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Department
for Education

Guidance

Funding for books and reading materials for secondary schools: guidance for schools

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Applies to England

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Introduction

The Department for Education (DfE) is investing £5 million for secondary schools to purchase books and other reading materials to support reading enjoyment amongst their pupils. This is to align with the National Year of Reading 2026, a UK-wide campaign aiming to tackle the steep decline in reading enjoyment.

This guidance is aimed at state-funded secondary schools in England. It sets out how you should use your allocated funding to purchase books and reading materials.

The purpose of this funding is to increase access to a range of reading materials for secondary-aged pupils and complement wider government initiatives, including:

- the [Reading Framework](#)
- the [Unlocking Reading](#) continuous professional development (CPD) course for secondary schools, and
- the [National Year of Reading campaign](#)

Eligibility

This offer is available to all state-funded secondary schools in England with pupils in key stage 3 and key stage 4, including academies, free schools, maintained schools, special schools and alternative provision settings.

You do not need to apply to access this offer. Eligible schools will automatically receive access to the DfE-appointed supplier's platform, Browns Books, and the associated discounts.

Funding allocations have been determined based on the number of pupils in key stage 3 and key stage 4, using the most recent available school census data. Allocations are weighted by school size and disadvantage, with a minimum entitlement of £450 and a maximum entitlement of £1400 per school. This approach ensures that funding is distributed fairly and proportionately across schools of different sizes, while reflecting levels of disadvantage.

Accessing the platform

Browns Books will create a dedicated DfE account for each eligible school. You will receive an email from 15 September 2026 with login details and a user guide, providing access to Browns Books' ordering platform and dedicated Reading for Pleasure Hub.

Using the Browns Books platform, you can browse, view pricing and stock availability, place orders and track your delivery.

Browns Books will offer user guidance and online demonstrations to support with ordering and use of the platform.

Timing

You must spend your allocation by the end of the 2025 to 2026 financial year. All orders must be placed by 31 March 2027. Any unspent allocation remaining after the end date will be unavailable.

Placing an order

Through your dedicated DfE account on the Browns Books website, you are free to choose from the full range of eligible titles and formats and are not required to select pre-set packages.

You should:

- search for and select a range of titles based on your pupils' needs and interests
- review pricing and discounts available on the platform
- place orders directly through the system

Browns Books will confirm your remaining allocation available and inform you when your allocation has been fully utilised.

Optional book servicing is available, including protective jackets and library labels. If you already purchase from Browns Books, your existing servicing profile can be

mirrored on your dedicated DfE account, so that books purchased are serviced in line with your usual requirements. If you are new to Browns, or if you wish to add servicing, you can request a servicing profile to meet your individual requirements.

Delivery

In-stock, non-serviced print orders over £50 placed before 4pm will be dispatched the same working day for free next-day delivery.

Serviced orders are typically dispatched within 3 working days for free next-day delivery.

eBooks are available through Browns' VLeBooks platform and are normally available within minutes of an order being processed.

Eligible uses of the funding

You must use this funding to purchase books and reading materials that support reading for pleasure. DfE recognises that you know your pupils and local context best, therefore this funding can be used flexibly to support your reading for pleasure priorities.

This can include:

- books that are suitable, relevant and of interest to your school cohort, including multiple copies of the same title
- a range of types of reading materials, such as non-fiction books, comics and graphic novels
- e-books, audiobooks and digital reading materials
- books and reading material in accessible formats, such as large print and braille

This funding cannot be used for:

- core curriculum materials, phonics programmes, reading catch up resources and resources that are not related to reading for pleasure, such as textbooks and lesson resources

- titles in foreign languages
- e-reader devices such as ipads, tablets and kindles
- general school running costs or staffing
- capital expenditure (for example, buildings, equipment, library furniture)

Where specialist or accessible formats are required, Browns Books can work directly with publishers to identify and source suitable editions wherever available.

You can choose to supplement your allocation with your own budgets to expand your order. If you wish to do so, you should place this separately through your standard Browns account. If you do not have an existing Browns account, you can create one free of charge. Any additional publisher promotional pricing available through this programme will also be available through your standard Browns account.

Titles in foreign languages are not eligible for this funding. We recognise that maintaining reading in pupils' home language supports those with English as an additional language to engage with reading for pleasure, and you may wish to use your own budgets to purchase books in other languages if you feel it would be beneficial for your school cohort.

Making the most of your allocation

Here are some top tips for selecting reading materials to help make the most out of your allocation:

- include a mix of reading formats and genres
- include some texts that authentically reflect your pupils' own lives and experiences and some that enable them to connect to the world beyond their existing perspectives
- consider titles that will appeal to less engaged and less confident readers
- include accessible reading formats that are appropriate for your pupils' reading needs, such as dyslexia friendly titles, large print and braille
- include titles by authors including, but not limited to, male and female authors and authors from different racial, cultural and class backgrounds
- involve pupils in book selection and give them the opportunity to share and recommend books (see this [BookTrust evidence](#) about why book choice matters)

- select materials that align with your pupils' interests and hobbies
- review your current book stock to see where you have gaps and include a balance between new, popular books and older, consistently popular titles
- showcase and promote the new books and materials once they arrive to generate excitement
- utilise the offers and expertise within your local communities. Speak to school librarians, reading charities, parent groups, independent bookshops and booksellers, Schools Library Services and local public libraries to help get an idea of which books and authors are most popular amongst teenagers and have a look at the events and activities they have to offer

You may wish to use Browns' dedicated [Reading for Pleasure Hub](#) to explore curated recommendations, inclusive and diverse collections, and new and forthcoming titles. The Browns team can also provide recommended reading lists and practical support, helping you to establish, refresh or expand your reading collections and identify suitable titles for reluctant readers and those with particular interests and reading abilities.

You can also explore a range of Browns Books pages and collections for further reading inspiration, including:

- [Secondary Schools](#): Discover more from Browns Books, with a wider range of books and collections beyond those featured in the Reading for Pleasure Hub
- [Official Book Awards](#): Find award-winning and shortlisted titles from established national book awards
- [School Book Awards](#): Discover titles featured in school and regional book awards
- [National Year of Reading](#): Browse titles and collections supporting the National Year of Reading
- [With A Book](#): Browns' year-long 2026 campaign celebrating that with a book, you can go anywhere, learn anything and feel everything, with a new theme each month
- [BookTrust Great Books Guide 2025 to 2026](#): Discover titles featured in the latest Great Books Guide, officially sponsored by Browns Books

Further resources

There are many organisations who offer advice, support and resources to help with selecting reading materials and encouraging reading for pleasure amongst your pupils. This list is non-exhaustive, but you may find some of the below suggestions helpful:

- [BookTrust](#) and the [BookTrust Bookfinder](#), which is an online database which can be filtered by age and theme to get suggested reading recommendations
- [School Library Association](#), who provides resources and guidance for schools to help with developing and delivering effective school library provision
- [The Reading Agency](#) and their [Find a Read](#) service where you can browse curated booklists
- [The National Literacy Trust](#) and the resources developed for the [National Year of Reading campaign](#), including the 'interests' pages on the website which may be helpful in identifying books to meet the interests of your pupils
- [The Story Museum](#), which is a story-finding website showcasing a range of book recommendations curated by experts and can be filtered by age, theme, genre and format
- the shortlists for the many [children's book awards](#) are also good places to go for recommendations and recent publications
- local public libraries are a great resource for advising on frequently borrowed titles amongst children and young people and the titles that are proving popular locally

Queries and support

You should contact Browns Books in the first instance for support with platform access, ordering, title availability, funding, deliveries, returns, and eBooks. Browns' Customer Care Team is available, Monday to Friday, by telephone, email and online chat.

Telephone: 01482 384660

Email: dfc@brownsbfs.co.uk

Online chat: www.brownsbfs.co.uk

For further information, guidance and FAQs about using your DfE funding through Browns, visit the [dedicated programme area](#) on the Browns website.

If you have questions that cannot be resolved by Browns Books and are not answered in this guidance, you can contact DfE via email:

Books.ForSchools@education.gov.uk.

DfE has contacted schools using the most up to date school census data. If you are a newly opened school, or have not received an email regarding your allocation, email Books.ForSchools@education.gov.uk.

Data and feedback

DfE will receive management information from Browns on uptake of this offer, including information on orders placed and titles purchased.

You are not required to submit routine returns to DfE as part of this programme.

DfE may contact some schools to request feedback on your experience of the programme and to obtain case studies on how the funding has supported reading engagement and enjoyment.

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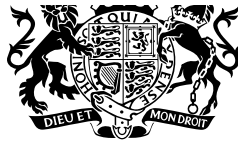
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