

Getting Our Kids to Read More Books

*AUTHOR PEN PALS – A NEW INITIATIVE TO RAISE LITERACY LEVELS AND MAKE
READING COOL AGAIN!*

In 2023 children’s authors Kate Foster and Dee White started Author Pen Pals, a new initiative to get kids excited about reading. The programme inspired by UK-based Book PenPals, connects Australian authors and illustrators with Australian schools, especially those whose lack of funds or remote location means they rarely, if ever, get to host authors or illustrators.

Author Pen Pals pairs a book creator with a group of primary school students, sending them a minimum of four postcards or letters throughout the school year. Students send two responses, and everything is delivered the old-fashioned way via snail mail. It’s an opportunity for children to ask questions and discuss books with the people who create them.

In 2023 over 200 authors and illustrators participated, from debut to emerging to seasoned creators, and approximately 90 schools across all states and territories and over 250 individual classes signed up.

“Dee and I are super excited and so very proud to take our programme into its second year,” says Kate Foster. “We have an impressive list of creators already on board for 2024, and we’ll continue to accept new creator and school sign ups right through until early next year.”

Nurturing strong literacy skills in children has multiple benefits, from improving memory and concentration, boosting performance and critical thinking, and developing empathy, stronger mental health, and self-image.

Dee White says: “The Author Pen Pals programme provides some much-needed support for educators and makes books and reading cool while celebrating Australia’s homegrown talent.”

Rachael Hind, Teacher Librarian at St Thomas Aquinas Primary School, one of the many participating schools in 2023, says: “Classes have loved receiving letters and packages from our authors and enjoyed replying to questions the authors asked. It has been wonderful to get to know the work of authors new to us and their books are now very hot property in our library.”

If you'd like more information about Author Pen Pals, or to schedule an interview with Kate, please contact her on 0431 636 825, or Dee on 0438 730 218 or email them both at authorpenpals@gmail.com