

Press Release – embargoed until 9am Thursday 21st May 2026

Bonnier Books UK teams up with WHSmith on *Ultimate Football Heroes* partnership for the National Year of Reading 2026

Bonnier Books UK Children’s Group, WHSmith, and the National Literacy Trust, have partnered on the 2026 nationwide *Go All In* campaign for the National Year of Reading, using the hugely popular *Ultimate Football Heroes* series to support children’s literacy and raise funds to provide books for young readers most in need.

From 21st May to 22nd July 2026, for every copy of *Ultimate Football Heroes* sold in WHSmith stores across the UK and Ireland, 50p will be donated to the National Literacy Trust, directly supporting its work to improve literacy outcomes for children and young people.

With more than 3 million copies sold worldwide and translations in over 24 languages, *Ultimate Football Heroes* is the UK’s number one football book series for children. Top titles from the series in the UK include *Messi*, *Ronaldo*, *the Ultimate Football Heroes Colouring Book* and *Ultimate Football Heroes 2025* and *2026* annuals. The series is widely celebrated for its ability to encourage reluctant readers, thanks to its focus on world-class football players and their incredible stories, as well as a carefully considered editorial approach that offers both excitement and accessibility.

One of the key collaborating writers behind the *UFH* series, Matt Oldfield will be supporting the initiative by delivering multi-school events in partnership with the National Literacy Trust in the Stoke and Nottingham regions in June to coincide with the World Cup and promote his newest title in the series, *Ultimate Football Heroes: World Cup Greatest Moments*.

Anna Bond, managing director of Bonnier Books UK Children’s Group said: ‘We’re delighted to partner with WHSmith and the National Literacy Trust for the National Year of Reading, harnessing the power of *Ultimate Football Heroes* to inspire young readers across the UK. This much-loved series demonstrates how stories rooted in children’s passions can unlock a lifelong love of reading. Together, we’re proud to support an initiative that not only celebrates reading for pleasure but also



helps ensure more children have access to books and the opportunity to discover stories that truly resonate with them.'

Stephanie Milton, publishing director at Studio Press said: 'With reading for pleasure at a twenty-year low, the impact of gateway series like *UFH* is more important than ever. We are incredibly proud to be part of this fantastic campaign with WHSmith and the National Literacy Trust, which will support the National Literacy Trust's excellent work as they ensure every child is given the opportunity to develop a love of reading.'

Andrew Harrison, CEO of UK and International, at WHSmith said: 'WHSmith has partnered with the National Literacy Trust for over two decades because we know how important reading for pleasure is in shaping young people's futures. We're proud to play our part supporting the Go All In campaign, bringing together a much-loved series with an important cause, and getting more books into the hands of children who need them most.'

Jonathan Douglas CBE, Chief Executive of the National Literacy Trust said: 'The National Year of Reading invites the nation to 'Go All In' on their passions and interests through reading. And what better way to fuel a love of football than diving into the brilliant Ultimate Football Hero series. We know that when children and young people have access to books and the freedom to choose books that reflect their interests, they are more likely to read for enjoyment. In turn, this helps build confidence, levels of well-being, and empathy, while also supporting future success in life.

We are delighted to be working alongside WHSmith and Bonnier Books and are extremely grateful for their support. Everyone who supports this initiative is helping to ensure that every child gets the opportunity to connect with stories and become a reader.'

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About the 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.



About WHSmith

WHSmith is a leading travel essentials retailer for the world's travelling customer. With more than 1,200 stores across over 30 countries worldwide, WHSmith offers passengers a wide range of food & drink, health & beauty, books and tech to support their journeys. The Company has over 600 stores primarily across the world's leading airports. This includes more than 300 stores in North America, the world's largest travel retail market.

About National Year of Reading:

The National Year of Reading is the biggest campaign in a generation designed to inspire everyone to discover a passion for reading and embed it into our everyday lives. A Department for Education initiative supported by the National Literacy Trust, the National Year of Reading is delivered by nine leading literacy sector charities, and supported by funders, sponsors and pledge partners. This unique collaboration brings national scale and local expertise, connecting education, culture and communities across the UK.

The campaign asks the nation to Go All In on their passions and interests for 2026 and discover how reading in any format can unlock the things they already love – be that music, football, baking, family-time, sci-fi, or...anything. Put simply: if you're into it, read into it. The National Year of Reading is fuelled by organisations who believe in the power of reading and are committed to investing in the solutions to create change. The National Year of Reading aims to sign-up 100,000 volunteers, get one million more people actively using libraries, and encourage millions more to read regularly. <https://goallin.org.uk/about/>

About Bonnier Books UK

At Bonnier Books UK, we publish for everyone. We champion stories and content that open our eyes to new perspectives and bring us closer together. We offer a nurturing home for our authors, illustrators and brand partners, publishing bestselling books for readers and listeners everywhere. We know that fantastic stories can come from anywhere and our purpose is to bring them to as wide an audience as possible, a simple ethos that has led to us becoming one of the country's leading publishers.

The offspring of Bonnier Books, a leading family-owned world publisher headquartered in Sweden, we are inspired by a rich literary heritage but not bound by convention. We think in generations rather than quarters, and strive always to operate in an open, curious way that contributes to the future of the planet and its people. We are an active participant in the Science Based Target initiative, committed to a strategy to limit global warming to 1.5 °C.

