



School Library Association

RECOMENDATIONS FOR

Primary

SCHOOL LIBRARIES



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“ *What does having a school library mean to you?*

It means I don't have to read the same book over and over again.

*- Question to pupil at Griffin Primary School
Cressida Cowell's Life Changing Libraries, 2021*

THE PURPOSE OF A PRIMARY SCHOOL LIBRARY

“A school’s physical and digital learning space where reading, inquiry, research, thinking, imagination, and creativity are central to students’ information-to-knowledge journey and to their personal, social and cultural growth.”

- IFLA 2015

<https://www.ifla.org/publications/node/9512>

The School Library Association believes that the purpose of a school library is:

- To provide a flexible space with a wide and inclusive range of resources to support learning and teaching, personal development and wellbeing throughout the school.
- To have a vibrant role in the development of a culture that promotes wider reading, motivated readers and learners for life.
- To provide a place for collaborative learning, creativity, and for developing independent research and information literacy skills.
- To support teaching staff in embedding media and information literacy skills across the curriculum.
- To provide support for and link into the school’s improvement/development plan.

To achieve this, it should be managed by trained staff, funded and accessible to the whole school community of pupils, staff and parents during and outside of the school day.

However, the balance of the above will vary from school to school. Additionally, we understand that this may not be possible in all circumstances. Therefore, throughout this document we utilise ideal or alternative to provide recommendations which work for a range of contexts. We are happy to work with individual schools to develop a plan which works for each school.

“Overall, children and young people who used the school library had better levels of reading enjoyment, reading for pleasure, reading confidence, writing for pleasure, writing confidence, and reading attainment than those who did not. They also tended to read and write a greater variety of material relative to non-library users.”

Understanding the Impact and Characteristics of School Libraries and Reading Spaces, Georgina Rudkin and Clare Wood, Nottingham Trent University, October 2019.

https://cdn.literacytrust.org.uk/media/documents/Libraries_project_review_2019_-_final.pdf

TERMINOLOGY

- **Librarian** – this term is used when we refer specifically to the person in charge of the Library department and who manages all library matters, including budget and staffing. Could be called Library Manager.
- **Library Assistant** – someone who is a valuable help in carrying out library duties, but the role is to support the running of the library rather than lead it.
- **Library Staff** – a term used to refer to all library staff no matter what their experience.
- **Library** – used throughout, but some schools may refer to their Library Resource Centre (LRC).

QUALIFICATIONS

There is no specialist School Librarian/Teacher Librarian qualification in the UK, so there are a range of qualifications which may be applicable at different stages of career or for different backgrounds.

- **Certification** – Certification is aimed at those who are at the beginning of their professional career or who want to gain some recognition for the knowledge and skills they have developed working in a library, information or knowledge role. Open to all.
<https://www.cilip.org.uk/page/ProfessionalRegistrationCertification>
- **Chartership** – Chartership is the level of Professional Registration for those working in the information professions who wish to be recognised for their skills, knowledge, and application of these in the form of reflective practice. Open to all.
<https://www.cilip.org.uk/page/ProfessionalRegistrationChartership>
- **Library and Information Services/Management degree** – a degree which covers the Professional Knowledge and Skills needed to run a library, across a range of settings. Some are accredited by CILIP (Chartered Institute for Library and Information Professionals), and can be completed in person or by distance.
- **Teaching/education degrees** – can be very useful in a school setting, and allow for improved communication with colleagues, but additional training should be undertaken in addition.
- **Apprenticeships** – there are library and information apprenticeships available, designed by CILIP. The Level 3 standard covers a wide range of professional skills, including digital skills and information literacy. There are also more generic apprenticeships available which may support those working in school libraries – leadership for example.

STAFFING

School libraries should ideally be run by a dedicated member of trained staff with some experience in a relevant role. This training may have been acquired through a librarianship qualification, Chartership or other on the job training. Alternatively, school libraries should be run by someone with a passion for working with children, and an extensive knowledge of modern children's literature.

In settings where it's not possible to employ a full-time member of staff, job sharing across Trusts/groups of schools should be explored. Utilising local School Library Services (SLS) is recommended where this service exists.

Volunteers can make an important contribution to school libraries, but shouldn't be the sole staffing element. Any volunteers should be trained.

Staff should be provided with every opportunity to pursue relevant training and acquire the specialist knowledge required for the role of school librarian. This is even more important when the librarian is not experienced in librarianship or education.

The librarian should be employed for additional weeks outside of term time, to allow for planning, stock-take, and cataloguing – equivalent to Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA).

We recommend a minimum staffing level of a full-time librarian (term-time only, plus two weeks) for schools of up to 500 pupils. For schools with less than 100 pupils, we recommend a minimum staffing level to allow for three full days (term-time only, plus two weeks). These staffing levels are to maximise the impact and benefit of the library, making it central to other learning within the school. Liaising with colleagues, visiting classrooms to assist with information literacy, attending external meetings and completing strategic plans and administrative tasks are all a part of a librarian's role, and they require the equivalent of PPA time. We provide example job descriptions, available online on our website.

Any additional hours worked over those contracted for should be taken as holiday or paid as overtime.

All staff are legally entitled to an adequate lunch break of at least 20 minutes if you are expected to work more than six hours at a stretch. We recommend a minimum lunch break of 30 minutes.

The library should be open before and after the school day. These hours and any extended school day activities within the library should be supervised by a member of staff with the ratio of one member of staff to 30 pupils.

Library staff should be included in the school's formal performance and appraisal process. Support for this can be found on the website, by calling the advice line (01793 530166) or emailing info@sla.org.uk

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS

Structures and job descriptions available here: <https://www.sla.org.uk/hr>

SCHOOL LIBRARY CAREER PROGRESSION:



LIBRARIAN'S SKILLS AND EXPERTISE:

Skills Base PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE	
Resource Management & Development	Cataloguing and classification Knowledge of current children's and young adult fiction Development of policies for stock selection, withdrawal and disposal Financial management Resources on careers and HE
Research Skills	Knowledge of research methods Ability to assess the research needs of a student or teacher Copyright, Plagiarism and referencing Internal and external resource knowledge
Literacies & Learning	Information literacy Digital literacy Encouraging reading for pleasure Teaching & learning skills
Educational Context	Curriculum knowledge Educational systems Behaviour management Awareness of SEND issues Awareness of safeguarding
School Specific	Awareness of PP pupils, including promoting the library as a safe place to study Knowledge of individual pupils' reading ability

Skills Base GENERIC SKILLS	
Advocacy	Building relationships within the organisational context Demonstrating value Working with decision makers Strategic thinking
Planning & Management	Planning in line with organisational aims and ethos Policy development Financial management People management
IT & Communication	ICT skills System development Social media knowledge Communication skills Networking skills

Taken from Library Skills and Expertise: <https://www.sla.org.uk/hr>

STATUS OF THE SCHOOL LIBRARIAN

The School Library Association believes that the Librarian/Library Manager should:

- Have full control of their departmental budget and be responsible for management of all additional staff, volunteers, library helpers and organisation of the area, including preparing risk assessments and implementing policies relevant to the school library.
- Be considered the head of a department, attending head of department and curriculum meetings to keep the library central to school life.
- Be line-managed by a member of the School Management Team with curricular oversight.
- Be entitled to attend and deliver relevant whole school INSET.
- Be entitled to an induction at the start of their employment.
- Be entitled to relevant continuing professional development, including being allowed time to network with other school librarians in the area, attend relevant meetings and actively participate in professional groups outside of their school.

If someone is working within a role not equivalent to that of a Librarian, these may vary, however, an induction, continuing CPD and INSET should apply at all levels.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT:

Cultivating Curiosity: Information and Digital Literacy Skills and the Primary School Library,

Geoff Dubber and Sarah Pavey, SLA, 2018, 9781911222156

Train to Gain: Continuing Professional Development for School Librarians,

Barbara Band, SLA, 2017, 9781911222095

Both available from <https://www.sla.org.uk/shop>



THE LIBRARY SPACE

The library should have sufficient space to incorporate areas for study, soft seating, group work and computer provision for project work, research and homework.

There must be appropriate room for the resources to be displayed and accessed.

Ideally there should be sufficient space to house a full class of students, with a teacher, and additional accommodation for students wishing to study. Alternatively, as a minimum there should be space for 10% of total pupils.

There should be areas for book display and promotional materials.

There should be no more pupils supervised than a maximum of 30 per staff member present.

There should be space for storage, a book preparation/administration area with some space which can be secured.

Dedicated computer suites should be housed separately from the main library area.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT:

Designs for all Reasons: Creating the Environment for the Primary School Library, Michael Dewe and Sally Duncan, SLA, 2018, 9781911222149

Supporting Autistic Students in the School Library: A Personal Perspective, Karen Bainbridge, SLA, 2018, 9781911222132

Both available from <https://www.sla.org.uk/shop>

DfE Area guidelines for mainstream schools Building Bulletin 103, June 2014
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/905692/BB103_Area_Guidelines_for_Mainstream_Schools.pdf
Page 25 – at least one library or learning resource centre (LRC) with a total area of at least 9m² plus 0.05m² for every primary pupil place and 0.12m² for every secondary pupil place

However, we believe that this is too small for a space to deliver the range of activities which should happen in a school library and will hamper the functioning of the department.



STOCK

We recommend that the library should stock a minimum of 10 items per primary pupil.

Ideally this should be 10–15 items per pupil in the primary school age range.

The smallest school library should be resourced as if it had a roll of 200 pupils, as a means of ensuring that there is sufficient material to cover all interests and ability levels. Therefore 200 X 13 items = 2600 items of stock.

The stock should be in the proportion of 50% fiction to 50% non-fiction.

The collection should include books, graphic novels, poetry, information books. Music, comics and e-books should be considered. The whole collection should offer diversity and inclusion so that all pupils can see themselves represented and are able to read about others.

Journals and magazines should also be kept in hardcopy and/or online, covering both academic and leisure subjects.

Access to news information should be provided – either in hardcopy or online, or both.

All stock should be either relevant to the curriculum or of general interest and must contain up to date and accessible information.

We recommend that general stock over 10 years old must be regularly checked to ensure that it complies with the above statement.

We recommend that stock which covers topics of science, technology and geography should be checked when it is five years old or over, or when significant developments occur.

Fewer resources which are newer and more applicable are better than a surplus of old, unattractive or inaccurate titles.

Utilising local Schools Library Services is recommended where this service exists. Discover your nearest SLS: <https://sls-uk.org/>

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT:

Developing Digital Resources in the Primary School Library,
Sarah Pavey, SLA, 2019, 9781911222071

Voice and Vision: Essential Issues around Diversity and Inclusion for School Libraries,
Jake Hope, SLA, 2018, 9781911222118
Both available from <https://www.sla.org.uk/shop>

BUDGET

We recommend a spend of: number of pupils x 13-15 x current average book price.

Our minimum recommended spend formula is:

number of pupils in school x 10 x current average book price.

Figures updated annually on SLA website (with thanks to Peters for providing them <https://peters.co.uk/>)

This figure is for the allocation of a stock for all resources including e-books.

We recommend that 10% of stock will need to be replaced annually, so with a school population of 400 this will be:

$$400 \times 10 = 4,000 \div 10 = 400 \times \text{average book price}$$

Unless you are developing your library when an increased development budget is needed for x years.

In addition to this figure, there should be an additional budgetary allocation for magazine subscriptions, stationery, digital and online resources (annual support) - e-book platform and library management system, at least one author visit per term and other events as appropriate.

The downloadable automatic SLA budget planner, available on our website from the Member Resource Library will help create a budget.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT:

Budgeting for Success: Planning and Managing the Primary School Library Finances, Karen Horsfield and Susan Staniforth, SLA, 2017, 9781911222088

Developing Digital Resources in the Primary School Library, Sarah Pavey, SLA, 2019, 9781911222071

Both available from <https://www.sla.org.uk/shop>



THE SCHOOL LIBRARY FOR WELLBEING

One in six children aged five to 16 were identified as having a probable mental health problem in July 2021, a huge increase from one in nine in 2017. That's five children in every classroom.

Source: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-of-children-and-young-people-in-england/2021-follow-up-to-the-2017-survey>

Scotland, to further the health and wellbeing aim of the National Strategy for School Libraries in Scotland, pulled together some suggestions here:

The school library offers:

- A safe space – a retreat from the busy playground or stressful classroom
- Pupil involvement and a sense of pride, increasing self-confidence and self-esteem
- Bibliotherapy
- Clubs and competitions – the fun stuff
- Events
- Reading for relieving stress and offering an escape from reality
- Individual choice – of reading, of what activities in which to participate
- Research support
- A friendly face – every interaction with pupils & staff is important
- All contributing to improved social and health benefits

Source: <https://www.cilips.org.uk/health-wellbeing-and-the-national-strategy-for-school-libraries>

Using a mental wellbeing index, which combines life satisfaction, coping skills and self-belief variables into a scale from 1 to 10 could explore the impact of school libraries on mental wellbeing. The findings show that children and young people who use the school library have, on average, higher mental wellbeing scores. Those who don't use the school library are nearly twice as likely to have low mental wellbeing than they are to have high mental wellbeing.

School libraries: Why children and young people use them or not, their literacy engagement and mental wellbeing,

Christina Clark and Anne Teravainen-Goff, 2018

https://cdn.literacytrust.org.uk/media/documents/School_libraries2018_1.pdf

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT:

Pupil Wellbeing and Mental Health Guideline,
Barbara Band, SLA, 2018, 9781911222255

Available from <https://www.sla.org.uk/shop>

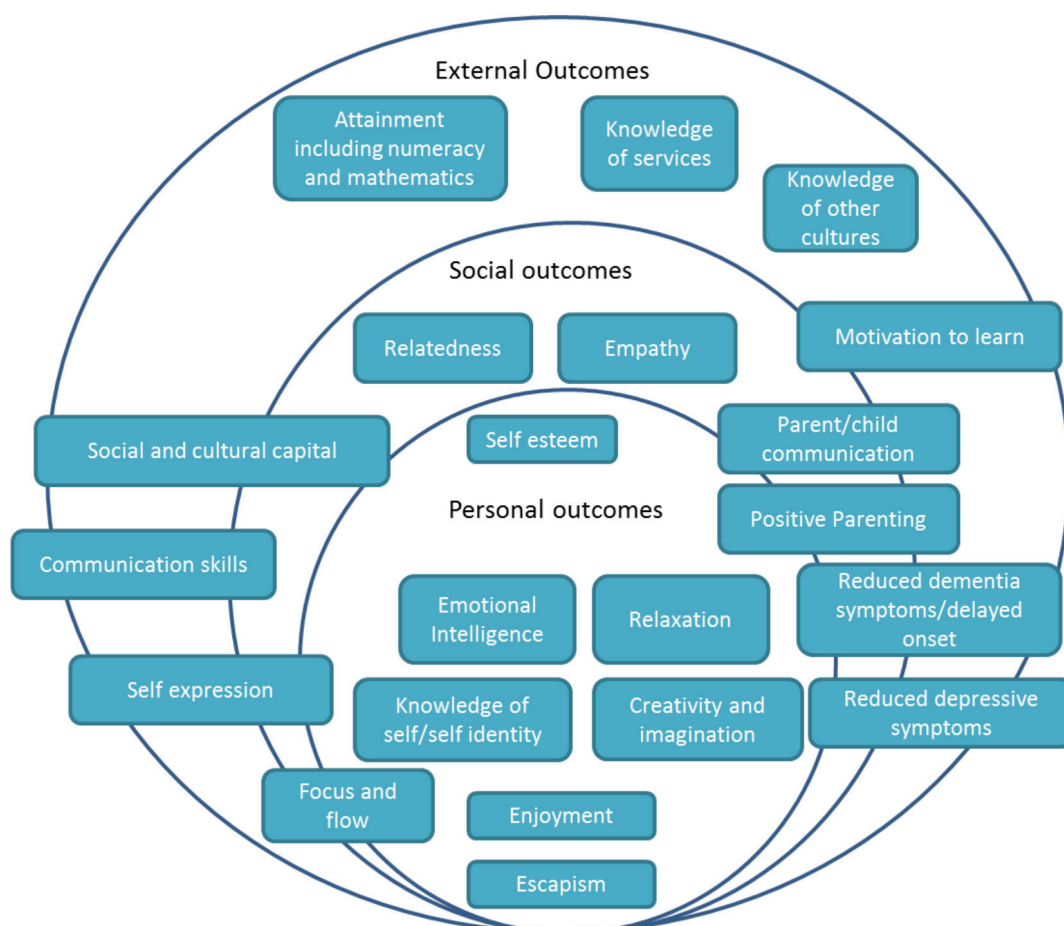
Wellbeing through Reading is a partnership between the SLA and Bounce Together resulting in a digital platform for measuring and monitoring the link between a pupil's attitude to reading and their wellbeing.

<https://www.sla.org.uk/wellbeing-through-reading>

Examples of good practice: <https://www.greatschoolibraries.org.uk/wellbeing-diversity>

THE READING AGENCY LITERATURE REVIEW:

The Impact of Reading for Pleasure and Empowerment



Overall Outcomes Map

© BOP Consulting 2015

https://tra-resources.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/entries/document/2277/The_Impact_of_Reading_for_Pleasure_and_Empowerment.pdf

MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY AND RESEARCH SKILLS

Society is moving at an extraordinary rate, and the ability to utilise information has never been more important. Young people need to emerge from school with the skills needed to operate in a digital world where they will encounter fake news, mis and disinformation and have a reduced ability to turn it off.

Added to this is the progression in the realm of machine learning and AI; meaning that independent learning skills and curiosity are important for the future of work. Not only can the library support delivery of these skills, they can be leading it.

DEFINITION OF INFORMATION LITERACY

“Information literacy is the ability to think critically and make balanced judgements about any information we find and use. It empowers us as citizens to reach and express informed views and to engage fully with society.”

CILIP’s Information Literacy Group updated the CILIP definition of Information Literacy to the above in 2018. The definition is supported by an introduction and background information with links to information on skills and competencies.

https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.cilip.org.uk/resource/resmgr/cilip/information_professional_and_news/press_releases/2018_03_information_lit_definition/cilip_definition_doc_final_f.pdf

Students need to be taught skills of searching the most appropriate formats, then using and presenting this information in ethical ways. Linking to curriculum subjects is useful as it helps pupils put skills to practical use. Teaching alongside teaching colleagues will offer classes access to the specialist knowledge of the teacher and access to appropriate resources by the library staff.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT:

<https://infolit.org.uk/>

This website has been designed and developed by information professionals from key UK organisations actively involved in the field of information literacy. The site supports practitioners by providing news, case studies, examples of best practice and freely available toolkits.

There are various models which will help set out skills:

<https://infolit.org.uk/definitions-models/>

Resources for schools:

<http://literacytrust.org.uk/resources/fake-news-and-critical-literacy-resources/>

Cultivating Curiosity: Information and Digital Literacy Skills and the Primary School Library

Geoff Dubber and Sarah Pavey, SLA, 2018, 9781911222156

Identifying Fake News: Critical Literacy and the School Library,

Cathal Coyle, SLA, 2020, 9781911222217

Both available from <https://www.sla.org.uk/shop>

ABOUT THE SLA

The School Library Association (SLA) is a not-for-profit which supports schools develop their school library, establish a reading culture and deliver independent learning skills. We believe that all schools should have their own (or shared) staffed library to help all children and young people fulfil their potential.

We currently have over 2,200 members and are the first port of call for schools and individuals wanting advice, resources and training. We support schools to overcome their barriers - including time, money and space, amongst others - to ensure that no child gets left behind on their reading journey.

We work to ensure that every child gets the strongest start when considering their future. The environment of the school library often means it's the first shared space children inhabit. It provides precious opportunities to learn about who they are, and who they could be. Reading can deliver a range of skills, and inquiry can build independent learning skills vital for lifelong self-sufficiency.

We have a wide range of resources that provide a starting point to support these important topics, and can also support lessons or individual conversations.

Up to 10 members of staff can benefit from free resources, on demand and live training, networking opportunities, a quarterly journal, personalised advice, exclusive discounts and more as part of a school membership. Our membership is designed to help you build an inclusive, supportive and engaging reading culture, where all children read widely and often to develop their confidence, enjoyment and skill.



**School Library Association
1 Pine Court
Kembrey Park
Swindon
SN15 2FN**

info@sla.org.uk

www.sla.org.uk