

PRESS RELEASE: 10 July 2013



Summer Reading Challenge 2013

Sarah Champion MP supports Rotherham's campaign for every child to join their local library and do the Summer Reading Challenge

Local MP Sarah Champion is supporting a campaign run by charity The Reading Agency to encourage all primary school children to join their local library and take part in this year's Summer Reading Challenge - the UK's biggest reading promotion for primary school children.

Research shows the Summer Reading Challenge increases children's reading range and their enjoyment of reading significantly. It builds confidence and independent reading, while combating the dip in children's literacy levels during the long break from school.

A unique partnership between The Reading Agency and public libraries across the UK, the Summer Reading Challenge already gets three quarters of a million children to read six library books in the summer holidays. With the support of local MPs, libraries, schools and the Summer Reading Challenge Champions*, even more children aged 4-11 will be encouraged to join the library and join in.

Sarah Champion MP said: "*I hope parents and carers in Rotherham will take their children to their local library this summer to sign up for The Reading Agency's Summer Reading Challenge. It's free and makes reading fun - a vital ingredient in building literacy. Last year 2334 children in Rotherham took part in the Challenge. I hope we can increase that figure this year and show local libraries what a valuable asset they are to us and our community.*"

Each year the Challenge uses a new theme to inject fun and creativity into reading. The 2013 theme is "Creepy House", illustrated by award winning Chris Riddell, inviting children to explore a Creepy House and its host of characters. They can take part in spine tingling reading activities and collect pungent smelling stickers to complete a collectable Creepy House poster.

Children can also visit the website summerreadingchallenge.org.uk to create a profile, chat about books and get help on what to read next via the digital *Book Sorter*, which also works on mobiles and tablets.

Justin Tomlinson MP, Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Libraries said: "*Encouraging children to read is really important, as it not only builds literacy but confidence too. With the long school holidays fast approaching, the Summer Reading Challenge is a fantastic way to get kids reading in a fun and engaging way. I know from its success in my own constituency that it is popular with parents and children alike. This year's theme,*

Creepy House, will no doubt push numbers even higher with its striking illustrations and fun mix of characters.”

Miranda McKearney OBE, Director of The Reading Agency, and Janene Cox, President of the Society of Chief Librarians, say:

“Education policy makers now understand the importance of children reading for pleasure. The SRC is the UK’s biggest children’s reading promotion. It involves 750,000 children each year and accounts for 20% of all children’s books borrowed.

The Summer Reading Challenge has a simple magic – it makes reading really, really fun, and is a crucial intervention from the people who know how to turn children on to reading – librarians. This year’s theme is Creepy House. Children go to their library, get a lovely poster, experience lots of creative library events, receive collectable incentives along the way, and a medal and certificate at the end. Simple but powerful.”

Follow the Summer Reading Challenge on Facebook at
www.facebook.com/SummerReadingChallengeUK

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Notes to editors:

***Summer Reading Challenge Champions** Malorie Blackman, alongside her Children’s Laureate predecessors Julia Donaldson, Michael Rosen and Jacqueline Wilson, football star Frank Lampard and other hugely popular children’s authors and illustrators including Charlie Higson, Liz Pichon, Chris Riddell, Frank Cottrell Boyce, Cressida Cowell and Justin Somper, line-up as Champions of the Summer Reading Challenge with libraries, in a major drive to inspire more children to read for pleasure.

For more information on the Summer Reading Challenge including how to get involved and resources for schools, go to www.readingagency.org.uk/summerreadingchallenge

The All Party Parliamentary Group on Libraries (APPG) has been established to provide information and opportunities for debate about the role that libraries play in society and their future, with Justin Tomlinson as its Chair.

The Reading Agency is an independent charity with a mission to give everyone an equal chance in life by helping people become confident and enthusiastic readers. It runs big programmes and partnerships across the whole library network. It is funded by the Arts Council. Visit www.readingagency.org.uk for more information.

The Society of Chief Librarians (SCL) is a local government association made up of the chief librarian of each library authority in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. SCL takes a leading role in the development of public libraries, through sharing best practices, advocating for continuous improvement on behalf of local people, and leading the debate on the future of the public library service. www.goscl.com