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Thornhill School's 'dream' library opens after parents' 'relentless' fundraising efforts

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Head teacher Jenny Lewis cuts the ribbon at the launch of the new library at Thornhill School in Barnsbury - Credit: Thornhill School

Thornhill Primary School's new "dream library" has finally opened, thanks to the efforts of parents who raised more than £150,000 to build it.

Youngsters at the school in Thornhill Road, Barnsbury, took part in workshops with Jan Kattein Architects, which culminated in pupils making 400 models from cardboard boxes with their own ideas for the space.

The final product - built in an unused part of a Victorian outbuilding in the playground - comes complete with elevated reading nooks; books are kept in themed browsing bays; mobile book trolleys can be re-arranged to achieve different looks; and a stage area provides for author readings and role play.

Parents were the driving force behind the four-year campaign.

They set up the school's charitable Thornhill Foundation, and raised money through fun runs and a comedy night supported by Russell Howard, Katherine Ryan and Jon Richardson.

Some parents pledged money they saved on free lunches via Islington's free school meals policy – earning them the moniker: "meal donors".

Funding also came from the council and sponsors including its principal backer Islington Square, the firm behind the new Upper Street development.

Works were completed last July, and following the re-opening of schools after the third lockdown, the new library finally had its official launch.

Head teacher Jenny Lewis cut the red tape, and thanked the Thornhill Foundation for their "relentless" fundraising.

Gareth Marriott, design director at Jan Kattein Architects, said: "Thornhill Primary School now has a new library, but as a result of the co-design process it also has a bunch of budding architects and an even more tightly knit community who are proud to be associated with the school.

"The school wants pupils to develop a love for learning, and its new library is integral to achieving this mission, empowering children from as young as four to script an autonomous learning experience in an inspirational environment."



Thornhill School's new library - Credit: Jan Kattein Architects

The foundation has secured funding for a school librarian and the cost to replenish the book store over the next few years.

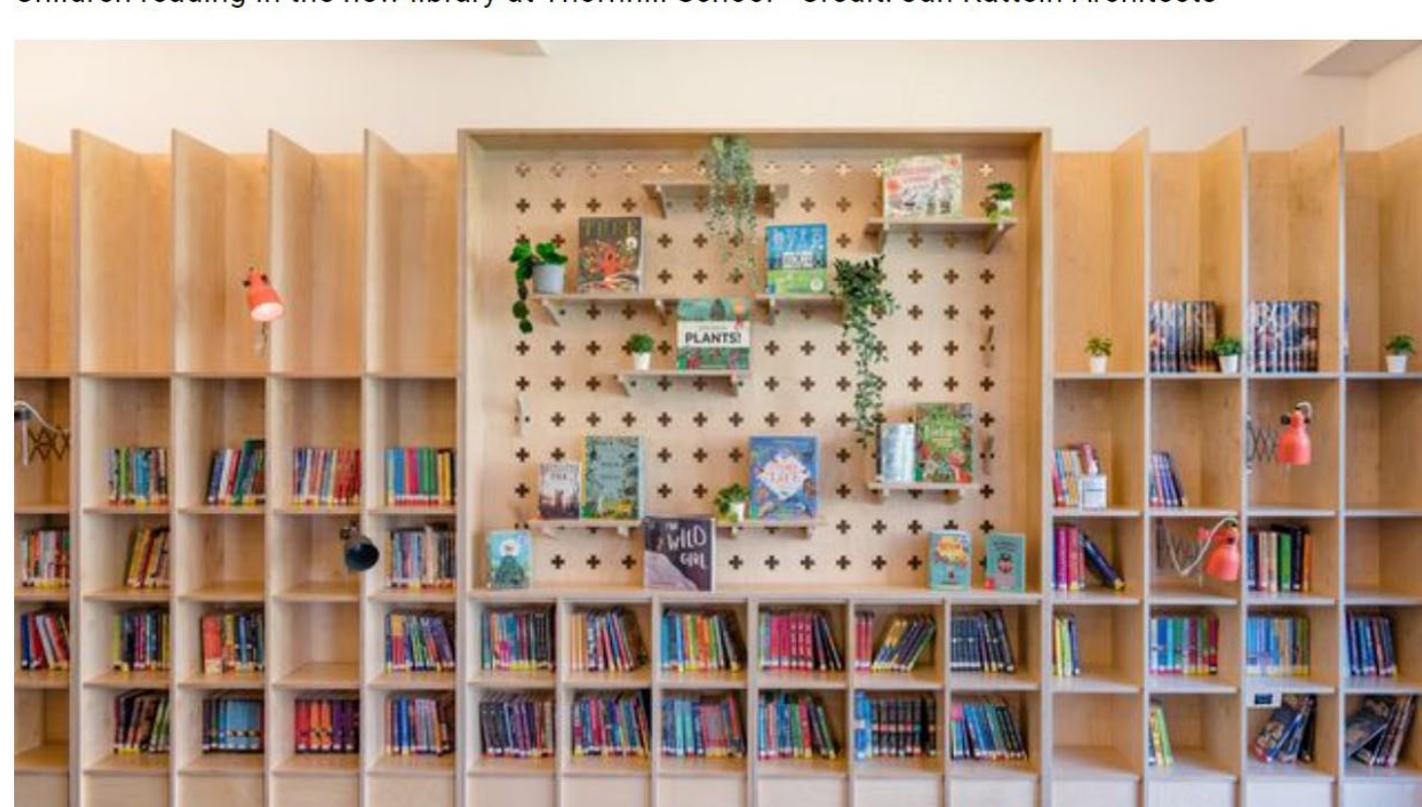
This week Children's Laureate Cressida Cowell was supported by her predecessors, Michael Rosen and Quentin Blake, as she called on the government to ring-fencing £100m a year for school libraries.



Youngsters reading in Thornhill School's new library - Credit: Jan Kattein Architects



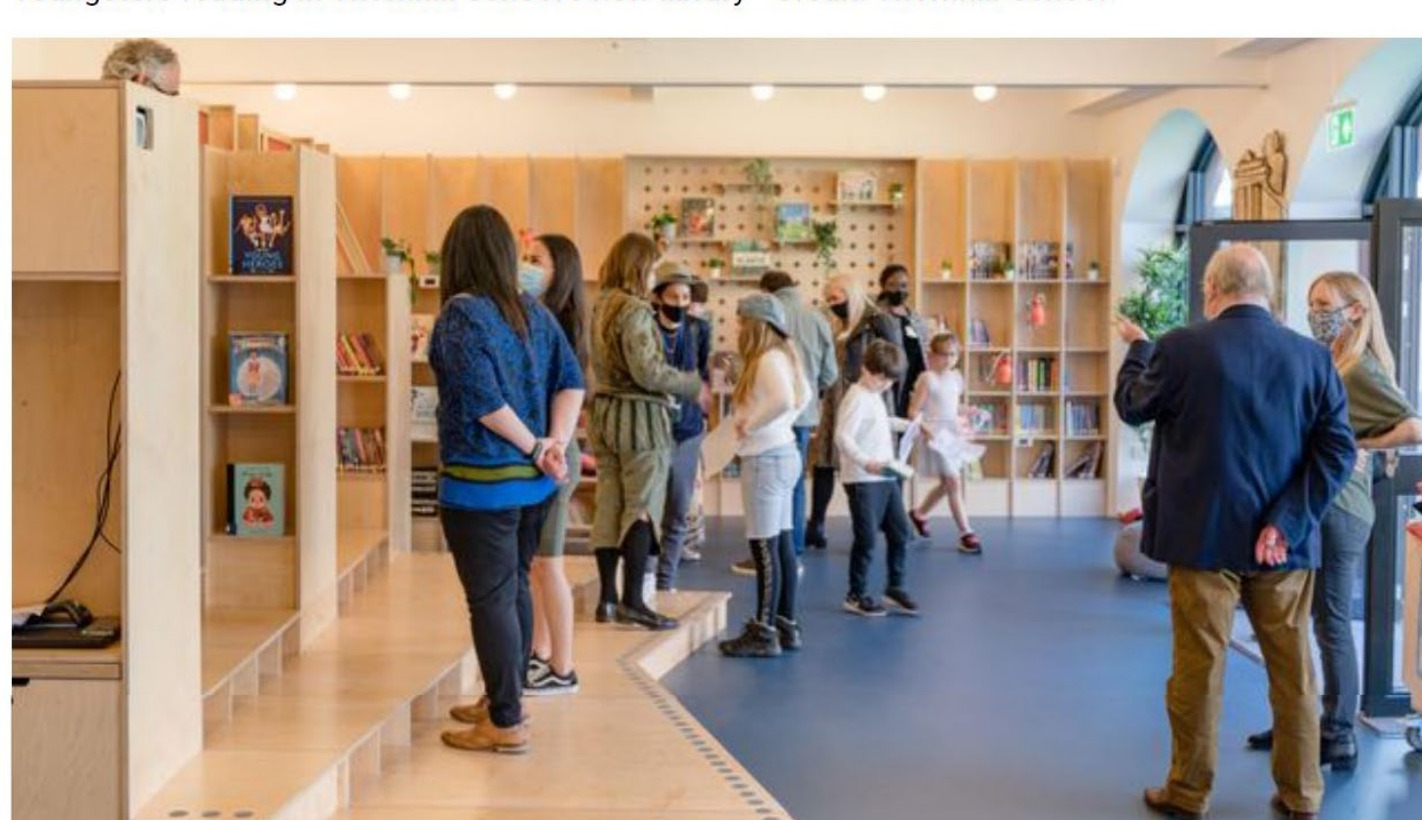
Children reading in the new library at Thornhill School - Credit: Jan Kattein Architects



The new library at Thornhill School has finished completion - Credit: Thornhill School



Youngsters reading in Thornhill School's new library - Credit: Thornhill School



The launch of Thornhill School's new library - Credit: Thornhill School

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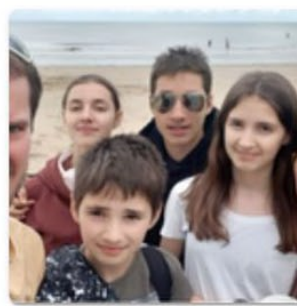
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