

# Space Ranger Fred Author Expands Literacy Initiative Amid Debate Over Children's Reading Habits

*As Britain debates children's screen time, author Matthew Newnham expands his literacy initiative, arguing that children need more stories, not less technology.*

LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM, July 1, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Children's author Matthew

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When children read, they are not just learning words on a page. They are building worlds in their minds, solving problems, developing empathy and learning to think creatively.”

*Matthew Newnham*

Newnham is expanding his literacy initiative to help children rediscover a love of books, imagination and storytelling as educators and policymakers across the UK continue debating how best to improve children's reading habits in an increasingly digital world.

Built around his popular Space Ranger Fred series, the initiative includes school visits, classroom readings and interactive sessions designed to encourage children to engage with books beyond the classroom and develop a lifelong reading habit.

The expansion comes as the National Literacy Trust's newly released 2026 Annual Literacy Survey reports the first improvement in children's reading enjoyment since 2021. While 36.1% of children and young people now say they enjoy reading in their free time, up from last year's 20-year low, the charity says reading enjoyment remains well below levels recorded a decade ago, with improvements uneven across income groups and between boys and girls.

The issue is attracting attention far beyond the UK. Countries including Sweden and Denmark, once regarded as pioneers of technology-led learning, have begun reintroducing more traditional educational approaches. Investments in physical textbooks, reduced reliance on digital devices and stricter mobile phone policies have all formed part of efforts to address concerns around reading comprehension, concentration and academic performance.

For Newnham, the conversation is not about choosing books over technology.

"We don't need less technology. We need more stories," he said.

"Technology is an important part of modern life and it offers incredible opportunities for learning. The challenge is that many children are spending less time immersed in books and more time consuming short-form content. Reading exercises the imagination in a way that scrolling simply doesn't." Newnham believes children's reading habits should continue to concern parents, educators and policymakers because the benefits of reading extend well beyond literacy itself.

"When children read, they are not just learning words on a page. They are building worlds in their minds, solving problems, developing empathy and learning to think creatively," he said. "Those skills become increasingly valuable in a world where information is everywhere, but deep thinking is often in short supply."

The Space Ranger Fred series was originally created to spark curiosity and encourage young readers to explore science, discovery and adventure through storytelling. The literacy initiative, supported by [free classroom resources](#), seeks to build on that mission by bringing stories directly into schools and communities, helping children experience reading as something exciting rather than simply another academic task.

Through classroom readings, discussions and interactive sessions, pupils are encouraged to engage with books in a way that promotes curiosity, concentration and creative thinking.

The programme also arrives at a time when educators around the world are debating the long-term impact of screen-heavy learning environments. Researchers have increasingly highlighted concerns around distraction, reduced attention spans and declining engagement with longer-form reading, prompting renewed discussion about the role of books and traditional learning methods in childhood development.

While acknowledging the importance of digital literacy, Newnham believes balance is essential.

"This isn't about turning back the clock or rejecting technology," he said. "It's about ensuring children have opportunities to develop the imagination, focus and curiosity that come from reading. Stories help young people ask better questions, explore new ideas and see possibilities beyond their immediate world."



Matt Newnham brings the Space Ranger Fred universe to life, engaging young minds through storytelling and imagination-led learning.

As schools, parents and communities build on renewed national efforts to encourage stronger reading habits, the expanded literacy initiative aims to contribute to a broader movement focused on placing books back at the centre of childhood.

"The future belongs to people who can think creatively, solve problems and imagine new possibilities," Newnham said. "Reading remains one of the most powerful ways we have to develop those abilities. If we can inspire more children to pick up a book and discover the joy of reading, then we've achieved something worthwhile."

UK schools, libraries, Scout groups and other youth organisations are invited to contact Matthew Newnham using the details below to arrange school visits, reading sessions and literacy events designed to encourage a love of books, storytelling and creative thinking.

Journalists, broadcasters and podcast hosts seeking commentary on children's reading habits, literacy, imagination, screen-time culture and the role of storytelling in childhood development are also welcome to contact Matthew Newnham using the details below to arrange interviews. Please see media contact details below.

#### About Space Ranger Fred

Space Ranger Fred is a children's book series created by author Matt Newnham to spark curiosity and inspire a love of STEM in readers aged 6 to 12. Through story-driven adventures, the series introduces problem-solving, creativity and scientific thinking in an engaging and accessible way. It is supported by free educational resources for parents, teachers and young learners, with growing use in schools and increasing international interest. To learn more about Space Ranger Fred, please visit [www.spacerangerfred.com](http://www.spacerangerfred.com).

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