



Change your story



MEDIA RELEASE

WHSmith, National Literacy Trust and Macmillan Children's Books, launch Gift a Gruffalo campaign

- WHSmith, National Literacy Trust and Macmillan Children's Books have teamed up with a new campaign to get more children reading.
- Building early language, literacy and communication skills in a child's early years is crucial for their development and future life chances*, but National Literacy Trust research shows that one in five young children don't own a book.**
- For every copy of a *Gruffalo* title purchased from WHSmith during the campaign - Thursday 23 May to Thursday 5 September - WHSmith, Macmillan Children's Books and NLT will give a copy of *The Gruffalo*, written by Julia Donaldson and illustrated by Axel Scheffler, to a young child from a disadvantaged community.
- In 2021 and 2022, WHSmith, Macmillan Children's Books, and the National Literacy Trust's partnership with Marcus Rashford delivered almost 62,000 books to children with the greatest need.

Today (23 May) WHSmith has announced it has launched a new campaign with the National Literacy Trust and Macmillan Children's Books, a division of Pan Macmillan, to improve children's early years literacy. 'Gift a Gruffalo' will see copies of Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler's beloved story, *The Gruffalo*, gifted to children from communities where the link between low literacy levels and poverty is the most evident.

The gifted copies will be distributed through the National Literacy Trust's literacy hubs - where they work with and in some of the most deprived communities in the UK to tackle low levels of literacy.

The Gruffalo, which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year, is an award-winning modern classic with a cast of immediately recognisable characters. It has captured the hearts of countless children, and reached millions of readers globally, and promises to delight future generations for years to come.



Customers will also be able to donate money to registered charity, the National Literacy Trust, at any WHSmith High Street store across the UK*** at the till point or online at <https://literacytrust.org.uk/support-us/fundraising/gift-a-gruffalo-book/>. All funds raised will support the charity's ongoing work with communities, schools and local partners in socioeconomically deprived areas of the UK.

This latest campaign in partnership with WHSmith, National Literacy Trust and Macmillan Children's Books follows on from previous fundraising and awareness raising campaigns in recent years, which delivered the equivalent of almost 130,000 books to children, through book donations and financial contributions to provide the support that is needed.

WHSmith has a long legacy of championing children's literacy, having partnered with the National Literacy Trust for over two decades, and over the last nine months they're proud to have supported the launch of the National's Literacy Trust's [Early Words Matter](#) campaign, which offers early support to 250,000 children in the most disadvantaged areas of the country, while also raising awareness of the critical role the early years play in school mobility. Families experiencing poverty work hard to get what is best for their children, but are less likely to have the resources, information and confidence to create the stimulating and engaging environment needed to develop crucial early communication, language and literacy skills. For example, lower income parents may be less confident in their own literacy skills, be less able to afford age-appropriate books, and struggle more with competing time pressures, among other factors. National Literacy Trust's Early Words Matter campaign calls on the Government and the business community to commit to working together to provide better early years support to families from disadvantaged communities. It is endorsed by members of the National Literacy Trusts' national Business Council, of which WHSmith is a member.

The donations raised for the National Literacy Trust through the 'Gift a Gruffalo' campaign launching today are part of our continued efforts to fund resources, including free books for young children who are unlikely to own one, and interventions to help improve their reading skills.

Lucy Swinburn, Group Trading Director Books at WHSmith commented: "At WHSmith, we are committed to promoting literacy. Together, we've been able to extend the joy of reading to thousands of children across the UK who may not have access to books of their own. Yet with literacy so vital to children's growth and potential, the gap between the most disadvantaged and their peers continues to widen, and we must address this with urgent action. That's why with the help of the Gruffalo we've launched this latest campaign, committing to further book donations and fundraising efforts through our stores and online. Our mission remains steadfast: to ensure that every child has the opportunity to discover the magic of reading."

Jonathan Douglas, CEO at National Literacy Trust added: "The National Literacy Trust is enormously grateful to WHSmith and Macmillan Children's Books for their generous support in helping us to provide young children with the literacy skills they need to succeed in life. We believe every child has the right to those literacy skills but sadly so many of them are being held behind simply because they don't have access to books of their own at home. The Gift a Gruffalo campaign supports the work we do with and in communities to build a child's early language, literacy and communication skills right from the start.'

Joanna Prior, CEO at Pan Macmillan said: “We are so proud to publish *The Gruffalo* at Pan Macmillan and privileged to work with the brilliantly talented Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler, whose books have won the hearts of children and families throughout the UK. I can imagine no better way of celebrating the 25th birthday of this best loved, iconic character, than working in partnership with The National Literacy Trust and WHSmith to help get books into the hands of children who need them the most.”

Julia Donaldson said: “There's nothing like a book for sparking a child's imagination and helping them to understand themselves and the world. So I'm very happy to be working with WHSmith and the National Literacy Trust on the ‘Gift a Gruffalo’ campaign, getting books to as many families and children as possible. I believe that all children should be able to access books and stories and the joy they can provide, and this partnership will go a long way to help this become a reality.”

Axel Scheffler said: “Discovering and enjoying picture books is an important moment for a child, and one that should be available to all. ‘Gift a Gruffalo’ is a vital campaign and working in partnership with the National Literacy Trust and WHSmith means we can help to bring change to the lives of those children who need it the most. I am very pleased to be supporting this initiative.”

-ENDS-

*The National Literacy Trust’s [Early Words Matter campaign](#) calls on the business community and government to take practical action to empower families with more opportunities and early advice to support their child’s literacy skills in those crucial first years.

**Reference: National Literacy Trust (2023) [Book Ownership in 2023](#)

***WHSmith branded high street stores, excludes WHSmith Travel stores, franchise stores and concessions.

Gruffalo books are available to purchase from selected WHSmith High Street and Travel stores and online at [WHSmith.co.uk](https://www.whsmith.co.uk).

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Notes to Editors:

About WHSmith

WHSmith is a leading global retailer for the world's travelling customer. With more than 1,700 stores across 30 countries worldwide, WHSmith offer customers a wide range of travel essentials for their journey, including books, newspapers & magazines, digital accessories and food and drink.

The Company has a growing international business with over 660 stores primarily across the world's leading airports, including over 320 stores in North America, incorporating leading specialty retail brands Marshall Retail Group and InMotion.

WHSmith's High Street business comprises over 500 stores across the UK and customers can shop online 24/7 at WHSmith.co.uk.

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About Pan Macmillan

At Pan Macmillan we publish a broad and vibrant range of books for audiences of all ages from dazzling bestsellers to influential prize-winners; books to inspire lifelong readers and listeners to enduring classics for generations to come. The fourth largest UK publisher, we pride ourselves on publishing successfully and sustainably and are committed to working together to positively impact culture and society at large.

Our brilliant authors and illustrators include: Dapo Adeola, Tomi Adeyemi, Kate and Kay Allinson, Pam Ayres, David Baldacci, Floella Benjamin, Nancy Birtwhistle, Olivie Blake, Rod Campbell, Cassandra Clare, Ann Cleeves, Hernan Diaz, Emma Donoghue, Carol Ann Duffy, Julia Donaldson, Allie Esiri, Andy Griffiths, Kristin Hannah, France Hardinge, Robert Hardman, Natalie Haynes, Lenny Henry, Alan Hollinghurst, Morgan Housel, Peter James, Toshikazu Kawaguchi, Vex King, Casey McQuiston, Lydia Monks, Kate Morton, Kate Mosse, David Olusoga, John Patrick Green, Alexandra Potter, Patrick Radden Keefe, TJ Klune, Marcus Rashford, Camilla Reid, Chris Riddell, Lucinda Riley, CJ Sansom, Axel Scheffler, Danielle Steel, Douglas Stuart, Karen Swan, Adrian Tchaikovsky, Colm Tóibín, Louis Theroux, Leah Williamson and Hanya Yanighara.

www.panmacmillan.com

National Literacy Trust

The National Literacy Trust is an independent charity that empowers children, young people and adults with the literacy skills they need to succeed. Reading, writing, speaking and listening skills give you the tools to get the most out of life, and the power to shape your future. For over 30 years the National Literacy Trust has continued to support schools, families and communities on a local and national level to help people change their stories.

literacytrust.org.uk