

Volunteering as a Reading Buddy at St Werburgh's Primary School

This volunteering opportunity came round the office and it seemed like something I could easily do that wouldn't take up much time. I have found it immensely rewarding.

The volunteers are co-ordinated by [Ablaze](#), which is a Bristol charity that brings together local business and schools. They organised a 2 hour training session and for Criminal Records Board checks to be carried out. A few of us from Temple Quay then went into school to meet the teacher that co-ordinates reading and be shown where everything is.

I am now in my second year, most children are very shy when they start but you see the same readers each week which allows you to build rapport. It sometimes takes a while for their confidence to build (and yours) but once you've built that relationship the hour away from the office flies past.

I don't really do the technical stuff (like phonics)! If the child doesn't know the word and can't work it out we don't prolong the agony, I just tell them. We do spend a lot of time talking about the story and meaning of new words since the value of the one to ones is in improving comprehension rather than mechanical reading skills. From a personal development perspective I think the experience has improved my communication and problem solving skills, especially asking open questions.

I give up an hour to an hour and a half each week, I am in a role were I can flex my lunch break to suit and that makes it easy to volunteer. I have a great time, feel welcomed by the staff and students and it gives me a different perspective. I don't think you have to be a great literary reader just able to give some time. If you wanted to find out more you are welcome to contact me garry.packer@highways.gsi.gov.uk or Sally Ridley at Ablaze sally.ridley@ablazebristol.org