

MERCURIAL  
PICTURES

A FILM BY EDWARD OWLES AND JAIME TAYLOR

H is for Harry

Red scribble

**A Screening Guide and CPD Toolkit**  
For Schools, Educators and Related Organisations

Supported by

**JRF** JOSEPH  
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FOUNDATION





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## 1. Foreword

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As a society, we believe that every child should have the best start in life. And yet in a typical classroom of 30 children in the UK, nine are growing up in poverty. This means:

- Nine children who are unable to thrive;
- Nine children whose opportunities and life chances are restricted;
- Nine children whose hopes and dreams are curtailed.



Abigail Scott Paul, JRF

For a country like the UK, this is unacceptable.

But it doesn't have to be this way.

**H IS FOR HARRY** offers up a different story to the ones we usually hear. This is an authentic and refreshingly optimistic film that explores how one school is unlocking opportunities for kids trapped in poverty through focused and specialised support. Harry and his fellow classmates are defined by their potential, not by their poverty.

With more and more families being swept into poverty because of low pay, high housing costs and cuts to social security, we need action so that all our kids have a chance to get on in life, whatever their circumstances.

**H IS FOR HARRY** is one story that shows that the change we need for our children is possible. This important film, and the surrounding campaign, should act as a catalyst to have that conversation in the corridors of power as well as the wider community.

**Abigail Scott Paul, Deputy Director of Advocacy and Public Engagement  
Joseph Rowntree Foundation**

**The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF)** is an independent social change organisation whose vision is for a prosperous and poverty free UK. We believe that people with direct experience of poverty should be at the heart of our influencing efforts and the design of policy solutions. We are working with the media, filmmakers and other storytellers to improve the representation of people and places trapped in poverty, in order to expand public understanding of the issues and build public and political support for action on poverty.

For more information visit: [www.jrf.org.uk](http://www.jrf.org.uk)



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## 2. Introduction to H IS FOR HARRY

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**H IS FOR HARRY** is a coming of age story about Harry, a charismatic 11-year old boy, who arrives at secondary school in suburban London unable to read or write. With the help of Sophie, his extremely dedicated teacher, can he and his family overcome his illiteracy and years of feeling excluded from learning and opportunity?

Against the backdrop of a Britain riven with debates around class, identity and social mobility, the film follows Harry over two years as he fights not only to improve academically but also to believe in a different future for himself.

The film has been screened across the globe both on broadcast television and at film festivals, and is available to licence for public or private use.

**“Heartbreaking”** - The Guardian

**“An intimate insight...into a national problem”** - The Telegraph

**“Casting a spotlight on one of the biggest education scandals in Britain”**  
- The Sunday Times

Longlisted for British Independent Film Raindance Discovery Award 2019

Watch the official trailer here: [vimeo.com/288524874](https://vimeo.com/288524874)



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### 3. How to use the Screening Toolkit

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#### **Thank you for organising a screening of H IS FOR HARRY.**

This screening guide and CPD toolkit has been created together with the help of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF). It is intended as a CPD resource to use alongside the film for a variety of engaged audiences, from education professionals and trainee teachers, policymakers in national and local government, staff at literacy and social mobility charities, as well as others working across the education system.

We believe that watching the lived experience of the children, teachers and families in H IS FOR HARRY will enhance the understanding, empathy and practice of professionals working in these sectors. As such we have included a variety of discussion topics, depending on your institution's focus, as well as suggestions for how you organise your screening event.

**Before starting the session** we advise that you watch H IS FOR HARRY and read this toolkit to think about how it should be used and adapted to your specific setting. Questions to consider as part of your preparation are:

- **How many people are you anticipating will attend the event?**
- **How will you promote your event?**
- **Are the themes you hope to discuss covered in this guide? If not, what else would you like your audience to discuss in relation to the film?**
- **What are three actions you want all participants to carry out after the screening?**

“The discussion afterwards with the staff actually went on way longer than planned... They felt really passionate about the issues raised and how we can try to change the status quo.”

- Teacher at Stoke Newington School, London

**After your audience has watched the film**, our post-screening discussion frameworks should act as the basis for the next part of the event. They are centered around the five themes of our **Vision for Change** and you should choose whichever ones best suit your aims.

We have also included **Learning Goals** (pp. 14-15) to help you keep track of the topics you are covering with participants during, and/or after your event.

There are many different ways in which you could structure your session including:

**Immediately after the screening**, leave a space for quiet reflection, during which time individuals write a postcard to one or some of the characters in the film reflecting on what they have experienced. A printable template can be found on our website here: [hisforharry.com/takeaction](https://hisforharry.com/takeaction)

**Facilitate small group or pair discussion** (depending on the overall size of the group) for people to answer the discussion guide questions. You could give each group/pair one **Vision for Change** aim, or have everyone doing the same one. Then expand to a whole-room plenary with each table presenting their responses and ideas.

**Encourage small groups** to create mind maps, to address how some of the most pressing challenges raised in the film interconnect.

**Create a pledge wall** for individuals to stick tangible actions/changes they could make on a post-it note. Ideally, the facilitator should ensure there is some way of making people accountable for these pledges.

**The Filmmaker Q&A** (pp.17-21) will also be a useful tool for you to help respond to some of the more common queries that arise after watching the film.

**Additional resources** and information are included at the end of this **toolkit** (pp.23-25).



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## 4. Watch H IS FOR HARRY

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### Film Details:



- Length: 86 mins and 53 mins options available
- Language: English [subtitled version also available]
- UK Certification: 12A “mouthed strong language, moderate drug references”

H IS FOR HARRY is an observational documentary with no narration and minimal text on screen. It represents a child's point of view of educational inequality and therefore raises as many questions as it does answers.

This guide is built around the film being watched in its entirety in a cinema-like venue, with viewers then forming a post-screening community for sharing observations and experiences.

Please make every effort to ensure black-out in the screening space and to test audio and image quality. It is recommended that some venues use the subtitled version if their speakers are not of a sufficient standard.

To arrange for a copy of the film to be sent ahead of your event, please contact the production team on [info@hisforharry.com](mailto:info@hisforharry.com)

Directors Ed Owles and Jamie Taylor with Sophie, Harry's teacher and Christo Hird (Dartmouth Films) after theatrical premiere on World Book Day 2019



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## 5. A Vision for Change: Post-screening Discussion Topics

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Harry and his family's experience of disadvantage and illiteracy is far from unique. Similar stories are unfolding in towns and cities all around us fuelled by poverty and inequality.

Our aim with the film and wider outreach campaign is to make a long-standing impact, paying attention to the voices of individuals who are living and breathing the critical issues most schools and settings are facing today.

This Vision for Change is our call for urgent, enduring action. It is built around five key themes which could form the basis for your post-screening discussions:

**A** - **ABOLISH** illiteracy

**B** - **BEGIN** with the voice of children, young people and families

**C** - **CHAMPION** early intervention

**D** - **DELIVER** support all-through a child's life

**E** - **END** the blame narratives and show compassion

To download the Vision for Change, please visit: [hisforharry.com/takeaction](https://hisforharry.com/takeaction)





# A - Abolish illiteracy



“It’s just repeat, repeat, repeat. My dad’s had it, I had it,  
and now my son’s gonna have it.”

- Grant, Harry’s Dad

The film shows the all-encompassing nature of Harry’s predicament, the way that whole families can be held back from achieving a better life, with his father Grant aware of how history is repeating itself despite his best intentions and aspirations as a parent.

## Starter Exercise:

Write a postcard to Grant, Harry’s dad, responding to what you have learned about the impact illiteracy had on his life, how it affected you and what you hope for his future. A printable template can be found on our website here: [hisforharry.com/takeaction](https://hisforharry.com/takeaction)

## Questions for group work:

- What are Grant’s aspirations for Harry and how are they related to his own experience of the education system? What is the context in which he is parenting?
- How can we talk about issues like illiteracy that sometimes span generations of the same family, without resorting to fatalistic debates that see such challenges as insoluble?
- In public discourse, there is often a narrative of disengaged, uncaring parents in certain communities. How does Grant’s example challenge that stereotype?
- Numerous statistics show that where you are born dictates your socioeconomic circumstances. How does the school in the film try to change this cycle?
- The film shows how a lack of social mobility affects much more than academic achievement. How does it affect the psychology of a child?

## Taking Action:

From both a systemic and a personal level, what can be done to support parents and carers like Grant to break the cycle of illiteracy?

What more could be done in your community / organisation to make this change?

## B - Begin with the voice of children, young people and families



“When I’m older, I don’t want to be the person who’s left out, living on the streets. Basically the aim is for me to have a better life than my dad.”

- Harry

In debates around educational inequality and social mobility, it is a sad reality that the child’s voice is too often missing. The filmmakers wanted to make an observational film from the child’s point of view, with little adult talking heads or narration telling the audience what to feel or think. Grounded in a sense of compassion and justice, the film reinforces a mindset that all children count.

### Starter Exercise:

Write a postcard to Harry, responding to what you have learned about his life, how it affected you and what you hope for his future. A printable template can be found on our website here:

[hisforharry.com/takeaction](https://hisforharry.com/takeaction)

### Questions for group work:

- In what form are you more used to hearing stories of educational inequality and social mobility? E.g. articles, reports, statistics, expert views. How does the film’s child-centred approach complement those different forms?
- Discuss the reasons for educational inequality. Why do you think there continues to be an issue and how does Harry’s story inform your thinking?
- What are the different ways that educational inequality can affect a child? e.g. academic, psychological, emotional, social, behavioural
- How does the film help our understanding about the potential for the education system to improve/transform children’s lives?
- Which of the other children’s stories did you find particularly affecting and why?

### Taking Action:

What are the concrete steps that you can take to ensure that you and your organisation are listening to the unheard voices in your community?

How can you place the child’s voice at the centre of your thinking?



## C - Champion early intervention

“We have had children come to us this year in Year 7 [aged 11] who can’t tell the time, can’t tie their own shoelaces and struggle to spell their own name.”

- Rebecca, Secondary Headteacher, Reach Academy Feltham

Evidence shows that early years intervention can transform a child’s life chances and those in poverty are more likely to need extra support. Having seen the film, you can help us raise awareness of the need to change the system.

### **Starter Exercise:**

Write a postcard to Harry and Grant, imagining that Harry had just been born and you are explaining what support you hope they get for Harry’s pre-school years. A printable template can be found on our website here: [hisforharry.com/takeaction](https://hisforharry.com/takeaction)

### **Questions for group work:**

- What is early intervention, why is it important and when can it make the biggest difference?
- What should be the role of parents and carers in those formative pre-school years?
- What are the ways in which the system is working against Harry, Grant and Sophie (Harry’s teacher)?
- How would support in the early years have made a difference to the challenges they faced?
- How can early years hubs, community centres, libraries and investment in schemes like Sure Start improve the situation?

### **Taking Action:**

Would you or someone you know consider volunteering for charities like the National Literacy Trust or Doorstep Library?

Are there any opportunities to take this forward in your local community, or any barriers that need to be overcome?



## D - Deliver support all-through a child's life

“Dunno what's gonna happen next year.  
Doesn't matter where I go.  
Where I don't go. Life is just life.”

- Harry

The film shows how a lack of social mobility affects children and young people in many different ways, not just academic achievement. The school in the film has a vision for continuously unlocking opportunities for every child and young person, no matter what their age or circumstances, with all-through support for children and families.

### **Starter Exercise:**

On a postcard, write as many key supports and services that you can think of, that all children deserve from birth to when they reach adulthood. If you think those supports or services could be better joined-up with one another in order to ensure that all children can thrive, connect them with a line. A printable template can be found on our website here: [hisforharry.com/takeaction](https://hisforharry.com/takeaction)

### **Questions for group work:**

- What does all-through support mean to you?
- How should support be targeted across the ages and stages to make the biggest impact? What more can be done at the transition point to secondary school?
- Thinking especially about the years immediately before and after school, what sort of support should be available then?
- How can we use all-through support for families to help kids break free from illiteracy?
- How can we think differently about aspiration of choice for children and young people? Discuss how we value the various post-school pathways, from university through to apprenticeships and vocational training.

### **Taking Action:**

How can you develop the way in which you build relationships with parents and carers to benefit children and young people? What works well?

Where do you experience barriers that need to be overcome?



## E - End the blame narratives and show compassion

“What are you going to be doing when you’re 25, Harry?”

- Sophie, Secondary School Teacher

“Trying to stay alive...”

- Harry

The film shows how hard Harry’s teachers are working to help the ‘whole child’. The filmmakers were interested in showing just how much time and energy is required to support someone with Harry’s levels of reading and writing on arrival at secondary school. They wanted to avoid judgement and instead portray the range of challenges facing teachers, parents, carers and the wider community.

### **Starter Exercise:**

Write a postcard to Sophie (Harry’s teacher), responding to what you have learned about her life, how it affected you and what you hope for her future. A printable template can be found on our website here: [hisforharry.com/takeaction](https://hisforharry.com/takeaction)

### **Questions for group work:**

- What were some of the challenges Sophie faced when it came to teaching Harry and his ‘Super English’ classmates, whilst also leading other classes and the Year 7 year group?
- What different methods did she and the school use to overcome some of the challenges Harry and his classmates face?
- How important is it to understand a child’s background in order to teach them?
- Harry had an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), yet Sophie did not have enough time or resources to support him. What could be done to help children that have additional needs remain in mainstream school?
- How do we move away from judging parents and carers who live in disadvantaged circumstances? How can we build compassion and value the experiences of others?

### **Taking Action:**

Once you leave the screening room, how can you reframe the way you talk about the education system, whether in conversation with others or the media, so that debates become less about judgement and more about compassion and finding solutions?

## 6. Learning Goals

Use the table below to refer to whether the film, discussion, or both has addressed the **Vision for Change** available here: [hisforharry.com/takeaction](http://hisforharry.com/takeaction)

Learning Goal	From film	From discussion
<p><b>1. ABOLISH Illiteracy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. A greater understanding of what it means to grow up illiterate</li> <li>b. The impact of illiteracy on daily adult life</li> <li>c. How illiteracy can exist across generations of a family</li> <li>d. A discussion around the options currently available for adults to improve low levels of literacy</li> <li>e. How illiteracy is framed in the national media</li> <li>f. A discussion about local and national organisations working to alleviate illiteracy</li> </ul>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>
<p><b>2. BEGIN with the voice of children, young people and families</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. An appreciation of what poverty looks like in Britain today</li> <li>b. An understanding of what the education ‘system’ feels like from a child’s perspective</li> <li>c. An awareness that children can advocate for themselves whatever their academic ability, if we give them the time to express themselves</li> <li>d. An insight into a child’s resilience and how fragile this can be, particularly in the transition to secondary school</li> </ul>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>
<p><b>3. CHAMPION early intervention</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. An understanding of the low levels of reading and writing with which a significant number of children arrive at secondary school and its impact</li> <li>b. An appreciation of how social inequality affects educational achievement</li> <li>c. An understanding that without early intervention and support, it can be difficult for a parent who has also experienced disadvantage themselves to give their child a full range of opportunities</li> <li>d. A discussion about the various non-school organisations which can support children early in life (e.g. libraries)</li> </ul>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>

Learning Goal	From film	From discussion
<p><b>4. DELIVER support all-through a child's life</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. A greater understanding of the complex issues that lock families in poverty and hold many children back</li> <li>b. An understanding of what it can be like for a parent who has lacked that support themselves when they were a child</li> <li>c. The key stages for support throughout a young person's life, including once they leave school at 16</li> <li>d. A discussion about local and national organisations working to provide pre-school support</li> </ul>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>
<p><b>5. END the blame narratives and show compassion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. An understanding of some of the resource constraints that teachers operate under, especially when managing additional educational needs</li> <li>b. An increased awareness of the broader societal factors that affect the difference a school can make</li> <li>c. An appreciation of the value of pastoral care in schools</li> <li>d. A consideration of the way educational debates are often framed in terms of scapegoats, rather than compassionate analysis of people caught up in a system</li> </ul>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>

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## 7. A personal perspective on the film by director Jaime Taylor

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I come from a very similar place to Harry's neighbourhood, with the same levels of poverty and the problems that come with that. Looking at my school year group today: some have never worked, some are already grandparents in their thirties, some ended up in prison, one is a prostitute, a couple are drug addicts. Others haven't fared quite so badly but they certainly never reached their potential. They weren't even aware that they had the potential or agency to create any kind of future for themselves. None of us were.

Because the worst, most debilitating effect of poverty on young people is the lack of confidence and headspace to imagine that life could be different. I got away from my hometown to escape that crushing sense of inevitability that life would always be that way, and it was for these reasons I became a teacher and continue to work in education today. Is it possible to press the reset button on these children's lives? To help kids break free from poverty? And is it actually right to do this?

Opportunities should exist everywhere for our kids. It's not right that often the only option is to sever ties to family, friends and community for good - as was the case for me. In communities even subtle differences - your changing accent, "speaking different" - can have a huge impact on relationships.

We've been present through the highs and lows of the school year - capturing the small details that reveal an enormous amount: the facial expressions of children who have never been told before that they are important. H IS FOR HARRY is a 'coming-of-age' film to encourage a discussion around education and the extent to which it can perform the miracles each new government promises.



Jaime Taylor, Co-Director

**Jaime Taylor, Co-Director of H IS FOR HARRY**



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## 8. Filmmaker Q&A

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### 1. Why did you want to make H IS FOR HARRY?

We made the film because we believe in the power of telling stories from the perspective of people you might not normally see or hear. In debates around educational inequality and social mobility, the child's voice is often conspicuous by its absence, so we decided to make our film firmly from Harry's point of view.

We live in a country where children from the poorest backgrounds arrive at school many months behind their peers and rarely catch up, where 1 in 5 children leave primary school unable to read properly and where, unsurprisingly, social mobility has stalled. As a teacher in the film says 'We have had children come to us this year in Year 7 [aged 11] who can't tell the time, can't tie their own shoelaces and struggle to spell their own name'.

In Harry's story, and that of his father Grant, we gain a snapshot of the cycle that many families feel trapped in, that we often only hear about in statistics and reports. As Grant says: 'It's just repeat, repeat, repeat. My dad's had it, I had it, and now my son's gonna have it.' We believe that constructive public debate and good policy-making happens best when there's empathy with those who experience the impact of those policies - in this case a child and parent in a low income community. If their voice is in the room when decisions are being made, it's likely that policies will be better designed.

Harry's story (and that of his classmates) is hard to watch at times and can stir emotions, not least anger, at his predicament. It is tempting to try and find a focus for that anger. We think it's really important to avoid the 'blame game', which perhaps offers some catharsis, but no sustainable solution. It is common to look for a scapegoat: the parent, the school, the local authority, central government or even the child. Harry's story reveals a complex, systemic issue to which there is no easy answer.

The film touches on many topics that we hope will resonate with audiences: social mobility, marginalised communities, illiteracy, inclusion, special educational needs, schooling and teachers to name a few. If we were to offer a single message from Harry's story, it would be based on the final scenes in the film when Harry spends time with the Primary and Nursery pupils. These scenes are an opportunity for the audience to reflect on what might have been, had Harry had a greater level of support in his early years.

Our reflection, having watched Harry's story over the years and knowing the national statistics around these issues, is that an early, holistic approach combined with sustained support throughout a child's school years is the best chance of breaking the cycle for children like Harry.

### 2. Why did you choose a long-form, observational style for the film?

Much of the material we see about education and children on TV uses a narrator and various other elements to manage the viewer - explaining what is going on or how someone is feeling.

By filming discreetly over such a long period of time, we thought we could bear witness to the changes and challenges a child starting secondary school goes through from a bottom-up perspective.

The freedom to pace the film for a cinematic audience also meant we could include nostalgic montage sequences that help remind an audience of what it was like to be starting out at school.

It also allowed us to go with events as they unfolded, rather than stick to rigid deadlines or narrative outcomes. Many stories or films about education tend to either focus on bad behaviour as a catch-all excuse or give us the miraculous tale of someone who makes it to great success from humble beginnings. One of the reasons we've found Harry's story resonates so strongly with many organisations is because it is representative of a huge proportion of children whose trajectories we normally don't hear about, especially not in their own words.

### **3. How did you decide to film with this particular school?**

We've been making (shorter) films in schools for many years and had been looking for a setting for a feature film to explore the themes in H IS FOR HARRY from a bottom-up point of view. Jon (the film's producer) was a governor at the school in the film and so was able to introduce us to the Headteacher and it went from there. We (Ed and Jaime) spoke with teachers in both the primary and secondary sections of the school and in the end settled on the crucial transition that happens at Year 7, when pupils first arrive at secondary school.

The school was expressly founded to address some of the issues around educational inequality, staffed by a group of very young and ambitious teachers, which made it an intriguing place to start filming. Initially we worked with the whole of one class - Team Don - and over the period of filming narrowed our focus from 30 children to a handful, of which Harry's became the main narrative.

### **4. How did you work with the school and parents during the filming? What was the ethical approach?**

We obtained written consent from the school's leadership team and its governors, as well as all teachers involved. Throughout the process, we shared reflections and footage and checked in regularly that they were happy with how we were operating.

For the parents and carers, we attended the first parent consultation day early on in the school year, explained the project to both the children and their parents/carers and then obtained written consent from all those involved. We checked in with them at each subsequent parent consultation, as well as sharing the edited film with them at the end of the process. With the main characters in the film, we spent extra time talking to the parents and ensuring they knew what and how we were working and ensured that they felt comfortable with the process. All the main contributors saw the film before it was finalised to ensure they were happy that they had been accurately represented.

Harry and Grant have always supported the making of the film, welcoming the chance to have their voices heard, and have been involved at every step along the way, including appearances on BBC Breakfast and Radio 5 Live when we released the film in cinemas.

### **5. Did the children not mind being filmed?**

Team Don welcomed us from the off! Nowadays, filming each other and being filmed is such a part of children's daily life that we didn't attract too much attention. We were also careful to keep a low profile, to the side of the classroom, operating in a discreet manner and never intervening.

In the Spring Term, we ran a Digital Storytelling workshop to get to know some of the class members better and pass on some technical/storytelling skills.

This also meant we were able to work more closely with certain children, like Harry, outside the classroom because they gained a greater understanding of what we were doing and why we were doing it.

## **6. How did you decide that Harry would be the focus of the film?**

Over the first term we gradually got to know the whole class. In the course of building relationships with the pupils and their families, we identified Harry along with a couple of other characters as individuals who had stories that resonated with the wider themes we wanted to explore and who, just as importantly, were also enthusiastic about working with us. As the edit progressed, it became clear that the film would centre on the triangular relationship between Harry, Grant and Sophie.

Harry's story is emblematic of many children and communities who are often given the label 'left behind'. As a white working class boy, he is part of the segment of society which statistically does the least well at school. For example, whereas approximately 60% of the overall population secure at least five GCSE grades at the government's expected standard,<sup>1</sup> only 26% of white working class boys on free school meals achieve this same.

## **7. Can you tell us more about the school?**

[Reach Academy Feltham](#) was founded in 2012, received an 'Outstanding' Ofsted rating in 2014 and received its first GCSEs in 2017, ranking 16th in the country by Progress 8. The school is in an area of high deprivation with 46% of pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium and Harry's neighbourhood has been identified as a Higher Education 'cold spot,' with only 20% of children progressing to Higher Education. The school was full with 60 pupils in every year from Reception to 6th form as of 2019. It also has a nursery with 2-4 year olds.

The school is very inclusive, with almost 5% of pupils holding an Education, Health and Care Plan higher than typical mainstream schools and it also has the highest number of Looked After Children in its Borough. Reach Academy has been visited by the Prime Minister, the Duchess of Cambridge, The Mayor of London and a number of ministers. The school has opened a Children's Hub to work with children and families as early as possible in their lives.

## **8. Why is there not more information about Harry's previous life? Can we have some more details?**

As mentioned in the film, Harry was previously at a primary school for children with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. We felt it was important to make the film as present-tense as possible and to show things from his perspective, so we avoided giving much more information or analysis.

Additionally, we were wary of focusing on one aspect of his past, whether that be his dyslexia, family situation or behaviour, since to do so felt both personally inappropriate and unrepresentative of the complex set of factors that made up his life before Year 7. We were keen not to reduce Harry to a specific condition or a set of statistics that might make it easier for an audience to conclude that his situation is a unique result of his very specific circumstances. This is a story about inequality, one that affects a huge number of children, and we felt it was important not to let the 'system' off the hook.

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<sup>1</sup> The Sutton Trust, Class Differences: Ethnicity and Disadvantage Report, 2016: <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/class-differences-ethnicity-and-disadvantage/>

**9. The timescales between when Harry returned to school in Autumn term Year 8 and him being told the school could no longer support him seemed quick. What were the timescales here?**

Condensing almost two years of footage into 85 minutes inevitably comes with compromises, and this is one of those. As Year 8 progressed, the school tried many different approaches that we couldn't find time to include, or that we decided not to, because Harry was unaware of them and the film is from his point of view. (For example one of the main reasons he went back into the main class was on the assessment and advice of an Educational Psychologist).

Although there was a long process as the local authority, school and Grant explored different options, Harry's personal experience was one of his inevitable departure once he had his sudden loss in confidence. In the spirit of the way the film is made, this felt a 'truer' way to frame the narrative.

**10. Where is Harry now? How is he doing? Is he being supported?**

Harry remained at the specialist school that he moved to at the end of the film, taking functional English, Maths and Science classes. He took his exams in summer 2019 and is now exploring his options for further education, including the possibility of an apprenticeship. He's desperate to earn his own money, travel as much as possible and regularly meets the film team for a catch-up at Nando's on Feltham High Street.

**11. Where are Grant, Sophie and the School now? Are they being supported?**

Grant says in the film "I try to stay in my bubble... how am I going to know where I'm going if I can't read?" yet following his attendance at the film's festival premiere in central London, which was a really positive experience, Grant applied for his and Harry's passports and they have since visited France twice and Spain. Grant is also continuing his reading and writing lessons from home to improve his literacy skills.



Meanwhile, Sophie has bought a house in Feltham and remained Head of Year for the class we see in the film. They took their GCSEs in summer 2019. She is now on sabbatical, having adopted a child.

The school has continued to develop the [Reach Children's Hub](#) which has received significant investment from Save the Children to develop a blueprint to support vulnerable families with children aged 0-5 years old as well as Feltham Futures funding to help young people plan for after they leave school. You can read some reflections about the need for the Hub [here](#).

## 12. What do you hope the impact of H IS FOR HARRY will be?

**“Documentaries help create culture, and culture leads change”**

- Impact Guide, Doc Society

We are firm believers in this statement. Social mobility in the UK has stalled, and educational outcomes are not fair; your background should not dictate how well you do in life. It doesn't have to be this way. Evidence shows that early years intervention can transform a child's life chances, and we are using the film as a call to action for parents, teachers, children, young people, policymakers and politicians.

Specifically, the film has screened to MPs in Westminster, to the OECD in Paris, staff at the Department for Education and attendees at the Conservative Party Conference. It has been sponsored by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation for an outreach campaign, has been used by Save the Children in its early years campaign and is due to screen at a myriad of other conferences and festivals.

H IS FOR HARRY is a tool to strengthen and grow an existing community of support, activism, education and outreach (including partnering with a number of charities). We are always looking for opportunities to help spark and shape debate and maximise the impact of the film with our **'Host Your Own Screening' campaign**.

For more information please visit: [www.hisforharry.com/takeaction](http://www.hisforharry.com/takeaction)

## 13. Filmmaker Biographies

Co-directors Edward Owles and Jaime Taylor co-founded and run **Postcode Films**, an award-winning documentary production company.

Jaime was a teacher until 2009 when she decided to move into filmmaking. She has worked as a development producer with the BBC and Producer with Century Films on the BAFTA-nominated, RTS and double-Grierson winning 'The Secret History of Our Streets', described in the Guardian as "wonderful...it prodded your brain awake as it broke your heart."

Ed has shot and directed films across the globe for the last 12 years for broadcast, festival and online. His previous feature documentary 'The Auction House: A Tale of Two Brothers' screened at festivals around the world and was described by The Hollywood Reporter as "tremendously vivid and expertly entertaining."

**Mercurial Pictures** was founded in 2015 by Jon McGoh to create socially-engaged films that share a vision for a better world, informed by empathetic, nuanced storytelling. Jon was part of Sheffield DocFest's flagship Future Producer Program. As a Governor at Reach Academy, Jon was essential in building trust and access for the Directors.

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## 9. Toolkit Feedback

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We are seeking feedback and insights that will help us expand on the screening toolkit, **Vision for Change** and how H IS FOR HARRY can be used to make the most impact.

Your feedback is very important to us.

**Please take five minutes to complete our simple online questionnaire here:**

**<https://forms.gle/yGSVqwhoDtVzvbcN7>**

Alternatively, send feedback directly to us on **[info@hisforharry.com](mailto:info@hisforharry.com)**



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## 10. Links and Resources

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### JOIN A GROWING COMMUNITY OF ACTIVISM

**1 in 5 children** in England cannot read well by the age of 11.<sup>1</sup>

**Children** born into communities with the most serious literacy challenges have some of the **lowest life expectancies**.<sup>2</sup>

**1 in 8 disadvantaged children** in the UK don't own a single book.<sup>3</sup>

The H IS FOR HARRY Vision for Change, and wider campaign supported by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, is a call for action to unlock opportunities for all our children.

The film tells a new story about:

- The impact of illiteracy on children's futures;
- The complex issues that lock families in poverty and hold children back from achieving their potential;
- The need for schools, education and communities to work together to drive change;
- The need to listen to children and young people.

**For full details and to download our Vision for Change, visit:**  
**[hisforharry.com/takeaction](https://hisforharry.com/takeaction)**

To find out more about JRF's work on communicating more effectively with the public about poverty go to:  
**[jrf.org.uk/our-work/talking-about-poverty](https://jrf.org.uk/our-work/talking-about-poverty)**

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- 1 The Reading Agency, Reading Facts:  
<https://readingagency.org.uk/about/impact/002-reading-facts-1/>
  - 2 Joseph Rowntree Foundation, UK Poverty 2018 findings:  
<https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/uk-poverty-2018>
  - 3 National Literacy Trust, Book ownership and reading outcomes report, 2017:  
<https://literacytrust.org.uk/research-services/research-reports/book-ownership-and-reading-outcomes/>

## TAKE ACTION

### **Become a reading volunteer for a child or adult with:**

National Literacy Trust: Young Readers programme  
Reading Agency  
Beanstalk Charity  
Learn2Love2Read  
Doorstep Library



### **Find out how you can help a child as early in their life as possible:**

School Home Support  
National Literacy Trust - Early Years  
Save the Children  
Action for Children  
National Children's Bureau



### **See how you can help improve social mobility and widen opportunities for all young people:**

Achievement for All  
The Fair Education Alliance  
The Equality Trust  
The Sutton Trust  
The Joseph Rowntree Foundation



### **Inspired? Why not become a teacher or expand your teaching career:**

Get Into Teaching  
Teach First  
Now Teach



### **Are you a teaching professional that is committed to improving the outcomes of vulnerable children and reducing exclusion?**

The Difference

### **Looking for support as a parent or carer?:**

Family Links  
Achievement for All  
Parentkind  
Family and Schools Together programme (Save the Children)



## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE FILM

### Coverage of the film in national and industry press:

“Shines a light on a scarcely believable fact” - [The Observer](#)

“An intimate insight...into a national problem” - [The Telegraph](#)

“Casting a spotlight on one of the biggest education scandals in Britain...heartbreaking”  
- [The Sunday Times](#)

“Wonderfully moving” - [BBC Radio London](#)

“An energetic and urgent documentary” - [Talha Burki, The Lancet Journal](#)

“The inspirational story of a teacher reaching his or her students to help them succeed and elevate their low expectations of themselves, amidst the seemingly insurmountable obstacles that society erects, is the stuff of Hollywood” - [Film Inquiry](#)

IntoFilm: [‘Literacy and the class divide in documentary ‘H is for Harry’](#)

Open City Documentary Festival: [‘Insights from Ed Owles on Impact and Engagement’](#)

School Library Association: [H is for Harry – and thoughts on literacy, libraries and laureates](#)

TES Article: [‘Harry’s story shows the challenge of illiteracy’](#)

[NAHT School Leadership podcast](#) with the directors.

Watch Feltham [MP Seema Malhotra mention film](#) in House of Commons resulting in an [Early Day Motion](#). An article was also included in [HOUSE Magazine](#).

Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) @HisforHarryFilm / #HisforHarry

Interested in becoming a partner and advocate for H IS FOR HARRY?

Contact us: [info@hisforharry.com](mailto:info@hisforharry.com)