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Better education and care

Good school libraries:

making a difference to learning

This report identifies those factors which help to produce good libraries in primary and secondary schools. It emphasises the importance of: the commitment and support of head teachers; the appointment of specialist library staff; effective monitoring and evaluation; and coherent programmes for developing pupils' information literacy.

The report draws on inspection data collected from visits to 32 schools between September 2004 and July 2005. Case studies from some of the schools are included.

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Contents

Executive summary

This report is based on a small survey designed to follow up Ofsted's findings, reported in 2004, that, while some schools have good libraries, too many have weaknesses. Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) visited 32 primary and secondary schools in 2004/05 in order to identify and disseminate features of good practice. The survey sought to evaluate those factors that had led to recent improvements in school libraries.

The schools surveyed had been judged in their most recent inspection to have good practice, or they had been recommended by local authorities or School Library Services (SLS).

The survey found that, overwhelmingly, the most significant element in bringing about improvements was the commitment and support of effective headteachers. External factors such as inspections by Ofsted and reviews by local authorities or SLS could also be influential. Improvement was most likely to occur under the leadership of a well trained, specialist librarian.

In the best schools, librarians were regarded as important middle managers and encouraged to work closely with other members of staff. The most effective librarians ensured that the library contributed to meeting the school's priorities for improvement. The best librarians show great initiative in promoting the library and enthusing pupils about reading.

The survey found that some of the weaknesses previously identified remained, even in the schools where practice was judged to be good. Monitoring and evaluation of the library, for example, were areas for development in around one in three of the schools visited, although recent guidance provided by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) was beginning to have an impact. The most effective librarians analysed data well and used a wide range of additional evidence to evaluate the impact of their library.

In many primary schools, libraries are often closed to pupils for long periods such as at lunchtime. Libraries in secondary schools were generally open all day, often for substantial periods before and after school. However, pupils' use varied greatly, and evidence from many of the schools confirmed that use declined for many pupils at Key Stage 4.

The quality of pupils' information literacy skills was often unsatisfactory.[1] Many pupils struggled to locate and to make use of information. The most effective schools had put in place systematic programmes for teaching these skills.

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[1] The term information literacy is generally defined as the ability to access, evaluate, organise and use information from a variety of sources. For example, pupils might be asked to research a topic for homework using information from books and the internet. They would need to locate relevant information and select what is most important for their task. They would make notes and identify key ideas. They might then need to organise what they have learnt in the form of a piece of writing or a talk to the rest of the class.

Libraries can have a significant impact on pupils' personal development. However, there were generally too few opportunities for pupils to work independently and pupils were not always prepared sufficiently for further education or the workplace.

Key findings

☐ In the most effective primary and secondary schools visited, libraries and well trained specialist librarians had a positive impact on teaching and learning.

☐ Leadership by supportive and knowledgeable headteachers and senior managers was the most important factor in improving library provision. They recognised how libraries contributed to learning and, wherever possible, they appointed specialist librarians to lead developments.

☐ In effective schools, librarians interrogated data to identify patterns of use and took account of a range of additional evidence to demonstrate the library's effectiveness. Schools generally do not take advantage of in-house data to monitor and evaluate the library's impact and use.

☐ Schools Library Services provided good support for schools, including specialist audits and advice, additional resources, training and opportunities for networking.

☐ The best libraries were not necessarily the newest; they were more likely to have been created gradually through imaginative use of space and resources. Many libraries, however, lacked sufficient working space for teachers and pupils.

☐ Schools promoted reading and library use effectively. Librarians were involved directly in programmes to support reading including the promotion of reading groups.

☐ In many schools there was limited use of the library by Key Stage 4 pupils.

☐ Pupil librarians were an essential part of the best library teams.

☐ Funding for libraries varied markedly, even across the schools with good libraries. The survey found a direct link between well funded libraries and effectiveness. However, gaps in resourcing were less significant overall than under-use or poor management.

☐ Lessons in library skills were often unsatisfactory and not underpinned sufficiently by whole-school agreement on what was to be taught at each stage. In general, there were too few opportunities for pupils to carry out a search or work independently to prepare them for further education or the workplace.

☐ Schools acknowledged they were not successful enough in involving subjects across the curriculum in work on information literacy. Senior managers were not sufficiently active in managing this work. Librarians

who lacked their support found it difficult to involve reluctant departments.

Recommendations

Schools need to:

- improve evaluation of their library, taking account of the full range of evidence to assess its impact on pupils' learning and requiring librarians to report formally
- develop the quality and coherence of programmes for teaching information literacy to provide better continuity, challenge and progression in pupils' learning
- extend use of the library by teachers and pupils throughout the day, but especially by primary pupils at lunch time
- improve use of the library by Key Stage 4 pupils
- consider ways to promote pupils' independent study by more effective use of the library.

Those responsible for advising and supporting schools in developing their libraries need to:

- work with headteachers and senior managers, as well as librarians, in order to develop provision and integrate developments with other whole-school priorities.

Introduction

Libraries have always been central to education and self-improvement. They also have the power to act as motors for more dynamic and effective learning, whether for individuals or for groups. At school, college or university, the library plays a vital supportive role as a source of research and reading material or as a place of study.[2]

1.   The library has always had a significant role in supporting reading and literacy, as well as helping to develop pupils' independent learning. One international literacy study concluded: 'Finding ways to engage students in reading may be one of the most effective ways to bring about social change.'[3]

2.   Following the report of its Education and Libraries Task Group in 2000, the DfES worked with library agencies to develop schools' library provision. It commissioned a literature review which concluded: 'School libraries can have a positive impact on academic achievement, particularly at the primary and early

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[2] *Empowering the learning community*, education and libraries task group, DfES, 2000.
[3] *Reading for change: a report on the programme for international student assessment*, OECD, 2002.

secondary levels.'[4] The work of the task group led to the publication of *School libraries: making a difference.* The foreword said:

> *The school library is the heart of the school, which itself has learning at its core and good libraries can empower the learner. The resources in a library can allow our imaginations to run free, introduce us to new experiences and promote access to knowledge and enjoyment.* [5]

3.   *The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of schools* in 2003/04 recognised effective practice in many schools where libraries and learning resource centres are: '...at the heart of pupils' learning [and] pupils enjoy access close to books and computers to support their work.'[6] However, it also identified weaknesses in funding, accommodation, resources, management and staffing. In particular, it drew attention to missed opportunities to involve librarians in developing pupils' literacy.

4.   This survey aimed to identify and disseminate good practice in this important area through visits to schools that had been identified as having effective school libraries.

5.   Pupils are increasingly likely to be using a computer for research as well as traditional printed materials from books and magazines. During the survey, some schools emphasised that they were seeking to create 'a virtual learning environment.' In these schools, much of the traditional library research was carried out in different spaces around the school, including information and communication technology (ICT) hubs, rather than in one central area. Such activity is reflected in this report as contributing to library provision.

What factors influence change in school libraries?

Senior managers

6.   Overwhelmingly, the most important factor leading to improvements in school libraries is the commitment and leadership of knowledgeable headteachers, with consequent implications for the agencies that seek to improve practice: they need to work with headteachers as well as librarians as they seek to develop practice in schools.

7.   The most effective headteachers had a vision for the library's key role in raising standards of literacy and making a difference to learning. They talked about placing the library at the centre of the school – and meant it. They

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[4] *The impact of school library services on achievement and learning*, Williams/Wavell/Coles, DfES, 2001
[5] *School libraries: making a difference*, DfES, 2004.
[6] Many libraries, especially in secondary schools, are more commonly known as 'learning resource centres'. Similarly, librarians are sometimes called 'learning resources managers'. This report uses the terms 'library' and 'librarian', except when quoting schools' own usage.

funded the library well and understood the importance of appointing well qualified staff. Headteachers gave them opportunities to enhance the role of the library and extend its impact on pupils' learning. The headteacher of one secondary school said:

> *I am very proud of our of our library facilities as they are central to our drive to continue to raise achievement. The library has an impact on learning across the curriculum, encourages independence and is particularly important in the vital task of promoting pupils' reading and improving their information literacy skills. The library also caters for the varied personal interests of the whole school community – education in its widest sense. We all hope that, by enjoying using our school library, our pupils will visit libraries all their lives. For these reasons, our library resource director is a key member of our staff, carrying out a wide range of important roles.*

8.   A newly appointed headteacher of a small primary school decided that one way of raising standards and enhancing the breadth of the curriculum was to develop the school library. She aimed to stimulate pupils' reading and develop their skills of working and researching independently.

> *The development of the library was a major achievement for the school; £20,000 was raised in order to improve it. Part of this money came from the local authority, with matched funding from local businesses and the school's own budget. The library now provides an attractive and accessible environment, with good quality resources. Opportunities for pupils to use books have improved. The development of the library is integrated fully within the school's improvement plan. The governing body receives regular updates and external expertise has been used effectively. As a result, the changes have begun to have an impact on pupils' achievement.*

External reviews

9.   Many of the schools visited for this survey had improved their library provision significantly in recent years. Sometimes, the libraries had improved as a result of external factors, the two most common being:

- action taken in response to inspection by Ofsted
- the impact of reports from the local authority or the Schools' Library Service.

10.   For instance, a recent school inspection identified weaknesses in a primary school's development of pupils' independent skills. The school tackled this through putting in place a systematic programme for higher order reading and research skills, introducing a scheme to teach these skills in the central library and within class libraries. All pupils had two weekly timetabled library sessions, which gave work on reading and research a high profile. As a result

standards improved with most Year 6 pupils achieving level 5 in the end of key stage reading tests.

11.   Reviews and audits carried out by the local authority and/or the SLS were highly influential, although their availability varies since some local authorities no longer operate a library service. Some smaller local authorities have a programme for regular reviews of all their secondary school libraries. Others sample libraries in secondary schools periodically and produce a general report aimed at influencing practice in all their schools. Because of the numbers involved, primary schools are less likely to be reviewed systematically in this way, although several of the schools visited for this survey had requested an audit from their local SLS. Many SLSs, however, provide some guidance and advice as an integral part of their service level agreements with schools.

12.   The quality of these reviews varied in the schools visited. They were most effective when they:

- involved members of the local authority advisory team working alongside SLS staff to create a dual perspective
- focused on the key issues of use and impact
- contained a realistic number of priorities for development.

The best reports provided schools with a clear agenda for improvement. For example, one on a large secondary school identified a number of areas for improvement including: extending the library skills programme; improving Key Stage 4 resources; providing additional clerical support; and developing formal monitoring. When school leaders are prepared to act on recommendations, the impact on the development of the library is significant.

13.   Some review reports were extremely thorough in their coverage but focused too much on issues such as stock and the quality of library furniture at the expense of evaluating effectiveness. Others identified too many issues for development, leaving the school uncertain about what its main priorities should be.

14.   Primary school audits tend to be more limited in scope and often focused largely on issues such as resources and accommodation, choice of texts, how to display books and the height of shelves. Primary schools found such advice very helpful as few were able to appoint specialist library staff. The audit carried out in one school acted as a useful benchmark as it sought to tackle the lack of resources, partly through fundraising and additional funds released by the governing body for the library. The report also enabled the school to draw up a library action plan that linked with its school improvement plan – a crucial step in identifying a vision and plan for improving the library.

Specialist librarians

15.   Well trained and energetic librarians with good specialist knowledge had a major influence on increasing effectiveness of school libraries. The best school librarians had a positive impact on teaching, pupils' personal development and their learning. Active support from senior management teams contributed to their success; equally, however, committed headteachers needed their expertise, knowledge and enthusiasm. Their role is dealt with further in paragraphs 24–29 below.

Accommodation and resources

Accommodation

16.   While some small primary school libraries were no more than a collection of books in the entrance hall or the contents of a few book cases in a corridor, the smallest secondary school tended to have a dedicated library area. Some primary schools lack an adequate central library space and disperse books to classrooms. However, almost without exception, the libraries visited for this survey were attractive and stimulating; consequently, pupils were keen to visit and work in them. This did not happen by chance: the best libraries were always the result of hard work, imagination and vision.

17.   Shortage of space was a feature of most of the primary and secondary libraries visited. In primary schools, there was rarely enough room for pupils to browse and carry out research. Few libraries, even new ones, have the space for a full class to work in comfort, or to sit at tables to work while accessing information.

18.   Secondary school libraries tend to be much larger, but even they rarely have enough space for the numbers of pupils or the range of demands made on them. The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) has recommended that libraries should be able to seat 10% of a school's students at any one time; it was rare that inspectors visited a school that was able to do this.[7]

19.   The very best libraries visited provided excellent accommodation and managed to meet a wide range of demands from teachers and pupils. However, it should not be assumed that this was true only of new, purpose-built libraries. The best libraries were not simply newer or funded better than others, although this was sometimes the case. More than anything else, these libraries enjoyed a high degree of support from headteachers with a realistic understanding of their needs. Many of the best libraries had been created with care, over time, and through the imaginative use of stock rooms, corridors and redundant classrooms:

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[7] *Guidelines for secondary school libraries*, CILIP, Barrett/Douglas, Facet Publishing, 2004.

Extract from an inspector's notebook

When you walk into this learning resource centre, what immediately strikes you is the stimulating, well maintained and eye catching environment. Its spacious and modern layout, with room for 180 students, is the result of 3 previous teaching rooms being recreated into student working areas. The main learning resource centre has been transformed over time to provide specialist areas for sixth form work, careers work, independent work and ICT research. Students have access to videos and DVDs, with news and current affairs programmes being shown on television at peak times. A diverse selection of newspapers and magazines is also available, catering for the wide-ranging needs of students, including the large number of students who have English as an additional language.

Resources

20.   This survey did not set out to provide a detailed picture of how schools fund their libraries; that information is available elsewhere.[8] However, three conclusions can be drawn from the evidence collected for this survey:

- There was a marked variability in funding for libraries, even across schools with good libraries.
- Even the best funded school libraries struggled to meet the most commonly recommended levels of funding.
- There was a direct link between well funded libraries and effectiveness.

21.   School libraries are expensive resources to maintain. One case study illustrates this clearly.

A secondary school with around 800 pupils spent over £11,000 on the library last year. This appears to be a well above-average figure. However, the school had a high level service agreement with its local SLS and, by the time consumables, magazines and newspapers had also been paid for, only £2,800 was available for spending on books. This meant that only 350 new books could be bought each year. This gives a 'shelf life' of just over 20 years. Not surprisingly, the stock was described as 'rather tired'.

However, some secondary schools provided funding for the library that was much lower than in the example above. In one school visited, the library's funding did not even match that available 20 years previously.

22.   CILIP has recommended that libraries should have at least 13 items per pupil and that 10% of the library stock should be replaced annually.[9] The

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[8] See details at the National Reading Campaign website www.literacytrust.org.uk

survey confirmed that many of the schools visited were not able to sustain this level of expenditure. However, of more significance was the large variation in spending on the library, even in schools where provision was considered to be good.

23.   Although gaps in resources were identified in several of the libraries visited, these were of less significance in terms of the library's impact than under-use of the library, poor management of it, or the lack of a systematic focus on developing information literacy skills.

Managing the library

The contribution of specialist librarians

24.   The role of the librarian is crucial in the effectiveness of libraries. Historically, the primary school library has been the responsibility of the English subject leader or a member of the senior management team, generally with no additional time allocated for it. However, there have been a number of positive developments recently. The survey confirmed that the most effective primary schools were appointing a part-time learning assistant with dedicated time (sometimes up to 60%) to manage the library. These librarians generally had no specialist knowledge, but were enthusiastic and supported well by the headteacher and also by a teacher who took a more strategic role. In one of the best examples, the librarian had trained 10 parents to work in the library, two each day. This released her from many of the routine administrative tasks, enabling her to work more effectively with pupils and teachers.

25.   The headteacher of a primary school in an economically deprived area explained why he decided to appoint a part-time library assistant:

> *The library at our school is a focus of activity and exploration. Previous experiences of revamping the library have taught us the importance of having a librarian on site. The library is theirs to manage and develop into a thriving area of study and recreational activities. Without this key professional I believe that the library would decline in years to come, as collective responsibility is never a substitute for personal pride.*
>
> *Our commitment to funding this post has made the library a valued resource for all. She works in the library from 12.00 to 3.00 p.m. each day. As a result, the library is always supervised and never unlocked when unattended. In a very crowded school, it is a wonderful resource, which has not only engendered a love of reading for our children but also helped them to refine their skills. It is a place to come to relax, to meet friends but above all to learn. The librarian is the key to this*

[9] See CILIP guidelines above.

success: a person in control, taking responsibility for and a pride in one of the school's outstanding initiatives.

26.   One problem for many library assistants in primary schools is that they lack regular contact with colleagues elsewhere. Few training opportunities are available for them and effective networks rarely exist. In the best schools, the strong support of senior management included time and opportunities for them to attend training and meet colleagues. In one school visited, the library assistant had become a key member of a local group. This provided her with invaluable opportunities for networking with colleagues, as well as for organising library-related events. This was an area where the support provided by the SLSs was crucial.

27.   All the secondary schools surveyed had full time librarians and many had appointed chartered librarians. The common pattern in the most effective schools visited was for a full time and well qualified librarian to be supported by a part time librarian, employed for the duration the school was open. This was the most effective staffing model seen: it meant that the library remained open and well staffed, even when the senior librarian was involved elsewhere, for instance, teaching information literacy sessions with subject staff.

28.   The impact of a knowledgeable and well qualified librarian on all aspects of the service, including the quality of the stock, should not be underestimated:

> **Extract from an inspector's notebook**
>
> *Non-fiction sections indicate great thoughtfulness in purchase. For example, issues such as feminism, pacifism and cultural diversity were well covered. There is a good range of periodicals and high interest magazines for pupils. This shows the impact of the knowledgeable librarian.*

29.   One librarian listed the complex mix of skills and qualities needed for a good school librarian, including:

- financial and management skills
- good knowledge of children's literature and resources
- a passion for reading
- an understanding of the research process
- knowledge of the curriculum in schools
- teaching skills
- an ability to work with all the pupils and teachers in the school.

Not surprisingly, where funding was available, headteachers appointed specialists and were keen to tell inspectors that this represented good value for money.

The position and status of school librarians

30.   In the best schools, librarians were given the status and responsibility appropriate to their important middle management roles. In these schools, it was common for them to be part of the middle management structure, to attend working parties (such as on teaching and learning or the curriculum) and to attend staff training events. In one secondary school, the librarian was paid at the level of a head of a subject department.

31.   Arrangements for managing the work of librarians have improved, especially in secondary schools. Librarians are increasingly likely to be managed by a deputy headteacher or another key curriculum manager rather than, as has sometimes been the case previously, someone with a purely administrative or financial responsibility. One school had established a library management board, which included a governor and a member of the senior management team. Some schools had identified a linked governor for the library.

32.   In these effective schools, librarians were also involved in the performance management arrangements. The librarians were aware of their school's priorities and the contribution that the library could make. One feature of these libraries was the quality of their action plans. They tended to be integrated well into the overall school improvement cycle and responded to whole school priorities. In these schools, the librarians were also held to account in relation to the school's targets for pupils' achievement and they were keen to gather evidence that showed the impact of the library on learning.

> *Extract from an inspector's notebook*
>
> *The library development plan is a model of its kind. Actions and success criteria are very clear. Who is to be responsible for which action, the resources involved and the time scales by which appropriate actions are to be completed are equally clear.*

33.   Another plan identified the librarian's role to implement strategies, the deputy head's role to monitor and the headteacher's role to evaluate impact.

> *Extract from an inspector's notebook*
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> *Senior managers regularly scrutinise the outcomes of the research that has taken place using the library resources in order to monitor and evaluate the extent to which these resources are being used effectively and the degree to which they have an impact on standards. This kind of quality assurance is most uncommon.*

Monitoring and evaluation

34.   Overall, monitoring and evaluation were not always well developed, except in the most effective libraries. In one school visited, the inspector noted:

> *The school makes excellent use of self-evaluation. The DfES self-evaluation form has been completed in some detail; this has highlighted the library's strengths and weaknesses and provided information for development. The governors are kept up to date through regular improvement planning meetings. Targets have been set using the self evaluation form: to involve pupils more in the choice and selection of books for the library; to use the library beyond the school day; and to link library policy with others.*[10]

35.   Good librarians were keen to be part of school self-evaluation, but many found it difficult to judge the impact of the school library. The best schools had started to make good use of the recently published DfES self-evaluation materials, as in the example above, often supported by their local SLS. Research is currently underway to measure the impact of these materials.[11] Other materials have also been published recently and are beginning to be used effectively in some schools.[12]

36.   The evidence from the schools visited for this survey suggests that few are confident about self-evaluation, as far as the library is concerned, or conduct any systematic review of the library or its impact. Many did not make sufficient use of library data as a starting point, even though most schools now have detailed data through their computerised library management systems. These data, especially about book borrowing, were often routinely recorded by librarians but sometimes without the kind of analysis that might generate important insights, such as borrowing patterns by gender, by different minority ethnic groups, or by year group. Too few headteachers were aware of the data held or used it to ask questions about the library's effectiveness and its use by subjects.

37.   The best librarians visited used a wide range of other data such as pupil surveys and questionnaires to evaluate pupils' attitudes and knowledge of the library. One infant school used pupil and parent questionnaires, as well as teachers' views and analyses of borrowing patterns, to ensure that the library stock met pupils' interests and supported the planned curriculum. As a result of this, more 'books about dinosaurs' were purchased and there were multiple copies of the most popular books. In some schools, pupil librarians were

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[10] *Improve your library:, self evaluation resources for both primary and secondary schools*, DfES, 2004.
[11] A three year research study into the impact of the DfES materials, to be carried out by Lucy Gildersleeves at University College, London.
[12] See, for instance, *Inspiring learning for all*, a method to improve museum, libraries and archives services and measure the impact of these services on people's learning. Museum, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), 2004.

involved in identifying gaps and choosing books; schools council representatives are also sometimes asked for their views on library provision.

38.   Some librarians in secondary schools kept up-to-date figures on timetabled library use by subject departments. However, these were rarely reported to senior managers. At one school, the librarian provided a regular written report to selected departments on their library use, including an evaluation of the quality of the subject specific resources.

39.   Other examples of good practice in monitoring and evaluation on the survey included:

- monitoring of use by pupils before and after school and at lunchtime
- analysis of use by classes and individual pupils during lessons
- collection of the outcomes of research and examples of good work
- questionnaires for pupils (and staff)
- a collection of 'golden moments', such as a letter from the head of the art department, thanking the librarian for work done to promote learning in the subject
- evaluation of the impact of one-off events, such as National Poetry Day.

40.   Even in the best schools, it was unusual to find that librarians were expected to report formally on the work and impact of the library. Annual reports to the governing body were the exception and, where they were written, tended to focus on resources and accommodation. Departments generally report each year on the standard and quality of their work. There is no reason why librarians in secondary schools should not do this; many would wish to do so.

Promoting the library

41.   Knowledgeable and enthusiastic librarians brought great energy and initiative to the task of promoting the library and enthusing pupils about reading. Many libraries built strategies around national events such as Black History Week and National Children's Book Week. The survey revealed many excellent ideas and initiatives, such as themed displays linked to visiting authors, 'Top 30 reads', 'Question of the week', shadowing of the Carnegie book award, a 'Mad about books' club and reading treasure trails. One inspector encountered a library 'sleep-over', linked to National Bedtime Reading Week. The 'sleep-over' involved pupils in pyjamas, mugs of hot chocolate and reading by candlelight. In reality, the event did not last all night but just into the early evening...and all children were safely collected!

Extract from an inspector's notebook

The learning resource centre plays host to an impressive range of activities, running the gamut from student and staff reading groups to homework clubs staffed by learning mentors. The library is pivotal in planning and hosting an annual cross-phase literary festival with visiting authors, performers and drama groups. This year's focus is Chaucer's 'The Pardoner's Tale'. In order for the learning resource centre to evolve and meet students' needs, all are given a say in the books stocked, via regular questionnaires on 'How to improve our facilities'. The School Council and staff hold meetings there as well – one of the many reasons why the learning resource centre is seen as an integral part of school life. The learning resource centre is, effectively, an extension of the classroom with displays and leaflets emphasising key terminology and shared skills: the focus is relentlessly on learning.

42.   Many schools made increasingly good use of reading groups for pupils. Some librarians also provided specific support for pupils' reading such as through the Reading Challenge materials or in a paired reading programme.[13] These activities were important and helped to support reading, but they also demonstrated the skills required of a good school librarian.

Access

43.   Although, clearly, there were constraints of staffing in primary schools, the survey found that the most effective schools were trying to ensure that libraries were open as long as possible. Many primary school libraries were not generally staffed throughout the day. These libraries were open only during lessons and their use was limited because the teacher was often working on her own with 30 pupils. In too many schools, children were not able to visit the library at lunchtimes. This reduced the possibilities for voluntary visiting and made it more difficult for schools to evaluate their pupils' attitudes towards reading. One primary school headteacher described what was possible following the appointment of a dedicated library assistant:

The library is used for small clubs, such as those for high achievers, parents and writers, throughout the morning until the librarian, a teaching assistant with sole responsibility for the running of the library arrives around midday. The library opens up at lunchtime with a rota for infant then junior classes, supervised by the librarian and her numerous monitors. All screens are shutdown midway through the lunch period for the prayer group run entirely by our children. The library operates at lunchtime with supervised board games, Internet research, with our eight research/games computers, quiet changing of books or even

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[13] The Reading Challenge is an intervention programme offered by the Secondary National Strategy targeted at different kinds of underperforming reader, based on coaching from an adult who reads with the pupil.

reading! The librarian quietly and politely keeps all on the boil and maintains a firm control on resources with our Micro Librarian Programme.

During the afternoon, classes come in on a rota basis, spending most of the afternoon using the library as a teaching area for a period of three weeks in every half term. Library research skills are taught as a part of this programme. As this continues, children change books or put in orders for their favourites. We are constantly buying new stock to invigorate the library and to replace well used stock. By the end of school, the librarian has gone and secondary students with difficult behaviour or weekly homework clubs take over, using our bright and comfortable environment to pursue their activities.

44.   The situation was very different in secondary schools, where the libraries were nearly always open and staffed throughout the day, often for the period of an extended day, allowing for use by pupils and others, both before and after lessons. Despite good access, some of the libraries visited were under-used at lunchtime, even though they were staffed by a well qualified librarian. In some of the schools, use at lunchtime appeared to consist largely of boys working with computers or as provision of a safe haven for the lonely and friendless. The best libraries were very different: a hive of activity with, literally, hundreds of pupils purposefully involved in a wide range of well supported activities.

45.   Many librarians identified significant under-use of library resources by Key Stage 4 pupils, in spite of the increased importance placed on independent learning and extended reading across the curriculum. While many schools were aware of this and blamed what they saw as a busy and prescriptive examination system, few schools had begun to identify any strategies for countering this.

Pupil librarians

46.   In the best examples seen, pupil librarians were used very well and contributed significantly to the success of the library. In some schools, librarians readily agreed that pupils managed the library largely by themselves, especially at lunchtime. In one primary school, pupils developed their own computerised system, devised with spreadsheets, to monitor library use. In another, the pupil librarians devised their own timetable for managing the library and organised their own meetings.

The best schools provided a good programme of training for pupil librarians, sometimes through the SLS, and often accredited. The business of appointing librarians was taken seriously. Pupils were expected to apply by letter and were interviewed. Upon appointment, their performance was monitored. In these schools, pupil librarians were given responsibility and status and seen as autonomous and trustworthy. Pupils were keen to apply for the roles. The

librarians were able to appoint pupils who represented the full student intake in terms of gender and ethnic heritage. The library offered these pupils many opportunities for personal and social development.

Extract from an inspector's notebook

Pupil librarians respond well to the responsibility they are given. They show maturity in carrying out their tasks and are helpful in supporting younger pupils.

47.   One librarian explained her policy in relation to pupil 'helpers':

Helpers are recruited at the end of Year 7. They apply in writing, which helps them to take the job seriously. They begin as a trainee, then progress to helper, then senior helper, if suitable. They work through a training package, which has been written with the support of the senior helpers. They receive privileges and rewards which are linked to the school rewards system. We also hold regular training sessions and meetings with them to sort out any issues. Helpers are organised in daily teams with a senior helper in charge. They undertake basic desk duties, tidying, managing the door, supporting students at the computers and assisting them around the learning resource centre. This team effort helps to build a sense of ownership of the learning resource centre, confidence and leadership skills. The system also enables the learning resource centre staff to communicate with a group of students, helping us to keep it relevant to their needs. Many students stay with us from Year 7 to 11 and we write a piece for their record of achievement when they leave and, sometimes, references for employers, too.

48.   Pupil librarians were given the opportunity to develop key skills such as communication, information technology, working with others, improving their own learning and performance, and problem solving. In one school, pupil librarians worked through modules in the style of the National Vocational Qualifications and received certificates when each module was completed. This training was developed as skills became updated to use the library's computerised system.

Schools Library Services

49.   This report has already referred to the positive support provided by the local SLS. Most of the schools involved in the survey, including secondary schools, had service-level agreements with their authority's SLS, although one or two opted out because of concerns over cost.

50.   Schools benefited from a wide range of advice and guidance, such as stock audits, purchasing recommendations to fill gaps in particular collections, training for librarians and pupil librarians, sessions on study skills taught by SLS staff, and advice on policies and programmes for teaching information skills.

This was the area of support most needed by many secondary schools. They tended to consider that their stock was adequate and, consequently, made less use of SLS book loans than primary schools. The latter welcomed the additional resources provided, through topic loans and top-ups to their collection of fiction.

Links with public and other libraries

51.   Links with local public libraries were not well developed across the schools in this survey. The Education and Libraries Task Group report, referred to earlier, commented that: '...coordination between public libraries...and school or academic libraries...is inadequate'. This survey did not provide any evidence that things have changed significantly since 2000. Support has recently been provided in this area through a publication funded by the DfES, aiming to improve links between schools and public libraries.[14]

52.   One school in the survey worked closely with a nearby public library and the school's leadership had ambitious plans to extend community use of its own library facility. Other headteachers mentioned one-off initiatives, such as visiting writers and holiday projects. One school noted support provided by the local public library staff in training its pupil librarians. However, another school had been discouraged from working closely with its local, village library because of fears that the school's provision was better and that any developing links would therefore adversely affect the public library.

53.   Links between school libraries were also limited, although inspectors saw some good examples of transition projects in information literacy that linked work in primary schools to the secondary schools to which the pupils transferred. However, schools frequently missed opportunities for well trained secondary librarians to work in the primary schools or for the primary school pupils to visit and work more regularly in the libraries of the secondary schools.

Information literacy

Teaching information literacy skills

54.   Inspectors observed a great deal of teaching of information literacy (IL) skills. The best schools had introduced imaginative and effective programmes that attempted to develop skills progressively from year to year and across the curriculum.

55.   However, the quality of many of the IL sessions seen was poor. The sessions were often superficial, repeated what the pupils already knew and did

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[14] *Enjoying reading: public library partnerships with schools*, The Reading Agency, 2004. The Reading Agency has also published some interesting examples of effective collaboration in this area.

not form part of a coherent programme. Provision was often not consolidated through learning across the curriculum.

56.   The survey found many weaknesses overall in pupils' understanding and use of information and research skills. This limited their achievement in reading and, more generally, in learning across subjects. They often did not know how to find fiction that might have interested them, unless they were helped by personal recommendations. Many pupils struggled to find non-fiction books, especially where they were not immediately located through their Dewey classification headings. More importantly, even when pupils were able to locate information readily, they often found it very difficult to use it effectively. It was rare, in this survey, to find note-taking (from books or the computer screen), skimming and scanning skills, or effective use of search engines taught effectively.

57.   However, the survey also identified some excellent practice in teaching information literacy in some schools, much of it led by librarians. One secondary school librarian said:

> It is important for school librarians to have a major role in developing IL skills as we have a cross-curricular approach to learning. At my school, we are working to produce progression in IL skills from Year 7 onwards, taught in the learning resource centre, through schemes of work nominated by departments. By doing this, we are integrating these important skills into the curriculum and avoiding the 'library lesson' syndrome. Students and staff can also see the relevance of the skills. This is illustrated graphically on our 'information literacy spiral', which shows clearly how skills are built up, developed and reinforced from year to year. We took the Key Stage 3 Strategy as a starting point for our discussions with subject leaders and teachers and are now beginning to think about how we can work with Key Stage 4 and 5 with higher level skills.
>
> Lessons are planned in collaboration with teachers, with the learning resource centre staff creating teaching materials, developing multi-media resources and also putting web links on the intranet. Sessions are evaluated by teachers and students, with feedback informing future developments.

58.   Another secondary school librarian described her school's approach to information literacy as follows:

> Our programme for information literacy has been running for three years now. The Literacy Across the Curriculum initiative involves learning resource centre staff working alongside the class teacher to plan one or two research lessons linked to the main subject module. At present over 50 modules have been created, covering varied areas as Roman slavery, energy and Janis Joplin! The library staff team teach the lessons which

draw on generic information skills and also have a subject specific slant. This means that students are able to transfer their skills across curriculum areas: the aim is to transform our students into independent learners. A crucial factor in the success of this high profile strategy is support from all staff, including the leadership team, and the fact that it is firmly embedded within subject schemes of work.

59.   In many of the good primary schools, all classes had a weekly timetabled visit to the library. Where this happened, it had a direct impact on pupils' attitudes to reading and literacy. In some of the schools, information literacy was integrated successfully within subject work. However, this was not always the case. In some schools, while all pupils were timetabled to use the computer suite for regular, targeted teaching of ICT, the library was not used in the same way for developing information literacy systematically. The survey found that too many library lessons in primary schools concentrated largely on the simple exchange of books; this is especially likely to happen where the library is closed at lunchtime. In other schools, library lessons take place, but there is a lack of overall rationale or coherent planning.

60.   Library skills lessons were not planned carefully enough and not informed by any whole school policy or scheme, leading to repetition, for instance, reminders about the organisation of the Dewey classification system, the differences between fiction and non-fiction, or the use of contents and index pages. The level of challenge of many of the programmes was too low and failed to build on what pupils had done at previous key stages. Activities for Year 7 pupils were too often a mere repetition of work in Year 6 or even earlier.

61.   One school visited had an effective scheme of work for information literacy, developed by the local SLS. This was progressive and identified both objectives and activities for pupils in different years. In another, the scheme of work for library skills had objectives for teaching and some measurable learning outcomes. The Year 6 pupils had been taught most of the information skills indicated in the programme; however, the activities were not ambitious enough, especially for able pupils, and some skills were over-taught.

62.   Some secondary schools provided training in information literacy that was little more than a simple induction course for pupils in Year 7 with variable reinforcement through the scheme of work for English. However, the best librarians worked with different subject teachers to teach a coherent and planned programme for IL skills across the curriculum. At one school, all Year 7 pupils had an induction programme in PSHE lessons plus IL lessons taught in all subjects (jointly by the librarian and subject teacher). Each curriculum area was expected to teach some IL lessons at Key Stage 3. The librarian generally took the lead in these sessions, following discussions with the teachers involved. Lessons were carefully planned to an agreed agenda and evaluated afterwards, by teachers and pupils. In another school, the librarian had developed a 'Road to Knowledge' programme, involving seven different departments in creating information retrieval units as part of the programme for Year 7 pupils.

63.   Despite some of the good provision seen in the schools visited, overall, pupils' study and information skills were not sufficiently well developed. One Year 7 class, during a lesson in the library, revealed a surprising inability to locate information speedily in non-fiction texts. Using search engines on the computers was even less successful. When they found information, they copied it word for word from the original sources.

Links across the curriculum

64.   No school in the survey considered that it was yet successful in involving subjects across the curriculum in work on information literacy, although this varied greatly from school to school. At one secondary school, effective research units had been developed in subjects such as English, geography and dance, building on joint work between the librarian and a subject teacher, although other departments had not yet been drawn into this work. The best practice occurred where senior managers made decisions about the curriculum and the teaching of IL that ensured the involvement of all subject areas. Where matters were left to the librarian alone, interested departments tended to develop good units of work but others remained uninvolved. This inhibited the development of an effective curriculum for IL across all subjects. Senior managers were not always sufficiently active in involving all subject departments.

65.   The visits confirmed the important role of libraries in pupils' personal development. Inspectors saw many examples of pupils using the library for independent work, showing a capacity for initiative and problem-solving. In general, however, there were too few opportunities for pupils to carry out research or work independently. Schools did not think carefully enough about the skills pupils would need to continue with their studies beyond school, either in further and higher education or in the workplace. Stronger provision needed to be made for independent research and learning.

Notes

Her Majesty's Inspectors visited 32 schools during the academic year 2004/05: 17 primary schools, including separate infant and junior schools, and 15 secondary schools. The primary schools ranged in size from a small village school with around 100 pupils to a large urban school with over 600.

The secondary schools ranged in size from 424 to 1,564 pupils. The proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals ranged from 0% to 52% and the percentage of pupils with English as an additional language ranged to a maximum of 63%. Schools also varied greatly in relation to pupils' levels of attainment.

Ofsted identified the schools to be visited, initially on the basis of their most recent inspection report. As the survey developed, most schools that were visited had been recommended either by their local authority or by the local Schools Library Service (SLS).

Further information

Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians (ASCEL)
http://www.ascel.org.uk

Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP)
http://www.cilip.org.uk

Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA)
http://www.mla.gov.uk

The National Reading Campaign
Information can be found at www.readon.org.uk

The Reading Agency
www.readingagency.org.uk

School Library Association (SLA)
www.sla.org.uk

Annex. List of the 32 primary and secondary school libraries visited 2004/05

School	Local authority
Hill Farm Primary School	Coventry
The Arthur Terry School	Birmingham
Moat Farm Junior School	Sandwell
Colwich C of E (C) Primary School	Staffordshire
The Broxbourne School	Hertfordshire
Stow Heath Junior School	Wolverhampton
Brockwell Middle School	Northumberland
Batley Girls High School - Visual Arts College	Kirklees
St Dominic's RC Primary School	Hertfordshire
Swinton Community School	Rotherham
Withinfields Primary School	Calderdale
Greyfriars Primary School, King's Lynn	Norfolk
Bournville Infant School	Birmingham
Bosworth Community College	Leicestershire
Burbage Junior School	Leicestershire
Thorpe Acre Infant School	Leicestershire
Archbishop Sancroft High School	Norfolk
Attleborough High School	Norfolk
Tile Hill Wood School and Language College	Coventry
Christ Church Pellon CofE VC Primary School	Calderdale
Hayfield Lane Primary School	Doncaster
The Grove High School	Shropshire
Woodside Primary School	Shropshire
Rawmarsh Community School - A Sports College	Rotherham
The Ridings School	Calderdale
Nicholas Chamberlaine Technology College	Warwickshire
Luddenden Dene CofE (VC) Junior, Infant and Nursery School	Calderdale
Broke Hall Community Primary School	Suffolk
Fernwood School	Nottingham City
Sheringham High School and Sixth Form Centre	Norfolk
Duncombe Primary School	Islington
The Laurance Haines Primary and Nursery School	Hertfordshire