Lovereading4kids.co.uk

Helping you choose books for children

0-5 5-7 7-9 9-12 12+

opening extract from

Friendly Matches

written by

Allan Ahlberg

illustrated by

Fritz Wegner

published by

Puffin

All text is copyright of the author and illustrator

please print off and read at your leisure.

Polite Children

May we have our ball, please
May we have it back?
We never meant to lose it
Or give it such a whack.

It shot right past the goalie
It shot right past the goal
And really then what happened next
Was out of our control.

It truly was such rotten luck
For all concerned that you
Were halfway up a ladder
When the ball came flying through.

We also very much regret
What happened to your cat
It's tragic when an animal
Gets landed on like that.

Your poor wife too we understand
Was pretty much upset
When phoning for the doctor
And phoning for the vet,



She quite forgot the oven.
It simply is no joke
When your husband's half unconscious
And your house is full of smoke.

The fire-brigade, of course, meant well
It wasn't their mistake
That there was no fire to speak of
Just a bit of well-done steak.

Still clouds have silver linings
And pains are soon forgot
While your lawn will surely flourish
From the hosing that it got.

The game of life is never lost
The future's not all black
And the ball itself seems quite unmarked.
So . . . may we have it back?

Talk Us Through It, Charlotte

Well I shouldn't've been playin' really
Only there to watch me brother.
My friend fancies his friend, y'know.
Anyway they was a man short.

Stay out on the wing, they said
Give 'em something to think about.
So I did that for about an hour;
Never passed to me or anything.

The ball kind of rebounded to me.
I thought, I'll have a little run with it.
I mean, they wasn't passin' to me
Was they? So off I went.

I ran past this first boy
He sort of fell over.
It was a bit slippery on that grass
I will say that for him.

Two more of 'em come at me
Only they sort of tackled each other
Collided – arh.* I kept going.
There was this great big fat boy.

** Rhymes with 'car' – Charlotte's a Black Country girl.*

One way or another I kicked it
Through his legs and run round him.
That took a time. Me brother
Was shouting, Pass it to me, like.

Well like I said, I'd been there an hour.
They never give *me* a pass
Never even spoke to me
Or anything. So I kept going.

Beat this other boy somehow
Then there was just the goalie.
Out he came, spreadin' himself
As they say. I was really worried.



I thought he was going to hug me.
So I dipped me shoulder like they do
And the goalie moved one way, y'know
And I slammed it in the net.

Turned out afterwards it was the winner.
The manager said I was very good.
He wants me down at trainin' on Tuesday.
My friend says she's comin' as well.



Surely This Boy Must Play for England

In an ordinary house in an ordinary room
In an ordinary single bed
An ordinary boy in pyjamas
Flicks a casual goal with his head.

Surely this boy must play for England.

Helps his dad after breakfast
To wash and polish the car
Beats his man in the garage
And hammers one in off the bar.

It's madness – he's only ten.

Helps his mum in the afternoon
With the supermarket trip
While clearing a wall of shoppers
With a David Beckham chip.

If he's good enough, he's old enough.

Plays with his little sister
Takes the dog for a stroll
And dumbfounds the local pigeons
With an unbelievable goal.

Ten-year-old makes the squad.



Eats his tea in the evening
Talks to his gran on the phone
Faces four giant defenders
And takes them on on his own.

Surely this boy *must* play for England.

Cleans his teeth in the bathroom
Draws in the steamy glass
Shuffles his feet on the bathroom mat
And flicks a casual pass.

Youngest-ever sub takes the field.

In an ordinary house in an ordinary room
In an ordinary single bed
An ordinary boy plays for England
And stands the game on its head.

A hat-trick, and he's still only ten.

Leaves the ground with the match ball
While his mother tidies the pitch
And his dad turns off the floodlights
With a casual flick of the switch.

They think it's all over.

Just an ordinary boy in pyjamas
Fast asleep at the end of the day
Though his feet still twitch in the darkness
And he's never too tired . . . to play.