



2022 FINAL REPORT

The Children's Bookfest (CBF) is an annual festival that arranges for authors and illustrators to visit state primary schools in the Chichester area and, for the first time this year, two schools in Bognor Regis also took part. Each child participating in the festival receives their own signed book, paid for by the charity. For some children, this will be the first book they ever own. Our mission is to address the following unacceptable statistics from the National Literacy Trust:

"1 in 11 disadvantaged children in the UK does not own a book of their own".

"1 in 4 (24%) of children in West Sussex were unable to read well by the time they left primary school."

"3 in 10 eleven year olds in Chichester leave primary school unable to read at the level expected for their age."

"1 in 5 children in England does not own a single book of their own."

The 2022 Children's BookFest was held from 4-6 October with 33 authors leading 61 inspiring sessions in 22 schools. We bought and donated 3,597 new books, an increase of 952 on 2021, every book was signed by the authors and each child was gifted their own treasured book.

In addition to the primary schools, three secondary schools enjoyed inspiring author visits and, instead of donating books to every child, books were purchased by CBF for the school libraries.

This year's festival saw children behaving like crocodiles, roaring like lions and creating wonderful imaginative stories and pictures! The authors engaged and entertained the children, sometimes as many as 90 at a time, with interactive storytelling, illustrating, creative writing tips, quizzes, question and answer sessions and even yoga! So much laughter and joy, inspiration, and admiration, and of course, all 3,597 primary school children participating, went home with a signed book of their very own! All in all, the festival was a huge success as can be seen in these comments from some of the schools:

'It was really good. I mean really really good.'

'Reading was the winner yesterday.'

'I want to say a huge thank you for all your efforts with the Chichester BookFest. It was such a success - the children loved meeting all the authors, listening to them and talking with them. It was also lovely to see those pupils who don't normally enjoy reading a book coming out of the session, with their own copy of the book and sitting reading it.'

'It was such a successful day and to see every child with a book was just magical. Every single child was so excited and beaming from ear to ear as they walked away with their book. It really was the perfect day. Thank you so much for everything you do. BookFest really has changed lives today and I'm so grateful to you for involving our school. I know these children will remember this for the rest of their lives. Many of them said this was the first ever book they have owned which I know is what you're all about.'

Some schools based their literacy classes around the book each child received with some authors providing learning resources for follow up lessons. One week after the event one teacher said that her students were still all so engaged with reading their book, and she'd never known a book to capture so many of her class's attention. To see a full list of all our authors, please see our website.

It has to be pointed out here that although the majority of the events took place during the festival week, it was disrupted this year due to the train strikes with some authors unable to travel, and sessions re-arranged for November and December.

We have also continued our partnership with the Chichester District Foodbanks and bought and donated new children's books each month to the foodbanks in Chichester, Selsey, Petworth and Midhurst and have also added the Bognor Regis foodbank this year. Initially we donated 20 books to each foodbank every month but have now increased this to 30 and in November and December will be donating 50 books to each foodbank for Christmas. By the end of the year, we will have donated over 1,600 books to the local food banks, for many children, this will be the very first book of their own.

"The partnership with Bookfest has made it possible for us as a Foodbank 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 is lovely to see the faces of the children who are able to choose a book and take it home with them. Thank you Bookfest for all the joy you have brought to the many children that have come through our doors at Chichester District Foodbank." Joanne Kondabeka, CEO Chichester District Foodbank

Another new initiative this year is our Outreach work. Jen Rogers, our Outreach Co-ordinator has been visiting schools where she runs an assembly about the BookFest, tells an interactive story and reads 1:1 with 10 children who have been selected by the school and are either on pupil premium funding, reluctant readers or could just do with a little pick-me-up. Jen receives information on each child prior to her visit to select a book that is tailored to their reading ability and interests. Many of the selected books are published by Barrington Stokes as these are dyslexia friendly texts. She also takes a stack of books to offer the school for reading prizes or to boost book corners or libraries.

In July Jen was invited to the Sanctuary summer party where she performed 'Angelica Sprocket's Pockets' by Quentin Blake among other stories to around 30 refugee children. Jen dressed in a spectacular pink coat and the children pulled items from her many colourful pockets! Each child took home a copy of the book which was specifically chosen for its vibrant illustrations and vocabulary learning opportunities for the refugees.

We are hugely grateful for the generous support of trusts, foundations, sponsors and individuals that has enabled us to buy all the books. In addition, we arranged a book sale and two very successful fundraising talks. Award winning author and illustrator, Rob Biddulph, kept a capacity audience spellbound at the 'Draw With Rob' event in April. He shared his journey to becoming a bestselling children's author and showed how simple it is to draw his dog 'Doodle'. The excitement in the room was palpable and every child had a precious moment with Rob who generously signed many books and posed for photographs.

In June, we welcomed the marvellous Reverend Richard Coles to Chichester Cathedral where he talked about his new novel, 'Murder Before Evensong'. The audience were captivated with tales of his fascinating life as a musician, writer, Church of England priest and radio presenter. Together, these two events enabled us to buy over 1,000 books for children.

Sadly, since the pandemic, and with the current rising cost of living, 87% of parents now say they have less disposable income with 64% reporting that the amount of money they have to spend on books for their child has decreased. As children have missed so much schooling in the past couple of years, we are more determined than ever to provide opportunities to encourage children of all ages to read books and inspire a love of the written word which, apart from bringing huge enjoyment, is also the basis of their future education.

Altogether this year, we have bought around 5,300 new books for the children who participated in the festival as well as the monthly donations to the local food banks and our Outreach work, an increase of over 1,300 books on 2021. The trustees have worked hard during the year to raise the funds to extend the reach of the festival and ensure that we can continue to buy books for even more children, schools and foodbanks and hope to increase this number in 2023.

The BookFest team have learnt a lot this year and want to do even more in 2023. With additional voluntary support now in place, we are in a good position to do far more inhouse to ensure that almost

every penny we raise goes towards the cost of books. We are also planning to arrange additional events in schools throughout the year to support disadvantaged children on an ongoing basis. To that end, we are now in the process of meeting head teachers to understand how we can continue to work together and plan new initiatives.