School Library Association and Barrington Stoke launch new Reader of the Year Award in the National Year of Reading

Monday 2 March, 2026

Ahead of World Book Day, and to celebrate the National Year of Reading, the School Library Association (SLA) is launching a brand-new award in collaboration with one of the UK's most innovative children's publishers.

The Barrington Stoke Reader of the Year Award will be the only national award to celebrate young readers, recognising pupils in Year 7 and 8 who have overcome challenge to discover the joy of reading. The winner will receive £400 worth of Barrington Stoke books for their school library, a £100 book token for themselves, and a digital subscription to First News for both home and school.

Nominations are now open for the award, which celebrates engagement, enjoyment and determination over academic attainment or reading fluency. Awarded by the SLA, the Barrington Stoke Reader of the Year Award will also highlight the vital role school libraries and librarians play in getting the right books into the hands of the right pupils, helping every child develop their own positive relationship with reading.

Teachers, headteachers and school librarians from across the UK can nominate Year 7 and 8 pupils (S1 and S2 in Scotland). The closing date for nominations is Friday, 15th May, after which a prestigious judging panel will decide on a shortlist. The winner will be announced at the SLA's Annual Awards Ceremony, taking place on 18th November 2026 in London.

Jane Walker, Sales & Marketing Director at Barrington Stoke, said: *"At Barrington Stoke, young people are at the heart of everything we do, and we know that some of them face real challenges on the path to developing a love of reading. We're therefore thrilled to be working with the School Library Association, sponsoring an award to celebrate those readers, while also recognising the crucial role of the school librarians who support them on that journey."*

The judging panel will include SLA School Librarian of the Year 2025 – Julie Broadbent, author and SLA Patron Tom Palmer and Barrington Stoke author Catherine Johnson, as well as representatives from Barrington Stoke, the School Library Association and children's newspaper First News, who will join the award as media partner.

Catherine Johnson said: *"I am so excited to be a judge for the brand-new Barrington Stoke Reader of the Year Award! I firmly believe that school libraries and librarians are an integral part of any school community. And I am thrilled to help shine a light on those students – a vital part of those communities – who have found their way into books."*

Victoria Dilly, CEO of the SLA, said: *"Launching a brand-new award that celebrates young readers puts children and young people at the heart of our National Year of Reading activity. We are thrilled to be joining forces with Barrington Stoke – their focus on making books accessible to every reader makes them the perfect partner for an award specifically recognising young people who have had to overcome challenge to discover the joy of reading. The Barrington Stoke Reader of the Year Award will celebrate the curiosity, empathy and imagination that all children and young people can unlock when they discover the joy of reading.*

With children's reading for pleasure at an all-time low, and a mandatory Year 8 reading test soon to enter the curriculum, the need to celebrate children's reading enjoyment has never been so important. We know that school libraries and school librarians help millions of children to develop more positive relationships with reading, and I can't wait to hear about some of them."

Nominations for the Barrington Stoke Reader of the Year Award can be made at:
sla.org.uk/reader-of-the-year

Media:





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