

Information Professionals supporting attainment in schools

Briefing for Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

About CILIP in Scotland

The [Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland](#) is the professional membership body for all library and information professionals in Scotland. Formed in 1908, our role is to support our members to achieve and maintain the highest professional standards in all aspects of delivering library and information services. We set and support professional standards and training, accrediting formal learning courses in two Scottish universities via our affiliate UK body, [CILIP](#).

Reason for meeting

CILIP in Scotland has requested this meeting because we share the government's aspiration to raise attainment, close the attainment gap and realise the goals set out in the [National Economic Strategy](#). We concur with the belief that every part of the education system has a role to play in improving outcomes for learners. We support the Government's ambition for Scotland to be the best place to grow up and learn. That is why we advocate for professionally trained information professionals working alongside teaching staff in schools.

CILIP in Scotland understands that decisions about school library provision are for Local Authorities at present. However, we believe that there is a requirement for standards, enforced by the Scottish Government, to ensure the positive impact a professionally staffed school library can have on attainment and curriculum delivery.

We believe that the time is right for a framework with accompanying standards for school libraries and we would be keen to explore with the Deputy First Minister how we could help develop these. We want to offer a practitioner perspective and to press upon the Deputy First Minister our strong belief that the professional skillset of our members in schools, working in partnership with teachers, make a positive contribution to the raising attainment agenda.

Current Picture

Recent reductions to school library services have included:

- East Renfrewshire reducing their school library service by 50%;
- Argyll and Bute deleting all professional school librarian posts;
- Falkirk Council stopping their Central school library service.

Other previous reductions to services include sharing librarians between schools in Glasgow, and replacing librarians in North Ayrshire, South Ayrshire and Fife with library assistants. Some schools, such as Dumfries Academy, have handed responsibility for libraries over to English department staff, while several councils have opted for term-time only appointments.

The situation has resulted in a highly-varied level of provision that reduces equity of access including:

- Only 11 out of 32 local authorities who have a full time qualified librarian in every secondary school, every day;
- 19 Councils with part time librarians or a mix of librarians and library assistants in their secondary schools;
- One Council (Argyll and Bute) with no school librarians;

A [recent UNISON Scotland report](#) said that support staff, including school librarians, were feeling 'exhausted, undervalued and stressed' with pupil numbers increasing by 6,707 since 2010 despite of the above cuts.

The value of Information Professionals in schools

We recognise the excellent Government support being channelled into our public library service via SLIC and the [National Strategy for Public Libraries](#) to ensure that equal access to reading, literacy support and learning opportunities is a core offer. Our professional practitioners located in public libraries are key to delivery of initiatives such as *Every Child a Library Member*, *Bookbug*, *Play, talk read*, *Read, Write Count* and the *First Minister's Reading Challenge*, and play an important role in developing early years' literacy and preparing Scotland's children for the more formal learning environment of school.

However, CILIP in Scotland contends that once a child becomes a pupil in a secondary school, they should have access to an information professional located in a school library setting who can support them through the intersection of formal and informal learning. School libraries are a safe and supportive learning environment where all pupils have equal and equitable access to curriculum related learning resources, both physical and digital, practical support, and information for educational purposes. Pupils can be guided by a standard of excellence set by classroom teachers in collaboration with school based information professionals. [Research](#) shows that integrated academically focussed activities have a positive effect on attainment.

Information professionals, embedded in the infrastructure of the [school](#), understand the education system, the curriculum, pedagogy and can manage resources to support the curriculum, literacy and developing reading. Educated to degree or post graduate level in Library and Information Science or working within our professional registration framework information professionals can offer the following skillset to support pupils curriculum related learning and contribute to raising attainment and closing the attainment gap:

- Managing a safe, secure and supportive environment for formal and informal learning;
- Specialist knowledge of the curricular context of learning;

- Partnering teachers in supporting delivery of the Curriculum for Excellence;
- Curating resources to support delivery of Curriculum for Excellence;
- Selecting and providing age and stage appropriate resources for each subject;
- Supporting pupils in choosing, evaluating and using information appropriately and effectively;
- Providing specific services in support of pupil learning across subject departments in a school;
- Support for personal and social development;
- Training in information literacy - visual, digital and technological for staff and pupils;
- Encouraging reader development, the foundation skill for learning, personal growth and enjoyment;
- Providing careers support and information;
- Working with teaching staff to provide pupil focussed specialist support when needed.

A professionally staffed school library can act as a bridge between school and the requirements of further and higher education and employment by developing transferable skills such as information literacy and research. The role of the school based information professional is also vital to the intended aims of [GIRFEC](#) by providing additional support within a safe and trusted environment.

The Standing Literacy Commission has highlighted the links between literacy and attainment while the EIS has [argued](#) that “The promotion of literacy is central to the aims of Curriculum for Excellence; good, well-resourced school libraries, staffed by qualified professionals are cornerstones of whole school literacy strategies. Therefore, in the view of the EIS, it is difficult to see how the aim of improving the literacy of all children and young people in Scotland’s schools can be reached without essential investment in school libraries.”

Studies have found that reading for pleasure is more important to a child's educational achievement than their family's wealth or social class. Reading for pleasure can best be cultivated in a school through the work the school librarian does in partnership with teaching staff. This can include author visits, participation in national reading awards and events such as Book Week Scotland. Professional librarians develop and support a whole school reading culture and are expert in the ever-expanding genre of teenage and young adult literature.

Further reading and research

The Scottish research report, [“Impact of School Libraries on Learning”](#), draws on a range of international evidence to highlight the educational outcomes which are impacted on by school libraries. The benefits noted include increased academic attainment across the curriculum; successful learning outcomes including information literacy and higher quality project work; and positive attitudes towards learning. The report also summarises the key attributes of school libraries which contribute to the positive impacts on learning. These include a school based information professional and a library which has the resources to support the curriculum as well as appeal to pupils’ leisure needs.

The [final report](#) of the Standing Literacy Commission noted that “schools with school libraries and librarians achieved higher exam scores, leading to higher academic attainment; higher quality project work; successful curriculum and learning outcomes; more positive attitudes towards learning and increased motivation and self-esteem among pupils.”

Further Information

For further information on this please contact Sean McNamara Policy and Digital Officer:

E mail: sean.mcnamara@cilips.org.uk

Tel : 0141 353 5637 or 0771 623 7433