

Monday 11 May 2009

Chatterbooks unveils new-look materials

The Reading Agency today unveils its new range of Chatterbooks materials, designed to help libraries across the UK develop children's reading groups through the shared Chatterbooks network.

As Chatterbooks moves into its eighth successful year with an ever-growing number of children taking part, the materials have been redesigned by children's illustrator Andy Ward, working with Chatterbooks members feeding in their ideas to the design process.

They include:

- smart new blue carrier bags for books
- a reading diary with fact file, favourites lists, websites, games and a message from Jacqueline Wilson, the scheme's Patron
- biros and stickers
- book bites post-it notes for children's comments and feedback on books

"Andy's bright and funky designs have captured the essence of Chatterbooks: that reading is fun and for everyone," says Tricia Kings of The Reading Agency. Visuals of these new materials are available to journalists upon request.

Chatterbooks reading groups encourage children aged four to 12 years old to read adventurously, talk about books and visit libraries with their families. It has grown hugely since its launch in 2001 and now involves 7,625 children in 455 groups.

Recent evaluation shows that 99% of the children involved are reading more, with 56% reading a lot more. Ninety-nine per cent of the children taking part are more confident about reading, with 48% a lot more confident.

Recent case study work has also shown how effective it can be in encouraging children who are not confident with reading.

"The difference has been unbelievable," says Katrina Dukelow, mother of ten year old James from Northern Ireland. "Chatterbooks has helped his confidence no end. He's now far more likely to tackle bigger books. That's been a big sea-change. James has continued to read on his own – in fact last night, around 10pm when he should have been asleep, he came to me and said that he couldn't put the book he was reading down!"

Top selling children's author Jacqueline Wilson is the project's Patron and keen supporter. She says: "I am so pleased to be part of Chatterbooks because it encourages children to explore and have fun with reading. Through Chatterbooks they get to read widely and enjoy books they might not have picked to read on their own".

The Chatterbooks network is run by The Reading Agency, the independent charity working to inspire more people to read more. (Please see "Notes to editors" for more information.)

The new materials are available for immediate order by library authorities who have already signed up with the Chatterbooks network. They can place orders online at: www.readingagency.org.uk/shop. Or call 0207 278 8922. Orders placed now will be despatched in June.

The Reading Agency would also be delighted to hear from other library authorities interested in finding out more about Chatterbooks. Please contact Tricia Kings on tricia.kings@readingagency.org.uk or 0871 750 1206.

“Chatterbooks has got me reading books I wouldn’t have thought of reading,” says James Dukelow, aged ten years old, who belongs to the Chatterbooks group at Ballyhackamore library in Northern Ireland. “At Chatterbooks you get to read really interesting books. It’s really fun, and when you start a book you can’t put it down.”

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Notes to editors:

- **The Reading Agency is an independent charity working to inspire more people to read more. It is funded by the Arts Council and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council.** (www.readingagency.org.uk)
- **For more information about Chatterbooks, please visit:** www.readingagency.org.uk/children/chatterbooks