



MERCURIAL PICTURES PRESENTS H IS FOR HARRY IN ASSOCIATION WITH POSTCODE FILMS
 DIRECTORS EDWARD OWLES & JAIME TAYLOR PRODUCER JON MCGOH EDITORS MATTHEW SCHOLDS & EMILIANO BATTISTA
 ORIGINAL MUSIC MIKE BROOKES & PABLO SCOPINARO EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS FOR BUNGALOW TOWN RACHEL WEXLER AND JEZ LEWIS

www.HISFORHARRY.COM

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H is for Harry





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Mercurial Pictures Presents

His for Harry

A Film by Ed Owles & Jaime Taylor

www.hisforharry.com

in Association with [Postcode Films](#)

and Executive Produced by [Bungalow Town](#)

World Premiere: 6th September 2018

UK Release Date: 7th March 2019

Running Time: 86 minutes

Trailer: vimeo.com/288524874

UK Distribution:

Managed by [Mercurial Pictures](#) // Jon McGoh in Partnership with [Dartmouth Films](#)
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Download Stills: <http://bit.ly/2M0w6MP>

SHORT SYNOPSIS

What does it take to change a child's life? 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 overcome the illiteracy ingrained across generations of his family? 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.



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Harry with his teacher, Sophie

LONG SYNOPSIS

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

“Tryin’ to stay alive” - Harry

H IS FOR HARRY is the story of the relationship between one charismatic boy, Harry, and his teacher, Sophie. Harry arrives at Reach Academy in Feltham the third generation in his family to be illiterate. Sophie, in her first year as a qualified teacher, runs a specialist English group where she meets Harry and tries to help him catch up so that he can re-join his friends.

H IS FOR HARRY shows Harry from his first day at school and throughout the school year as we see him struggling to read and write in Sophie’s class. We meet Grant, Harry’s father, who fights tooth and nail to keep Harry in school, as they attend regular meetings about both Harry’s progress and misbehaviour in school. We feel Grant’s frustrations as he is unable to help his son learn. Grant hopes Harry can stay in mainstream school, the only place he believes can ‘save him’ from a life of illiteracy and poverty.

By intimately portraying Harry’s journey towards adulthood, brimming with humour and heartache, we show the world from the child’s point of view. Depicting the often-unnoticed impact that material and aspirational poverty can have on a child’s future, H IS FOR HARRY is at the crux of current debates about society’s growing inequality.

FILMMAKERS STATEMENT // NOTE TO PRESS:

Our approach: Empathy, not blame

As filmmakers our intention has been to tell a human story which speaks to wider issues. Crucially we chose to make the film from the point of view of the child, because we felt that the child’s voice is so often lost in debates around education and social mobility.

Harry’s story is hard to watch at times and can stir emotions, not least anger at his predicament and those of his classmates. It is tempting to try and find a focus for that anger. We have been assiduous in avoiding the ‘blame game,’ which to our mind offers no solutions, except perhaps some catharsis. It is common in public debate to



find a scapegoat: The parent, the school, the local authority, central government or even the child, but we seek to avoid that way of thinking. Harry's story reveals a complex, systemic issue.

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. These sad facts are in evidence up and down the country. Vilifying individuals or organizations is not going to make the difference that is needed. What is required is a nuanced debate about the issues and deep thinking about why the system is having these tragic outcomes.

Good policy can only be made by understanding and empathizing with the end-user of that policy – in this case the child, and parent in a low income community – and our aim has been to create a film which hopefully enables that to happen, or at least starts the process.

CONTEXT

H is for Harry is a film for our times. As a white working class boy, the segment of society which statistically does the least well at school, Harry's story is emblematic of many such children and communities that feel left behind. Whilst there are multiple statistics surrounding this issue, seldom do we actually see or hear from the children themselves.

Barack Obama once said that 'education is the civil rights issue of our time'¹ and, in Harry, we have a character who embodies the injustice in the education system. How can it be that, in 2018, a child can

be the third generation in his British born-and-bred family to go through the education system and come out illiterate?

At one point in the film, Harry challenges his dad: 'You did okay' [despite being illiterate], only for his father to say 'it's not like when I was at school – these days you need to be able to read and write to get on in life.' His father's hopes and dreams for his son are defined by his own experience – he just wants him to learn to read and write - and he also recognises that the world is changing.

1 The Washington Post: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2017/live-updates/trump-white-house/real-time-fact-checking-and-analysis-of-trumps-address-to-congress/obama-also-called-education-the-civil-rights-issue-of-our-time/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.b32c117f78fc> [accessed 1/3/17]

Harry learning to read and write



White working-class boys are the worst performing demographic group in the UK education system. To take just one statistic; whereas approximately 60% of the overall population secure at least 5 GCSE grades at the government's expected standard, only 26% of white working class boys on free school meals achieve this level.²

We started making our film before the Brexit referendum occurred, but in the wake of the vote, certain scenes in the film take on a new resonance. Harry's father, Grant, talks about how the education system has let him down and is now letting his son down, whilst in the background he loyally flies the St George's Cross in his garden.

We are passionate about the topic of educational disadvantage and have dedicated ourselves to telling this story for the past four years. Our approach has always been to place the child's point of view at the centre of the film with no talking heads and no narration. This choice stems from our underlying belief in the power of empathy and that good public policy is dependent on understanding and empathising with the 'end users' of those policies. We believe that a politician in Westminster, or a parent in Bolton will engage more in this topic by getting to know Harry and understanding his predicament through his own words and eyes – through his story - than they will by being told what to think by experts, reports and statistics.

KEY STATISTICS

- 1 in 5 children in England cannot read well by the age of 11³
- 4.1 Million British children live in poverty⁴
- 1 in 8 disadvantaged children in the UK don't own a single book⁵

Harry with his teacher, Sophie





“...When I’m older, I don’t want to be the person who’s left out, living on the streets, basically the aim for me is like to have a better life than my dad. He was like worse than me always getting kicked out of every single school...”

- Harry

Harry in catch-up English lessons





Feltham

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT: JAIME TAYLOR

"I come from a very similar place to Harry's neighbourhood, with the same levels of intergenerational 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 potential or agency to create any kind of future for themselves. None of us were.

The worst, most debilitating effect of poverty on young people is the poverty of aspiration: 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 break the cycle of poverty? And is it actually right to do this? I know from my own experience how this can sever ties to family, friends and community for good. In these communities even subtle differences – your changing accent, "speaking different" – 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."



IMPACT CAMPAIGN

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, policy-makers and politicians to do something.

We are using 'H is for Harry' as a tool to strengthen and grow an existing community of support, activism, education and outreach. We are partnering with a number of charities to maximise the impact of the film.

THE FILMMAKERS

JAIME TAYLOR - DIRECTOR

First-time feature film director Jaime Taylor left a career in teaching in 2009 to make documentaries & co-found Postcode Films. She has worked as a development producer with the BBC & Producer with Century Films on the Bafta nominated, RTS and double Grierson winning 'The Secret History of Our Streets'. She worked for 4 years across both series of the critically acclaimed documentary, described in the Guardian as “wonderful...it prodded your brain awake as it broke your heart.”

ED OWLES - DIRECTOR

Ed Owles has shot & directed films across the globe for the last 10 years for broadcast, festival & online. His first feature documentary screened at festivals around the world, was broadcast on Al-Jazeera, and was described by The Hollywood Reporter as “tremendously vivid & expertly entertaining”. Ed is the co-founder of award-winning production company Postcode Films which specialises in educational projects and programming.

JON MCGOH - PRODUCER

Harry in a spelling test

Jon McGoh is an entrepreneur running a successful education company, which has funded the development of the film. Jon is part of Sheffield DocFest's flagship Future Producer Program. As a Governor at Reach Academy, Jon has been essential in building trust and access for the Directors.

CREDITS

Directors: Jaime Taylor and Ed Owles

Producer: Jon McGoh

Executive Producer: Rachel Wexler and Jez Lewis

Creative Producer: Isla Badenoch

Editors: Matt Scholes and Emiliano Battista

Composers: Mike Brooks and Pablo Scopinaro

Post-Production: RoundTable



KEY PRODUCTION TEAM BIOGRAPHIES

Executive Producer Rachel Wexler is a producer & exec producer at multiple-award winning Bungalow Town Productions, making distinctive docs for a worldwide audience. She devised & runs the Future Producers programme with Sheffield Docfest & Creative Skillset.

Executive Producer Jez Lewis is a producer & executive producer at Bungalow Town Productions, with a strong track record in theatrical, festival and other forms of distribution as well as worldwide broadcast.

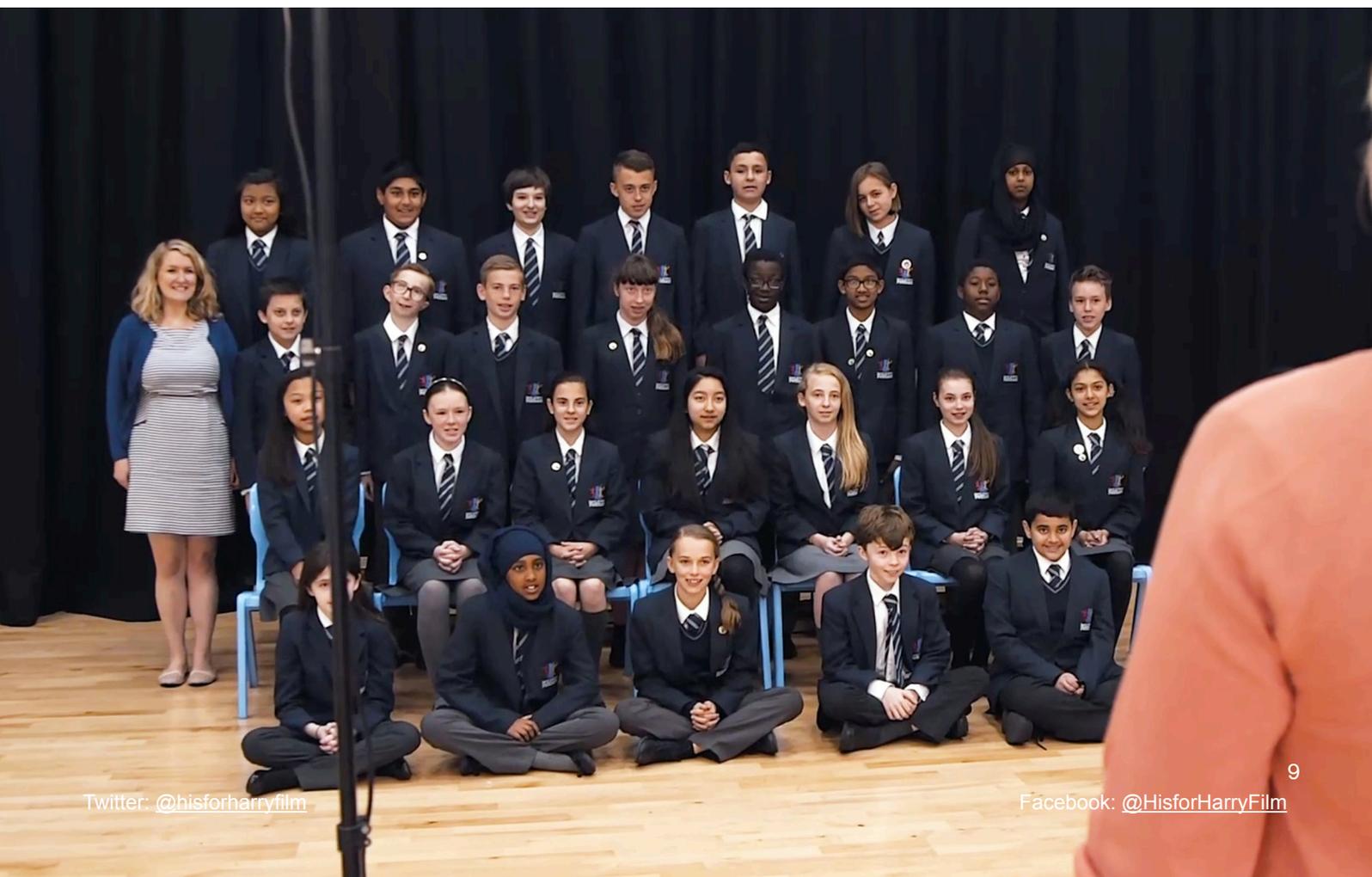
Editor Matt Scholes won accolades in 2015 for the BAFTA nominated 'A Syrian Love Story' voted by the Guardian as the 3rd best film of 2015 & described as an 'unmissable documentary.' Matt is based in NYC & London, where he edits films for broadcast, theatrical release and online.

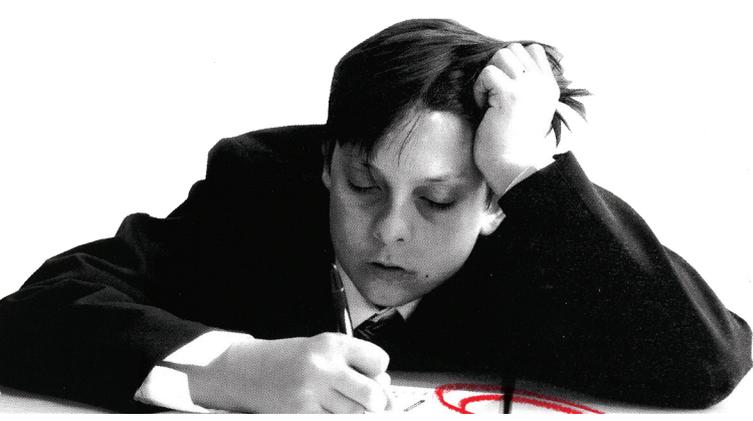
Editor Emiliano Battista is an award winning editor of feature documentaries, dramas and television programs. His films include 3 ½ minutes (Special Jury Prize Sundance 2015, HBO), How is your Fish Today? with Chinese novelist and film-maker Xiaolu Guo (Sundance 2007) and the films of Eva Weber (The Solitary Life of Cranes).

Creative Producer Isla Badenoch is a documentary filmmaker, creative producer and visual artist. Isla has an MA from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts and has developed several international documentary films on subjects ranging from religious tolerance in Sierra Leone, the Danish UN General Secretary, to families surviving baby loss.

Composers Mike Brooks and Pablo Scopinaro specialise in writing scores for film, TV and games. They possess a unique creative sensitivity and passion for storytelling. Pablo is currently completing a Masters degree in Composing for Film & TV at the prestigious National Film and Television School (NFTS).

Harry, Sophie and classmates on the first day of school





H is for Harry

H is for Harry // World Premiere Feedback

From the Contributors:

'One of the best nights of my life' - Grant, Harry's Dad

"What a fantastic evening. Great film. You made us laugh, you made us cry. You showed the true colours of a caring school with fabulous teachers. Well you did great and i hope the film continues to be shown for a long time to come. Stay in touch. Morgan and I thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience."

- Parent of Morgan (secondary character)

VIP's & Outreach Partners Feedback (details available upon request):

"Incredibly important subject, powerfully delivered, great to provoke an essential conversation"

"There is no more important film in this year's festival" "Compelling and tragic"

"A powerful insight into the challenges face by children left behind by school"

"A reminder of how far we've come, and how much furthers we've got to go"

Audience Response:

"Funny, moving, emotional, shows the dedication of teachers in difficult circumstances'

"Captivating, thought-provoking, poignant with the perfect balance of humour"

"Searing social cinema with nuance and heart; absolutely vital viewing"

"An important film that shows how overwhelming it can be for children and adults with impaired literacy. How it can affect all those around them and the strategies schools have in supporting them, even with fantastic teachers"

"A beautiful, complex observational piece that tells a very different story without lecturing"

"An honest portrayal of the challenges facing children in the UK today"

"Kept almost crying, at the raw difficulty of Harry's situation in its complexity"

"Excellent portrayal of life in a school in a challenging area form the point of view of the young people"

Press Quotes:

"Casting a spotlight on one of the biggest education scandals in Britain...heartbreaking"

- [Sian Griffiths, The Sunday Times](#)

"A national scandal that the life chances of so many children are being doomed by their inability to read"

- [Joanna Trollope, The Sunday Times](#)





His for Harry

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