



CHILDREN'S BOOKFEST

BOOKFEST REPORT



2024

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WHAT'S NEXT FOR CHILDRENS' BOOKFEST?

BOOKFEST BOGNOR 2024

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The BookFest bounced into Bognor on 6th and 7th February, with 9 authors visiting 7 schools, giving 18 presentations to 1650 children - and the Children's BookFest charity (CBF) bought a brand new book for every single one of them.

The BookFest Bognor welcomed picture-book writers Lawrence Roberts, Matt Carr and Simon Philip, who brought their magical stories to hundreds of Key Stage One children at Rose Green Infants, Bersted Green Primary School and Downview Primary School.

Key Stage Two wasn't forgotten either, with award-winning authors such as Iszi Lawrence, Jenny McLachlan, Lucy Brandt, Gareth P Jones, David Owen as well as the extraordinary SF Said bringing a whole host of puppets and musical instruments as well as wonderful words and exciting ideas to pupils and teachers alike.

School staff reported that lots of the children hugged their books and couldn't wait to start reading them. Lace, in Year 3 at Edward Bryant School, summed up beautifully the power of the BookFest, saying, 'Are the books really free? This is my first book, the only book I've ever owned!'



Lucy Brandt at Rose Green Juniors

Of course, the other, vital ingredient of the success of any of our BookFests is the dedication of its volunteers. As with many small charities in the region, all the Trustees of CBF are unpaid, but during the BookFests every single author is matched with a local volunteer steward.

Award-winning author SF Said had this to say; "I've been absolutely blown away to witness the impact of a Children's BookFest event! It's an amazing thing to get books into the hands of every single child on a school visit, and to see the incredible excitement around reading and books that this creates. It's a truly inclusive initiative, and it will change many children's lives forever!"

The BookFest really can have a profound impact on our children's futures, and is much more than the sum of its parts.

BOOKFEST CHICHESTER 2024

2

Across three days in October, the Children's BookFest flew around Chichester casting its spell over 26 primary schools and more than 3800 children.

Every child involved in a BookFest event was given their own book, personally dedicated to them by the author themselves, all bought and paid for by Children's BookFest.

We welcomed 27 authors overall, including locals Kieran Larwood, MG Leonard and Neal Layton, as well as those from further afield such as Kate Wakeling, Sam Sedgman and Onjali Q Rauf, and it was a joy to have so many of them buzzing about spreading the book-love.

Maz Evans brought blue skies and balloons to the pupils of Jessie Younghusband, as well as a bucket load of energy and fascinating insights into the Maya people that populate her latest trilogy. Donald Vass, Teacher Governor at Jessie Younghusband, was also impressed with the individual attention Maz gave each of the children who came to have their book signed, saying, 'Maz was great at asking the children what other authors they were enjoying, and sharing book recommendations based on this as well.'



Joseph Coelho at Kingsham Primary

Joseph Coelho, former Children's Laureate, spent the day at Kingsham Primary School, entertaining and inspiring children from age 5 right up to age 11. He captivated them with his charm and charisma, encouraged audience participation and answered a myriad of questions, before signing each and every one of the books CBF bought for the pupils, which in the case of Kingsham totalled over 250.

This combination of having an author coming to your school to give an inspiring presentation, followed by the gift of a real-life book you can keep and return to whenever you choose, is absolute rocket fuel to the burgeoning imaginations of our children, and vital for their development into the grown-ups of tomorrow.

WHY IT MATTERS

THE RESEARCH

The recent article in the Guardian about the research from the National Literacy Trust (NLT) highlighting the decline in Reading for Pleasure in today's young people tells us that it is now at an all-time low having seen a drop of 8.8% since 2023.

Findings from this NLT survey showed that book ownership was linked with "reading enjoyment, frequency and skill:

- More than three times as many children and young people aged 8 to 18 who had a book of their own at home said they read daily (23.1% vs 7.0%) and almost four times as many told us that they enjoyed reading compared with those without a book (38.7% vs 10.1%)
- Compared with their peers who said that they had a book of their own, more children and young people who told us that they didn't have a book read below the average (16.7% vs. 7.3%) and fewer read above the average (10.6% vs. 22.5%).

Recognising the links between book ownership and broader life outcomes, increasing book ownership may be seen as a matter of social justice."

THE REASON

Books let children be children, they enhance imagination, promote adventure and build confidence. They bring us together and foster understanding between people and cultures. Research from the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education found that real books bring learning to life, engage children and sustain their motivation to read and write.

And yet, almost a million children in the UK do not have a book of their own at home.

With your help, Children's BookFest can keep tackling this issue head on.

1 IN 8
CHILDREN
WHO RECEIVE
FREE SCHOOL MEALS
DO NOT OWN A BOOK

FEEDBACK MATTERS

The responses we get from children, teachers and authors tell us we're on the right track.

A child at Fishbourne Primary School

"Please can you write a note for my dad so he won't make me bring this book back to the library?"

A teacher at Portfield Primary Academy

It is great for the children to meet aspirational people such as the authors. It is lovely for the children to get a book as many children have few books at home.

A child at Medmerry Primary School

It is cool drawing characters from a real life book. I didn't think I would be able to do it, but with Zehra's help I did!

A teacher at The March School

BookFest is such a wonderful thing! For all the children in the school to hear an author talk, to meet them in person for a 1-to-1 chat and to take away a signed copy of their book is so exciting and motivating for our young readers. It is a great shared experience for the children that promotes a love of reading.

Author Gareth P Jones

Many book festivals bring books to the places they are wanted. The wondrous thing about Bookfest is that it brings books to the places they are needed. Every child who takes part goes home with a book, so the positive effects of an author visit last far beyond the time we spend in school. It is one of the best, most well organised school visiting festivals in the UK.

OUR 2024 STATISTICS

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Every year, through our Bognor Regis & Chichester BookFests, we try to reach more children in more schools.

The BookFests in schools are at the heart of everything we do. Every school who takes part in the BookFest asks to be included the following year, and by the end of 2025 we will have visited 100% of state-funded Chichester primary schools.

We need to maintain the existing funding levels for Chichester, whilst also finding extra support for our Bognor Schools. There are many more schools in Bognor we have yet to reach, but we're confident that, together, we can make it happen.

NO OF AUTHORS	NO OF SCHOOLS	NO OF BOOKS
Bognor 2024 9 authors	Bognor 2024 7 schools	Bognor 2024 1650 books
Chichester 2024 27 authors	Chichester 2024 26 schools	Chichester 2024 3802 books
TOTAL: 36	Total: 33	Total: 5452
In Chichester 2024 the average % of children taking part in the BookFest who:		
are entitled to Free School Meals was 18.4% have Special Educational Needs was 14%		

TOTAL NUMBER OF BOOKS GIVEN VIA BOOKFESTS, FOODBANKS & OUTREACH in 2024

7,864

FOODBANK MATTERS

6

Our regular donations to five local Food Banks are a key part of our mission

600

BOOKS GIVEN TO
BOGNOR

400

BOOKS GIVEN TO
SELSEY

400

BOOKS GIVEN TO
CHICHESTER

400

BOOKS GIVEN TO
MIDHURST

400

BOOKS GIVEN TO
PETWORTH

“The partnership with Children’s BookFest has made it possible for us as a food bank to provide books for children whose families are finding it hard to afford the basics and where a book is seen as a luxury. It’s lovely to see the faces of the children who are able to choose a book and take it home with them. Thank you Children’s BookFest for all the joy you have brought to the many children that have come through our doors at Chichester district food bank.”

Jo Kondabeka, CEO Chichester district food bank

WHAT'S NEXT For Children's BookFest?

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Pilot Schemes

In November 2024 we ran two pilot schemes.

The first, at Easebourne Primary School in Midhurst, involved all 172 children in Years 1 to 6. Gareth P Jones brought his instruments, puppets and enthusiasm, and CBF bought a copy of 'Snowy White' or 'Solve Your Own Mystery' for every single child involved. This pilot was made possible by the kind generosity of the Inner Wheel Club of Midhurst & Petworth, and is an important step to take as we consider branching out to other areas of West Sussex.

The second pilot was at St Anthony's Special School in Chichester. This is a school dedicated to helping children with additional needs, and required a completely different format than the usual BookFest events. CBF worked closely with the school and the chosen author, Simon Philip, to make sure that the day was tailored to the children involved. Each of the 28 children received a physical copy of Simon's book, as well as a pdf version they can access on their digital tablets. As Frank Cottrell-Boyce says, 'reading is a right not a privilege,' and access to good quality books is vital.

Ticketed Events

Ticketed events are an important part of our fundraising strategy. This year we hosted a wonderful evening in the Cathedral with Anthony Horowitz and Kate Mosse as part of the Festival of Chichester, and two performances in the Minerva Theatre with Julia Donaldson and her beloved husband Malcolm, which sold out in a matter of days.

In 2025 we plan to host more events for both children and adults, and to find new ways to involve the wider community and local libraries. Our new partnership with the Cathedral will be key to this aim, as will our long-standing relationships with the wonderful teachers and librarians.

Outreach Visits to Schools

Every year our Outreach Coordinator, Jen Rogers, goes into various schools to help inspire a love of Reading for Pleasure. Jen works with ten, selected children 1:1, who each receive a book matched to their reading ability and interests which they can take home and keep. We hope to expand upon this in 2025 to keep the book-love going all through the year.

What sets CBF apart is its commitment to accessibility – the charity buys a book for every child to keep, regardless of their circumstances. This tactile connection to literature is invaluable, instilling a sense of ownership and pride in their growing libraries and reinforcing the power of storytelling in shaping futures.

Iszi Lawrence, CBF Patron

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to acknowledge the contributions of the people who worked tirelessly on behalf of CBF this year.

Our Patrons and Trustees

Sir Mark Featherstone-Witty
Iszi Lawrence
Penny Tomlinson
Sahra Gott
Amanda Kings
Elaine Bentley
Jen Rogers
Annie Ashworth
James Gough

Our BookFest Team

Georgina Lippiett
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Our Social Media Star

Bec Hopkins

Our Volunteer Stewards

You know who you are

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Our Festival Programme Consultant

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Our Partners

Chichester Cathedral
Chichester District Food Banks

As well as all the trusts, foundations, organisations, sponsors, individuals, anyone who bought a ticket to an event, granted us funds to continue our work, offered their time for free or at a vastly reduced rate, spoke well of us to others, or has in any way been a CBF champion.

WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT