**Author Dan Freedman talks knife crime, gang culture and sibling rivalry as part of his Northern Ireland school tour**

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**27 February 2020,** This week Dan Freedman, football journalist and creator of the Jamie Johnson books (now television series), visited schools around Northern Ireland to get more children reading and writing in an event series run by [BookTrust](http://bit.ly/BookTrustHomePage), the UK’s largest reading charity.

Over four hundred students from Markethill High School, Newtownhamilton High School, St Paul’s High School Bessbrook and Newbridge Integrated College were visited by Dan where he enthusiastically engaged the young audience by sharing stories about his life as an author and his time as official reporter on two world cup campaigns.

Dan was able to excite and inspire children through his own anecdotes, clips of interviews with David Beckham and playing pool with Rio Ferdinand, while also discussing his new book *Unstoppable* which includes many issues that young people can relate to; sports, sibling rivalry, knife crime and gang culture.

**Dan Freedman comments**, “*Being able to speak with children is one of my favourite parts of being an author. You can really see the spark in their eyes when they begin to think about all the possibilities for their future and as they get excited to read or even start creating stories of their own. It’s so important to support schools, teachers and libraries across Northern Ireland to get more children reading.”*

The events were run with the support of SONI and the Arts and Business NI Investment Programme Fund as part of a partnership launched in 2016 where BookTrust gifted baby packs to families across the South Armagh area to encourage early book sharing. With additional support from Arts & Business NI, BookTrust have been able to extend their reading for pleasure programme to promote the world of books and reading to older children in the area.

SONI (System Operator for Northern Ireland) plans and operates the electricity transmission system. SONI brings electricity to every part of Northern Ireland and plans ahead for future growth.

**Jo Aston, Managing Director of SONI says**, *“SONI is really proud of our partnership with Book Trust NI. Removing barriers to education is a key focus area of our community investment strategy; and promoting literacy through reading is a key first step. We are delighted that our support has enabled Book Trust to bring reading to life for pupils in Armagh through Dan’s visit.”*

**Liz Canning Head of BookTrust Northern Ireland says** “*Author visits are an important and effective way to encourage and excite children to read and write outside school. By creating open platforms for children to connect with authors, books become less intimidating and children see reading and writing from a new perspective. We were thrilled to have Dan on board for these events as his stories have the students engaged and sitting at the edge of their seats to hear more.*”

As part of the events all of the 400 pupils involved will receive a copy of Dan’s latest book *Unstoppable* and each school will receive the full Jamie Johnson set for their library.

**-ENDS-**

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**Notes to Editors**

**About BookTrust**

BookTrust is dedicated to getting children reading because we know that children who read are happier, healthier, more empathetic and more creative. Their early language development is supported and they also do better at school.

We are the UK’s largest children’s reading charity; each year we reach 3.9 million children across the UK with books, resources and support to help develop a love of reading, because we know that reading can transform lives.

We work with a variety of partners to get children excited about books, rhymes and stories, because if reading is fun, children will want to do it. Our books are delivered via health, library, schools and early years practitioners, and are supported with guidance, advice and resources to encourage the reading habit. booktrust.org.uk