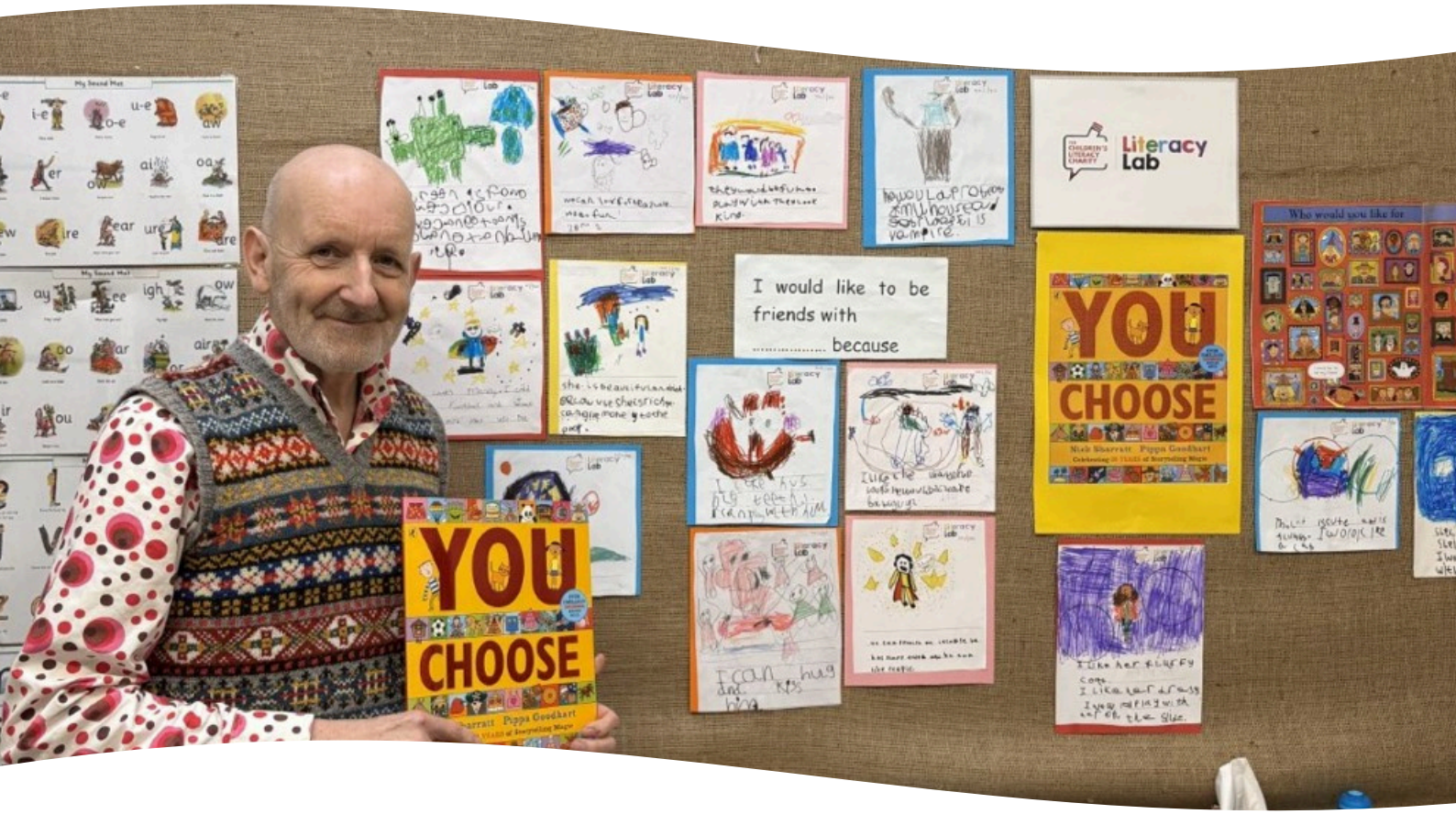

SPRING UPDATE 2026

As we step into Spring, in this termly update we focus on the National Year of Reading, celebrating our Authors of the Month programme, an exciting visit by Nick Sharratt to one of our Literacy Labs, and the new Family Learning section on our website which supports parents with helping their children to read at home.

March also sees the launch of our **Where Reading Begins** match funding campaign, and do read Sofia's Story: an inspiring case study of the power of literacy.

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Celebrating the National Year of Reading

Where Reading Begins – have your donation doubled in March

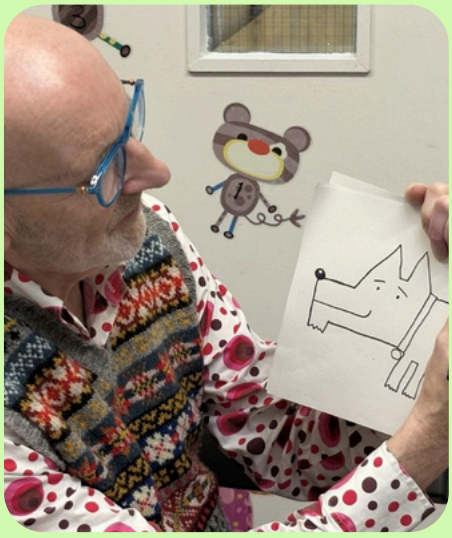
New Family Learning webpages go live

Launch of the National Year of Reading

The Children's Literacy Charity is pleased to be a Pledge Partner of the Department for Education's **National Year of Reading**. Launched in January, the 'Go All In' campaign is designed to inspire more people to make reading a regular part of their lives and aligns with our mission to close the literacy gap for children needing specialist support.

While our expert, tutor-led interventions focus on building all the important literacy skills, developing a love of reading sits at the heart of everything that we do. The 'Go All In' initiative therefore provides a perfect opportunity for us to celebrate the joy of reading with our Literacy Lab schools.

Nick Sharratt is our National Year of Reading Ambassador (as highlighted in our last newsletter) and he launched our programme of events as Author of the Month for January. Across all our Literacy Labs, pupils have been using his book *You Choose* as a core text for rich oracy and writing activities, designed to strengthen spoken language, ideas and writing confidence.



We were delighted to take Nick on a visit to our Literacy Lab at St James' Primary School in Bermondsey where he read from one of his stories and chatted to the children about the work they had done using *You Choose*. Nick taught the children how to draw a lion and a shark, with their drawings inspiring him to add eyelashes to his lion!

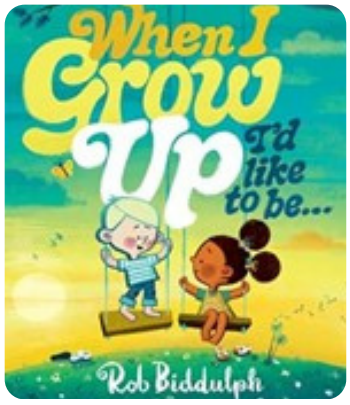
Nick then took part in a school assembly, reading from *Shark in the Park* and showing the children how to draw two of the characters from his books. He was asked all sorts of questions about being a writer, including whether it is a fun job, and his visit was thoroughly enjoyed by all!

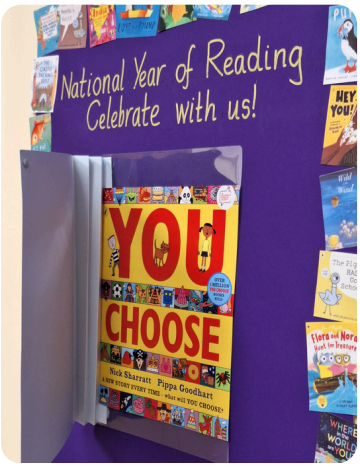
Literacy Labs celebrate the joy of reading

Kim Hillyard was our author of the month for February, providing an exciting addition to our Literacy Labs with her book, *Bert and the Bubble.*

Taking over in March is **Rob Biddulph** with his fabulous book *When I Grow Up I'd Like to Be*.

We have a fantastic group of children's writers lined up for the rest of the year, including Nicola Davies, Leigh Hodgkinson, Rashmi Sirdeshpande, Bethan Woollvin and Matt Goodfellow. Their work will be celebrated in our Literacy Labs and each author or poet will provide a specially-made video message for the children.





The Literacy Lab tutors will be capitalising on the involvement of all our authors of the month and embedding reading for pleasure across their sessions, supported by creative activities such as designing posters, producing reading scrapbooks and book-making.

Alongside our author-led work, we are launching a **Story Mission Reading Challenge**, designed to increase parental engagement while making reading motivating and enjoyable. Literacy Lab children can listen to stories online, complete fun activities, and collect stickers for their Story Mission passports.

Last but not least, as part of our National Year of Reading activities, we are offering free CPD for partner schools, with a focus on *Reading Fluency and Its Role in Developing Reading for Pleasure* and *Developing a Reading Culture in Your School*, supporting sustainable, whole-school approaches to literacy. Email beata.gawthrop@theclc.org.uk for more information.

Where Reading Begins – our match funding campaign is live!

This March, your donation can go twice as far. A generous pledge pot of £25,000 means **every donation will be matched pound-for-pound until we reach the campaign target of £50,000.**

Please click here to donate

By taking part in this campaign, supporters could have the value of their donation matched, pound for pound, creating double the impact and twice the opportunity for children to unlock a love of reading and a lifetime of learning through literacy.

Reading for pleasure is a key message of the National Year of Reading but this is unattainable if a child lacks the essential literacy skills. Our specialist literacy interventions can make all the difference. The charity's holistic approach goes beyond the mechanics of reading, as our expert programmes focus on all the key communications skills: writing, comprehension, listening, speaking and reading, all essential for improving fluency, enhancing vocabulary and boosting reading engagement and confidence. As a real life case study of the power of our work, do read Sofia's story here.

With the attainment gap the widest it has been for a decade, early intervention is a powerful means of giving children a fair start to their education. Our work is needed now more than ever and every donation helps to fund our specialist tutors, tailored resources and expert programmes that build vital literacy skills and open doors to learning.

Please share news of our *Where Reading Begins* campaign with friends, family and colleagues and if you would like to support, do remember to make your donation between 1st March and 31st March to benefit from the match funding and double the value of your gift. Thank you!

For more information email **fundraising@theclc.org.uk**. Special thanks to our pledge donors for their generosity in providing the match funding for this campaign.

Recognition for how we help to deliver 'excellent outcomes' at West Midlands school

This term has seen our partnership with Holyhead Primary Academy, Wednesbury, go from strength to strength with new tutor Sumaiya delivering our second Reading Lab at the school, alongside the existing Reading Lab and Literacy Lab already in operation.

Our work strengthening core literacy skills has proved significantly beneficial for children needing specialist support.

On receiving recognition from the Secretary of State for Education that the school had, in 2024/25, achieved excellent outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, placing it among the very best nationally, The Principal paid tribute to our work.

> **"We have never worked with such a great charity as The Children's Literacy Charity and you are a part of this success."**
>
> Natalie Shipley, Principal at Holyhead Primary Academy

New partner schools

We launched new Labs in two further schools this term:

In Coventry, tutor Lisa is running our Literacy Lab at Sowe Valley Primary School, working 1:3 with pupils to develop the skills they need to thrive both in and beyond the classroom.

Hannah is tutoring in a new secondary school Reading Lab at Orion Eden Park in Beckenham, supporting KS3 pupils to build confidence, fluency and a love of reading.

We are also delighted to start our Reading Lab intervention in the summer term at another new school: Dee Point Primary School in Blacon, Chester. Headteacher Dave Williams says:

'We are really excited to be working alongside The Children's Literacy Charity to provide high quality learning opportunities and to develop reading skills in our children. The model is, in my eyes, the perfect solution to high quality, consistent and accountable intervention to demonstrate secure pupil outcomes and impact. Given the pressures of school life, staffing and the enormity of the curriculum, this is not always possible. I feel this is a model that all additional intervention should follow. We can't wait to get started!"

Launch of our new Literacy Learning Resources to support Reading at Home

We are excited to share the launch of a new, dedicated Family Learning section on The Children's Literacy Charity website. Building on the education expertise of the charity, this new section has been specially developed to support families in helping their children develop strong reading, writing and communication skills.

Encouragement at home plays a vital and irreplaceable role in children's learning but sometimes, parents are unsure as to how best to help their child. These new Family Learning pages provide a comprehensive guide to supporting children on their literacy journey, bringing together practical advice, engaging activities and reassuring guidance to help parents and carers feel confident supporting their child.

Click on these links to explore our new Family Learning webpages:

- Reading
- Phonics and Spelling
- Communication and Language
- Reading Lab
- Literacy Lab
- Story Lab

The carefully curated literacy content drawn from a wide range of sources includes ideas to encourage reading for pleasure, tips for building vocabulary, fluency and confidence, and activities that fit easily into everyday family life. They are designed to be clear, welcoming and accessible, with a focus on making literacy enjoyable. As well as bringing information on all the core literacy skills together in one place, there are also helpful links to other online resources, including videos and games which provide constructive options for screentime.

As Julie Taylor, Education Lead at the charity explains: **"Our online literacy resources are designed to support the full range of literacy development, from early language and communication through to reading, spelling, and writing. They are accessible and engaging for children of all ages, and give parents clear, supportive ways to reinforce learning at home. The goal is to help families strengthen the foundations that underpin literacy, while keeping learning enjoyable and meaningful."**

With thanks to our corporate partner Stellantis UK who has so generously helped to fund the development of this new resource.

Sofia's literacy journey

We are lucky enough to be able to show the impact of our incredible work through our rigorous assessment of outcomes, supported by powerful case studies. That said, sometimes a child's story stops us in our tracks as it tells us so much more than just the data. When tutor Laura shared Sofia's journey with us, showing how Reading Lab has opened up the world of language, not only did we find it moving but we felt it captured the essence of what we do so well that we wanted to share it more widely. These are Laura's words:

"Sofia is eight years old and in Year 4. She lives with her mum, dad and younger brother in a small, two-bedroomed flat. Sofia had another brother who sadly passed away two years ago when he was still a baby.

Sofia finds reading and writing difficult and doesn't have any story books of her own. At school, she makes an effort in class but is not confident in herself or her abilities. Sofia was selected for the charity's small group, 10-week Reading Lab programme as her baseline assessment indicated a reading age of 4 years and 8 months. Her comprehension score was also low at 40%.

In the first two weeks of the Reading Lab programme, while Sofia was engaged and co-operative she was quiet and reserved. However, in the third week, Sofia told me that she had written a story by herself at home and asked if she could bring it in to show me. She arrived in week four beaming proudly and carrying a pink sparkly notebook. She read out her uplifting two-page story of an unlikely friendship between two creatures with fluency, expression and pure joy. From that moment on, her confidence rocketed.

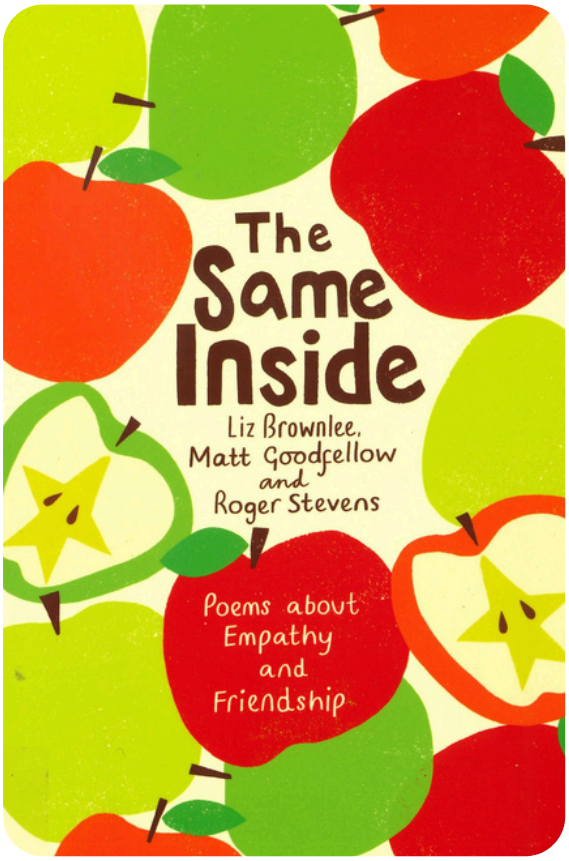
In week seven, I read the poem *Rise* by Matt Goodfellow, and I asked the children to close their eyes and visualise themselves in the poem as they listened. At the end, Sofia was visibly moved. The next day she said that she had written two poems of her own, one of which was about her baby brother who passed away, and she read both poems aloud. Sofia told me that she had never been able to express these feelings before and she loves poems now because they make her feel safe. She said that her mum and dad had both cried when they read the second poem and that they were so proud of her."

By the end of the 10-week programme Sofia was working at the expected level in reading. It is evident that the small group environment of Reading Lab, and the tailored support of a skilled and consistent tutor, has helped to unlock the depth of her thoughts and feelings, leading to increased confidence and understanding of herself.

Reading fluently unlocks reading for pleasure

In her latest blog on our website, Education Lead Julie Taylor reflects on The Children's Literacy Charity's recent submission to the Education Select Committee on Reading for Pleasure. While a love of reading underpins all of The Children's Literacy Charity's work, it is through the support of our expert tutors that pupils in our Labs develop the reading fluency and confidence needed to access, engage with, and enjoy books.

Click here to read the blog post



Rise

The end of our school field
where the grass grows long
is where I sometimes hide
when the world is going wrong

I lie among the dandelions
staring at the sky
wishing I was someone else
wishing I could fly

out into the atmosphere
swooping through the clouds
somewhere much less complicated
somewhere much less loud

somewhere safe and peaceful
where all secrets are revealed
I close my eyes, become the skies
and rise above this field

Matt Goodfellow

To inspire us all to read more for pleasure, here is the poem which helped Sofia discover the joy of reading. Wishing everyone a happy Spring.