Primary School Library Charter

“Few pleasures, for the true reader, rival the pleasure of browsing unhurriedly among books: old books, new books, library books, other people’s books, one’s own books – it does not matter whose or where. Simply to be among books, glancing at one here, reading a page from one over there, enjoying them all as objects to be touched, looked at, even smelt, is a deep satisfaction. And often, very often, while browsing haphazardly, looking for nothing in particular, you pick up a volume that suddenly excites you, and you know that this one of all the others you must read. Those are great moments – and the books we come across like that are often the most memorable.”

—Aidan Chambers

It’s more fun in the Library!
Article 13
The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child’s choice.

Article 17
States Parties recognize the important function performed by the mass media and shall ensure that the child has access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health.
To this end, States Parties shall:
(a) Encourage the mass media to disseminate information and material of social and cultural benefit to the child and in accordance with the spirit of article 29;
(b) Encourage international co-operation in the production, exchange and dissemination of such information and material from a diversity of cultural, national and international sources;
(c) Encourage the production and dissemination of children’s books; [...]
SLA Charter

This booklet is intended to help you set up and run a school library or give you ideas for improving what you already have; to point you towards inspiration and information on flexible, innovative and exciting library spaces and the development, maintenance and management of the resources held within them.

We believe that every pupil is entitled to effective school library provision.

Research shows that there is a clear link between the quality of a school’s library and the general well being of the pupils and their literacy levels and that there are other cross curricular benefits.*

We believe that every school library could/should be staffed as part of the school’s teaching and learning support and open to pupils from 08:00 until 18:00, five days a week.

My vision of learning for children and young people in the future has the library, in all its forms, at its heart. — Prof. Tim Brighouse

Benefits

We believe school libraries support children to become successful learners, responsible citizens and confident individuals and support schools in their duty to promote wellbeing and community cohesion.

Just one book opened a gateway that has never since been closed. — Lucy Bakewell, School Librarian of the Year 2009

...around the school an attractive and well-stocked library is often an indicator of effective support for pupils’ wider reading and information retrieval skills. —Ofsted 2011

Getting started

We believe school libraries should work in partnership with School Library Services and the local public library (where possible) for the benefit of children and their families.

Leadership by supportive and knowledgeable headteachers and senior managers was the most important factor in improving library provision. They recognised how libraries contributed to learning... The most effective headteachers had a vision for the library’s key role in raising standards of literacy and making a difference to learning. They talked about placing the library at the centre of the school – and meant it.

— Ofsted 2006

...there were successful measures to involve the library and ensure that the librarian had an important role in developing reading. This is common sense, building on the specialist knowledge that librarians possess. Where librarians are fully integrated into the management structure of the school, they have an opportunity to influence debate and to enhance the library’s contribution to pupils’ progress. Many of the imaginative programmes to encourage reading that inspectors see are inspired by a good librarian.

—Ofsted 2013

Schools Library Services (SLS) – often part of your local council in many parts of the country – generally have experts who can help you plan and design your new library, can offer you practical help in organising your library, regularly offer resources on loan as a subscriber service, offer various reading activities including resources, posters, advice and quizzes. We recommend you use a schools library service wherever possible. If there is not an SLS in your local authority it is possible to subscribe in neighbouring authorities. Look at the Schools Library Services map – www.sla.org.uk/sls-map.php to find your nearest SLS.

Partnerships can be one of the ways to create excellent school libraries – with cluster schools or in federations or with your local public library service. School libraries should work closely with their local public libraries to access class visits, reading activities, homework support and help for children to develop information literacy and research skills. Public library services should be promoted in schools. Co-location of public libraries in schools, if well planned, can provide access to a wider range of resources, better use of budgets and staffing and deliver extended services.
Spaces

The school library is incredibly important – much more so than in the past. It’s a place where everyone comes to learn and to share.

— Prof. Stephen Heppell

We believe that every school should have an area designated as a library where children and adults can relax and read for pleasure and where they can search for information relevant to their learning and personal needs.

The location of the library, its environment, furniture and fittings, is crucial in ensuring effective use.

School libraries can be an important community space for out-of-hours learning and activities for families in extended school provision.

Explore...


Primary School Library Guidelines website produced by ASCEL, SLA and CILIP – http://primaryschoollibraryguidelines.org.uk/

SLA Library Design Award and SLA Inspiration Award – both may spark your ideas!
www.sla.org.uk/library-design-awards.php
and
http://www.sla.org.uk/inspiration-award.php
Planning

We believe that every primary school library needs to create a simple, practical policy document and should feature in the school’s development plan.

Explore...


Organisation and Staffing

We believe that every school should designate a trained person to run the library. This person should have a clear job description, line management based on the school’s learning and teaching needs and structure, plus access to relevant training in and beyond school.

We believe that every school library should be organised in such a way that children and adults can find resources easily and quickly – we recommend that all resources are organised in line with a recognized classification system.

... a very effective school library and librarian – the librarian promotes reading competitions, clubs, reading awards and a range of other initiatives including half-termly visits from writers. —Ofsted 2013

Explore...


Learning about Libraries – online course for primary School Staff. SLA www.sla.org.uk/online-cpd.php


Primary School Library Guidelines – see above
Resources

The primary and secondary schools visited emphasised the school library as contributing markedly to improving literacy skills. All the schools visited had well-resourced libraries, often with computerised loan systems and facilities for accessing learning resources on an intranet. —Ofsted 2011

We believe that every school library should contain a wide range of current resources relevant to the social, cultural and educational needs of the pupils, to include books, technology and other relevant materials.

We believe that the school library should be adequately funded on an annual basis in line with other school budget areas and that these budget figures should be published to parents.

Explore...


Review magazines and websites:

The School Librarian – SLA www.sla.org.uk
Carousel – www.carouselguide.co.uk
Books for Keeps – www.booksforkeeps.co.uk
Readingzone – www.readingzone.com/
Armadillo – https://sites.google.com/site/armadillomagazinenew/
CILIP – Primary School Library Guidelines see above
Reading Activity

...performance was even stronger in reading because most pupils generally achieve the higher Level 5 at the end of Key Stage 2. This reflects the impact of a popular library, lots of reading by teachers, and the provision of good-quality up-to-date texts to stimulate pupils. Pupils are also keen to read to pick up ideas and hints for their own writing.

—Ofsted 2011

In every school ... there were successful measures to involve the library and ensure that the librarian had an important role in developing reading. This is common sense, building on the specialist knowledge that librarians possess. Where librarians are fully integrated into the management structure of the school, they have an opportunity to influence debate and to enhance the library’s contribution to pupils’ progress. Many of the imaginative programmes to encourage reading that inspectors see are inspired by a good librarian.

—Ofsted 2013

Books crowbar the world open for you.

—Katherine Rundell in her novel Rooftoppers

We believe in promoting literacy, inspiring reading for pleasure and supporting teachers and librarians in every child becoming a reader through enjoyment and enlightenment, creating independent readers and readers for life.

Explore...


Booktrust – Children’s Book Week, at the end of June each year, lots of resources for schools to use –

National Literacy Trust – provides programmes and activities schools can use – www.literacytrust.org.uk/schools_teaching

Reading Agency – organises the national summer reading challenge –
www.readingagency.org.uk/children

World Book Day – World Book Day is the biggest annual celebration of books and reading in the UK and Ireland. Visit www.worldbookday.com
Information Skills

We believe that to ensure that our pupils maintain an unquenchable enthusiasm for learning we need to guide and encourage them to become creative, curious, confident and flexible learners with their own strategies for handling information.

We believe that teaching information literacy skills and the associated ICT skills in a coherent curriculum and library context is one of the most important jobs for teachers, librarians and support staff in primary schools.

Explore...


Training

We believe in continual training and upskilling to develop knowledgeable and competent staff in all our school libraries.

Training courses for library staff are available from various bodies:
Chartered Institute of Librarians and Information Professionals – CILIP
www.cilip.org.uk/
Teacher Development Agency – TDA www.tda.gov.uk/
Your local School Library Service

Evaluating

We believe school libraries should evaluate their activity to show the contribution to pupils’ learning, well-being and motivation.

Explore...

MLA. Inspiring Learning for All: www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk/
Further Reading

Booktrust – reading and literacy research in primary schools - www.booktrust.org.uk/programmes/primary/research/


SLIC – Impact of School Libraries on Learning (2013) SLIC has commissioned Robert Gordon University (RGU) to undertake research into the impact of school libraries www.scottishlibraries.org/school-libraries/

Acknowledgments

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We believe that every pupil is entitled to effective school library provision. The SLA is committed to supporting everyone involved with school libraries, promoting high quality reading and learning opportunities for all.

The School Library Association is an independent organisation and registered charity which was founded in 1937 to promote the development of libraries in schools. Today the SLA exists to support and encourage all those working in school libraries, raising awareness and promoting good practice through an effective training and publications programme. Membership of the Association brings many benefits including an advisory/information service for national and international enquiries, a quarterly reviewing journal, online resources, and reduced rates for all publications, training courses and our annual residential course.