovery Trainers and Tutors, school principals, school teachers, and Reading Recovery Teachers are also integrated into this section to further explore and understand the quantitative data.

**Key findings**

### READING RECOVERY IN NEW ZEALAND PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- Reading Recovery is reaching 55% of primary schools in New Zealand (n=999)
- 23% of six-year olds in Reading Recovery schools are taking part in Reading Recovery (n=8,921)
- Slightly more higher decile schools offer Reading Recovery but lower decile schools have a higher proportion of students taking part
- Larger schools are more likely to offer Reading Recovery but students in smaller sized schools are twice as likely to take part in Reading Recovery

### STUDENTS REACHED THROUGH READING RECOVERY

- Reading Recovery is effective in reaching its target group (six-year-olds with low literacy levels for their age)
- Māori and Pasifika students were more likely to receive Reading Recovery than other ethnic groups

### READING RECOVERY SESSIONS

- On average students had four 30-minute sessions per week
- Reading Recovery is ineffective at providing the right dosage for those who need it the most
- Students in low decile schools had lower literacy levels on entry and on average received fewer sessions than students in higher decile schools
- Māori and Pasifika students had lower literacy levels on entry, and on average Māori students received fewer sessions
### 7.1 Reading Recovery is reaching just over half of all primary schools

Reading Recovery is reaching just over half of all primary schools in New Zealand and 63% of six-year-olds are attending a primary school that offers Reading Recovery (n=38,926; Figure 14).

**Figure 14: 63% of six year olds are attending a primary school that offers Reading Recovery**

Reading Recovery schools and the percentage of six-year-olds in Reading Recovery schools, by region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>% of schools</th>
<th>% of 6 year olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All New Zealand</td>
<td>55% (999)</td>
<td>63% (38,926)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auckland</td>
<td>53% (198)</td>
<td>52% (11,481)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bay of Plenty, Waikari</td>
<td>57% (70)</td>
<td>68% (3,176)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canterbury and Chatham Is</td>
<td>65% (141)</td>
<td>74% (5,323)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawke’s Bay, Tairawhit</td>
<td>47% (56)</td>
<td>59% (1,792)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelson, Marlborough, West</td>
<td>64% (63)</td>
<td>86% (1,921)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otago, Southland</td>
<td>58% (108)</td>
<td>76% (2,943)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tai Tokerau</td>
<td>43% (47)</td>
<td>57% (1,406)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taranaki, Whanganui, Mana</td>
<td>49% (86)</td>
<td>55% (2,275)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waikato</td>
<td>42% (90)</td>
<td>59% (3,394)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellington</td>
<td>67% (140)</td>
<td>76% (5,215)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 15 illustrates the spread of Reading Recovery by school decile. This indicates that in 2018, Reading Recovery was available in slightly more higher decile schools. However, children attending lower decile schools were more likely to be taking part.
In terms of school size, larger schools were classified as those having more than 30 six-year-olds enrolled in 2018. While larger schools were more likely to offer Reading Recovery, children at smaller schools were twice as likely to take part in Reading Recovery (Appendix 1: Figure 27).

### 7.2 Students taking part in Reading Recovery

Reading Recovery is reaching its target age group. Nearly all children (92%; n=8,904) taking part in Reading Recovery were aged six, with the full range of participating children’s ages being from five to ten years old. Seventeen children did not have an age recorded and were excluded from this analysis.

Māori and Pacific students were more likely to receive Reading Recovery than other ethnic groups (Appendix 1: Figure 28). Māori and Pacific students were more likely to receive Reading Recovery as a proportion of the school role across all school quintiles, with the exception of Pacific students in decile 1-2 schools (Appendix 1: Figure 29 & Figure 30). The reach for Māori and Pacific students is important given the higher level of need for literacy development support for Māori and Pacific students noted in the interviews.

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14 It is useful to note that this analysis was supported by the ethnicity breakdown for the school roll, as the breakdown for all six-year-olds was not available.
7.3 Students’ literacy levels and Reading Recovery sessions

Figure 16 illustrates that most children accessing Reading Recovery had low literacy levels for their age. This is in line with the identification criteria for Reading Recovery.

Figure 16: Most children taking part in Reading Recovery had low literacy levels for their age
A small proportion of children accessed Reading Recovery with higher literacy levels than expected. There were 31 children who entered with text levels over 15 and 345 with a text level over 12. The rationale for the participation of these children in Reading Recovery is not evident in the quantitative data, as not all of these children had low Reading text level and Burt scores on entry. The interview data suggests that differences in the level of need across the country could explain the variations in literacy levels on entry to Reading Recovery.

“Children in some schools get picked up at higher levels. This school, most of the children are coming in really low, Level 1, 2, 3 at the most probably. But some schools might be picking children up at Level 8 because that’s really low at their school. But you know, teachers here would go (level) eight?!”

Reading Recovery School Teacher

7.3.1 How many Reading Recovery sessions do children receive?

Reading Recovery participants received an average of four 30-minute Reading Recovery sessions per week. In accordance with the Reading Recovery guidelines, these sessions were delivered over a 20-week period.

Overall, students with lower literacy levels on entry tended to have more sessions than those entering with higher literacy levels (Figure 16). However, this pattern does not hold when analysing literacy levels and Reading Recovery sessions by decile or ethnicity:

- Reading Recovery students in deciles 1 to 3 schools were more likely to have lower literacy levels on entry and on average had fewer Reading Recovery sessions than students in higher decile schools (Appendix 1: Figure 31).

This finding is important to consider for future implementation. **Lower decile schools have the greatest number of hours available for Reading Recovery and yet students are still receiving fewer sessions.** The interview data indicates that this reflects the high level of need in these schools in comparison to higher decile schools and that the current allocation does not support Reading Recovery schools in meeting the needs of children in lower decile schools.

7.3.2 Māori and Pacific were more likely to have lower literacy scores and on average Māori students received fewer sessions

The Reading Recovery data indicates that Māori and Pacific students in Reading Recovery were more likely to have lower literacy scores and on average Māori students received fewer sessions (Table 4; further detail in Appendix 1: Figure 32 & Figure 33).

Table 4: Maori and Pasifika students had lower average entry levels and on average Maori students had fewer sessions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Average entry level</th>
<th>Average number of sessions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Māori</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>52.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>54.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European/Other</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>55.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. **FACTORS AFFECTING THE REACH OF READING RECOVERY**

The interviews and online survey identified a range of factors that influenced the reach of Reading Recovery. These related to the allocation process, Reading Recovery criteria, school context and the process for identifying Reading Recovery students. These factors are summarised here and explored in detail throughout this section, as it is the linkages and relationships between these factors that offer valuable insights into how the reach of Reading Recovery might be increased at the system and school levels.

**Key findings**

- **The national algorithm for resource allocation does not ensure Reading Recovery reaches those with greatest need**
- **Some schools do not offer Reading Recovery as they perceive Reading Recovery as outdated, not aligning with their pedagogy and not providing value due to its limited impact beyond individual students**
- **The inflexibility of the delivery model limits reach (one-to-one sessions and six-year-olds only)**
- **Student absenteeism meant that students who might benefit from Reading Recovery were not offered it**
- **Delays in accessing other literacy supports for students can result in some students accessing Reading Recovery while they wait for additional support**

8.1 **National resource allocation for Reading Recovery does not support reach for those with the highest need**

The national funding for Reading Recovery supported reach and was highly valued by interviewees and people taking part in the survey from Reading Recovery schools:

> “The Ministry is just a fantastic support, can’t say enough about them. We are very lucky in the sense that we are one of the few places in the world that has a whole system funding support behind us.”

National Reading Recovery Staff

However, the national algorithm and practical considerations relating to resource allocation at a regional office level influenced the reach of Reading Recovery across the system. This meant that schools with the highest levels of need were not always reached by Reading Recovery or did not have the level of allocation that would enable them to meet the literacy needs at their school:
“Unfortunately, the most needy areas also have the lowest take-up of Reading Recovery as well as having staffing issues so the most needy children particularly Māori and Pasifika are more likely to have less access to Reading Recovery as well as less experienced teachers.”

National Reading Recovery Staff

The need for schools to apply for funding also influenced reach, as schools are not automatically given an allocation. While the application process gives schools choice, it was associated with influencing the ability for Reading Recovery to reach children with low literacy levels across the primary school system, as some schools do not apply.

8.2 The perceived effectiveness of Reading Recovery and its ability to reach the level of literacy need affects schools participation

A school’s decision to make this contribution and have Reading Recovery at their school is influenced by:

- The requirement to contribute resources to have Reading Recovery
- Perceptions on the effectiveness of Reading Recovery
- Perceptions of Reading Recovery’s value for money
- The potential reach of Reading Recovery given the level of low literacy need at their school.

Many of the non-Reading Recovery schools that took part in the survey had Reading Recovery at their school in the past. When asked why they no longer had Reading Recovery at their school, perceptions of effectiveness, costs and alignment to student need were the top three commonly cited reasons (Figure 17). Regarding alignment to the needs of their students, schools cited the high level of literacy need and a difference in pedagogy as factors. A few schools also noted cultural needs.

When analysing the responses to ‘other’ the most frequently noted theme was the limited reach of Reading Recovery, with schools exploring and securing options to work with more students:

“Reading Recovery only worked with such a small number of students across the year. We have been able to use the equivalent money to employ a teacher to work with multiple small groups and individual students and reach a much wider number of students and target students who really need additional support. RR did not reach enough of our students who are not achieving where they should be.”

Online survey response from a school that stopped offering Reading Recovery
The survey findings also indicated that effectiveness and costs are key factors influencing Reading Recovery schools’ decisions to invest in any literacy programmes and/or resources (Figure 18). The alignment of literacy programmes and resources to a schools’ context was also an important factor. Alignment to the context of the school often related to the schools’ pedagogy and potential integration or alignment to other programmes or resources being used by the school:

**Figure 17: Perceived effectiveness and the high expense of Reading Recovery stopped schools from taking part**

Why does your school no longer deliver Reading Recovery? (n=52)

- Reading Recovery was not effective in supporting our literacy development programme at our school (25, 48%)
- Reading Recovery was too expensive for our school (20, 38%)
- It does not align to the needs of our students (18, 35%)
- Our Reading Recovery teacher left (10, 19%)
- It does not align to the context of our school (8, 15%)
- Reading Recovery has supported a shift in literacy development across our school and one on one (2, 4%)
- Other (please specify) (27, 52%)

**Figure 18: Evidence of effectiveness, alignment with school context, cost and cultural responsiveness were the top factors that schools consider when selecting literacy supports for their school**

What things are most important for your school when considering what literacy development programmes and/or resources to invest in? (n = 98)

- Evidence of their effectiveness (60, 61%)
- Alignment with the school context (46, 47%)
- Monetary cost (36, 37%)
- Cultural responsiveness (36, 37%)
- Staff FTE cost (31, 32%)
- Perceived quality (16, 16%)
- Recommendations from other schools (9, 9%)
- Ministry of Education endorsement (8, 8%)
- Other (please specify) (7, 7%)
8.3 The perception that Reading Recovery is out dated influenced school uptake

Staff at schools that were not providing Reading Recovery also suggested that Reading Recovery had not developed or changed much since its original design in the 1970s. There was a sense that it needed to develop and adapt to emerging evidence on literacy and the changing context of schools:

“When Mary Clay did Reading Recovery that was what they knew at the time, but things have moved on and as far as I know, the programme hasn’t adapted or changed that much since, was it the ‘70s? But I feel like we’ve moved on and so I feel like it needs to move on.”

Principal from a school not offering Reading Recovery

During the interviews and survey, a small proportion of schools noted that the intent of Reading Recovery was not always clear. There was a sense that the title did not reflect its wider focus on literacy and that this might influence uptake.

8.4 Reading Recovery’s focus on one-on-one support discourages schools with high levels of need from taking part

The capacity for Reading Recovery to support whole-school literacy development was a key factor influencing uptake. Reading Recovery’s focus on one-on-one support was associated with limiting the reach of Reading Recovery and was a factor that influenced schools’ uptake. This was particularly noted by schools with high levels of low literacy among their students and/or schools wanting a focus on whole-school literacy development:

“We decided that having a very small number of children on the Reading Recovery programme did not effectively change the results of our school or even in our younger students. A programme that must target the lowest achievers at 6 years old is not suitable.”

School survey response from a school no longer offering Reading Recovery

“Reading Recovery only catered for one child. Our groups are based on this style, with a mix of other approaches and we are looking at the whole child and catering for more children than Reading Recovery could.”

School survey response from a school no longer offering Reading Recovery

8.4.1 Offering group sessions was the most frequently cited improvement needed for Reading Recovery

When reflecting on the Reading Recovery model and identifying ideas for improvements, staff at Reading Recovery schools often cited the value of shifting from the one-on-one model:

“I’d like them to be able to take a group, rather than just [one-on-one], and I understand the research and Marie Clay’s work that she did is focused on that
individual interaction between the teacher and the pupil. But we have two children here in particular who demonstrate exactly the same needs, but I haven’t got a space for two.”

Principal at a school with Reading Recovery

8.5 The Reading Recovery identification criteria and process

Most schools used a literacy assessment to identify the children they would enrol in Reading Recovery (Figure 19). Often this literacy assessment was coupled with teacher judgement. For schools with high levels of need, the literacy assessment was particularly important for making sure that students with the highest levels of need were receiving Reading Recovery:

“Just about everyone [here] could do Reading Recovery. But you just have to take the ones that are identified, that are the ones that are really at the bottom, that are struggling. You take four, you move them on, they successful complete and are discontinued, and pick up the next ones. That’s really the only way you can do it”

Teacher from a school with Reading Recovery

Figure 19: Most schools use a literacy assessment and teachers’ perceptions to identify students for Reading Recovery

How do schools identify children that would benefit from Reading Recovery? (n=181)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy assessment of all children to identify those with the lowest literacy levels</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ perceptions of lower than normal literacy from class engagement</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy assessment for a sample of children with suspected lower than normal</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.5.1 The limited availability of Reading Recovery leads some schools to look at absenteeism when identifying children for Reading Recovery

The requirements of Reading Recovery coupled with the limited places available at schools resulted in the consideration of student-specific contexts such as parent/carer engagement when selecting children for Reading Recovery. The most commonly cited
factor was absenteeism. It was suggested that children with higher absence rates would be less likely to be considered for Reading Recovery.

“If we know the child has attendance issues, maybe we should look at a different child who could benefit from it. Then again that’s half the reason why we’ve got the person who’s got attendance problems, that’s why they need to be on the programme”

Reading Recovery teacher

The potential implications of this were recognised by the interviewees, in the sense that some of the children who might need Reading Recovery the most will miss out. The limited availability of places and the need for student engagement often meant that children with low attendance would not be placed into Reading Recovery.

8.5.2 Increasing the flexibility of the Reading Recovery criteria is important for schools with higher literacy needs

While most schools reflected in this evaluation were adhering to the identification criteria, many cited the benefits of increasing the flexibility of the criteria for their school. This was particularly evident at schools with higher levels of literacy need:

“The downside is because we’ve got such high needs kids here... but I know they have to be six years old and they’ve got to be at a certain level on reading. So that’s one of the frustrations is the criteria.”

School Principal with Reading Recovery at their school

Increasing the flexibility of the identification criteria was not just noted by schools with high needs. Most of the interviewees suggested improvements related to the Reading Recovery criteria:

“I don’t know a lot about the research that Marie did to identify that six was the best age group. And I’m wondering whether that... is it possible that this support could be perhaps extended to a wider age group?”

Principal from a school with Reading Recovery

The rationale for increasing the flexibility of the identification criteria related to reach. Many school staff noted the potential value of engaging with children before they were six years old to support their literacy development earlier. The potential value of engaging with children older than six was also noted by schools, particularly for children new to the New Zealand school system or those with high levels of transience.

8.6 Alignment with the school pedagogy and context affects schools participation in Reading Recovery

Alignment with the school context also affected schools’ decisions to utilise Reading Recovery. This alignment related to theoretical aspects of Reading Recovery, as well as practical requirements related to the teaching environment. For example, the alignment between the pedagogy of Reading Recovery and that of the school was identified as a factor that influenced reach. This was noted by the National Reading Recovery staff and school staff:
“If we think of a continuum, this is how I think of it, we’ve probably got Reading Recovery at this end and then Multi-Sensory Learning would be way over this end. So, we’re quite a different approach. Reading Recovery is more of a whole word approach. Whereas, and it’s more analytical, whereas ours is a bit more synthetic where you’re building it up, you know, breaking down the words.”

Principal from a school that does not offer Reading Recovery

Reflections on the fit between a school’s pedagogy and Reading Recovery also related to questions on the flexibility of the Reading Recovery criteria for participation:

“I’ve had the odd teacher contact me, saying my school’s going Play Based Learning, we’re not going to start formal reading and writing till seven, can we do Reading Recovery when they’re seven?”

National Reading Recovery Staff

There were also practical aspects of the school environment that influenced schools’ uptake. This included having the space to have Reading Recovery at their school. For example, one of the Reading Recovery schools that we visited ensured that there was a purpose-built Reading Recovery room as part of their renovation. The ability to provide this type of environment was not feasible for many schools and the lack of an appropriate environment was noted as a barrier.

8.7 Challenges with accessing staff to support Reading Recovery can make it difficult for schools

The interviews and survey identified some of the resource challenges that schools can face when delivering Reading Recovery at their school. Typically, these related to the ability for schools to access a Reading Recovery Teacher and/or a relief teacher to support sessions at their school:

“When they’ve been following the perfect model and have a classroom teacher delivering Reading Recovery, that second teacher, the schools just can’t find the person to do that, so we’ve had quite a few schools this year pull out as a result of that.”

Ministry of Education, Regional Office Staff

8.7.1 The teacher shortage was associated with the challenge of accessing staff to support Reading Recovery

The broader education system’s teacher shortage was associated with impacting schools’ ability to access support for Reading Recovery. The teacher shortage was noted by interviewees and was particularly relevant for schools in more rural and remote locations:

“The current general teacher shortage has had a big impact on training and on delivery. One because the schools can’t release a teacher to train because they need them for the class. So that’s one phenomenon. The other one I heard about the other day in rural areas was that a teacher wasn’t prepared to come in and be the release teacher for just 2 hours, because there’s such a shortage. They can get relieving work any time they want, for full days.”
8.7.2 Wait times for more intensive supports saw some children receiving Reading Recovery while they waited for additional support. Some school staff also noted that a small number of children were accessing Reading Recovery while waiting for other more intensive supports. Regional variations in waiting lists to access additional literacy support interventions were associated with the need to have some children on Reading Recovery while waiting for additional support.
9. THE DELIVERY OF READING RECOVERY

This section focuses on the key barriers to and enablers of the delivery of Reading Recovery, as well as fidelity to or adaptations to the intended delivery. This includes considerations relating to national training and delivery within schools.

9.1 Key barriers and enablers to delivery

9.1.1 Funding was a both a barrier and an enabler

Figure 20 identifies the barriers and enablers identified in the online survey by schools with Reading Recovery. Funding was the most commonly identified barrier and enabler. As an enabler, the national funding for Reading Recovery was highly valued and recognised across the sector. As a barrier, it was the ability for schools to contribute funding and/or to access the level of resource that led them to identify funding as a barrier. The ability for schools to access other literacy learning supports for students while contributing to Reading Recovery was also noted.

The ability to access funding that allows schools to train a broader range of teachers in literacy development was also associated with funding being a barrier. The interviews and survey responses noted the placement of value on training a broader range of teachers in Reading Recovery, and particularly those working with the younger children. It was felt that this would better support literacy development across the school.

**Figure 20: Funding was the biggest barrier and enabler to Reading Recovery. The Reading Recovery teacher and tutors were key enablers.**

![Key barriers and enablers to delivery (n=181)]

9.1.2 The national training, Tutors and Teachers were key enablers

The national training model and its delivery was identified as a key strength of Reading Recovery and subsequently an enabler to its delivery.

Reading Recovery is supported by a national training programme. Reading Recovery Teachers have a year-long apprentice-style training. Reading Recovery Tutors complete a full-time year of professional and academic training. This enables them to train Reading Recovery Teachers and provide them with ongoing support. Reading Recovery Trainers are advanced leaders in literacy. They undertake a year-long postgraduate
programme of study to enable them to train Tutors and guide the delivery of Reading Recovery across the school system.

The training model is designed to equip Teachers to deliver and independently run Reading Recovery in their school, while being able to access support and guidance from Tutors:

“We train the teachers to operate independently, the schools run Reading Recovery. We give a really good training to the teachers, we make sure the school is on board and we endeavour to work a lot with senior people in the school to ensure everybody understands how it can operate most effectively.”

Reading Recovery Trainer

While the training was noted as being intensive, the national training model was highly valued by nearly all interviewees and survey respondents. The training was a key strength of Reading Recovery with school staff identifying the credibility of the training in the education sector and its value in terms of enabling teachers to support children’s literacy development:

“It’s absolutely brilliant training for our teachers. We find that teachers who have taught Reading Recovery actually have a far better understanding around what that would look like in a classroom. The teachers who have done Reading Recovery training come out with a much deeper understanding around how children acquire their literacy skills.”

Principal from a school offering Reading Recovery

When reflecting on the training, many school staff engaged in the interviews and the survey identified the potential role and value of Reading Recovery in supporting the professional development of all primary school teachers. Engaging more teachers in the training was often identified as an improvement to the intervention.

Tutors and Reading Recovery Teachers

The support from the Tutors was the second most commonly cited enabler. The Tutors were noted for their expertise and responsiveness to schools. Reading Recovery Teachers were also identified as a key enabler. Accessing Reading Recovery Teachers however, was also identified as a barrier for some schools. The schools indicated that they found it difficult to access relief teachers and Reading Recovery Teachers. This was particularly challenging in more rural locations and some also felt that the teacher shortages made it harder to access relief teachers for shorter time limited periods.

9.1.3 Engagement of parents, carers and whānau was an enabler and absence of engagement was a barrier

The engagement of parents, carers and whānau was identified as both a barrier and enabler to Reading Recovery. Engagement was a key enabler when parents, carers or whānau were engaged and supported the literacy development of their child. For a few schools, Reading Recovery was associated with increasing the engagement of parents, carers and whānau, as it encouraged them to come into the school:

“We do actually struggle at times to get whānau engagement and we don’t have high percentages of parents turning up to parent/teacher interviews for
example...so the best engagement that we have with whānau is actually through Reading Recovery, because the parents actually come in”

Teacher from a school with Reading Recovery

Lack of engagement from parents, carers and whānau was a barrier to the success of Reading Recovery for a third of the schools who took part in the online survey (Figure 20). It was also a theme noted in the interviews. School staff noted that children were frequently absent and missed out on Reading Recovery even though the school had spoken about the importance of attendance for supporting their child’s literacy with parents.

9.1.4 The wide-ranging factors that influence children’s literacy development must be considered when providing literacy supports to schools

The influence of parent, carer and whānau engagement, student absenteeism, student engagement, teacher shortages and the location of the school are some of the wide-ranging factors that influence children’s literacy development. While an intervention such as Reading Recovery can provide support for students, there are system-wide factors and aspects relating to individual students that affect delivery. It is important to be mindful of these when considering the future direction and delivery of interventions such as Reading Recovery. For example, a school described the use of a buddy reading programme to provide support for children who might not have access to enough time or support for reading at home. Approaches like that are important for supporting children’s literacy development regardless of their individual circumstances.

9.2 Fidelity to and variations on implementation

Figure 21 provides an overview of the key components of the delivery of Reading Recovery in schools. This diagram was developed through the review of key documentation and interviews with Reading Recovery staff and school staff. Overall, most schools indicated fidelity to the Reading Recovery model. This section reflects on key aspects of this diagram to explore fidelity and variations in implementation.

Figure 21: An overview of the key stages of Reading Recovery in schools
9.2.1 Identification

The surveys and interviews indicated that schools primarily used an assessment of children’s literacy levels for identification alongside their understanding and knowledge of the children. The literacy assessment was often linked to Six year NET testing. This process identified whether children were suitable for Reading Recovery or required a referral to additional learning supports. For some students, the need for additional learning supports emerged during the instructional teaching or occurred at the point of discontinuation. This is in alignment with the Reading Recovery model.

Key variations related to the contextual and student factors were considered when identifying children for Reading Recovery. The influence of these factors on reach were compounded by the level of low literacy need at a school and the availability of Reading Recovery places.

9.2.2 Roaming around the known

Roaming around the known was identified as an important part of understanding the individual context, experiences and interests of children. All interviewees engaged in the training and delivery aspects of Reading Recovery indicated that this aspect of the model was being delivered as intended. The value of this time for understanding the needs of the child and getting them comfortable and set up for the intervention was also commonly noted.

“I start a series of lessons called ‘Roaming around the Known’, which is approximately two school weeks but can be a little bit more if I think it’s necessary. And that is a wonderful, wonderful time with a student, you never get this opportunity any other time in teaching where you just get to know a kid really, really, really well.”

Reading Recovery Teacher

There were no variations or adaptations identified when exploring this aspect of the model.

9.2.3 Instructional teaching

In terms of instructional teaching, the interviewees described a consistent approach in terms of a 30-minute session length over a 20-week period with an average of four sessions a week. However, the section on reach identifies variation in Reading Recovery sessions across schools. For example, Reading Recovery students in deciles 1 to 3 schools were more likely to have fewer Reading Recovery sessions despite their lower literacy scores. The interviews suggest that this was associated with the high level of literacy need in these schools, the desire to provide some level of literacy support to students, and perhaps the need to move children through the intervention.

Reading Recovery aims to bring children’s literacy levels up to the average of their cohort, so this might have also impacted on the number of sessions received at lower decile schools; if their average literacy levels were lower than higher decile schools. Some schools also had other literacy development programmes and resources that they were using to provide a scaffold of support for children who have been in Reading Recovery. This may have influenced the number of sessions that children received. The consistency of this pattern suggests that children in lower decile schools are more likely to receive fewer sessions.
Variations in the content delivered

Overall, the content and focus of the sessions were not identified as key aspects of variation. However, a small number of the Reading Recovery Teachers engaged in the interviews found it challenging to deliver the content in 30 minutes for some students. This led some to vary the content of individual lessons, without missing any content overall, in their effort to teach children at their own pace:

“In half an hour trying to get through absolutely everything is sometimes a bit overwhelming. So, I’ll do a reading focused lesson and a writing focused lesson. It still means, in a reading focused lesson you’re still going to be doing writing, but you will spend more time on the reading then the writing section. And vice versa.”

Reading Recovery teacher

9.2.4 Transition, discontinuation, and monitoring

Transition and discontinuation were consistently reflected on by staff at Reading Recovery schools and the Reading Recovery staff. The teachers took notice of the criteria to support transition and discontinuation and the importance of supporting children successfully back to the classroom. Engagement with the classroom teacher and classroom observations were identified as being important for supporting this transition. Re-assessment with the observation survey by an independent person (to ensure that the child is now up to the literacy level of their peers) was mentioned by Reading Recovery Teachers. The availability of Reading Recovery trained people to perform re-testing was noted as a potential challenge when discussing re-testing, as people need to trained in the administration of Observation Survey tasks. In one school, the Deputy Principal was conducting the re-testing as there was no one else available in the school to support this.

The greatest area of variation pointed out by interviewees was the ongoing monitoring component of Reading Recovery. There was a sense that Reading Recovery Teachers were prioritising delivery over ongoing monitoring (to meet the high level of demand for literacy development):

“Well there’s a theory part and a practice part for this [monitoring], I’m afraid to say. In practice it’s different because, where do I start? The only opportunity I get to monitor progress myself is if one of my students is absent from school and then I have a half-hour window to monitor other children that have had Reading Recovery.”

Reading Recovery Teacher

This is not to say that successful ongoing monitoring was not described by interviewees. Some schools have very robust processes for ongoing monitoring. These seemed to be best placed when supported by the wider school and not seen the responsibility of the Reading Recovery Teacher alone.

9.2.5 Integration with other literacy programmes and resources

The level of integration of Reading Recovery with a school’s literacy development strategy or initiatives varied across schools. For some schools, Reading Recovery was described as a stand-alone intervention with little integration across the school, neither in support of school-wide literacy development nor through of its connection with other
programmes. At its worst this saw Reading Recovery Teachers feeling unsupported by other teachers and potentially having impact on the transitional supports for students from classroom teachers.

In contrast, many schools described the benefits of integrating Reading Recovery as part of a broader literacy development approach. Many schools described the support that their Reading Recovery teacher gave to their school, such as training other teachers to complete running records.

Some schools also noted the range of other literacy programmes or resources that they used to support the transition of children who have taken part in Reading Recovery. This included buddy reading programmes, or other literacy development supports such as Rainbow Readers.
10. KEY STAKEHOLDERS’ IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENTS

The survey and interviews invited key stakeholders to identify ideas for improvements. Figure 22 identifies the key ideas for improvements suggested by Reading Recovery school staff through the online survey. The most commonly cited desired improvement in the survey and interviews was the improvement of reach. Ideas for improving reach predominately related to the inflexibility of the Reading Recovery criteria and the model:

“Being able to teach a group of children at one time, it is an expensive intervention that is not reaching enough children with low literacy skills.”

Reading Recovery school survey response

Figure 22: Improving the limited reach of Reading Recovery was the most commonly cited improvement in the survey (n=143)

Other common improvements noted in the interviews and survey included:

- **Adapting and flexing the model to include small groups:**
  
  “So, whilst I see a huge need for individual intervention, I’m wondering if it needs to come a little later, or the programme modified so it’s worked with small groups of children. It’s a huge resource for a low decile school with children who are frequently absent.”

  Reading Recovery teacher

- **Providing literacy development support for younger children**, before they enter primary school through early childhood centres.

- **Revising or refining the Reading Recovery model** to reflect recent evidence and the success of methodologies from other approaches.

- **Providing professional development** to increase the capability of all teachers to support literacy development, particularly teachers working with younger children.

- **Ensuring literacy development is part of teacher training.**
APPENDIX 1: SUPPLEMENTARY DATA AND INFORMATION

Introduction

Key changes in New Zealand society since the development of Reading Recovery include:

- Population growth from 2.8 million in 1970 to 4.8 million currently\(^\text{15}\).
- Increased amount of teaching of te reo Māori to children since the mid-1970s.\(^\text{16}\)
- More people are multilingual, 18.6% of New Zealanders report speaking more than one language in the 2013 census\(^\text{17}\).
- The ethnic composition of New Zealand has changed, the numbers of\(^\text{18,19}\)
  - Europeans decreased from 86.1% in 1976 to 74.0% in 2013
  - Pacific Peoples increased from 1.96% in 1976 to 7.4% in 2013
  - Māori increased from 8.6% in 1976 to 14.7% in 2013
  - Asian and Other increased from 1.05% in 1976 to 11.8% as Asian and 2.9% as Middle Eastern, Latin American, African, and Other in 2013.

Schools themselves have developed and evolved since Reading Recovery was first developed. Schools have gone through many educational restructures. Over the last few decades, managerial reforms meant that schools were granted increased decision-making power and were issued requirements to meet a wider range of accountability measures. As a result, teachers find themselves dealing with a broader range of competing responsibilities and interests than when the intervention was developed.\(^\text{20}\)

Additionally, the effect of high net immigration in the late 1980s and early 1990s meant that New Zealand was experiencing rapid growth in the primary school population. With a wider range of students and responsibilities, and with more social and cultural diversity in the schools, teachers are increasingly working to ensure inclusive education\(^\text{21}\).

\(^{15}\) New Zealand Population. Accessed from https://www.stats.govt.nz/topics/population
Outcomes data

Figure 23: Students tend to receive Reading Recovery until they reach approximately level 17

Statistical models were developed to explain literacy levels (reading levels, Burt word score, and Clay writing score) on exit for Reading Recovery participants. These models adjusted for the effects of ability upon entry, the number of RR lessons received, the length of time students were in RR, as well as gender, ethnicity and age of the student, school decile, average years of experience of the RR Teacher in the school, and whether the school was in a rural area. These models allow us to compare the exit scores of different types of students who have come into RR at the same literacy level and received the same number of lessons, to determine whether some types of students improve more than others.

After adjusting for relevant factors such as entrance scores and number of RR lessons received, results from these models indicate that students had statistically significantly higher exit scores if they were:

- female
- Pacific
- Asian
- attending a school where the RR Teacher had a greater number of years' experience.

22 This statistical model also adjusted for the clustering of students within schools, via a random effects model.
Across all literacy measures, no statistically significant difference between students at different school deciles, students at rural schools, or between Māori and European students were detected.

The model also included a variable that combined the number of lessons received and the entrance score. Analysis of this variable produced statistically significant results indicating that students who enter Reading Recovery at lower literacy ability appear to gain more per RR lesson than students who enter at higher ability levels.

While these results are consistent with the finding that Reading Recovery has a differential effect on different student groups, it is important to note that these students were also receiving regular classroom instruction in the time they were enrolled in Reading Recovery. Some of these effects may therefore be indications of different rates of learning more generally between these student groups.
Figure 25: Difference in e-asTTle scores from attendance at a Reading Recovery school in Year 2

Figure 26: Sustainability of the effects of Reading Recovery for children with low literacy levels (bottom 20%)
 Reach data

**Figure 27:** Schools offering Reading Recovery and percentage of 6 year olds taking part in Reading Recovery by size of school of roll

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size of School</th>
<th>% of Schools</th>
<th>% of 6 Years Olds Participating as % of Total at RR Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 30</td>
<td>45% (455)</td>
<td>40% (2,877)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 plus</td>
<td>66% (544)</td>
<td>19% (6,044)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>55% (999)</td>
<td>23% (8,921)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 28:** Ethnicity breakdown for Reading Recovery schools (all ages) and Reading Recovery students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>% of Reading Recovery Students</th>
<th>% of RR School Rolls (All Ages)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Māori</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>54.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Please note that “other” in the above graph refers to European/Other.
Figure 29: A higher proportion of Pasifika students participate in Reading Recovery for all but the lowest deciles

Figure 30: A higher proportion of Maori students participate in Reading Recovery for all deciles
Figure 31: Reading Recovery students in deciles 1 to 3 schools were more likely to have lower literacy levels on entry than students in higher decile schools, and on average had fewer Reading Recovery sessions.
Figure 32: On average Māori students received fewer Reading Recovery sessions

Average number of sessions and distribution of students by reading text level on entry: Māori

- % of students
- Average # of sessions
- Ave # of sessions (n<10)
Figure 33: Pacific students received more sessions than Māori students

Average number of sessions and distribution of students by reading text level on entry: Pacific

- % of students
- Average # of sessions
- Ave # of sessions (n<10)
APPENDIX 2: DETAILED METHOD

A summative outcome evaluation was designed to make overall judgements about the success of Reading Recovery, which is appropriate given the long-standing nature of the intervention. The evaluators also needed to understand more about how effective it is in reaching, engaging and supporting children in achieving positive outcomes for different learners. This is important for increasing the Ministry’s understanding of the contribution Reading Recovery makes to children’s literacy development, both through direct engagement in Reading Recovery and their attendance at a Reading Recovery school.

The multiple layers of Reading Recovery’s structure, coupled with the level of resource and intervention that is required to support its implementation, highlight the value of conducting a process evaluation. There is potential for variation in delivery across Trainers, Tutors, schools and Teachers. The evaluation also needed to recognise that Reading Recovery is being delivered across multiple regions and school contexts. To address this, the evaluation approach draws on the programme evaluation theory while also recognising the broader system, school and child specific contexts within which literacy development is being supported.

Programme theory, frequently referred to as ‘programme logic,’ ‘theory of change’ or ‘programme theory-driven evaluation science’ refers to the multiple ways in which causal models are developed to identify the causal chain between programme inputs and activities and intended outcomes.

In programme evaluation theory, this causal model is then used to guide the evaluation. This approach is useful here, as it has enabled us to articulate the intended delivery of the activities and outcomes for Reading Recovery.

Programme evaluation theory has been criticised for not fully reflecting the systems within which programmes are implemented. To address this, the data collection sought to identify the influence of context-specific characteristics on the delivery of Reading Recovery and literacy development more broadly.

Our evaluation approach was guided by the Aotearoa New Zealand Evaluation Standards. This was designed to protect the rights of the evaluation participants and ensure that we adopted an appropriate and credible evaluation processes. Further information on these standards can be found at: https://www.anzea.org.nz/evaluation-standards/

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Evaluation design

Synergia worked collaboratively with the Ministry’s Evidence, Data and Knowledge team (EDK) and Early Learning and Student Achievement team (ELSA) to support the design of the evaluation and explored the evaluation data and key findings together. This shared ‘sense-making’ was important for checking the credibility of the evaluation evidence and its key findings.

The key data sources used for this evaluation and an overview of the approach to analysis are presented in the following section. A detailed technical overview of the analytical approach for the outcome evaluation is provided in a Technical Report. This is available on request from the Ministry of Education, via Ed Counts. The Technical Report also includes more detail on the statistical outputs of the outcome evaluation.

Methods

The key data sources for this evaluation were:

- An online survey with a sample of teachers from schools providing Reading Recovery and a comparable sample of teachers from schools without Reading Recovery.
- An analysis of Reading Recovery data related to delivery and outcomes.
- A review of key documentation relevant to the background to and delivery of Reading Recovery.
- Key stakeholder interviews with people involved in Reading Recovery, including staff from the University of Auckland engaged in training Tutors, a sample of those Tutors, and staff from the Ministry.
- Visits to a sample of schools with Reading Recovery and to a smaller sample of schools without Reading Recovery. This was primarily for the process evaluation, although school staff identified the benefits and outcomes of Reading Recovery for their school at that time. These are also shared in this report.

10.1.1 An online survey with schools

Reading Recovery is delivered to over 900 schools across New Zealand. While it is desirable to establish a national view of delivery, there are pragmatic requirements for delivering a useful evaluation that can support decision making within the desired timeframe and with the available resources. To provide a credible and feasible approach for the online survey, structured stratified random sampling was used. This enabled the evaluation to ensure that characteristics of interest were represented in the sample and that these characteristics were also reflected in the schools without Reading Recovery who were invited to take part in the survey.

10.1.1.1 Approach to the online survey sampling

Discussions with the Ministry identified the following school characteristics for the sampling frame:

- Region.
- Equity index.
- Rurality.
- Size (number of Year 2 students or 6 year olds enrolled in the school).
- Type (i.e. Years 1-6, years 1-8, and years 1-13).
Within each of the structured strata, a systematic random sample was selected. The survey was supported by proactive telephone engagement with schools to maximise the response rate. A power analysis was used to calculate the minimum sample size required to reasonably detect differences and ensure that enough schools were invited to take part in the evaluation.

10.1.1.2 School survey sample and responses

Five regions across New Zealand were selected. This was designed to ensure that schools reflecting the key strata were included in the sample while also being mindful of some of the contextual differences in the Ministry’s regions. The five regions were:

- Auckland
- Bay of Plenty and Waiairiki
- Canterbury and Chatham Island
- Taranaki, Whanganui and Mana, and
- Wellington.

Schools were grouped based on the combination of the strata in the sampling frame. Of the 120 possible school groupings across the five school regions 113 had at least two schools that reflected the strata and 98 had three or more.

A random sample of three schools was selected from each group for invitation to the online survey. For groups with two schools, both were invited to respond. In total, 324 schools were invited to take part in the survey.

For each school included in the sample, the school Principal and a literacy leader or relevant staff member identified by the school were invited to complete the survey.

Two surveys were sent out. One was sent to schools that were using Reading Recovery and another was sent to schools without Reading Recovery.

Table 5 provides an overview of the schools invited to take part in the survey. The number and percentage of schools that had at least one response to the survey is presented, and the proportion of those schools that answered the questions relating to the resources that their school allocates to literacy development are presented. These resource questions were used to inform the reflections on schools’ investment in literacy development.

Table 5: Schools invited to take part in the survey and schools’ with at least one survey response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count of unique schools</th>
<th>Schools with Reading Recovery</th>
<th>Schools without Reading Recovery</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>996</td>
<td>831</td>
<td>1827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools invited to take part in the survey</td>
<td>162 (16%)</td>
<td>162 (19%)</td>
<td>324 (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools with at least one response to survey</td>
<td>124 (77%)</td>
<td>87 (54%)</td>
<td>211 (65%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools included in the investment in literacy development analysis</td>
<td>55 (44%)</td>
<td>39 (47%)</td>
<td>94 (45%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There were 181 individual responses from 124 schools with Reading Recovery and 98 individual responses from 87 schools without Reading Recovery.

For schools with Reading Recovery, 61% (110) of the responses were from those indicating a ‘Principal or school leadership’ role on the survey. Reading Recovery Teachers made up another 33% (59) of responses. Schools with Reading Recovery were more likely to submit multiple responses.

For schools without Reading Recovery, 50% (48) of the responses were from those indicating ‘Principals’ for their role, 15% (13) from those indicating ‘teachers’ and the remainder from those selecting ‘Other’.

10.1.3 Survey design
The survey for the Reading Recovery schools was designed to:

- Explore teachers’ views and experiences of Reading Recovery, including their perceptions of the benefits for children engaged directly in it and for other children at their school.
- Identify the factors that help or hinder schools from participating.
- Identify any ideas for improvement.
- Identify other approaches to literacy development at their school and the level of resource that schools allocate to literacy development as a whole.

For the schools not participating in Reading Recovery, the survey explored the literacy development programmes and resources at their school, the level of resource used to support these and their satisfaction with their school’s access to literacy development resources.

10.1.4 Exploring schools’ investment in literacy programmes and resources
As identified in Table 5, the survey asked schools to identify the FTE and funding that they invest in literacy development. This data was used to make comparisons between schools with Reading Recovery and those without. This analysis also included data on the costs of Reading Recovery at a national level. Collectively, this data was used to provide insight into the level of resources allocated to literacy development at the schools. This data required substantial cleaning, with a large proportion of data being removed from the analysis due to indications that respondents were unsure or were providing wide-ranging estimates of the resources allocated to literacy at their school.

10.1.2 Document review
A document review was conducted to improve our understanding of Reading Recovery. While this was not a formal literature review, the Ministry provided Synergia with key documents about the intended delivery of Reading Recovery and the findings of previous evaluations. Those documents provided much useful information for designing this evaluation. A formal literature review was not within the scope of this evaluation.

10.1.3 Reading Recovery and e-asTTle data
The national Reading Recovery data on the delivery and outcomes of Reading Recovery for 2018 was provided to Synergia and EDK for the purposes of this evaluation. Data sourced from www.educationcounts.govt.nz was also used to access national school roll data.
10.1.3.1 Analysis undertaken for the process evaluation

Roll data for all schools and Reading Recovery school data was used to assess the reach of Reading Recovery across the country, in terms of both schools and students. This descriptive analysis was explored by education region, decile, rurality and school type.

Data specific to Reading Recovery was used to look at the Reading Recovery resourcing level by school and the funding contributions from both the Ministry and the schools. This was considered in relation to the dedicated FTE and Reading Recovery Hours provided and the number of students receiving Reading Recovery.

Reading Recovery student data informed the analysis of the entry-level scores for participating students, as well as the pattern of sessions received.

10.1.3.2 Analysis undertaken for the outcome evaluation

Reading Recovery has a robust data collection component that collects pre-enrolment and post-completion data on students’ literacy levels. This was a key data source for examining the impact of Reading Recovery on children’s literacy development, alongside the e-asTTle data with which we explored the sustainability of the effects of Reading Recovery.

The outcome evaluation was designed with two key aspects to understand the contribution of Reading Recovery to children’s literacy:

1. **Reading Recovery**: Improvements in the literacy levels of individual children accessing RR (Reading Recovery outcome data)
2. **Literacy levels**: Differences between the literacy and educational outcomes for schools with and without Reading Recovery (e-asTTle data)

The following table provides further detail on the data sources available and considerations related to their contribution to the outcome evaluation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data source</th>
<th>Detail / comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative data</td>
<td>Which schools received Reading Recovery, which students received Reading Recovery, roll return on school characteristics.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Reading Recovery outcome data    | Only has immediate outcome data on children participating in Reading Recovery. This includes:  
- Pathway of child: successfully discontinued, referral for specialist support, incomplete (e.g. moved out of area).  
- Burt Word test and observational assessment as pre-post literacy measures. No natural comparison group is available with these assessments. |
| School-collected literacy assessments (e-asTTle) | Collection of literacy assessment data across all schools for the Ministry is no longer required. The e-asTTle tool is a literacy assessment tool available to the Ministry. Constrained to years 4 through 10. Available for schools with and without Reading Recovery but unable to determine the counterfactual group (students who are similar in all aspects to the Reading Recovery group but did not receive Reading Recovery.) |

A detailed description of the approach to the analysis was prepared by EDK and is provided as a technical supplement to this report.
10.1.4 Visits to schools and staff interviews

Visits to a sample of schools improved our understanding of Reading Recovery’s implementation and the varied approaches to literacy development at other schools. Three Ministry regions were selected to include schools in rural and urban locations spread throughout the country. The three regions were the Taranaki, Whanganui and Manawatu region, the Auckland region, and the Canterbury region.

Ten schools were visited; eight were using Reading Recovery and two were not. Schools without Reading Recovery were less motivated to engage with the evaluation, as they felt that the evaluation was less relevant to their school. The school visits were also being conducted during teacher strikes, which influenced participation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Number of schools visited with Reading Recovery</th>
<th>Number of schools visited without Reading Recovery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taranaki, Whanganui, Manawatu</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auckland</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canterbury</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the school visits, interviews were conducted with Principals, Reading Recovery Teachers and those supporting literacy development at schools without Reading Recovery. The interviews were designed to provide a deeper insight into the aspects explored in the online survey. In total, 18 interviews were conducted with 22 people from 10 schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff from schools with Reading Recovery (8)</th>
<th>Staff from schools without Reading Recovery (2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principals</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Recovery Teachers or literacy teachers</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10.1.5 Key stakeholder interviews

Key stakeholder interviews were important to the process evaluation. The interviewees included the University of Auckland staff who train the Tutors and a sample of the Tutors who are training the teachers to deliver Reading Recovery. This provided an insight into the approach to training, whether this is being delivered as intended, factors that support or challenge the delivery of the training, and its uptake and use by teachers. These interviews also identified ideas for improvements. In total, five national Reading Recovery staff were interviewed. This included two Trainers and three Tutors.

We also interviewed national and regional staff from the Ministry. This improved our understanding of the national and regional allocation of Reading Recovery. In total, four people from the Ministry were interviewed; one at the national level and three from regional offices. Interviews were undertaken until data saturation and consistent themes emerged.
10.2 **Limitations**

One of the key limitations of this evaluation is the lack of national data on children’s literacy. While e-asTTe data was used, that assessment is not utilised by all schools. It is optional for teachers to use, and teachers are only able to use it to assess a subset of students in their classes. We were unable to control for any differences in the characteristics of schools that chose to use the assessment tool, or control for the students they choose to assess between Reading Recovery and non-Reading Recovery schools. This raises the question of whether the students with valid e-asTTe data are representative of the overall student population or not. If some types of students or schools are systematically excluded from the e-asTTe dataset, then our resulting estimates could also contain bias.

While an analysis of the schools’ characteristics does not suggest any key differences between schools who were completing these assessments and those who did not, national data on literacy measures across all schools would be useful for future evaluations. The consistency of the insights from the interviews on the sustained and school-wide impact of Reading Recovery also gives confidence in the e-asTTe analysis.

The inability for this evaluation to undertake an economic evaluation is a limitation. The insights into the resources that schools allocate to literacy development through the survey must be viewed with caution. While this provides a useful overview, this analysis warrants corroboration through a review of school audits that would provide a more concrete assessment of resource allocation.

The evaluation aimed to include the views and experiences of schools that do not use Reading Recovery for comparison to schools with Reading Recovery. This meant that we were comparing Reading Recovery to a range of programmes and supports without detailed evidence on what these were and how schools were using them. For the site visits, the small sample of schools not using Reading Recovery made it harder to gain further insight into the ideas and suggestions identified by schools in the survey.

The timeframe available for this evaluation did not allow the evaluators to engage parents, carers, whānau or children in this evaluation. The timeframe also meant that we were unable to access data identifying the impact on adult literacy or longer term outcomes. However, the outcome evaluation has provided robust insight into the outcomes for children, and the interviews with school staff reflected on parent, carer and whānau engagement. Direct engagement with learners, parents, carers and whānau may have identified broader benefits such as engagement and a sense of inclusion from being able to engage in classroom activities, these are aspects of outcomes that are not evident in the literacy development measures. Future evaluations may wish to utilise those sources of information and explore the impact on longer term literacy outcomes. For example, using the Integrated Data Infrastructure to identify outcomes in NCEA achievement or immediate post-school outcomes.