

# Schoolreaders

improving literacy • increasing life chances

Welcome to our latest newsletter. We've got so much to celebrate with our volunteers delivering a record number of reading sessions last year, the recruitment of new staff and an exciting office move. Thank you to everyone - volunteers, supporters, funders and staff. It is your hard work and enthusiasm that are making all this fantastic progress happen.

## A new office for the Schoolreaders team

It was a landmark moment for us on December 6th last year when we cut the ribbon on our first permanent offices. We are delighted that our operations team, who administer the scheme and match up our schools and volunteers, is now housed in the Bedford Heights office complex in our founding county. In the next issue of this newsletter, we'll introduce you to our new team.

## Going the distance FOR SCHOOLREADERS!

Volunteering for us requires a special kind of dedication, and we appreciate every minute that our Schoolreaders spend with the scheme. And we're equally in awe of those who have used a different kind of stamina to help us. Our Suffolk Fundraising Ambassador, Bumble Gambier, took to her bike recently and cycled nearly 300km across Norway to raise funds. The hairpin bends in the picture below (9.1km of them) were tackled on the second morning, and the event culminated in an 18km time trial. If you feel like taking on a physical challenge while raising funds on our behalf, you could consider running in the Bedford Half Marathon or Twilight 10k, or you could sign up for a similar event local to you. Contact us to find out more about the Bedford events: [office@schoolreaders.org](mailto:office@schoolreaders.org)



## OUT AND ABOUT at Literary Festivals

Gatherings of book lovers are bound to be good places to spread the word about Schoolreaders and we're very pleased to be developing ongoing partnerships with Cambridge, Oxford and Buckingham Literary Festivals. As well as recruiting several volunteers at recent festivals, we've also been able to meet lots of children's authors. Last month our team at the Oxford Literary Festival met superstar writer, Robin Stevens, author of the Murder Most Unladylike series of detective stories. We are delighted that Robin has agreed to become one of our Author Supporters and are looking forward to working with her. She sums up what reading means to her and the importance of the Schoolreaders mission.



Robin Stevens  
© Alexandra Dao

“Being able to read with confidence is a vital skill ... And it's also incredibly fun! Schoolreaders can pass on the magic of reading to children – it's a wonderful way to make a difference.”



Other well-known faces joined us to endorse Schoolreaders, among them Ade Adepitan, medal-winning Paralympian basketball player. Ade has just published his first children's book, 'Battle of the Cyborg Cat', an all-action celebration of how friendship can overcome all

difficulties. And David Solomons, author of 'My Brother is a Superhero' was excited to hear about Schoolreaders, saying 'There's a book out there for absolutely everybody – one that flips the switch and changes things from that moment.' Lots of very excited children learned super-hero drawing techniques from this master of the art.

## School support



Our congratulations and thanks go to Alice, Jossy, Abi, Isabel and Sophie, all pupils at Bedford Girls' School, who recently won a grant of £250 for Schoolreaders. The girls competed against other school teams representing different local charities, and their confidence, knowledge and passion ensured that they were one of three teams to win a grant.



Be a **SUPERSTAR**  
for Schoolreaders!

We'll be tapping into the energy and enthusiasm of our partner schools later this year when we launch our 'Be a Superstar for Schoolreaders' campaign. Children will get to dress up as their 'Superstar' for a day and take part in lots of fun reading and writing activities. Look out for more news later this term and visit our website to register your school online.

## Grand finale for a Schoolreader

Retiring Schoolreader Kathleen Evans organised a leaving treat for children at the school in Princes Risborough where she has volunteered for several years – a visit from a touring theatre group who put on a production of 'Pinocchio'. Kathleen says it was a wonderful finish to her volunteering and that the children were completely enthralled. Regular readers of our newsletter may remember our article on Kathleen, who spent 58 years teaching in England and Canada, and who took to the road each summer to make sure that pupils living on far-flung farmsteads didn't fall behind with their reading during the long school holidays. Kathleen was delighted to put all this experience to good use when she became a Schoolreader in her late 80's. We are very sorry to be saying goodbye to Kathleen and thank her very much for the countless hours she has spent improving children's reading with Schoolreaders.



### Thanks to our supporters

Huge thanks to all our valued supporters and volunteers who help keep Schoolreaders going. These include:

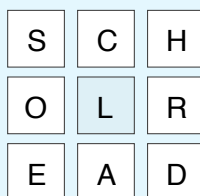
Garfield Weston Foundation  
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### Try a lexical timeline challenge ...

English speakers have a wonderfully flexible 1,000,000 words at their disposal, and lexicographers add an average of 1,000 new words to our dictionaries each year. Global Language Monitor suggests that as many as 5,400 new words are created annually, but don't achieve sufficiently widespread usage to get into print. See if you can guess which year each of these first gained common usage\*:

Skyscraper	Vegan	1977	1920
Robot	Foodie	1883	1941
Hipster	Shopaholic	1944	1980

Answers are on the back page



How many words of 4 or more letters can you find? All must contain the letter L. There are at least 250, but you'll be doing well if you can get more than 100.

And our quest for the best Scrabble words continues, but can you match the words with their meanings?

### Szygy Velleity Osculable

- (adjective) Kissable.
- (noun) A wish or inclination, but one that is not strong enough to lead to action.
- (noun) In astronomy, an alignment of 3 celestial objects.

## SCHOOL CASE-STUDY

# Holywell Primary School

Our volunteers have become an invaluable part of the team at Holywell Primary in Loughborough in the two years since the school joined the scheme. We've been talking to Sue Freeman at Holywell about how a highly effective partnership between the school and its Schoolreaders has been established.

Holywell Primary School joined Schoolreaders in May 2017 when Headteacher Mrs Ings heard about the scheme. The promise of free reading volunteers was instantly appealing to her – Holywell is a school of 420 pupils, where 30 languages are spoken and 11% of pupils have Special Educational Needs. Even though parent engagement and support for children's reading is mostly strong, extra help is always appreciated. Almost as soon as Mrs Ings had filled out our online application form we were able to send in our first volunteers. When a school signs up with us, our computer system can immediately tell us if we have registered volunteers within a short distance, and where no one is available locally we will actively target volunteer recruitment in that area.



Sue Freeman at Holywell Primary School

staff at Holywell also play their part, making volunteers feel welcome and appreciated and responding quickly to communications.

Sue deals with any small issues that present themselves. When one volunteer felt that she needed to refresh her knowledge of phonics to support children in Key Stage 1, Sue arranged for her to receive phonics sheets and to observe an experienced Teaching Assistant. Small moves like providing a dictionary for a volunteer and child to use together proved useful and have been more widely adopted, adding to the children's vocabulary, and giving them the sense of enjoyable collaboration with an adult as they look words up together.

**“Our volunteer is always friendly and has a lovely way with the children... She makes short succinct notes that are really useful.”**

Schoolreaders currently has eight volunteers supporting children at Holywell, with another due to start soon. The volunteers have been a great addition to the team, and currently read with up to 80 children each week. And the unexpected benefit has been the very real camaraderie that has developed between staff and volunteers and between children and volunteers, with our Schoolreaders being greeted enthusiastically long after they stop reading with a child.

**A huge thank you to all our volunteers across the country - like those at Holywell, you are making a real difference to children's lives.**

**“We currently have 8 very committed Schoolreader volunteers which is amazing; we really appreciate all your efforts to arrange this.”**

Sue Freeman, the school's nominated liaison with us, tells us that the positive effects of having Schoolreaders at Holywell were immediately noticeable. Help from the volunteers took the strain off Teaching Assistants and freed up time to allow for extra activities in class. And the quality of the volunteers' input was quickly recognised; their written and verbal feedback is used by the teachers to feed into their overall assessments of the children's progress and attitudes to reading.

**“Your support for reading is invaluable.”**

Sue feels that the investment of time and care required from the school as each new volunteer joins them has been the key to forming successful long-term relationships between the two. Use of our Guidance Notes helps define how initial contact between Holywell and the volunteers is conducted and ensures that nothing is forgotten in arranging DBS checks, introducing the volunteer to key staff, and arranging a timetable of visits that works for both volunteer and teachers. Teaching

## ‘H is for Harry’

A new documentary film reveals the difficulties facing children when they enter secondary school without the ability to read fluently. Harry, the engaging 11-year-old subject of the film, has grown up in a house where there are no books. His father Grant, himself unable to read and write, is passionate about Harry’s education, but lacks the skills to help.

We talked to Ed Owles, Co-Director of ‘H is for Harry’ about why he chose to make the film.

Harry arrives at Reach Academy in Hounslow, the third generation of his family to be illiterate. Here he meets Sophie, a newly qualified teacher who runs a specialist English group. The film follows them as Sophie coaxes Harry towards better literacy in the hope that he will catch up with his friends and achieve enough to be able to stay in mainstream school.



© Mercurial Pictures Ltd

For Ed Owles and his Co-Director, Jaime Taylor, herself a former teacher, ‘H is for Harry’ was a chance to make a film about education from a child’s point of view. The familiar statistics on UK literacy are brought into sharp focus as we see Harry struggling to read and write, and it is his particular voice and viewpoint that make the film so poignant.

Ed Owles explained that he came to Reach Academy without a clear idea of how the narrative of the film would develop. He had been welcomed in by the staff who saw that his film might help show what a complex process the acquisition of reading skills is, with social, economic and personal factors all playing a part in determining how well a child is able to respond to classroom teaching. Ed and his

Co-Director Jaime started by filming hours of general footage of the whole of a new Year 7 class interacting with their teachers, and intended to let the film tell its story by interweaving the experiences of three or four children. But quite quickly Harry’s sharp wit drew their attention, and ultimately Ed and Jaime decided to focus the film on his individual experience. Their choice proved to be a good one when they met Harry’s father, Grant. His frustration at seeing the illiteracy which had blighted his own and his father’s lives, apparently also about to undermine Harry’s future, brings about some of the most moving moments of the film. Grant’s hopelessness is hard to watch: ‘It’s just repeat, repeat, repeat. My dad’s had it, I had it, and now my son’s gonna have it.’

The producers have managed to make a deeply personal film about Harry’s experience, while also showing that his predicament is shared by many others. What do Ed and Jaime hope will be the effect of their film? Both believe that the power of film lies in its ability to stir empathy and they want to promote understanding of the complex challenges facing children and educators as the teaching process unfolds over time. For Ed and Jaime, who spent two years filming at Reach, these children’s life chances will depend on their ability to read well and be effective communicators. They believe that early intervention and sustained support offer our best hope of transmitting good literacy skills to Harry and his generation.

To find out more about ‘H is for Harry’ and for information on screenings, visit [www.hisforharry.com](http://www.hisforharry.com)

### Your support is invaluable!

Schoolreaders has to raise funds to cover the cost of placing volunteers in schools across the country. If you feel able to support us, or might consider making a gift to Schoolreaders in your Will, please contact Lesley on 01234 924222 or [office@schoolreaders.org](mailto:office@schoolreaders.org) or visit our website. Thank you for any support you feel able to give.

Robot 1920  
Foodie 1980  
Hipster 1941

Vegan 1944  
Skyscraper 1883  
Shopaholic 1977

Syzygy, an astronomical alignment  
Osculable, kissable  
Velleity, an unfulfilled wish

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