

In the know ...

Thousands of children do not own a single book

Almost 400,000 children in the UK do not have a single book of their own, new research suggests.

EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH



It means they are missing out on many proven benefits of book ownership, including improved reading skills, reading enjoyment and mental wellbeing.

The study involved 57,000 children aged from nine to 18 and has been undertaken by the National Literacy Trust (NLT).

It found that 6.3 per cent did would equate to 383,775 young people across the UK.

However, disadvantaged children are more likely to be among those without a book to their name. When broken down by free school meals, the figures show that 9.3 per cent of FSM children do not own a book compared to six per cent of non-FSM children. This gap has halved during the past six years.

The NLT study found that compared to children who do not have a book of their own, children who own books are six times more likely to read above the level expected for their age, three times more likely to enjoy reading, and twice as likely to agree that "reading is cool".

Previous NLT research (2018) has also shown that children who own books are more likely to have higher levels of mental wellbeing than their peers who do not own books.

During the past six years, the NLT has gifted more than 340,000 books to disadvantaged children and young people and this Christmas the charity has launched its Gift of Reading campaign.

The campaign asks people to donate money in order to give disadvantaged children the gift of a book and for Christmas it has published the "Ultimate Christmas book list" – an advent calendar of children's books chosen by 24 leading authors and illustrators.

Jonathan Douglas, the NLT's chief executive, said: "Books have the power to transform children's reading skills, enjoyment and mental wellbeing. Yet far too many children are missing out on the chance to reach their full potential simply because they don't have a book of their own at home."

- **Written by Pete Henshaw and first published on 4th December 2019.**
- **The Gift of Reading advent book list can be found on the NLT's parents website www.wordsforlife.org.uk and more information on the campaign is available at www.literacytrust.org.uk/giftofreading**
- **Book ownership, literacy engagement and mental wellbeing, National Literacy Trust, December 2018: <http://bit.ly/382Lwrc>**

Gerard Walker