

BRIEFING NOTE

School librarians empower thriving schools

This briefing note has been created for Head Teachers, Senior Leaders and Governors by CILIP and the CILIP School Libraries Group. For more information on the campaign and to download case studies illustrating the role of professional librarians in delivering thriving schools, visit <https://www.greatschoolibraries.org.uk/>

As a school leader, you know how fundamental education is to the life chances of every single child. The work you do unlocks potential, builds skills and confidence and empowers children and young people to go out and make a better world.

You'll also know that school is about so much more than just developing skills or preparing for tests. It is about building a vibrant community that creates opportunities for discovery, inspiration and ambition.

A great school library, led and nurtured by a professional librarian, enriches and enhances not just teaching and learning but the whole cultural and creative life of the school. It creates a '3rd space' within the school – between communal spaces and the classroom – within which your students can discover who they are, learn about each other and gain a more rounded perspective on the world around them.

We know that times are hard, and that you have a duty to balance costs while preserving as much of the essence of a great educational experience as possible. If you are considering losing your librarian, we urge you to think again – the cost to the life of your school will be far greater than the money you might save.

The difference a great school library makes

Evidence from the UK and US¹ demonstrates that a great school library can make a difference to:

- ✓ Educational attainment
- ✓ 'Value-added' for students
- ✓ Inspection outcomes
- ✓ Parent satisfaction with the school
- ✓ Student welfare and safeguarding
- ✓ Teacher engagement
- ✓ Making the school budget go further

Since the 1990's there has been a revolution in the world of school libraries. From the quiet spaces of old, they are now bursting with life, activity, creativity and student engagement. Professional school librarians have been building a whole new skillset, designed to add a new dimension to school life, including:

- Partnering with teachers to enhance and extend curriculum-based teaching by supporting enquiry-based learning, critical thinking and information literacy;

¹ See <http://greatschoolibrariesorg.uk> for details

- Developing the ability to support students and teachers with digital skills, including support for technology-enhanced learning (TEL);
- Providing dedicated support for students and teachers in recognising and combating fake news, misinformation and online harms;
- Building a 'reading culture' across the whole school, in turn nurturing empathy, social awareness and helping to build a more tolerant and inclusive school culture;
- Where relevant, providing dedicated and expert support for the requirements of the EPQ;
- Supporting students with careers advice and planning and helping students learn more about the world of work and enterprise;
- Helping budgets go further by providing teachers with free, quality-assured teaching and learning resources

If your school librarian has been trying to stop you in the corridor recently, the chances are it will be to share the excitement we feel as a profession about this exciting new role in school life!

How to make the most of your librarian

As professional librarians, we know that we have to be proactive in order to maximise our positive impact on school life and to demonstrate value for your investment.

We understand that you are managing a complex organisation with limited resources and multiple groups of stakeholders. If you give us the chance, we can show you how our skills help you overcome the challenges you face and achieve your ambitions.

Here's a simple checklist to help ensure that you are getting the most from your librarian:

- ✓ Meet with them and ask them to show you how they can help deliver your school's mission
- ✓ Invite the librarian to speak at a staff meeting about the new role of the school library
- ✓ Ask the librarian to provide you with a briefing on their impact for students
- ✓ Involve them in planning, particularly in preparations for Inspections
- ✓ Ask the librarian to engage with parents to explain how their work adds value for the students
- ✓ Work with them to provide a regular briefing to the whole school featuring new activities & services

Thriving schools need a great school library, and a great school library depends on professional school librarians. Despite the challenges ahead, we are hugely excited about the transformational work you are doing every day in your school. All we ask is the opportunity to play our part.

If you would like to learn more about the difference a great school library and professional librarian can make, visit <http://greatschoolibraries.org.uk>.