Books are a major budget priority in every school – teaching children to read requires an eclectic range of reading material. Outstanding schools take a strategic approach, carefully matching quality titles to the curriculum and catering for the needs of every pupil. It’s a never-ending process of replenishment that requires a finger on the pulse of what’s new and fresh – such as the TreeTops Chucklers from Oxford University Press (OUP).

If you are a primary teacher, you will be more than familiar with OUP’s TreeTops: it’s one of the biggest and best collections of levelled books on the market when it comes to building reading fluency and stamina. However, you might not know the resource has recently been updated with lots of new titles matched to the incoming national curriculum.

The TreeTops series as a whole is impressive and contains 126 novels by top children’s authors and illustrators: 24 classics; 24 myths and legends; 24 action-packed graphic novels; 66 non-fiction titles; 18 true stories; and 18 historical adventures featuring children’s favourites Biff, Chip and Kipper. Everything is here to support a real love of reading and to let children explore their own reading tastes.

Humour, I’m pleased to say, is now also part of this rich reading diet thanks to the addition of 35 titles collectively known as Chucklers, which have been put together to get children reading and giggling out loud at the same time. This ribtickling series, reassuringly edited by award-winning author Jeremy Strong, contains 13 novels, 13 short-story books, five anthologies of poetry and jokes, and four comics.

Books in the Chucklers collection are expertly graded using Oxford Levels 8-20, so matching children to the right content and language is easy. Each includes notes on what to do before and after enjoying the text, a quiz, and prompts for further reading. These are all well written, though I think more of the suggestions could have offered a greater level of challenge to readers.

Series authors include Roy Apps, Claire O’Brien, Ros Asquith, John Foster, Steve Barlow and Steve Skidmore, Jeanne Willis, Joanna Nadin and Michaela Morgan. The illustrations are universally brilliant. If children read one of these books I’d be surprised if they didn’t ask for more; the partnership between witty text and comedic illustration is superb.

Humour is a crucial genre for children to explore because it taps into their innate sense of fun and provides a clear motivation to read. As humour is a lighter form of literature, it’s also easier to comprehend. Sometimes it takes just one book, or one slice of an anthology, to get the reading neurons firing. Chucklers can be that catalyst.

One of my astute Year 5 pupils pulled me to one side and asked if he could have a word about Chucklers; he was confused about the name. He produced his dictionary, cleared his throat and said, “Chuckler. Verb – to laugh quietly or inwardly. That’s not an accurate description, Mr Dabell. Some of these made me laugh out loud! I think they should have called them LOLs or LOLipops.” Perhaps he has a point. A quiet or suppressed laugh isn’t something Chucklers is likely to produce.

I can’t see how you could go wrong with TreeTops Chucklers. You’re pretty much guaranteed every child will find something that inspires them to read – and to keep on reading, snorting, tittering and chortling until it’s time for lights out.

Verdict: LOL

“Kids love to laugh and so this collection is bound to be popular. The series is priced at £239 for 35 books. This works out at under £7 a title, which I’d say is a fair price for new reading material that makes you laugh through your nose. You can get a sneak peek at three titles by visiting the Oxford University Press website and so make up your own mind, but it’s a ‘yes’ from me.”