

Book Review

POOR: Katriona O'Sullivan

I was given this book by our CEO, Kerry, some time ago. I must admit I never got very far with it. At the time, my focus was pulled in many other directions.

Over the past few years, however, a strong commitment to understanding the barriers that affect school attendance has become a key driver of my work. Through this journey, another professional mentioned this book, and I immediately knew it was worth revisiting.

This time, I approached it with a very different perspective.

The raw and honest account of growing up in a toxic and abusive household was deeply moving. The impact of key adults — including school staff — who made even small, seemingly insignificant gestures stood out powerfully. It reinforced how relationships can leave a lasting imprint on a child's life. The book also highlights that recovery is not a simple "fix-it" process. Trauma is unlikely to be resolved by a single intervention, even a very good one, but meaningful support can be an essential piece of a much larger puzzle.

This is an inspirational book that I would highly recommend. It left me feeling grateful not only for my own experiences growing up, but also for those of my children. It is easy to judge situations from the outside, but this book strongly reaffirms that judgement is rarely helpful; kindness, understanding, and care should always come first.

Lauren Whamby Co-Head Mundella and Trust Attendance Lead

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"The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go." Dr Seuss