

# is there something in the post for me?

**A**N award-winning programme, which encourages children to read and aims to improve how well they do at school, has been extended to include adopted children.

The Letterbox Club was set up by the national charity the Booktrust in partnership with the University of Leicester in 2003. The programme focuses on improving the education of children aged seven to 13 who are in care.

As part of the scheme children receive a personalised parcel of books, maths activities and stationery every month for six months with a letter addressed to them at their home address.

This postal programme has been made available to children and their families as post-adoption support.

The main benefits are:

- Increased involvement of children in their own learning.
- Gains in reading and number work for many children.
- Enjoyment for the child in receiving personalised parcels.
- Increased involvement of their carers and parents.

Tracey Beaker author Jacqueline Wilson became a patron of the Letterbox Club in 2007. She said: "I think the Letterbox Club is such an exciting and worthwhile project. It's great that looked-after children get their own special parcel of books and stationery and stickers. It's like a little birthday present every month. I'm delighted to be involved – I think it's a wonderful way of introducing children to the joys of reading."

Parcel dispatch is designed to begin at the end of one school year, go through the summer holidays (when educational attainment levels tend to drop off), and culminate with parcels that children receive as they begin a new school year.



There are four parcels:

- **Letterbox Blue** - Designed for children at the end of Year 3, to follow them into the start of Year 4
- **Letterbox Red** - Designed for children at the end of Year 5, to follow them into the start of Year 6
- **Letterbox Green** - Designed for children at the end of Year 7, to follow them into the start of Year 8
- **Letterbox Yellow** - Designed for children in Key Stage 2 (ages seven to 11) working below National Curriculum Level 1, with additional educational needs. ■

*If you would like to know how to sign up for Letterbox Club 2013, please email [leanne.cobb@booktrust.org.uk](mailto:leanne.cobb@booktrust.org.uk) or telephone 020 8516 2993*

## flourishing artwork project

**F**LOURISH, a national programme promoting artwork by care-experienced children and young people in the UK, is seeking submissions for a brand new exhibition. The deadline is Friday 22 June 2012.

It will be the seventh annual exhibition of its kind and in the past has featured work from children and young people who have encountered a broad range of care, having experienced adoption, secure accommodation, fostering, support for special needs or being cared for by a family member other than their parents.

Flourish provides opportunities for artists to share their work with the public and each other, with an emphasis on expressing what matters to them most.

They are given the chance to speak to visitors about their artwork and receive valuable feedback and encouragement. It is not intended to be a competition but more a way of showcasing the talents of these unique artists.

Flourish was the first national programme to promote artwork by young people with such a diverse history of care. It was set up as a response to looked-after artists' frustration about a lack of opportunity to show their work. Artists may be looked after by

carers, be fostered or adopted, in secure accommodation or have special needs. Flourish celebrates talent and hopes to encourage confidence and skills toward creative careers.

Artwork is featured in a catalogue and promoted in a sensitive and open way. Artists are invited to the exhibitions, with the chance to hear feedback, and many attend a gallery for the first time. Flourish invites its artists to speak about the project at events and with the press, be involved with running exhibitions and inform the future of the initiative.

Flourish artists have gone on to university to study art, volunteered at galleries and held solo shows. Many artists have sold their work as a result of being exhibited. A Flourish board has been set up with artists from 2006, which select artworks for new shows and advise on policy.

Artists wishing to take part should make a formal application, give details about their work and submit an artist's statement highlighting aspirations and telling their story. ■

*If you are interested in applying or know of anyone who might be, you can read more and download the application form at the Flourish website at [www.flourish-art.org/](http://www.flourish-art.org/)*

**"This exhibition is unbelievably good; when I first came in I found it hard to believe the artists were so young – but what lives they have already lived!"**  
(Comment from a visitor to Flourish)

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