

10th September 2021

Dear Colleague,

I am writing to you from the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland (CILIPS), the Scottish affiliate of the leading professional body for librarians in the UK. We want to take the opportunity of the new school term to highlight the many reasons why school libraries and librarians are essential in Scotland, now more than ever, and ask for you to support them as much as possible.

We know that times are challenging for Scotland's schools as our nation's educational system recovers from the Covid-19 pandemic's protracted impact, and that is why it has never been more vital for every school library in Scotland to be supported, financially and otherwise: staffed by trained professionals who are dedicated to young people's attainment and committed to providing spaces for literacy, imagination, and creativity at their heart of their school communities as well as supporting the teaching staff with curriculum delivery.

As I am sure you are already aware, [Vibrant Libraries, Thriving Schools: A National Strategy for School Libraries in Scotland, 2018-2023](#) notes that school librarians 'play a key role in supporting the next generation of critical thinkers, enthusiastic readers and empowered individuals'. School libraries 'have the potential to be transformative in the development of every child and young person,' the strategy reminds us, and 'a strong school library service can have a powerful and positive impact on pupils, teachers, families and the wider community'. School librarians support pupils at every stage of their learner journey, including with 'employability skills... writing UCAS statements and preparing for interviews', and pupils themselves report that 'having a space out with the classroom to explore skills and interests has a positive impact' on their learning.

This welcome recognition of how essential school librarians are is also evident in the [IFLA School Library Manifesto 2021](#). 'Every child deserves the benefits of a School Library Program,' it notes, 'in support of UNESCO Sustainable Goal 4 of UNESCO: "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all"'. The manifesto describes how 'the school library program improves and enhances teaching and learning for the entire school community through its qualified school library professionals, collections and, and active collaborations for literacies, thinking, and global citizenship in inclusive and equitable education' and states that access to school library services should be based on the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Studies have shown that the presence of a school librarians can help improve attainment and have also 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.

Our recent campaign [#LibrariesAreEssential](#) revealed a rich body of evidence that demonstrates the essential contribution our school librarians make to Scotland and beyond. We suggest you look at examples such Elgin Academy's Lockdown [Book Clubs](#). [Shetland School Libraries](#) promoting learning and literacy and providing support to vulnerable young people during lockdown and some of the

[amazing activities](#) within the Holyrood Secondary School community. Award-winning head teachers have [prioritised school libraries](#) and believe in their transformative power.

We also suggest you look at [School Libraries Group Scotland](#), a CILIPS special interest group dedicated to school librarianship, have shown throughout the pandemic that the tireless work they do is essential to education in our nation.

We recommend you arrange a visit to your nearest school library and find out more about the work they are doing if you haven't done so recently. School libraries and librarians are vital to Scotland's future, and we believe they should be the central resource of the school, open every day and staffed by a professionally trained librarian. We urge you to look at your school library service and assess whether this is the case, and we would be happy to discuss with you how you might best support or increase your provision.

Yours Sincerely



Sean McNamara
Head of CILIP Scotland