

# Key highlights from the National Year of Reading Conference 2026

Wednesday 11th March 2026

School of Education  
St Mary's University, Twickenham

Lise Bentley, Ambassador – Creative showcase –  
Beavers Community Primary School

Photographs courtesy of  
Richard Cranefield MA, ARPS, PGCHE

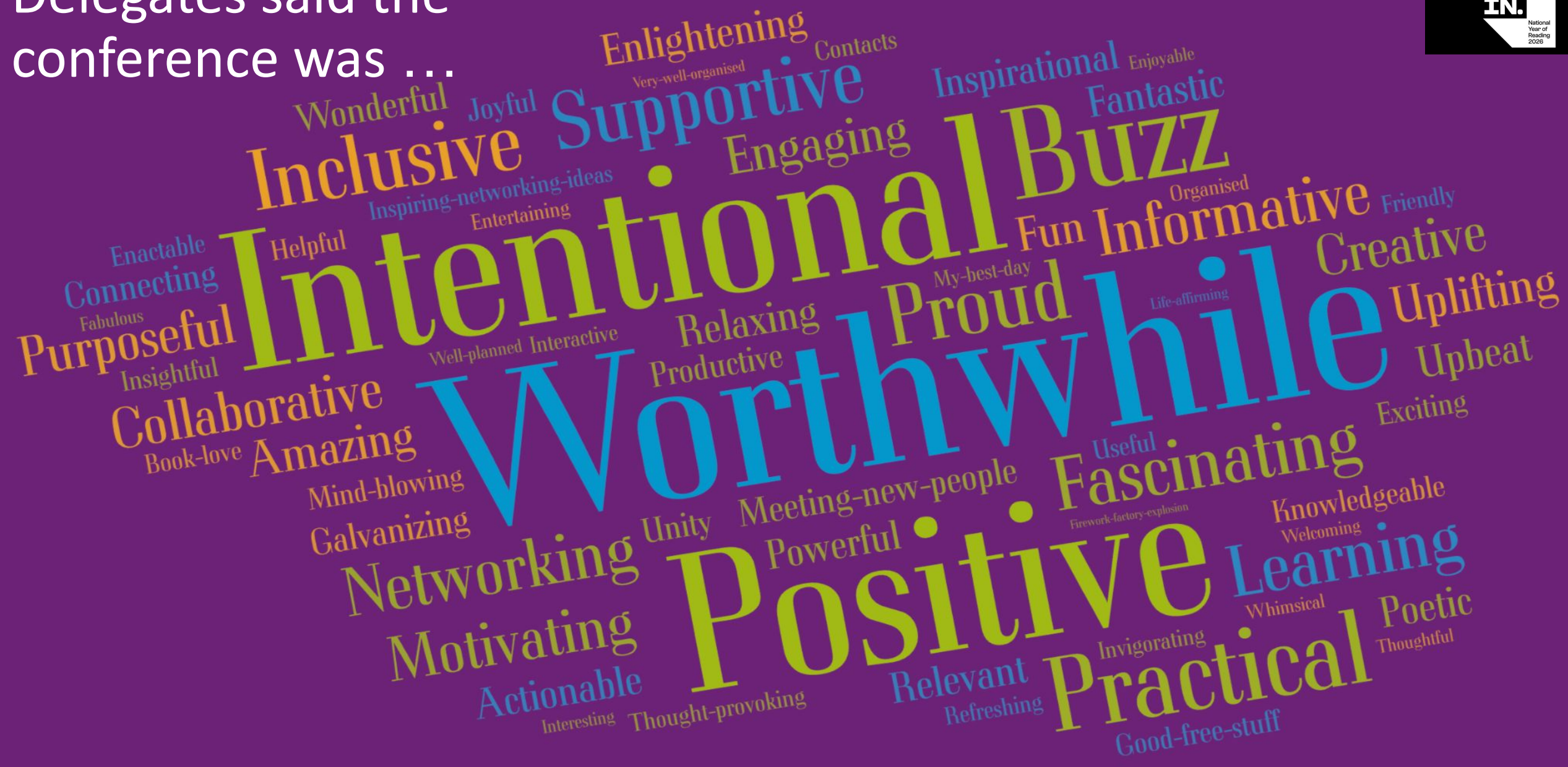


St Mary's  
University  
Twickenham  
London



Hounslow  
Education  
Partnership

Delegates said the conference was ...



# Headlines

96% attended

68% submitted feedback

113 guests and delegates

43 Hounslow schools

4 Primary English lecturers and 20 student teachers from St Mary's University

11 organisations

2 keynote speakers

11 networking tables

12 workshops

Blind-date-with-a-book swap

Book wave and give-away



Emma Gray, Librarian – The Green School Trust –  
Year 6–7 transition – data and book tasting

# Headlines

95%

greatly valued meeting in-person, chatting and networking with colleagues from other schools and organisations.



**GO  
ALL  
IN.**

National  
Year of  
Reading  
2020



Hounslow  
Education  
Partnership

# Headlines

**100%**  
praised the speakers  
as engaging and  
inspirational.



# Headlines

97%

found it useful to learn about what's available to support RfP in school.



# Headlines

**100%**  
experienced  
high-quality  
workshops.



# Headlines

98%

Said the conference met their overall expectations



Conference 2026

National Year of Reading

Nikola Standing  
GHR Project Leader  
Book wave and thank you



# Keynote by poet and author, Joseph Coelho

## Bringing poetry to life in the classroom

*“Joseph Coelho was completely inspiring but also very practical. I liked the way he drew a line between playing out as a child and his current work; as a fellow 80s child who had wild adventures outside, this really resonated with me.”*



**GO  
ALL  
IN.**

National  
Year of  
Reading  
2020

# Keynote by Matthew Courtney

Turning Pages, Changing Futures:  
RfP, social justice and opportunity

*“I am going to really think about who is benefitting from reading cafe/book clubs and see if I can target some children who need it more than others. I thought Matthew Courtney's talk was really powerful and realised I could do more here.”*



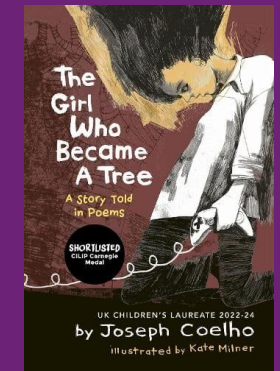
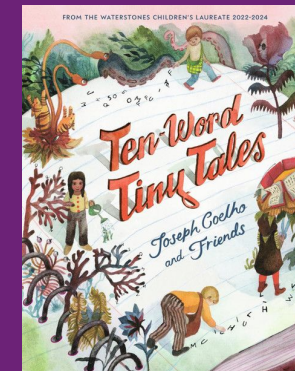
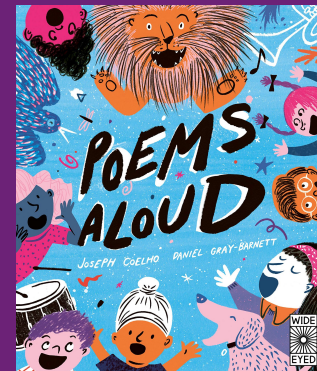


# Conference 2026

National Year of Reading

## Joseph Coelho

Book signing and mingling





*“The amazing Joseph Coelho – I learnt so much about poetry and how to engage and motivate children!”*

# Conference 2026

National Year of Reading

## The Alligator's Mouth Tony and Margaret



## The team at The Alligator's Mouth sent a lovely message for everyone:

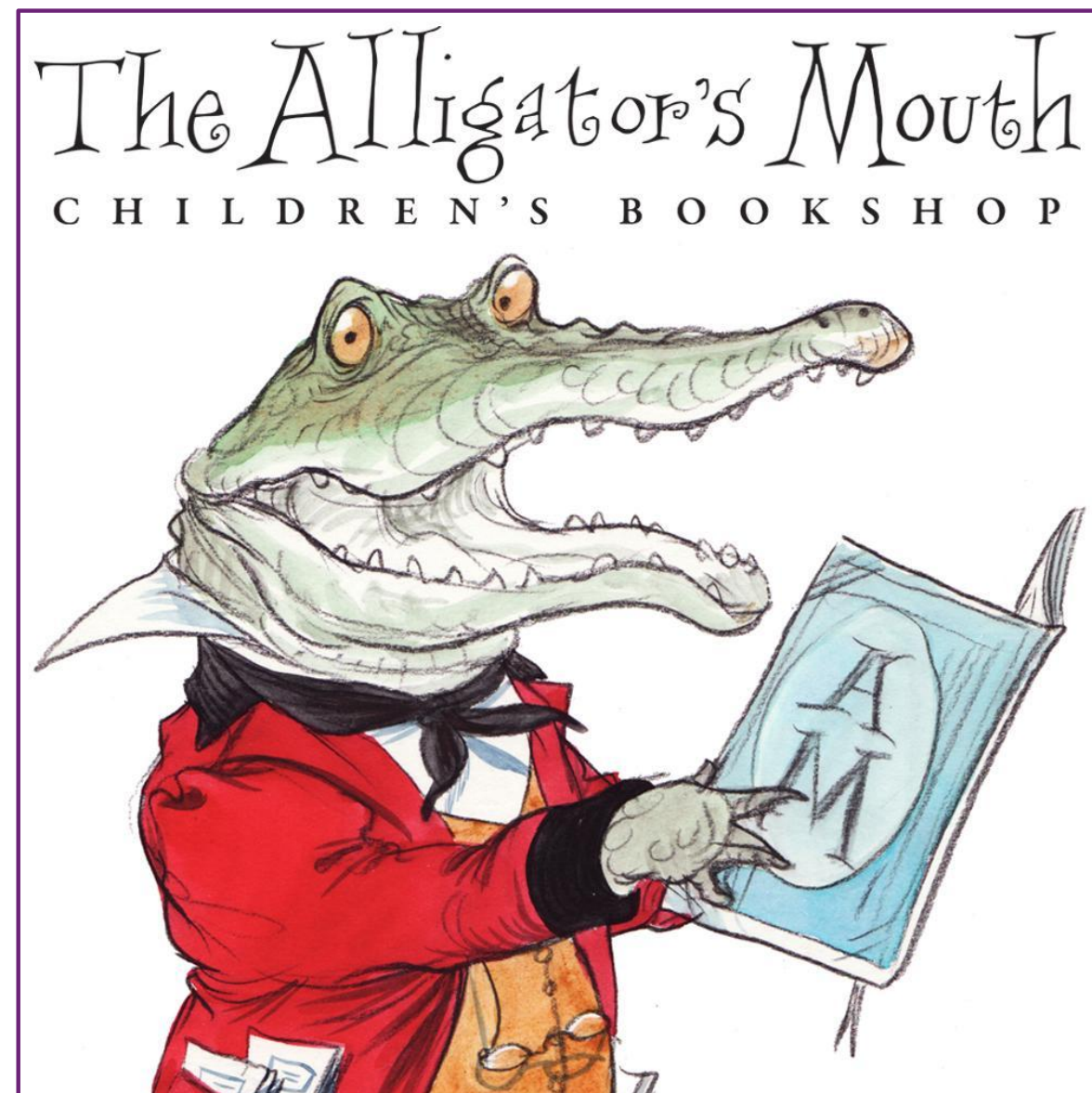
*We had a brilliant time at the Get Hounslow Reading (GHR) conference. We were very lucky to hear Joseph's opening address, and Matthew's closing speech. They were both so informative, thought-provoking, entertaining and inspiring.*

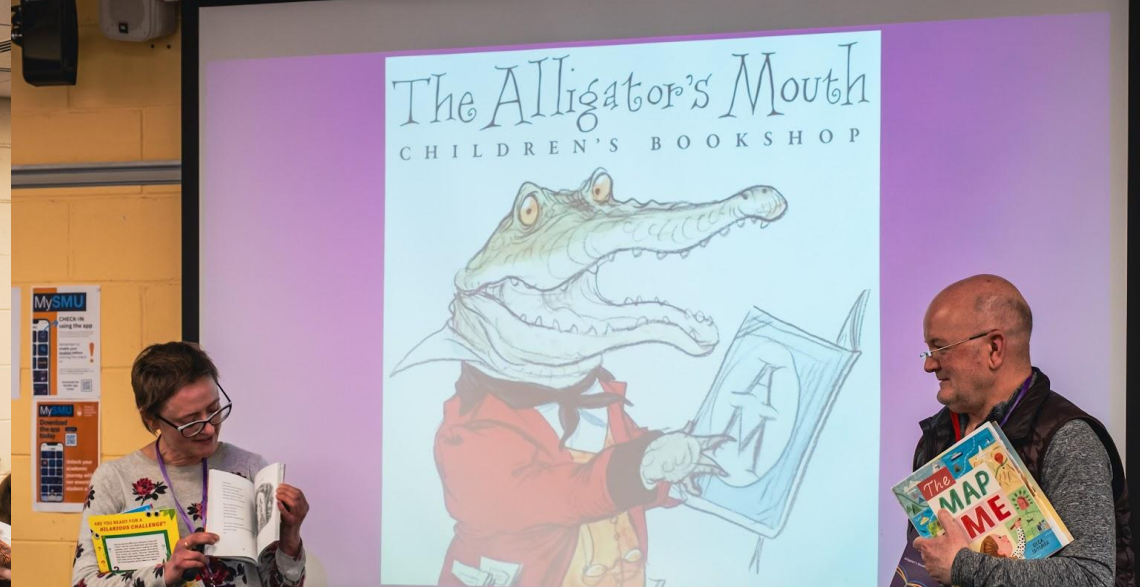
*We meet such a range of interesting and interested teachers at GHR. They were all so enthusiastic, and so keen to promote the love of reading in their schools. All around me I could hear happy and excited conversations about reading and how to prioritise and promote it in their schools. The teachers were very open to new and different books which they hadn't encountered before – it was a fantastic atmosphere.*

*GHR was very well organised. All went smoothly, everything happened on time, everyone knew what they were doing and (crucially) there were more than enough sandwiches and pastries.*

*All in all, a wonderful day and one of our favourite events of the year.*

*Thank you Nikola, and please pass our thanks to all the team. We love being involved, and we're already looking forward to next year.*





*"I'd like to visit The Alligator's Mouth bookshop or ask them to come in."*

*"More author visits and more engagement with Alligator's Mouth."*

*"A great selection of books to purchase!"*



**GO  
ALL  
IN.**

National  
Year of  
Reading  
2020



Hounslow  
Education  
Partnership



Get  
Hounslow  
Reading

# Conference 2026

National Year of Reading

Networking – key takeaways





*“A lot of fantastic ideas engaging students in poetry and some starting points on organising libraries and book spaces.”*

*“I am going to join the public library down the street from my house! I also intend to look for opportunities to support them/volunteer.”*

*“By networking with local primary schools, I have contacts to arrange for groups of students to go and visit the library and implement mentoring in the summer term.”*

*“Wonderful opportunity to talk to people in person. Contacts and enquiries gained to follow up re subscriptions or other ways to support them.”*

*Helen Lancashire  
Hounslow School Library Service*



**Hounslow  
School Library  
Service**



**Hounslow  
Education  
Partnership**



### Year 6- 7 Recommended Reading List

This selection of books cover a wide range of genres and reading levels. These books are perfect companion to escape and read for pleasure. If you want any more recommendations then please ask.



Friendship  
Heartwarming  
Mystery  
Seaside  
Funny  
Moving  
Year 6  
Relatable  
Moving  
Real-life  
WWII  
Heroes  
Heart-warming  
Coming out  
Comedy



Adventure  
Funny  
Ghost story  
Sport  
Adventure  
Coming of age  
Graphic Novel  
Prophecy  
Myth  
Myths  
Adventure  
Coming of  
Hilarious  
Myth  
Challenges



Funny  
Empathetic  
Friendship  
whodunnit  
Relatable  
Funny  
feel-good  
Authentic  
Funny  
Football  
Ghost stories  
Mystery  
Fantasy  
Missions  
Comic



### Year 6- 7 Recommended Reading List

This selection of books cover a wide range of genres and reading levels. These books are perfect companion to escape and read for pleasure. These books are recommended by Students and Librarian to help bridge the gap between primary and secondary school.



Sisters  
Gripping  
Murder  
Adventure  
Mythic  
Authentic  
Quest  
Griffin  
Mythic  
Victorian  
Heroine  
Funny  
Escapism  
Adventure  
Humour



Relatable  
Full of Heart  
Funny  
Fast-Paced  
Danger  
Twist  
Steadfast MC  
Curious  
Mystery  
Relatable  
Inspiring  
Empathy  
Drama  
Love  
Interesting



Joyful  
Life-affirming  
Pride  
Gloriously Dark  
Sisters  
Folk Tales  
Year 6  
Relatable  
Moving  
Blitz  
Heroic Dog  
Reuniting  
Birdwatching  
Mystery  
Bravery

*“Absolutely loved the day and a pleasure and honour to be an ambassador. Thank you Nikola and the HEP team. Can’t wait for next year!”*

*Emma Gray  
Senior Librarian, The Green School Trust*



*“So important to have a diverse collection of authors and books in the class/school library.”*

*“Developing a reading mentor/buddy programme with a colleague from a secondary school who I met at the conference.”*



The Green School Trust





*“We’d like the opportunity to engage with Hounslow schools in helping them with their reading stock.”*

*Richard Heath*

*Heath Books strives to offer the best customer service in the industry and take the stress out of book buying. If the book is in print, they’ll find it! They offer a personal service and can choose books to fit your topic or class for everything from the latest fiction and non-fiction to suit your budgets and advise on the core textbooks available for your courses. They offer discounts and free delivery to schools.*





*“We will be looking further into using StoryTalk as an intervention in our early years and KS1 setting to support some of the pupils in their language acquisition and developing confidence in communication.”*

*“Looking into the transition books HarperCollins has to offer.”*

*“To keep spending time in the education sector, because the knowledge, love and care in the room with regard to children's reading was phenomenal. Nikola's event is such a joyful experience and so powerful”*

*Clare Petre  
Collins*



Collins  
**BIG CAT**  
Read On



Little  
**Wandle**  
Fluency





*“Focus on my most vulnerable children for Reading for Pleasure.”*

*“Think about book offer for less confident readers.”*

*“Think about who my reading curriculum is serving.”*

*“Creating a space in my offer on bereavement support for secondary schools – starting with a list of brilliant books!”*

*Emma Marfleet*



**The Marfleet Foundation** for 10m 2019





*The Story Project has been awarded funding and is using it to train and provide resources to 15 Hounslow primary schools. We can't wait to see the impact of this generous offer from Olivia and her team.*

*"I loved the book swap idea and the thoughts around inclusiveness and reading for pleasure. I will be considering and talking to the team about how this relates to our work at The Story project."*

*Olivia Richards*



**GO  
ALL  
IN.**

National  
Year of  
Reading  
2020

**THE  
STORY  
PROJECT**



Hounslow  
Education  
Partnership



*Matthew Courtney and Maggie Crowell talked to delegates about **Wandle English Hub** and its offer for Hounslow schools, including free CPD. This included arranging an audit and securing DfE funding to support early reading and Reading for Pleasure.*

*Matthew's key takeaway from the day:  
"Using more anthologies, encouraging children to draw on their own experiences in their writing, using writing to encourage reading for pleasure."*



**EnglishHubs**  
Wandle at Chesterton Primary

Funded by



Department  
for Education



Hounslow  
Education  
Partnership

# Conference 2026

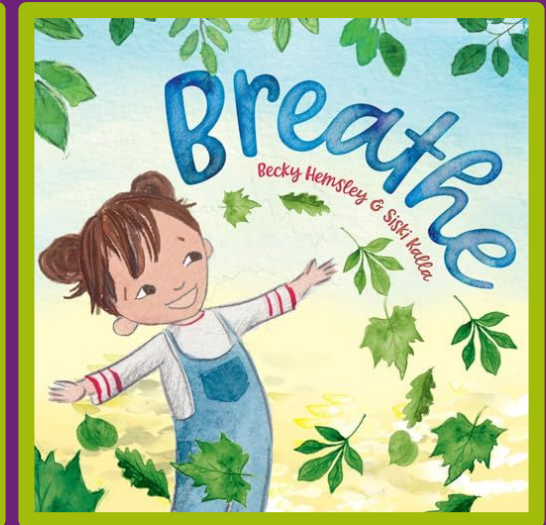
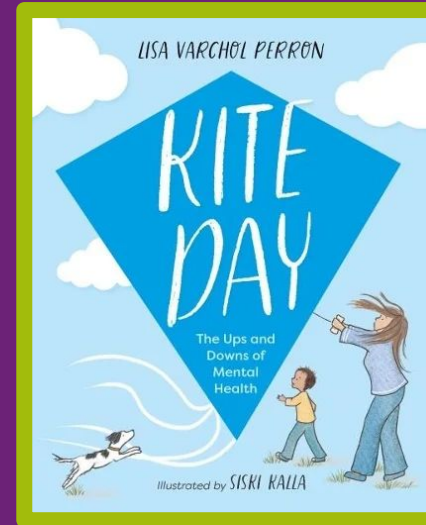
National Year of Reading



## Get Hounslow Reading



## Siski Kalla





*“Encouraging more creative input and more ‘about me’ from children themselves when I work with them.”*

*Siski Kalla  
Illustrator and author*

*“Great to be amongst like minded people, great to be out of the classroom and networking.”*

*“A wonderful, wonderful day with so many fantastic ideas that can encourage all children to become readers. Thank you so much!”*





*“I feel privileged to be a part of the community of practitioners that value reading and invest so much time and passion into shaping the lives of our pupils.*

*We all know the importance of reading and we are working in dynamic and proactive ways to keep bringing the message to the forefront in our schools.*

*Having the opportunity to connect with other teachers always means you take away a quick golden nugget or two.”*

*Dominique Curtis  
Southville Primary School*



**GO  
ALL  
IN.**

National  
Year of  
Reading  
2020



*“Thank you for inviting us to be part of your special day. It was a pleasure to meet you face to face.*

*We were impressed by the dedication of the teachers we met and their commitment to providing the best possible reading experiences for the children in their classes.*

*I hope we can collaborate further in the future.”*

*Nikki Gamble*



JUST IMAGINE





Get  
Hounslow  
Reading

# Conference 2026

National Year of Reading

Workshops – key takeaways





*“The sessions were engaging and provided practical ideas that can be applied in the classroom.”*

*“I went to diversity & inclusion and learnt new ways of teaching children to write, taking stories they know and recreating them into something that related to them!”*

***Diversity and inclusion in the classroom through books***  
*Led by Ambassadors Michelle Conway and Tracy Riddell*



Norwood Green Infant and Nursery School  
With Centre for the Deaf



Hounslow  
Education  
Partnership



***Practical approaches to poetry***  
*Led by Joseph Coelho*



*“Joseph Coelho's keynote was phenomenal.”*

*“Loads of creative writing workshop ideas. Thank you Joseph!”*

*“Joseph Coelho talked about catwalks with class poetry compilation - very excited to try this idea.”*

*“One word poems. Embedding poetry in our creative writing.”*



*"I've started hatching a plan for a storytelling game club, a bit like 'Dungeons and Dragons', but simplified, using sound effects, dice and lots of role playing and laughing."*



*"Oral storytelling with the amazing Jordan Campbell, taught me various ways of expression and how to encourage excitement in the classroom!"*

*"I plan to incorporate more storytelling techniques in my teaching to support engagement and deepen students' connection with the texts we explore."*

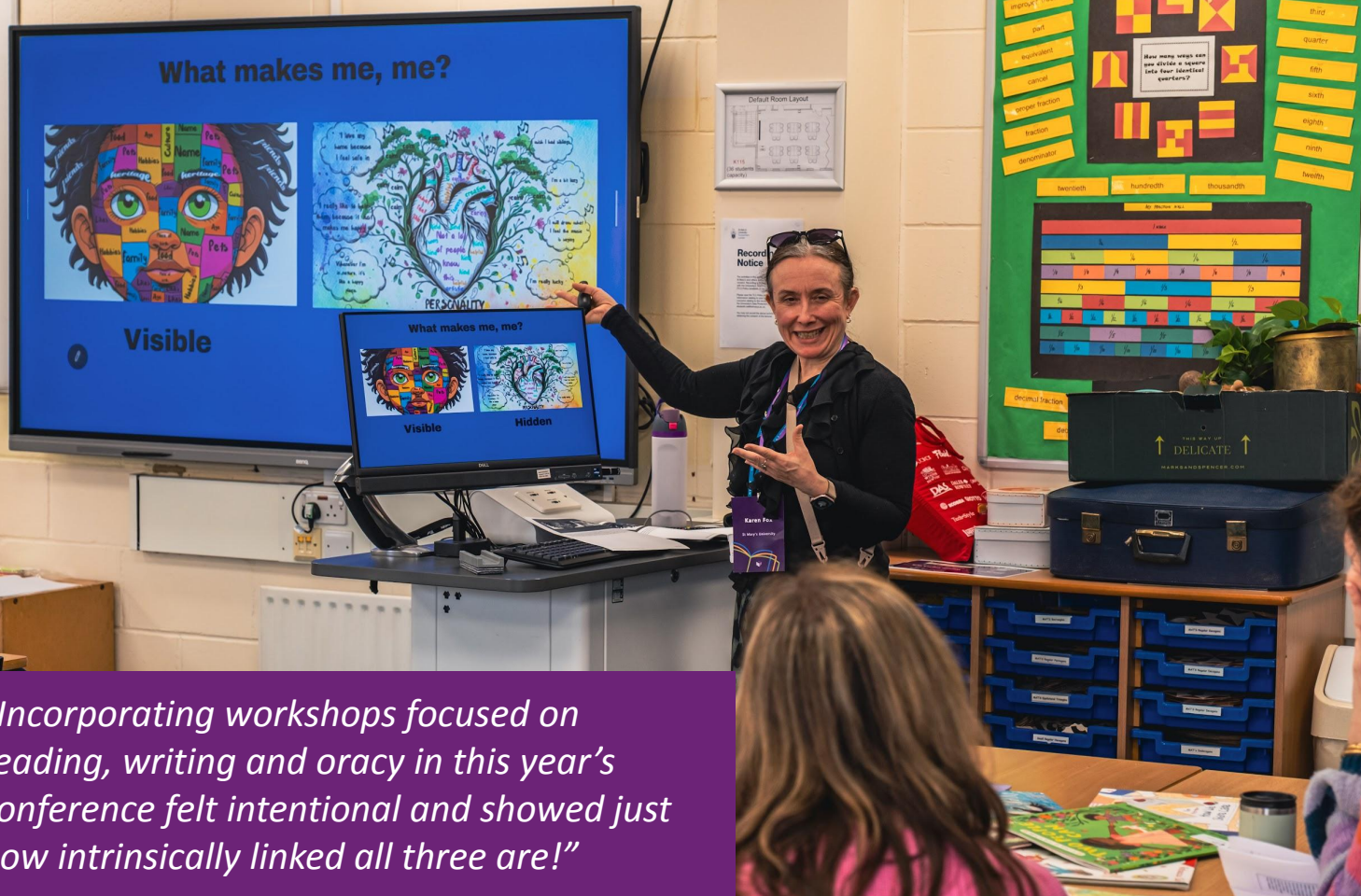
*"Jordan Campbell's amazing session made me think about the current hot thing, oracy, and how we could be using storytelling in schools."*

*"Every child, regardless of their background, should be empowered to find, develop and express their authentic voice."*

*National Literacy Trust*

**Oral storytelling**  
*Led by Jordan Campbell, DutchPot Stories*





*“Incorporating workshops focused on reading, writing and oracy in this year’s conference felt intentional and showed just how intrinsically linked all three are!”*

*“The workshops were instructive and beneficial to know what is happening inside the classrooms.”*

*“Linking to children’s personal experiences to create a love for reading and writing.”*

***Children’s voices – discovering themselves in a story***  
*Led by Karen Fox, St Mary’s University*

*Following the success of Get Hounslow Reading, the team at St Mary’s are working with our schools to Get Hounslow Writing, now in its second year. Both are underpinned by the pedagogy that teachers who read and teachers who write are best-placed to guarantee children’s future academic success.*





*"I'll share my experience from the Creation station and suggest the 'story cinema' to encourage more imagination and creativity in reading and writing sessions. The story cinema could be used as a 'topic launch' activity for new reading books/class text."*



*"I loved making story cinemas for ten-word stories."*



*"My key takeaway: The love of poetry and how to be more poetic with my class and maybe even writing our own 1-worded poems."*

**Creation Station – Story cinemas and badges**  
*Led by Lise Bentley and Siski Kalla*



*"I loved the outside tree experience"*

*"I took away so many great ideas for the importance of writing poetry."*

*HEP's growing partnership with St Mary's University and the generosity of the Primary English team, means we can continue our high-quality offer to Hounslow schools. 20 of their student teachers attended. We hope they come to work in one of our schools, confident that we are leading the way when it comes to children's reading and writing and talking for pleasure.*

***What do you see when you look at a tree?***  
*Led by Primary English Team, St Mary's University*





***Book clubs and the Junior Book Award  
Led by Helen Lancashire and Ambassador, Becky Blackmore***

***More than Information:  
choosing non-fiction for teaching and RfP  
Led by Nikki Gamble and Jo Castro***



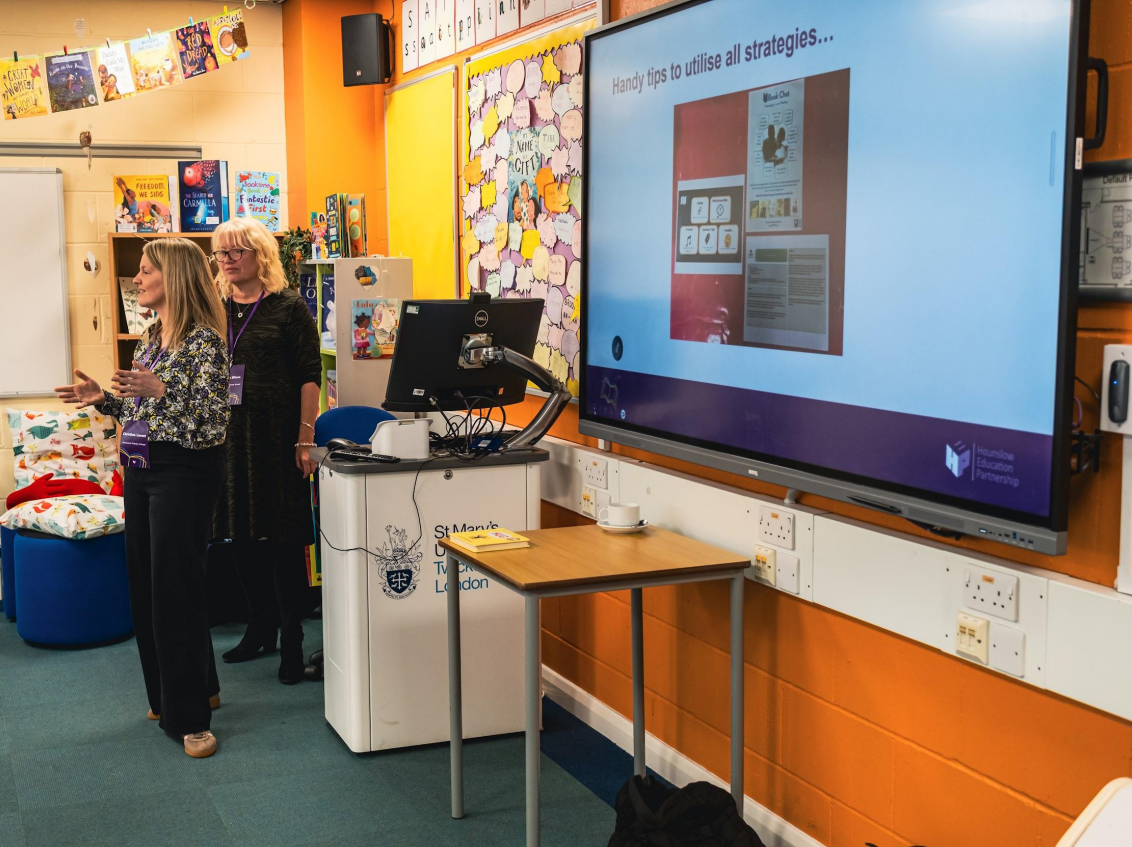
*“The work that Emma and Olivia are doing, underpinned by research and linked to books is brilliant. Having support to teach about grief and loss using a book-led approach is insightful.”*

***A story-led approach to bereavement education in primary schools***  
***Led by Emma Marfleet and Olivia Richards***



**The Marfleet Foundation** for Tom 2016



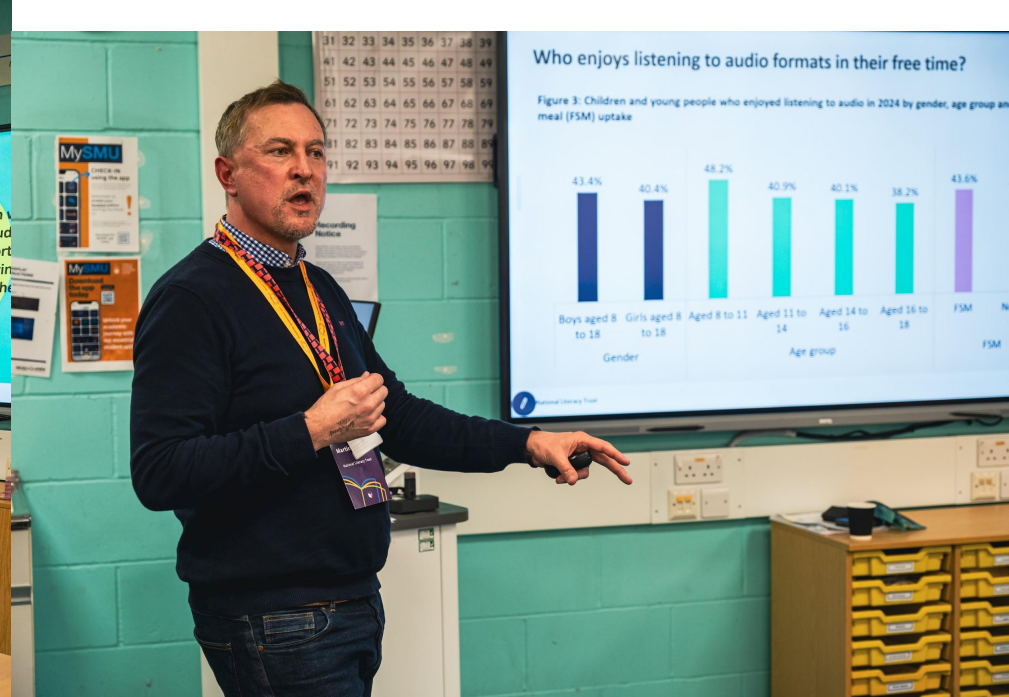


***Contingent Talk with a Book (StoryTalk) and parents***  
*Led by Ambassadors, Christine Lovett and Kathryn Sikora*  
*Joined by Giorgia Ferro from HarperCollins*

*“We will be looking further into using StoryTalk as an intervention in our early years and KS1 setting to support some of the pupils in their language acquisition and developing confidence in communication.”*

*“Contingent talk/StoryTalk – speak to the Early Years team, discuss how we can timetable this in. See if more training is needed. Use the books kindly provided from the conference to get started!”*





*“Loved the talk from Martin Galway on the value of using different media to access reading - will definitely be taking this forward through the use of audiobooks in the classroom and reading aloud.”*

*“Learn more about Audio Book Club- email Martin for support on how to reach more children using multimodal forms of reading.”*

*“Thanks so much for the generous hosting yesterday.”*  
*Martin Galway*

**Using audiobooks and reading aloud to develop reading enjoyment**  
 Led by Martin Galway, National Literacy Trust





Get  
Hounslow  
Reading

# Conference 2026

National Year of Reading

Book waves and thank yous



*"The blind date with a book was particularly brilliant - I love the blurb of the one I chose!"*



## Final delegate thoughts ...

*Really great organisation, fantastic speakers, lots to take away, another amazing conference day!*

*Would love this to continue yearly!*

*The event was really well put together and the location meant that it was easy to navigate between workshops.*

*The conference was the best yet! So well organised, with everything thought through to the last tiny detail. Lots of time to mingle and lots of quality brain input in the workshops.*

*Perfect pastries.  
Lovely lunch.  
Fresh fruit.  
Nice networking stands.  
Lots of tea and coffee ✓✓  
Lots of book gifts - so kind!  
Thank you.*

*Had a great time and will come again.*

*Thank you Nikola for your passion and all your hard work in bringing this to us. I will definitely be there next year!*

*Nikola, this conference was brilliant. Everyone was so lovely - it was such a happy space. Thank you for including Rich, Olivia and me :)*

*An incredible day. Truly inspiring and so well organised. Brilliant achievement!*

*An amazing and inspiring day, everything felt thought-through and was impactful. Thank you.*

*Thank you so much for this invaluable opportunity. I'm so happy we can support each other. Thank you so much and well done 🙌 for yesterday's conference. It was wonderful and such a great opportunity for us to meet people in person and not just through email!! 😊*

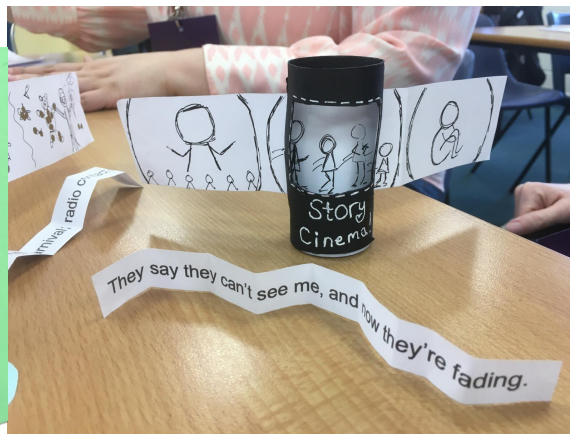
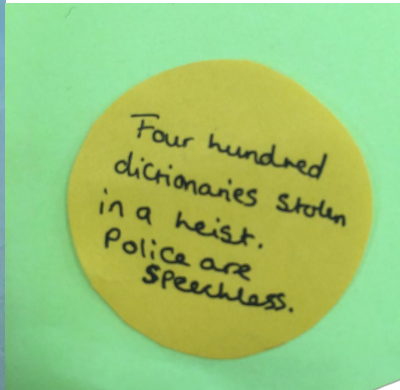
*Everyone should get the chance to do it.*





*“Wonderful conference. What came through was the teachers’ passion. As a speaker I found the conference extremely well organised and managed on the day. Information was clearly presented and the atmosphere was brilliant.”*

*Joseph Coelho*



*Creation station – badge making and story cinemas.  
Inspired by Joseph Coelho’s Ten-word Tiny Tales*



# READING FOR PLEASURE



MICHAEL ROSEN

A child

A book

A read

A chat

This is the way

The mind grows.

Not with a test

But a tale.



Get  
Hounslow  
Reading

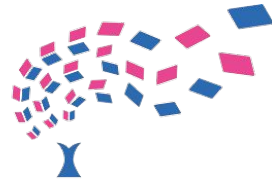
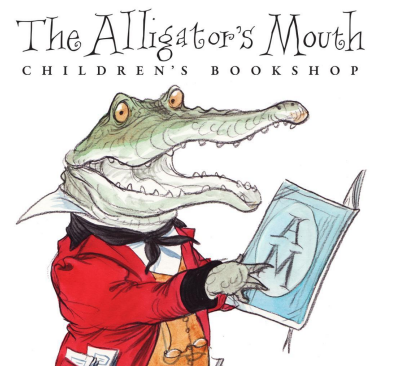


**GO  
ALL  
IN.**

National  
Year of  
Reading  
2026



National Literacy Trust



JUST IMAGINE



The STORY PROJECT

DUTCHPOT STORIES

The Marfleet Foundation <sup>for 10m 2019</sup>



St Mary's University Twickenham London

Collins



Partnerships and networking





# Conference 2026

National Year of Reading



## Get Hounslow Reading

Thank you to everyone who came and supported us on the day and adding to Get Hounslow Reading's legacy.



Click to read our article



St Mary's  
University  
Twickenham  
London



Hounslow  
Education  
Partnership