

About Booktime

Booktime is the flagship national primary offer from Booktrust, and forms part of a continuum of programmes, projects and prizes inspiring a lifelong love of books for all.



**Booktime event in Tower Hamlets Idea Store
Whitechapel**

Booktime is a national programme that promotes reading for pleasure and encourages family engagement in shared reading at an important transition stage in children's learning and development.

Booktime encourages children, parents and carers to read together for pleasure by giving a free book pack to children starting primary school. Booktime also aims to reach children not accessing mainstream education, through local authority contacts and social inclusion coordinators.

In 2009-10, Booktrust formed a partnership with The Reading Agency to enhance the communication, support and evaluation of the Booktime offer in partnership with public and schools' library services in England.

Booktime in Libraries 2009

151 library authorities took part in Booktime in 2009, distributing library resource packs to **2691** libraries and SLSs.

137 individuals from 129 English Authorities responded to the 2009 Booktime Evaluation Questionnaire. This represents a response rate of over 85% and provides a very sound basis for drawing conclusions about the project this year.



Booktime event in Kent 2009

The evaluation email alerts were sent out to library contacts and while the majority of the respondents were children's librarians from the public library sector, there were also responses from Bookstart officers, Early Years Librarians and from some Schools Library Services. This demonstrates encouraging levels of synergy between early years practitioners within individual authorities.

Key Findings from the survey

1. 130 or 98.5% of respondents knew in advance that the packs were being sent into their Primary schools.

This result seems to demonstrate a high level of good communication between the potential partners in the scheme.

2. 50 respondents (39.7%) had sent a central communication to their schools promoting libraries; and 26 of these (26% of respondents) had promoted library membership through this central communication. 32.5% had sent information from individual libraries, with 21.4% promoting library membership in this way.

However, 41 respondents reported that they sent no message to their schools. This must have significantly reduced the opportunities for them to fully engage with schools in the scheme and represents a lost opportunity on the part of these library services (32.5% of the total).

3. 112 Respondents (81% of the total) reported that 675 individual libraries put up special Booktime displays. The extrapolated total of displays for all participating libraries is therefore 833.

4. Booktime related events were held by 60.9% of responding libraries. Of these 20.9% were centrally organised. 42.7% however ran no related events and had no plans to do so in future.

5. Of the special events that were held, the overwhelming most popular event was a class visit to the library, run by 89.5% of those who ran activities. 21.1% of libraries holding events held family events in libraries but only 14.0% of them held these with schools. This would seem to be an area for development next year. 3.5% of libraries holding events held Adult language/literacy workshops.



Booktime event in Leeds, Horsforth Library

6. Most (87.9% of those who ran events) libraries ran one-off events with 41.4% running a series of events. This may have to do with library capacity levels.

7. Respondents representing 85.5% of all those libraries that were involved estimated that around 23,553 children and 1,491 families took part in these events. Extrapolated figures for all attendances throughout the whole project are therefore :

- Estimation of 27,547 children attending all Booktime events,
- Estimation of 1,743 adults attending all Booktime events.

8. 43.9% of respondents thought that the Booktime events were very beneficial and the same number thought that they were quite beneficial, making a total of 87.8% who felt they were beneficial. 12.3% thought that they were OK. This shows that library staff were well satisfied with the events where they were held.

9. The reasons given by respondents for believing that events were beneficial were:

- Promoting the library and its services 94.3%
- Developing enthusiasm for books 83.0%
- Strengthening links with schools 81.1%
- Contact with non-users 69.8%
- Increased membership(children & parents/carers) 47.2%
- Increased loans(children &parents/carers) 37.7%
- Attracted local press coverage 17.0%
- Attracted attendance of opinion formers 9.4%

10. Given this value for libraries it is not surprising that 79.7% of them intend running events next year with only 1.4% saying that they won't. 18.8% don't know at this stage.



Booktime gifting event in Wigan

11. Events held in order of popularity were:

- 1) School/reception class visit 83.5% of respondents
- 2) Gifting session 38%
- 3) Parents activity(reading with your child) 31.6%
- 4) Family event with schools 20.3%
- 5) Family event with libraries 12.7%
- 6) Adult language/literacy workshops 6.3%

12. Of those who didn't run events, 89.5% said that they already run enough events and 10.5% said that they didn't have enough notice. It would be interesting to have a conversation with these authorities to see what they are already doing and how existing events might be used to promote Booktime in future.



Booktime event in Kent 2009

13. The Booktime resources for forwarding to schools were received by 96% of respondents. It is possible that the 4 who reported they did not receive sets were based at an administrative HQ. However, there were some minor problems with distribution which were put right quickly at the time. For 82.7% of libraries they arrived in good time for forwarding on to individual libraries. However, 16.3% (14) would have liked to receive them earlier – mainly around one month earlier in August or early September.

They arrived in time but too late for Children's Book Week (Doncaster)

Beg Sept. Were a few weeks late classes were already picking up packs. (Middlesborough)

14. Only 97 (70%) respondents answered the question about whether libraries made good use of the resources. They reported that

Some(made good use)	36.1% of those who replied
Most	26.8% of those who replied
All	23.7% of those who replied
Don't know	9.3% of those who replied
None	4.1% of those who replied.

However, this shows that 84 respondents (the majority of respondents) thought that at least some libraries had used the resource well and 61% of all the respondents to the questionnaire felt they had been well used.

4 respondents felt they had not been well used, and 49 either didn't know or didn't answer. This implies that this 49 (around 1/3 of all respondents) may need more help with evaluation in order to obtain better feedback in future.



Booktime event in Newcastle City Library – Ed Vere

15. The Mr Big 'big' book was the most valued resource , followed by the sample Booktime book pack and the Mr Big poster. Less popular were the badges (which were an exclusive incentive available only to libraries), staff information leaflet, Books for All leaflet, Bookweek resource guide and the NHS leaflet. Several respondents mentioned the popularity of stickers in their feedback.

Badges- insufficient numbers for a whole class (Oxfordshire)

*More Book Marks Badges, and /or Stickers would be useful. They were much appreciated.
(South Tyneside)*

Would prefer stickers to give out in libraries instead of badges (Milton Keynes)

Most of the respondents (90 or 65%) felt there would be opportunities to use the resources again in the future.

16. The website was underused with only 56.7% of libraries claiming to have used it. 21% said they hadn't looked at it and 22.7 % didn't know whether it had been used or not. For those who had used it the most popular aspects of it were the Mr Big Activity sheets, the poetry Activity sheets, downloadable items (certificates, posters etc) and the Community language resources. Less used were the guides on running events and the recommended reads.

95 respondents skipped both the questions about the Families website. Another 40 respondents said they did use the website, and 42 said they did not. Evidence of use of the Families section by respondents and their libraries is therefore limited. 13 of the 42 respondents who did not use the Families website (ie around 1/3) said that they didn't know it existed, and 33 (i.e. over

three quarters) said not using it was due to lack of time. One respondent said there was nothing useful there to use.

17. Respondents were given the chance to suggest other resources that might be provided in future and suggestions included:

Colourings that can be linked together eg to form a wall display. The Harry and his bucket full of dinosaurs colourings did this brilliantly. Simple word searches, mazes, dot-to-dots and masks. (Cumbria)

A different large book for the libraries to use (West Berkshire)

Character toys as visual aids or hand puppets relating to the story for use with class visits. (South Tyneside)

Perhaps an incentive for class/ family visits to the library? A certificate/ badge or similar only available at the library? (Wolverhampton)

Bookplates (Poole)

(These were available to download and print from the Booktime website)

SRC had a CD with worksheets, graphics, activities etc. More library staff used the CD than the website. (LB of Hammersmith and Fulham)

pencils and writing / drawing paper (Rutland)

Stickers in library resource pack instead of badges as not enough badges for everyone when organising visits to the library etc. (Leeds)

18. Respondents could see the value of linking Booktime to other library initiatives. 62(74.7%) suggested a link could be made with the Summer Reading Challenge. The next most popular suggestion was Family learning programmes, with 55 (66.3%) respondents voting for this. 32 (38.6%) suggested a link with Chatterbooks reading groups, and 21 (25.3%) saw a link with local community programmes would be valuable. There were a few other suggestions:

We are currently piloting gifting the Booktime Rucksack at the same time as the Bookstart Treasure Chest in foundation stage units. (Oldham)

Possibly something around transition events? (Kent)



Booktime gifting at the Brite Centre, Leicester

Key messages emerging from the evaluation

1. It's clear from the feedback that some libraries managed to use Booktime to build **stronger links with schools** and to **offer activities to attract parents and children** in to the library. Information about some of the Booktime activities that were offered can be found on the booktime website at <http://www.booktime.org.uk/Librarians> .
2. It appears from the results of this evaluation that there are **capacity issues** for libraries. This is evidenced by the heavy reliance on class visits as the prime Booktime related event (these are probably already offered by most libraries as part of their "core" offer, so linking to these events may be easier than setting up new events). The low take-up of the website is also attributed to lack of time by respondents, and five respondents cited lack of capacity or staff time as a reason for not running Booktime events. A further two respondents mentioned it in their overall comments on the project. Several mentioned that Booktime came at a very busy time for libraries and might be better scheduled in the spring term
3. There appears that there is a need to **support libraries more** in their work on Booktime through
 - Encouraging them to see this as a valuable opportunity to work with schools and develop library awareness and support for families, by offering them library based events.
 - Encouraging schools more strongly to link their book gifting with library events, and involving library staff in events for parents designed to support reading and the transition to reception.

- Demonstrating the links between Booktime and existing activities such as
 - Baby Bookcrawl for younger siblings,
 - Chatterbooks groups in Schools
 - The Summer Reading Challenge
- By developing the value of the website to support activities, providing links to Chatterbooks, the Summer Reading Challenge, relevant book prizes and other related initiatives.
- By providing templates and case studies to promote the involvement of opinion formers at a local level, including providing support materials to enable libraries to build strong relationships with the authority's Early Years and Transition teams.
- By providing simple but effective evaluation information and structures earlier in the project, encouraging libraries to pull in more detailed feedback from their individual libraries. For example the survey questions could in future be issued at the project start, and libraries encouraged to gather detailed responses from their individual libraries.

All the above might be achieved through **training**, more **closely targeted resources**, and a **longer lead time** in which these key messages could be promoted. It appears that concentrating all messaging in the Booktime gifting period may be creating pressure for libraries that could be avoided.

4. Other ways to **embed Booktime and develop its impact** are:

- Encouraging libraries to develop links earlier with their schools and feeder nurseries, in the term before the transition to reception, through offering talks to parents about book-sharing, by encouraging families to join the library and take part in the Summer Reading Challenge, and making the links to Booktime and the importance of reading in the home explicit. They will then be well placed to take maximum advantage of the Booktime offer, and following the gifting by building with offers such as Chatterbooks and family reading groups, and preparing children and families to get involved in the following year's Summer Reading Challenge. In this way, Booktime becomes a key part of a whole year of reading for reception year children.
- Promoting small scale project work with libraries, schools and parents through Extended Schools and Children's Centres, particularly with BME groups, and Teenage Parents, to build up case studies of good and innovative practice.
- Linking Booktime to Adult language/literacy programmes using Adult Learners Week as a launch opportunity.

- Reviewing the associated resources in the light of the feedback and making links to other reading programmes in the reading year explicit in all the Booktime materials (eg Summer Reading Challenge, Chatterbooks, Bookstart programme etc).

Sue Jones and Liz Dubber
The Reading Agency
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