

Call for evidence to inform the Education Committee's one-off session on the work of Ofsted with Sir Michael Wilshaw, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

Written evidence submitted by The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP)

1. CILIP is established by Royal Charter and is the professional body for library and information professionals in the UK. It has around 13,000 members working in all parts of the UK economy, including in schools and Schools Library Services.

Executive Summary

2. A professionally managed, well resourced school library has been shown to impact positively on children's literacy levels, enjoyment of reading, information and digital literacy skills, confidence and self esteem.¹ This submission sets out how they support key aspects of school life that are of interest to OFSTED: school leadership and management; the quality of teaching, learning and assessment; and the personal development, behaviour and welfare of children. CILIP firmly believes that embedding school libraries and the work of library professionals in the Ofsted inspection framework would help Ofsted to achieve its overarching goal of "excellence in education and skills for learners of all ages, and in the care of children and young people".² At the moment there is no provision for the inclusion of school libraries within Ofsted inspections, resulting in secondary sector provision that "varies from excellent to invisible" and a government that has no quantitative data on the issue.³

School leadership and management

3. Whilst school library provision is not statutory in England, the National Curriculum for England calls for every school to "provide library facilities".⁴ Whether or not a school has a library is dependent upon the Head Teacher and whether or not this school library is an effective, professionally managed one, able to contribute fully towards the quality of teaching and learning outcomes, is dependent upon the effectiveness of leadership and management within the school.
4. A survey commissioned by CILIP in 2013 for the All Party Parliamentary Group for Libraries report on school libraries found that, of the Head Teachers who responded to the survey, the overwhelming majority agree that libraries have a positive impact on teaching and learning and consider their school library to be an important or very important asset to their school.⁵ When asked what could be done to encourage other head teachers to better support school library provision, several saw a role for Ofsted:

"Get Ofsted involved. Make it clear that Ofsted are interested and will be inspecting the role of the library in the school." (Head Teacher, NFER survey of UK Head Teachers, 2013)

¹ A summary of the evidence is available at: <http://bit.ly/1JmwvD>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted/about>

³ Douglas, J. and Wilkinson, S., 2010. *School Libraries: A Plan for Improvement*. National Literacy Trust

⁴ Department for Education, 2014. *National Curriculum for England, Key Stages 3 and 4 Framework Document*, p10

⁵ <http://www.cilip.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/BeatingHeartoftheSchool.pdf>

5. School libraries and professional school librarians should be regarded as a strategic resource that enables a school to achieve, at relatively low cost, its teaching and learning outcomes and promote a learning environment that is supportive and inclusive.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

6. A well managed school library supports both teaching and learning. The quality of teaching will be influenced by the support and learning resources provided by a good school library, which help to enrich and underpin the curriculum. In the best cases, where the library is fully integrated into the life and ethos of the school, the benefits a good professional partnership with the teaching staff can bring to the quality of teaching should not be underestimated.
7. The National Curriculum places an emphasis on raising literacy standards. An appropriately resourced and managed school library is key to achieving this. A 2011 Ofsted report noted that “the primary and secondary schools visited emphasised the school library as contributing markedly to improving literacy skills”⁶, while research for the School Library Commission’s report found that a high performing school library plays “a powerful role” in raising pupils’ literacy levels.⁷
8. CILIP welcomed the explicit emphasis on Reading for Pleasure in the National Curriculum for England and on the specification that this should not be confined to the English Curriculum. Reading across the curriculum is an important current issue and a good school librarian has the knowledge, skills and expertise to match pupils to reading materials that satisfy their curiosity and extend their reading habits. UK Literacy Association research has shown that teachers do not have the time or up-to-date knowledge of children’s books required to encourage wider reading and cannot always recommend titles that match a young person’s interest and/or ability.⁸ If a school is to set “ambitious expectations for reading at home”⁹, it first needs to ensure that every child has access to a wide range of appropriate, up-to-date reading resources, as many children come from homes where there are no books and/or do not have access to a public library. These resources will be provided by a good school library, which should be accessible before, during and after school hours.
9. Librarians contribute to cultivating a capacity for effective lifelong learning by providing pupils with a diverse range of information resources, motivating independent inquiry, and promoting critical and creative reading and thinking. They play an important role in supporting pupils studying for the Extended Project Qualification and Ofsted needs to incorporate the contribution of the school library and librarian within their assessment of the quality of teaching and learning within a school.
10. School librarians also build links with the public library service to support children’s learning outside the classroom, and we welcome plans recently announced by the Education Minister to get every eight-year-old enrolled at their local library.

⁶ Ofsted, 2011. *Removing barriers to literacy*

⁷ Douglas, J. and Wilkinson, S., 2010. *School Libraries: A Plan for Improvement*. National Literacy Trust

⁸ UKLA, 2009. *UKLA Research on Teachers as Readers*

⁹ Department for Education, 2014. *National Curriculum for England, Key Stages 3 and 4 Framework Document*, p10

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

11. A good school library should be a safe and secure environment for learning during and outside school hours. The role of the school library as a safe place for children figured prominently in the evidence presented to the School Library Commission in 2010. This evidence suggests that the library has a significant role to play for children who, for a variety of reasons, find the school environment particularly unwelcoming. Librarians are also in a position to notice things that may elude teachers, such as students being isolated at breaktimes, borrowing specific books, etc.¹⁰
12. The library is also a neutral space where children are valued as individuals and where they can access reading materials that supports their diverse needs and interests. All heritage is acknowledged and celebrated and through cultural activities organised by school librarians, such as author visits and reading clubs, horizons are expanded. Qualities such as self-esteem and empathy are enhanced through wider reading where stock selection and reader advice are provided by a good librarian.
13. E-safety issues are part of the wider remit of teaching information literacy skills and school librarians have a definite role to play in educating pupils about internet safety, including the safe use of social media. Many school librarians are already very active in this area, with some contributing to written internet safety policies for their schools, recognising that children are best protected when they are given access to the internet, whilst at the same time being taught how to differentiate the good from the bad.
- 14. We hope the Education Select Committee will support our view that Ofsted inspections should include the school library and the school librarian's contribution to the achievement of a school's objectives.**

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¹⁰ Shaper, S. & Streatfield, D. (2012) Invisible care? The role of librarians in caring for the 'whole pupil' in secondary schools in *Pastoral Care in Education: An International Journal of Personal, Social and Emotional Development*, 30:1, 65-75