

Libraries engagement with children, young people and schools, and Read Manchester

Libraries work with Read Manchester to promote reading for pleasure and the outcomes of literacy, wellbeing, and life skills, which lead to improved health, educational attainment and jobs. The library offer spans all age groups from baby storytimes and rhyme and an active partnership in Baby Week, right through to young people in our high schools.

The core offer includes the Bookstart offer, weekly storytimes at each library, class visits, author visits and national campaigns including the Summer Reading Challenge, World Book Day, Empathy Day and National Storytelling Week. Local and regional events including Chorlton Book Festival and the Festival of Libraries also include programming for children and families.

The Summer Reading Challenge supports 4-11 year olds to continue reading over the summer holidays and avoid the literacy slide that can occur during the break from school. Libraries again offered an integrated model of working, with 42 primary schools signing up their pupils directly to the challenge and receiving materials in school to support this. Children from all other schools were able to join via their local libraries, as part of a universal offer. Over 35,000 books were read by all the children taking part.



Manchester Libraries and BookTrust continue to gift book packs to over 10,000 babies and 3-4 year olds every year to encourage family reading and an early and enduring love of books. The baby pack goes to every baby in the city via the Registrars, whilst the Toddler and Preschooler are targeted via the Early Years partners.

Engagement with schools has continued to grow. During the academic year September 2022 to July 2023, 143 schools engaged with libraries (68% of total schools). Almost 70,000 children attended class visits (in-person and virtual) in the academic year 2022/23. Read Manchester's book gifting programme supported schools and pupils by giving them over 53,000 brand new books as part of their transition read and other book gifting programmes.

Six of our libraries were venues for the Holiday Activities and Food programme in Easter, Summer and December. Sessions involved lunch and activities such as arts and

crafts, reading, music and other positive, engaging activities, and were aimed at ages 11-16. Each holiday young people participated in sessions at Forum, Miles Platting, Withington, Central Library, Gorton and Newton Heath. These aimed to keep young people fed and entertained over holiday periods when they were out of school, and to engage them with libraries.

Working with the Youth, Play and Participation team, training has been rolled out for library staff across the city in working with and engaging young people. Youth-friendly library standards are being created and will include consultation with young people.

Read Manchester

For the last seven years Libraries and Education have worked together to support literacy and reading for pleasure through the Read Manchester campaign, a partnership with the National Literacy Trust. This helps us work with all age groups and focus certain campaigns on specific areas to provide maximum impact. In this way we can improve literacy levels across different ages and communities in Manchester.



Ensuring equal access to books through our **bookgifting campaign** has been a central aspect of this offer. These have been donated by publishers and have been given to residents via community groups, foodbanks, youth groups, churches and refugee groups. As far as possible, choice of books is encouraged so that recipients can choose books that appeal to them; owning a book has been shown to be important in encouraging enjoyment of reading.

Some of the feedback from our recent Christmas bookgifting campaign included the following:

From a parent: *"This is my child's first book. I can't believe she can take this home. I am so happy, thank you!"*

Another organisation said: *"It makes a huge difference to our vulnerable families."*

And from Message Community Grocery: *"Children loved recognising familiar characters, people were overwhelmed with the fact that they were gifted and the choice they had. It has been such a blessing to a community finding it tough to make ends meet. It was great to see pre-teens walking proudly out of the store with a book under their arm."*

Promoting inclusive and diverse books is the driver behind Read Manchester's **See Myself in Books** campaign. These mini libraries of 25 books by authors of colour feature central characters from ethnically diverse backgrounds which reflect the population of Manchester. Forty schools have benefitted from these collections, with a further 20 collections to be gifted in 2024. The collections are accompanied by our programme of author and illustrator school visits. A further set of books have been put together to reflect neurodiverse characters and will be promoted over the coming months. For both projects, a resource for teachers has also been prepared.

The 4th year of our year 6 Transition Read again saw all year 6 pupils (over 7,000) receive a copy of *The Lion Above the Door*, to keep along with teaching resources to support the move to high school. Pupils in SEND schools also received a copy of Sophy Henn's book *'Super Duper You.'* In 2023 a new transition read was launched for early years with children moving up from nurseries and private settings to reception receiving a copy of Dr Ranj's book *'A Superpower like Mine.'* Every 4-year-old received a copy of the book through Making Manchester Fairer funding. The celebration event was held at Moss Side Powerhouse.



Libraries and Read Manchester were the national partner for Empathy Lab UK's live Empathy Day event. Held at the National Cycling Centre velodrome. Over 500 pupils were heard top children's authors speak about their books and writing, as well as talk to the children about the empathy message and how children can find their own empathy superpowers. Each child received a book. Schools attending were supported with empathy-themed books to share back at school.



Partnering with Transport for Greater Manchester, World Book Day was also a highlight of the year and demonstrates the reach and impact of Read Manchester. World Book Day UK supported the partnership by bringing two top children's authors to the city to meet local school children. Over 7,000 books were placed on tram seats across the network, and children could exchange their book tokens for a World Book Day book in all libraries, instead of having to go to a bookshop or supermarket.

