

Key terms – in this call for evidence we are using the term ‘primary school library’ to mean a designated library area that provides access to a curated collection of resources to benefit pupils’ learning and development, and is separate to a classroom or other shared space.

Introduction

Primary school libraries are an important part of pupils’ learning environments, providing access not only to a diverse range of books and resources but also to a quiet and safe place to read. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, school libraries were under pressure, with 1 in 10 primary and secondary schools in the UK not having a library at all.¹ School library provision varies by area, with schools serving the most disadvantaged communities being almost five times less likely to have a designated library area than schools serving the least disadvantaged communities (44% vs 9%).² This is likely to have a detrimental impact on the pupils who would otherwise rely on these spaces and resources.

While we are only starting to see the full impact of COVID-19 on education, it is clear from initial findings from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) that the attainment gap is likely to be much larger than first predicted.³ In the report published by the EEF into the impact of COVID-19 school closures, they reported a ‘large and concerning gap’ for disadvantaged pupils.⁴ For both reading and maths this gap is estimated to be the equivalent of seven months’ learning.

Primary school libraries could be a key element in the academic recovery. The National Literacy Trust [found](#) that 73% of the children and young people who use the school library have higher literacy engagement scores than the average child who doesn’t use the space. They also [found](#) that pupils eligible for free school meals are more likely to use the school library area daily. With primary school libraries likely to have an important role to play in the academic recovery from COVID-19, it is now more important than ever to look at the current provision and make recommendations to support children and young people’s academic achievements as well as their wider social and cultural needs.

The National Literacy Trust and Penguin Random House are launching this call for evidence to make recommendations to the government about how best to support primary school

¹ Great School Libraries Survey Findings and Update on Phase 1: https://d824397c-0ce2-4fc6-b5c4-8d2e4de5b242.filesusr.com/ugd/8d6dfb_a1949ea011cd415fbd57a7a0c4471469.pdf

² Great School Libraries Survey Findings and Update on Phase 1: https://d824397c-0ce2-4fc6-b5c4-8d2e4de5b242.filesusr.com/ugd/8d6dfb_a1949ea011cd415fbd57a7a0c4471469.pdf

³ <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/disadvantaged-year-2-pupils-seven-months-behind-peers-eef-report-finds/>

⁴ Interim Paper: Impact of school closures and subsequent support strategies on attainment and socio-emotional wellbeing in Key Stage 1 (January 2021), Education Endowment Foundation, <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/covid-19-resources/best-evidence-on-impact-of-school-closures-on-the-attainment-gap/>

libraries. This Primary School Library Review will look the provision and impact of primary school libraries, before, during and after COVID-19, and will imagine what the future of primary school libraries could look like. This review will also provide a solution that complements existing work happening with library spaces to ensure that primary school libraries can continue to be an important environment within the school community.

With support from a steering group made up of; Penguin Random House, The Open University, BookTrust, CILIP, The Reading Agency, CLPE, School Libraries Group, and the School Library Association. The Primary School Library Review will take into account evidence from across the sector, alongside data from the National Literacy Trust. A report will be published in the autumn summarising the evidence collected and making a number of recommendations to the government.

If you have any questions about this call for evidence, please email policy@literacytrust.org.uk.

3 – Taking part

The Primary School Library Review is interested in all submissions and insights on the subject of designated primary school library areas. Please feel free to include any data and case studies you may have.

Questions cover:

- Primary school libraries before COVID-19
- Primary school libraries during COVID-19
- The future of primary school libraries post-COVID-19
- Other reflections

How should I provide feedback?

This call for evidence is targeted at librarians, teachers, schools, organisations and charities working within the education space and organisations working with libraries.

Please fill in this form with the answers to the below questions. If you are having trouble with the form, please instead email policy@literacytrust.org.uk with a Word document answering the questions by June 25th.

In your response, please clarify:

- Whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation or in a personal capacity;
- Which questions you are answering (there is no need to respond to all of the questions if they are not all relevant to you);
- Whether you are happy for us to use any data or case studies you have in the final document (please use the form to upload these and indicate your permission);

- Whether you are willing to be contacted by us about your response (if so, please provide contact details); and
- Whether you would prefer your response to remain confidential and non-attributable for commercial or other reasons (if so, please specify).

All responses should be submitted in advance of the closing date for this Call for Evidence, which is June 25th.

4 – Questions

4.1 Primary school libraries before COVID-19

In your response, you might want to consider the following areas:

4.1.1 If you're responding from a school, please describe your primary school library provision before COVID-19. If you don't have a school library, please explain why this is – lack of space, funding, resources, etc.

4.1.2 Please tell us about the diversity and quality of resources you have available.

4.1.3 Please tell us about how your library is funded – does the budget come from core school budget, voluntary income from PTA, etc.? How do you ensure the library is properly resourced across the year?

4.1.4 Please tell us about the ways that you support children from disadvantaged backgrounds to access library resources. Do feel free to include examples of what works well and what may not work as well that you have encountered through your work.

4.1.5 If you're responding from an organisation within this space, please tell us about the evidence and research you have about the need for and provision of primary school libraries before the pandemic.

4.2 Primary school libraries during COVID-19

In your response, you might want to consider the following areas:

4.2.1 If you're responding from a school, please tell us if you've tried to ensure pupils can still access books and resources during school closures. If so, how have you done this?

4.2.2 If you're responding from an organisation within this space, please tell us about the evidence and research you have on the ways that school closures caused by COVID-19 have affected pupils' access to books and resources within primary schools.

4.3 The future of primary school libraries post-COVID-19

In your response, you might want to consider the following areas:

4.3.1 What do you think the role of libraries should be in supporting post-COVID educational recovery in schools?

4.3.2 If you had to describe your ideal primary school library area, what would it look like?

4.3.3 How would you improve the diversity and quality of resources available?

4.3.4 Have you learnt anything during the COVID-19 restrictions in relation to the running of your school library that you will continue to apply beyond COVID-19 restrictions?

4.4 Are there any other issues, concerns or opportunities that weren't captured in the questions above? Then please let us know here.

In your response, you might want to consider the following areas:

4.4.1 What are the benefits of and need for primary school libraries, such as the impact of primary school libraries on children and young people as well as the wider community?

4.4.2 How are public and school library services working together to support primary school libraries?

4.4.3 Please tell us about the ways your library is integrated with teaching and learning within your school. For example, how can the school library support your school's approach to reading both at school and at home?

5 – Privacy notice

We take your privacy very seriously. This privacy policy (together with our terms and conditions) explains what information the National Literacy Trust may collect about you, how we will use it, and the steps we will take to ensure it is kept secure.

The information we collect:

We will need to hold and process your personal data in order to manage responses to our call for evidence. It will only be used for this purpose, and will not be shared with anyone else.

For our full privacy policy, see www.literacytrust.org.uk/privacy.

6 – Acknowledgements

