



28<sup>th</sup> May 2024

## **Jamie Oliver opens newly renovated garden at Essex school with help from British Garden Centres**

**British Garden Centres recently assisted chef and author Jamie Oliver as he opened a newly renovated garden at Great Bradfords Junior School in Braintree, Essex, to mark the publication of his second children's book, BILLY AND THE EPIC ESCAPE. The garden renovation, sponsored by Puffin Books, was significantly enhanced by the generous donation of plants from Braintree Garden Centre, part of the BGC family.**

The garden features planting spaces for flowers, herbs, fruits, and vegetables, alongside brand-new reading nooks and bookshelves, providing children with serene outdoor spaces to enjoy stories. The renovation was carried out by local landscaper LEX Building Services, with the vibrant array of plants donated by Braintree Garden Centre, which the pupils will enjoy as they learn about gardening and nature.

During the visit, Jamie talked to pupils from the school including members of the gardening club, and student librarians, as well as pupils who struggle with reading – something Jamie himself experienced as a child due to his diagnosis with dyslexia. He shared his experiences with the children and listened to theirs, discussing the idea of it being okay to do things your way, particularly that there are many ways to enjoy and create stories.

Speaking about his book, **Jamie Oliver** said: “The brilliant thing about stories – whether you read them or listen to them – is that they can transport you to magical worlds and take you on incredible adventures. But stories can also help you understand yourself and show you that everyone has different ways of doing things. And that’s why I’m super excited to be publishing my second book, which I hope will open new worlds to the children that read – or listen! – to Billy’s new adventure.”

**Francesca Dow, MD at Puffin Books**, commented: “When Jamie first spoke about his idea for Billy and the Giant Adventure, he inspired me with his story and his passion that as a parent or carer, above most things you want for your child to love good healthy food and love reading. The two are beautifully intertwined in Jamie's Billy stories. Puffin has always been about sparking children's imaginations, and we're proud to publish many different authors and books to inspire varied tastes. So, it feels very fitting to celebrate BILLY AND THE EPIC ESCAPE, Jamie’s second



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children's book with us, by sponsoring a garden with gorgeous reading spaces uniting these two important factors in childhood development."

**Mr Wrench, Headteacher of Great Bradfords Junior School** said: "We are delighted with our new gardening area. The area has been transformed and is an excellent space for children to enjoy planting and growing along with reading outdoors for pleasure. We can't thank Jamie, his publishers Puffin, British Garden Centres and LEX Building Services enough for this opportunity and the children will love using this space!"

**Lisa Capper of Braintree Garden Centre** said: "Jamie Oliver's dedication to nurturing children's imagination and connection with nature is truly commendable, and the team at Braintree Garden Centre are thrilled to have contributed to the renovation of the garden at Great Bradfords Junior School. We hope the pupils enjoy the garden and explore the vibrant array of plants that will provide enjoyment for years to come."

**ENDS:**

**WORD COUNT: 530**

**Notes to Editors:**

About the business:

British Garden Centres (BGC) is the UK's largest family-owned garden centre group with 62 centres around the country. The group is owned and led by The Stubbs family, who also own and operate Woodthorpe Leisure Park in Lincolnshire. BGC was launched in 1987 with the opening of Woodthorpe Garden Centre funded by brothers Charles and Robert Stubbs. Since 2018 it has expanded rapidly with the acquisition of 50 garden centres allowing it to grow from its heartland to the business it is now with 62 garden centres spread from Carmarthen to Ramsgate, Wimborne to East Durham. The group has a team of 2,700 colleagues working across the garden centres, restaurants, 2 growing nurseries, 4 distribution centres and Woodthorpe Leisure Park and Woody's Restaurant & Bar.

**Social Media**

Facebook: British Garden Centres

Twitter: @BGCentres

Instagram: @BritishGardenCentres

Website: [www.britishgardencentres.com](http://www.britishgardencentres.com)

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About Billy and the Epic Escape:

The book is the thrilling sequel to the 2023's children's hardback debut bestseller BILLY AND THE GIANT ADVENTURE, a magical adventure which celebrates the joy of sharing food with the people you love and doing things your own way. BILLY AND THE EPIC ESCAPE expands on those themes and also explores the power of friendship and the importance looking after the world around you while growing food, introducing young readers to the concept of food provenance.



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Puffin will publish in HB in the UK and TPB in the rest of the world, continuing the illustrator partnership with Mónica Armiño, whose artwork will be included throughout the book. There will also be a simultaneous audio release, produced by Vaudeville, using immersive sound-scaping technology.

The story finds Billy and his best friends Anna, Jimmy and Andy looking forward to a fun summer exploring Waterfall Woods and discovering more about the magic within. But, when the woods come under attack from the mysterious red lady and the Rhythm of the woods is thrown off balance, it seems that the gang might need to come to the rescue . . . again!

Friends old and new reunite in their biggest adventure yet as they race to save Waterfall Woods from a terrifying new villain.

BILLY AND THE EPIC ESCAPE is ideal for children aged seven and above.

BILLY AND THE EPIC ESCAPE also offers a dazzling audiobook experience for children and families, featuring an original immersive soundscape, designed by Vaudeville, that allows readers to step into the world of Waterfall Woods. Jamie Oliver is joined by exciting acting talent such as Mark Strong, Jason Flemyng, Dexter Fletcher and Kadeem Ramsay (as well as special guest appearances from Jools, Daisy, Buddy and River Oliver!), who bring the story to life with engaging characterisations mixed with original music and sound effects. The spell-binding production will create a magical world for readers, including those who may struggle with the written word.

About Libraries for Primaries:

Great Bradfords Junior School is part of World of Stories project, and the Libraries for Primaries campaign, which brings together charities, publishers and businesses to address the lack of investment in primary school libraries, particularly in disadvantaged communities where 1 in 4 primary schools don't have a library. The initiative was founded by the National Literacy Trust and Penguin Books in 2021 and equips primary

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