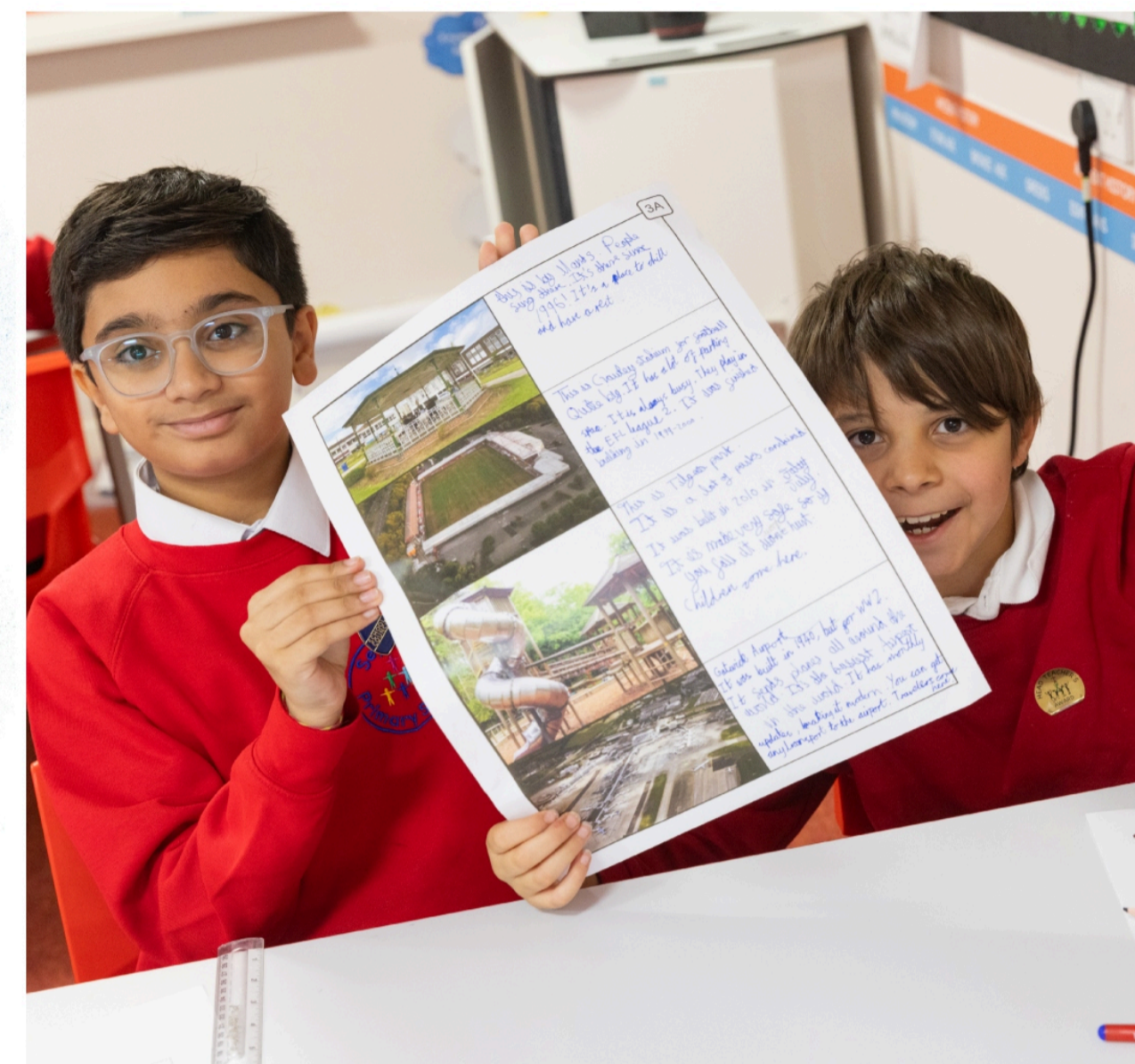


# Guidebooks written by children for adults: award-winning artists Andy Field and Beckie Darlington launch the next instalments in their renowned Book of Your Town series, now featuring Crawley and Thetford.



Children from Seymour Primary School working on The Book of Crawley (front cover in the centre, credit Alison Guile). Photo credit Ian Greenland.

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“We recommend you read this guidebook in Thetford. Read it in the town centre or read it at the library... Do not attempt to read this book in a cave with no torch or if you are falling headfirst out of the sky. Do not read it in the cemetery where there is a perturbing silence.”

An excerpt from The Book of Thetford

Part creative imaginings and part actual guide, The Book of Your Town is a series of guidebooks to a town or a city created by up to 250 local school children aged between 8 and 11. Written and edited by children, the book allows readers to experience a town or city through the eyes of that place’s youngest inhabitants.

Two new books are due to be released this year: **The Book of Crawley on 24 April in partnership with Creative Playground Crawley, and The Book of Thetford on 16 May, commissioned by the Norfolk & Norwich Festival.**

The books depict famous and not-so-famous sites, things that children miss that don’t exist anymore, imaginary and adventurous walks, maps of local neighbourhood with various places – what is the best place to keep a tiger? which place will disappear first? The children also design a new space in their town such as a park or a community centre and put only important things in there, they also suggest a list of improvements for their town (pet cinema anyone?).

“On our streets everyone is so kind. They smile and say hello in the morning. There are parks nearby and secret passages. We can see people playing football outside and when a train passes by we wave at the people inside the train. There are fields with long grass and huge brown (we think poisonous) mushrooms. There are houses on the side with garages. There are messy front gardens and lots of different coloured cats. It’s very peaceful and there’s lots of oxygen. Every weekend our friends knock on our doors and we go outside to play.”

An excerpt from The Book of Crawley.

This creative project is an opportunity to look beyond the familiar and the predictable. To see the sights that children deem important, to follow both their favourite walks and their favourite ways of walking, to navigate through real and imagined streets in their footsteps. Whether a visitor or a local resident, this project is a way of expanding the reader’s knowledge about a place and an invitation to participate in a conversation about the very different values and meanings that adults and children ascribe to the things they encounter in the world around them.

**Miss Aslam from Langley Green Primary School, Crawley, said:** “I was surprised that the children took such ownership and worked so collaboratively together to make sure they had some excellent artistic responses for the project! I have learnt that the children care just as much about the changes in their town as the adults and it was evident from their ideas in the project that they feel strongly about their space!”

**Sharing a conversation she had with a pupil, who is one of the Book of Crawley editors, she added:** “He learnt more about his town when doing the project and he learnt that he was really creative and was good at getting/ thinking of new ideas! He said that at first when he found out he was a bit nervous and unsure what it would be like but then he enjoyed it so much and was really happy to be an editor. He also said it was the best thing that he was chosen and he loves the zoom sessions!”

**The first version of The Book of Your Town was created in 2021 in St Helens,** commissioned by social arts agency Heart of Glass as a way of bringing together young people and policy makers to think about their relationships to the town. The project won the Liverpool City Region Impact Award for Improving Education and Learning in 2021.

Beckie and Andy continued the series with **The Book of Brighton & Hove** and then took the concept to the international stage with **The Book of São Paulo (Brazil), Riga (Latvia) and Kuopio (Finland).** Future plans also include books in Poland, Hungary, Latvia and Ukraine, as well as UK editions including Cambridge and Bedford.



Clockwise from top left: The Books Of – St Helen's, Brighton & Hove, São Paulo, Kuopio and Riga.

Also reflecting on the connection young people have with the place where they live, Beckie and Andy's previous work includes **News News News**, a television news show made by children for adults, recorded in front of a studio audience and broadcast live on the internet; **Lookout** which invites an adult audience to meet with a group of local children somewhere high-up overlooking a town or city to participate in a one-to-one encounter in which together they look out at the view and imagine how the place they see before them will be different many years in the future.

In April this year they are also opening **The Museum of Small and Overlooked Things** (Das Museum der Kleinen und Unwichtigen Dinge) in Mainz, Germany, a physical archive of objects, collected and curated by the young people of Mainz, that they care about or value, but that adults think are unimportant.