

the reading agency

Chatterbooks enters new phase

Chatterbooks, the UK wide network of children's reading groups, is celebrating seven years of award-winning work, and announcing new 2009 plans.

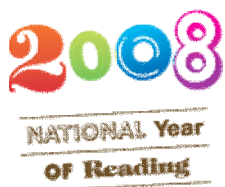
From January 2009 The Reading Agency will be taking Chatterbooks forward with a new look, consulting with Chatterbooks members about new materials, offering reading promotions through an exciting new partnership with children's publishers, and trialling new approaches to developing children's reading confidence including working with digital media.

Chatterbooks encourages four to 12 year olds to read adventurously, talk about books and visit libraries with their families. It was launched in 2001 by The Reading Agency, the charity with a mission to inspire more people to read more, with sponsorship from Orange. The scheme has grown enormously - 7500 children now belong to 400 Chatterbooks reading groups run by 145 different library services. Every child joining a Chatterbooks group gets a special pack and the groups do a wide range of creative reading based activities.

In this National Year of Reading, libraries have used Chatterbooks to bring new reading opportunities to disadvantaged children from a variety of backgrounds.

Chatterbooks was launched and has been sustained over the past seven years through funding from Orange, and in 2006 Orange and the Reading Agency won the Arts and Business Award for Sustainability. This contact with Orange is now coming to an end.

"We want to thank Orange for their support over seven great years of Chatterbooks which began with three trail-blazing groups and is now a vibrant national network. It's been a productive and award winning partnership." says Miranda McKearney, Director of The Reading Agency.



The Chatterbooks group in Plympton, Plymouth is a perfect example of how Chatterbooks can change children's lives through the power of reading. The group was started three years ago, with its twelve members meeting once a month. Despite a fire in August 2008 which destroyed Plympton Library, they have continued to meet.

Plymouth City Council librarian Jill Currie, who founded the group, says: "We have been really impressed by the children's attitude, coming back and getting on with the group, despite the fire."

"Before I started at the Chatterbooks club I wasn't a keen reader, but now I read lots more," adds Jacob Burnitt, aged nine years. "I feel happy to have met all the people and share with them what I like about books."

- Orange branded Chatterbooks packs will be discontinued from the end of December 2008. New Chatterbooks materials will be available from March 2009 onwards. In the meantime, Chatterbooks groups are requested to place orders now for materials they will need to take them through until then. (Closing date for orders 8 December 2008). Please contact Tricia Kings, senior Reading Agency project manager, on 07974 365696 or tricia.kings@readingagency.org.uk.
- For further information about Orange, call the Orange press office on 0870 373 1500 or email: Orangepr@golinharris.com