




# Vibrant Libraries, Thriving Schools

A National Strategy for  
School Libraries in Scotland  
2018-2023





**“My school library helps me at all levels of my education. I can take part in lots of activities at the library. The librarian helps me with literacy and numeracy at school, and can access books and resources for me that are relevant to my interests. I can read, create, relax and socialise in my library. It is inspected with the rest of the school, which means I can give feedback about my experience of the library. My school library also gives me access to WiFi so that I can try out digital learning and STEM activities, developing my digital and information literacy and my employability skills. My librarian arranges visits from organisations and authors to the school and to other libraries. My library is a trusted space in the school where I feel safe and welcome.”**

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# Foreword

School libraries have a vital role to play, throughout the learner journey from 3-18, in supporting literacy, health and wellbeing, and improving attainment across the Curriculum. There are many schools in Scotland where the school library is the epicentre of the school, promoting an appreciation of literature, an understanding of information literacy and a place of contact, friendship, dialogue and reassurance. At their best, school libraries are a hub of activity, with library staff supporting a range of creative approaches to learning, addressing issues related to health and wellbeing, and facilitating connections between pupils across the school community.



Vibrant Libraries, Thriving Schools - A National Strategy for School Libraries in Scotland 2018-2023 sets out a vision where every child and young person in Scotland has access to a dynamic school library service, like the one described above. It sets out 20 actions that decision makers, including local and national government, headteachers, and school librarians can implement to deliver that vision. The strategy recognises that models of school library provision, rightly, vary between local authority areas, and that local priorities and circumstances must be taken into account in considering delivery. By recognising the important role school library services play, and by seeking to maximise the positive impact they have, we can ensure sustainable provision in innovative and flexible ways that will benefit Scotland's young people.

We would like to thank the Scottish Library and Information Council who have overseen the drafting of this strategy, and the members of the Advisory Group who brought

their expertise to bear in shaping the plan, as well as the schools who hosted site visits to inform the work of the Advisory Group.

We are pleased to endorse this strategy, and the activity that will be taken forward to implement it over the next five years.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Swinney'.

**John Swinney MSP,**  
Deputy First Minister and  
Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen McCabe'.

**Councillor Stephen McCabe,**  
CoSLA Spokesperson on Children and Young  
People

# Introduction from the Chair



I was privileged to be asked by the Deputy First Minister to chair the School Library Strategy National Advisory Group, which has developed a new strategy for Scotland's school libraries: *Vibrant Libraries, Thriving Schools - A National Strategy for School Libraries in Scotland 2018-2023*. Scotland has a rich school library landscape, supported by dedicated school librarians, who play a key role in supporting the next generation of critical thinkers, enthusiastic readers and empowered individuals.

In preparing the strategy, it was necessary to robustly capture the wide range of innovation happening in school libraries across Scotland. The recommendations therefore form a blueprint for future development and the vision for school libraries across the education sector in Scotland, irrespective of delivery models.

Advisory and working group members visited a number of schools across Scotland, consulting with headteachers, teaching staff, school librarians and pupils. The most powerful testimonies about the impact of the school library came from the pupils themselves. We also met a number of headteachers who were passionate and committed to developing their school libraries and explained the benefit to their pupils, from enhanced literacy, skills support, personal development and confidence building. Great emphasis was placed on the expert learning and research support that school libraries and librarians offer.

I would like to thank the Advisory Group members, COSLA, SLIC, and Scottish Government advisors for their commitment to the production of the National Strategy for School Libraries and for their expert input. Thank you to the Chairs and members of the thematic working groups for their research, advice, and hard work in developing recommendations.

I would also like to thank the school librarians, headteachers, staff and pupils across Scotland who generously gave up their time to talk to us and share their experiences with us. The vision for the strategy is that every child and young person in Scotland will experience a school library as described below by a pupil at Ellon Academy:

*"The library services provide an opportunity for pupils, from all backgrounds and abilities, to flourish their interests and widen their comfort zones in terms of both genre of literature, and the learning opportunities it provides. On a personal level, helping out at the library promoted my confidence in speaking to others and my organisational skills, abilities I would not currently have without the support of the staff and pupils here, and skills that I know will aid me in the future. It would be impossible to regret a single second spent in the library, it truly is the heart of the school."*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Martina McChrystal".

**Martina McChrystal,**  
Chair of the Advisory Group



# Executive Summary

*Vibrant Libraries, Thriving Schools - A National Strategy for School Libraries in Scotland 2018-2023* is the strategic document for the future of school library services in Scotland's education sector. The vision outlined in this document is one where every child and young person in Scotland has access to a vibrant school library service. It highlights best practice and how this is incorporated into provision from Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) settings to primary and secondary schools. The document also supports the continuous improvement and professional development of school library services and school librarians.

There are many examples of excellent practice across the country, demonstrating the critical role school libraries play in education. However, there are also instances where the school library could play a stronger role and the recommendations in this report are designed to help achieve that. Site visits from across Scotland have shown the vital role that school libraries can have in improving attainment, supporting equity, and developing children and young people for the future. A summary of actions for headteachers, Directors of Education, school

librarians and local and national government are included at the end of the document for the development of excellent school library services.

School libraries and school librarians are a fundamental part of Scotland's education sector and have the potential to be transformative in the development of every child and young person. A strong school library service can have a powerful and positive impact on pupils, teachers, families and the wider community.

The service should reach all ages, levels and curricular subjects to improve attainment, develop a reading culture, support information and digital literacy, and provide a nurturing space for pupils to reflect and learn. Professionally trained librarians and information experts can provide children and young people with the transferable skills required to achieve throughout life and develop a lifelong love of reading. An inspiring and safe space, school libraries foster wellbeing and creativity across the school community.

The scope of the strategy is to highlight to decision makers the intrinsic value of a strong school library service and the impact this has on children and young people's wider school experience. It also informs headteachers, school librarians and education practitioners on the value of school library services. The strategy will advise decision makers of the central role that school library services play in the education sector

and advocate for appropriately resourced services for each child in Scotland. It is vital that decision makers recognise the influence school library services and school librarians have in supporting children with an equal start in life and encouraging young people in their lifelong learning.

School library provision in Scotland varies across schools and local authorities. ELC settings and primary schools have differing levels of service compared to secondary schools, with most secondaries having a dedicated school library and professionally trained librarian managing the service. Pupils and teachers have access to varying standards of provision which has an impact on the learning outcomes for children and young people. The actions set out in this document are aimed at ensuring that every child and young person has equitable access to an excellent school library service which is tailored to their individual learning needs.





## Purpose of the Strategy

*Vibrant Libraries, Thriving Schools - A National Strategy for School Libraries in Scotland 2018-2023* is the strategic document for the development of school libraries in Scotland. School libraries have a vital role to play in the learning of children and young people, facilitating Curriculum for Excellence from 3 to 18. School libraries empower pupils, school staff and the wider community in learning, providing a service to improve school-leaver destinations, promoting all forms of literacy, and supporting the role of lifelong learning for children and young people. Professionally trained librarians and information experts drive improvement in all sectors of the education system and are central to reducing the attainment gap.

The strategy outlines the ways well-supported school library services contribute to achieving the Scottish Government's ambition of excellence and equity in Scottish education. It will help education leaders and decision makers to make effective choices regarding school library provision, ensuring all pupils, staff and the wider community have access to a strong school library service. Reflecting the [National Improvement Framework](#), the service encourages pupils

to be well-educated, skilled and able to contribute to society, and grow up loved, safe and respected so that they reach their full potential.

A considerable body of international evidence demonstrates that school libraries support improved attainment, successful curriculum or learning outcomes and positive attitudes to learning.<sup>1</sup> The role and impact of school library services in the learning of



Scotland's children and young people and facilitating the Curriculum for Excellence therefore cannot be understated. The strategy document will be used alongside *How good is our school library?* and *How good is our school? 4th edition* to promote self-evaluation leading to continuous improvement in the school library in each school.

The Scottish Government, Education Scotland, local government, the Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC), headteachers and school librarians are all key partners with responsibility for the implementation of actions in this strategy

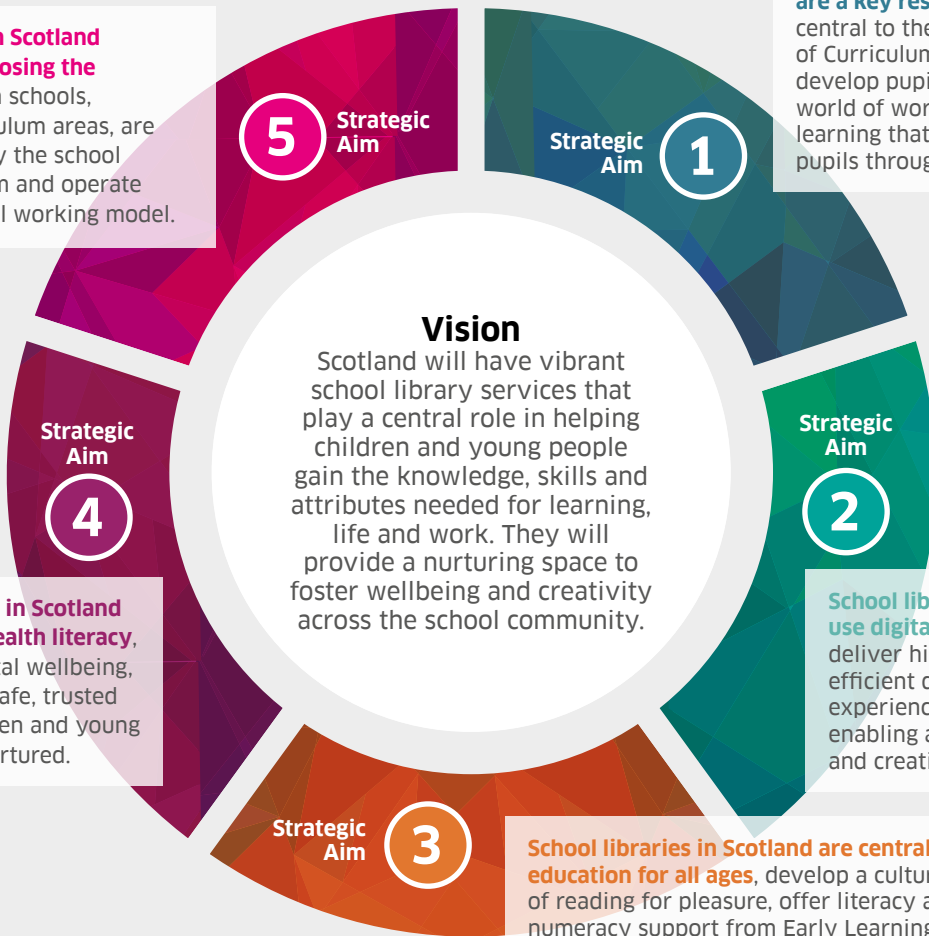




# Vision & Aims

**School libraries in Scotland are essential to closing the attainment gap** in schools, support all curriculum areas, are well-supported by the school management team and operate under a successful working model.

**School libraries in Scotland are a key resource** and are central to the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence, develop pupil skills for the world of work, and encourage learning that will stay with pupils throughout their lives.



**Vision**  
 Scotland will have vibrant school library services that play a central role in helping children and young people gain the knowledge, skills and attributes needed for learning, life and work. They will provide a nurturing space to foster wellbeing and creativity across the school community.

**School libraries in Scotland contribute to health literacy**, social and mental wellbeing, and provide a safe, trusted space for children and young people to be nurtured.

**School libraries in Scotland use digital technology** to deliver high quality and efficient digital learning experiences for young people, enabling access to information and creative opportunities.

**School libraries in Scotland are central to education for all ages**, develop a culture of reading for pleasure, offer literacy and numeracy support from Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) settings through to primary and secondary schools, and enable opportunities for family learning.





# Context & Background

## Context

Scottish Education aims to deliver excellence in terms of ensuring children and young people acquire a broad range of skills and capacities at the highest levels, whilst also delivering equity so that every child and young person thrives and has the best opportunity to succeed. School libraries play a pivotal role in the delivery of the priorities identified in the [National Improvement Framework](#), published to help deliver the twin aims of excellence and equity.

These priorities remain as:

- Improvement in attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy, and closing the attainment gap
- Improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing
- Improvement in employability skills and sustained, positive school-leaver destinations for all young people

## Background

School library services in Scotland have experienced a period of great change. New service models and changes to local government budgets have resulted in school library provision being adjusted to meet new challenges, and the model of provision varies from one local authority to another. All secondary schools in Scotland have access to library services either through a dedicated school library, a joint school and community library or from a central local authority library service. The majority are managed by professionally trained librarians who hold academic qualifications in the field of library and information studies or professional management skills.

School librarians have an in-depth knowledge of learning styles and:

- Manage a safe, secure and supportive environment for formal and informal learning
- Are responsible for curating a range of reading material, resources and activities to support the curriculum
- Partner with teachers in supporting delivery of Curriculum for Excellence
- Engage pupils in information seeking, skills development and discussion
- Develop critical thinkers, enthusiastic readers and ethical use of information
- Promote information literacy across the curriculum

Some local authorities also have an Educational Resource Service, which provides books, resources, activities and advice to primary schools and ELC settings, as well as offering central support to the secondary school librarians in the area. Due to local variations in service provision and without a shared understanding on the role of school library services and school librarians across Scotland, not all children and young people currently have access to a suitable school library service.

To achieve the ambition of excellence and equity in Scottish education, all pupils require access to, and support from, excellent school library services throughout the learner journey.

## Strategy Development

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, recognising the important contribution that school libraries and school librarians make to the overall education offer, commissioned the development of a National Strategy for School Libraries by SLIC in September 2017.

The aspiration of the strategy is Scotland's learners will have access to a school library service that inspires at all points of education, led by school librarians to develop the skills needed for children and young people to be successful and reach their full potential.

Martina McChrystal, Director of Library Services, University of Glasgow, was invited to Chair an Advisory Group which included representatives from key stakeholder groups and organisations. The School Library National Strategy Advisory Group (SLNSAG) provided a strategic forum for the development of the National Strategy for School Libraries in Scotland. The members of SLNSAG were as follows:

- Martina McChrystal, University of Glasgow (Chair)
- Michael Wood, Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES)
- Catherine Kearney, Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland (CILIPS)
- Eddie Follan, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)
- Madeleine Brown, Young Scot
- Jim Thewliss, School Leaders Scotland (SLS)
- Lee-Anne Connor, School Libraries Group (Scotland)
- Catriona Mackenzie, Scottish Government
- Pamela Tulloch, Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC)

- Eileen Prior, Connect
- Richard Aird, University of Stirling
- Jane Renton, Education Scotland
- Greg Dempster, Association of Headteachers and Deputies Scotland (AHDS)

### Observers:

- Rachael Laburn, Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC)
- Sarah Harmon, Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC)
- Anand Ferguson, Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC)

The Advisory Group was guided by the Scottish Government's priorities for education as part of Curriculum for Excellence and the [Education Bill Reform - Joint Agreement](#) between local and national government. This identified five key areas of focus for the strategy. These also align with the First Minister's [Programme for Government](#), the [National Improvement Framework](#) and [Getting it Right for Every Child \(GIRFEC\)](#), the national approach in Scotland to improving outcomes and supporting the wellbeing of children and young people.

Five short life working groups were commissioned to explore the following themes:

- Curriculum, Learner Journey and Developing the Young Workforce
- Information, Digital Literacy and Digital Creativity
- Literacy, Numeracy and Family Learning
- Health and Wellbeing
- Leadership, Standards and Working Models

Development of the strategy was informed by a combination of desk research, which involved a global literature review, a national survey and site visits. The Advisory Group took account of the Scottish Government's [Early Years Framework](#) and the principles of GIRFEC, putting the rights and wellbeing of children and young people at the heart of the services that support them.



# 1. Curriculum, Learner Journey & Developing the Young Workforce



**School libraries in Scotland are a key resource and are central to the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence, develop pupil skills for the world of work, and encourage learning that will stay with pupils throughout their lives.**

Proactive and appropriate school library services have a key role to play in improving the learner journey for Scotland's children and young people throughout education. In line with Getting it Right For Every Child, the school library service should be child-focused, ensuring the child and the family are at the centre of decision-making. It should centre on the wellbeing of the child, tackling need early, offering the right help at the right time from the right people, and should be built on joint-working. Involving children and young people and families in defining the school library service will ensure that it meets their needs. It is important to recognise that each child, school and local authority is different, with differing priorities that should be met by each local school library service. Headteachers should decide how their school library service will be delivered to all pupils and should ensure this is understood by pupils, practitioners and parents.

**The school library should be at the heart of developing young people for the world of work.**

Network Librarian, Alness Academy

Local authorities will work with schools to ensure that school library services are made available and promoted in line with appropriate investment in resources and staffing. Site visits have shown some of the benefits experienced by ELC settings

**The library is a real hub of the school - I'm always amazed at how much is going on.**

Deputy Headteacher, Ellon Academy

and primary schools when adopting a school library service as part of lessons. These include greater access to resources and support from the wider library sector. Support from Learning and Education Resource Centres gives pupils and teachers the opportunity to access a high standard of educational material. A key part of the school library service is the involvement and support of school librarians. They have an understanding of the types of resources that pupils require for learning and provide tailored support for areas such as Gaelic education, Additional Support Needs (ASN) and English as an Additional Language (EAL). They promote the library and its resources across the whole school and provide support to and complement the provision of all departments. School librarians are therefore central to a strong school library service.

School librarians can forge working relationships with a range of partners within and out with the school to support children and young people to prepare for the world of work. Careers information in the school library can offer pupils direct support and the opportunity to gain knowledge of employment sectors in Scotland. This is reflected in the expansion of the Gaelic sector, where Gaelic development and

language roles are developing across the country. Partnerships with Scotland's national skills agency, [Skills Development Scotland](#), are used to provide information and resources to pupils. School librarians can assist pupils with learning appropriate employability skills, while teachers can use the library space to help pupils write CVs and develop skills profiles. Evidence suggests that pupil volunteers can gain positive development experience under the direction of the school librarian,<sup>2</sup> and site visits displayed the positive impact this has on pupil confidence, giving pupils a sense of ownership and responsibility. School librarians provide pupils with guidance on writing UCAS statements and preparation for entrance interviews. The school library can also give pupils a space to participate in active citizenship opportunities such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award. Pupils reported that having a space out with the classroom to explore skills and interests had a positive impact on learning.

School librarians will have the opportunity to participate in curriculum related Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to stay informed and support pupils and staff.

They should be empowered to continually review the service and identify what tools and resources are necessary for their professional development. Platforms on Glow and Education Scotland's [National Improvement Hub](#) will support school library resources and include CPD opportunities for all school library staff. Resources and case studies will also be made available on SLIC's website to provide further inspiration for school library development. Due to the proven positive impact that school librarians have on pupils' learning experiences, it is vital that they remain appropriately trained and supported.

The integration of school library services into the life of the school happens most effectively when headteachers and school managers have a good understanding of the value of library services and school librarians in the school community. The publication of [How good is our school library?](#), which aligns closely with [How good is our school? 4th edition](#), means that school librarians have a set of specific quality indicators which they can use to evaluate practice and feed into planning for improvement at whole-school level.

## Learning About Scotland Strathearn Library & Crieff High School, Perth & Kinross

Working in partnership with Crieff High School and LOGOS youth club, Strathearn Community Library supported S2 pupils with their 'Learning about Scotland' week. Teaching staff and professional librarians collaborated to provide activities tailored to the learning needs of the pupils. By using their local history resources, and with the help of a local historian, the pupils devised a town trail using local landmarks as points of reference and of historic interest. The librarians also offered ancestry workshops and set pupils the task of finding interesting facts from the local history archives. The pupils therefore developed their critical thinking, information evaluation and search and retrieval skills. This also helped to support a two-day summer school which was planned for the young people researching a Scottish topic of their choice. The pupils were able to access library resources and develop their transferable skills to help them complete their investigations and presentations. The project enabled the library to be a viable tool for research in support of subjects from across the curriculum and showed pupils that information is gleaned from other sources, not solely the internet. This project was shared with other community partners and organisers who are now keen to adopt the trail for dementia friendly walks.



## Actions

To further extend the good practice seen in school library services across Scotland, the Advisory Group recommends that:

- ▶ Headteachers should decide how their school library service will be delivered to all pupils from ELC to secondary school and should ensure this is understood by pupils, practitioners and parents.
- ▶ Headteachers reinforce and proactively support school library services in the wider school and curriculum.
- ▶ Headteachers support school librarians in Continuous Professional Development, which is reviewed and improved in line with CPD for other school staff.
- ▶ Secondary school librarians provide pupils with opportunities to develop employability skills by supporting volunteering in the library, as part of a managed service, and arranging pupil committees.

**A school library is a precious and important place – and librarians have a very important role to play in the lives of children.**

Philip Caveney, Author







## Transitioning to Secondary Hazlehead Primary, Aberdeen City

Hazlehead Primary has a dedicated library room managed by a school librarian, supported by P6 pupils and parent volunteers. The school librarian's direction means there is an understanding of the flexible nature of the library and the cross-curricular activities that is utilised through the service. In order to maximise the service, a proactive relationship has been created with the school library and school librarian at the secondary school. P7 pupils at Hazlehead are actively involved in transition activities with the secondary school librarian to ensure a consistent and seamless journey between the primary school and the secondary. The transition activities focus on the role of the secondary school library and introduces the children to a space that is fun, creative and safe in the secondary school. This means that the children are familiar with the school library and school librarian before leaving primary and understand the role they play in supporting their learning at secondary school. The school librarian and teachers are currently looking at ways to develop this advanced planning to improve partnerships with both the secondary school and public library to combat the one-off nature of most service interactions. This will be supported by local authorities articulating the importance of children and young people's access to a school library service at all levels of their learner journey. A key part of this is a dedicated, trained school librarian and well-supported resources for children and young people to access at all points of their learning.



## 2. Information, Digital Literacy & Digital Creativity



**School libraries in Scotland use digital technology to deliver high quality and efficient digital learning experiences for young people, enabling access to information and creative opportunities.**

Digital literacy is as an essential skill set for the workforce of the future, and evidence shows these skills are increasingly having an impact on future social and economic wellbeing. The Scottish Government set out a vision for Scotland as a vibrant, inclusive, open and outward looking digital nation in their [Digital Strategy for Scotland](#). In recognition of the challenges facing young people in the information age and concerns about the reliability of some media sources, information literacy and digital literacy are core skills to be developed in Curriculum for Excellence. School librarians have an important role in ensuring that children and young people build the skills required to navigate and evaluate information effectively. School librarians are, by both their training and nature of their work, skilled in engaging with the digital landscape. This makes them crucial to achieving the key outcomes to develop a digital society, ensuring pupils are given the opportunity to develop the skills to navigate information critically and effectively.

**Our digital literacy is very much part of our general literacy, with as high a priority as English and Maths.**

YoungScot

Site visits demonstrated that where headteachers and local authorities invest in a school library service which develops digital collections and improves access to digital

devices, and a school librarian providing guidance and support, there is a positive impact on digital literacy. This develops young people into critical thinkers and ethical information users.

**I passionately believe that the school library is a very special place for many children.**

Catherine Rayner, Illustrator and author

Ensuring quality digital and information literacy provision in schools requires a dedicated space. A flexible space, made available for recreational use, encourages pupils to experience digital activities in a creative way. For primary schools, digital and information literacy provision can be facilitated by librarians in classrooms as part of literacy lessons. Digital literacy provision should be further extended to primary schools and early years settings where possible, facilitated by a school librarian, and evidence shows that some headteachers are successfully using Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) to support this.

School librarians can introduce science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) activities such as Makerspaces and Code Clubs, and collaborate with STEM-related departments to extend these opportunities to teaching staff. These activities promote digital creativity amongst children and young people,

and align with the STEM agenda. Education Scotland will support school librarians with STEM provision alongside teachers and other education practitioners, in particular those working with primary schools and early years. School libraries can promote Gaelic language provision online and through physical resources, encouraging pupils to use platforms such as e-Sgoil. These initiatives, alongside others, focused on music, design, visual, audio expression and programming, are examples of where the school libraries add value to the school experience by offering opportunities to children and young people with an appetite for creativity and development, no matter age or level.

With current developments in open knowledge and data, schools should have appropriate policies in place to allow for the sharing of resources. To enable digital learning opportunities, in line with the actions in [Enhancing Learning and Teaching through the Use of Digital Technology](#), school infrastructure will be continually reviewed to identify areas for improvement, including the provision of, and access to, WiFi within the school library. The digital infrastructure and policy of the school will be flexible to ensure equitable access for staff and pupils. Maintaining positive relationships between

local authority IT staff and teaching staff will establish a whole-school understanding of the capacity and requirements of the school to participate in digital learning opportunities, for instance, available bandwidth. This will help IT staff to deliver stable and quality digital access that ensures equity, allows for the sharing of ideas and creates opportunities for collaboration within the school library. School librarians should contribute to the school's internet safety policies, recognising that young people are best protected when they are given access to the internet and taught ethical practice. This will be underpinned by a digital literacy strategy for the school and use of an acceptable digital literacies framework aimed at ensuring all stakeholders have a shared understanding of what digital literacy is, and the importance of ensuring all children are leaving school with strong digital skills.

Glow developers will ensure that digital learning resources are made available to support school librarians, and that there are opportunities for school librarians to be involved in a professional learning community where they access current good practice from across the digital education sector. A platform will be established on Education Scotland's [National Improvement Hub](#) and resources made available on SLIC's website.

## DigiDabble in Primary Schools North Ayrshire

After the success of the DigiDabble sessions in public libraries across North Ayrshire, the learning team extended their outreach to primary school clusters in the area. Aiming the project at P1-5, the library staff provided access to tablets, digital toys and coding equipment to give children the opportunity to try out new digital devices in a creative way, with experienced digital practitioners on hand to assist them and the teachers. Having informed and knowledgeable staff facilitating the digital sessions meant that the pupils could spend time learning about new devices, play with ones they were most interested in, and learn new STEM skills. It also gave teaching staff the opportunity to learn more about the digital devices, and ways they could incorporate them into their teaching. Bringing the session to the schools meant that pupils who could not attend the activity at the public library had the chance to participate in an area where many young people struggle. This example shows the impact of a strong working relationship between public libraries and primary schools, and the value in using professionally trained librarians and their knowledge to assist teachers in aspects of their lessons that require support.



## Actions

To ensure that children and young people are supported in developing their digital literacy, the Advisory Group recommends that:

- ▶ Key partners will ensure that the school library service makes best use of the WiFi and digital infrastructure available for delivery of digital learning across the curriculum, including STEM related activities.
- ▶ School librarians, supported by other staff across primary and secondary schools, facilitate information literacy lessons.
- ▶ School librarians use and promote Makerspaces, STEM resources and digitally creative opportunities.
- ▶ Headteachers support school librarians in using Glow and a dedicated platform on Education Scotland's [National Improvement Hub](#) will be extended to school librarians to share digital learning resources with other education practitioners.

**The emphasis is on providing a free and open community space for teens to explore digital media and technology - and to do so on their own terms. This sort of informal learning can hopefully foster creativity and experimentation and offer both STEM learning and play that doesn't always happen in schools.** KOED



## Information Literacy Lessons St Ambrose High School, North Lanarkshire

After discussions on how to embed information literacy into the school curriculum, the school librarian and English department at St Ambrose High arranged timetabled information literacy classes for all of their S1 pupils. They had noticed an impact on the literacy of the pupils after the closure of the Education Resource Centre and wanted to address this, as well as equip the pupils with the skills and knowledge required to effectively and safely navigate information in the era of fake news. The class was timetabled once a week as part of their literacy class and involved pupils conducting project research and presenting their findings at the end of the session. They were introduced to library management systems, evaluating websites, critical thinking, information skills and referencing. The lessons were positively received by pupils and the headteacher is planning on using the evaluation to incorporate the sessions into the S1 English curriculum. The sessions aim to emphasise the universal use of information literacy in everyday life and other subjects in the curriculum. This example shows the success and benefits of having a trained library professional in secondary schools for the appropriate provision of information literacy.





## 3. Literacy, Numeracy & Family Learning



### Strategic Aim

**School libraries in Scotland are central to education for all ages, develop a culture of reading for pleasure, offer literacy and numeracy support from Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) settings through to primary and secondary schools, and enable opportunities for family learning.**

Fostering a love of reading through storytelling and rhyme helps children of all ages and abilities develop the literacy, language, arithmetic, motor and concentration skills required to start education at an equitable level and support improved attainment throughout the learner journey. Reading for pleasure has a positive impact on the emotional and social health of children and young people, and evidence shows that it improves attainment. Supporting parents to play, talk and read with children from an early stage has been proven to not only assist children's development, but also promotes parent-child attachment.<sup>3</sup>




### The school library is the hub of our school.

Headteacher,  
Renfrew High School

School libraries can support all of this with school librarians leading literacy activities at all levels, helping all children in accessing them, and continually developing resources to inspire learning. Central to the role is developing a culture of reading for pleasure from early years onwards and extending this to the wider school community, creating lifelong readers. School librarians ensure that children and young people have equitable access to age-appropriate books and resources that are tailored to interests and the curriculum. Ideally, this includes opportunities to engage with a variety of material and activities, and different

forms of literacies, including media and film literacy. By including Gaelic texts and activities, school library services can also support Gaelic Medium Education (GME).



### I want to share my love of reading with the pupils.

Parent Volunteer, Priorsford Primary School

Where an on-site school library may not be available, public libraries across the country have embedded literacy and numeracy sessions into early years service delivery, including initiatives such as Bookbug and story times. There is also a commitment from public libraries to promote Gaelic provision as part of early years literacy activities, with dedicated programmes.

Literacy initiatives such as The [First Minister's Reading Challenge](#) (FMRC), [PlayTalkRead](#), [Read Write Count](#), and national reading campaigns such as Book Week Scotland, [World Book Day](#) and [National Poetry Day](#) offer opportunities for school libraries and school librarians to create synergies that can improve standards of literacy in pupils of all ages and engage parents in reading. Schools are increasingly taking on initiatives such as the Deputy First Minister's Holiday Maths Challenge and Maths Week Scotland which support numeracy across the curriculum. The school library and school librarian can support these campaigns and initiatives by providing a space for children and young people

to participate in these activities, and by creating a tailored calendar of activities for teachers, pupils and the wider community to get involved in.

School libraries can have a positive impact of the wider community, and school librarians play a significant role in lifelong learning. They provide a space for learning for people of all ages and abilities, support creative and family learning, including through intergenerational activities, and extend a culture of reading for pleasure. Recognising that the engagement of parents and families supports attainment, providing an inclusive and flexible school library resource in schools can support equity within the school environment. This can be particularly valuable in supporting inductions and transitions for primary to secondary, where school librarians should play a central role in planning and management. Site visits have shown that community campus facilities

are particularly accessible to families and carers of pupils, support family learning and parental involvement and develop a sense of community. Education Scotland will provide information on what school libraries and school librarians contribute to children and young people's education through the [National Improvement Hub](#) and [ParentZone](#). Support from [Connect](#) and the [National Parent Forum of Scotland](#) will encourage further engagement with families.

Recognising the positive impact of the school library service, headteachers are increasingly allocating additional PEF to directly support a school library service. School librarians have the opportunity to apply to the School Library Improvement Fund (SLIF) for projects which demonstrate innovation and creativity in the school library setting.

## Maths in the School Library Craigroyston Community High School, Edinburgh

The school librarian collaborates with the Maths department to provide pupils with a regular alternative learning experience to the classroom environment. Every second week, Broad General Education (BGE) pupils use iPads in the library to access the interactive maths app, Sumdog. Alongside the additional library experience to the pupils weekly 'reading for pleasure' period, the digital maths class enables the school librarian to improve relationships with students who are more easily engaged with numeracy than literacy. The school librarian therefore plays a key role in supporting curriculum learning and developing digital skills within the library infrastructure. It was observed that the success of the class contributed to pupils being more at ease and better behaved during their reading periods, resulting in a perceptible impact with learners who had been frequently unfocused, reluctant or demotivated in their reading. This collaboration has positively contributed to the school library becoming part of the numeracy landscape in the school. Relationships with staff have strengthened as they understand the role the school library takes in teaching and learning beyond the English department. The Development Officer for Transformational Learning works across all departments to improve attainment throughout the curriculum with a focus on literacy and numeracy, and will continue to build on the school library's involvement.



## Actions

To allow children and young people across Scotland to benefit from the support a strong school library service can offer to literacy, numeracy and family learning, the Advisory Group recommends that:

- ▶ Key partners ensure the school library service encompasses creative approaches to literacy and numeracy for all ages and abilities.
- ▶ School librarians and teachers embed a calendar of activities to promote literacy and numeracy in the school and wider community.
- ▶ Secondary school librarians create links between the service and local primary school clusters.
- ▶ Key partners ensure that the school library service fosters and encourages connections with families and carers of pupils from early years and childcare settings to secondary level.

**Exposure to stories, essays and poetry from where we live, using our language, contemplating our culture, with themes and characters which resonate with our lives, is enormously self-affirming. Nowhere else provides this service at that level.**

Theresa Breslin, Author





## P1 Literacy Activities HighLife Highland

HighLife Highland Libraries work in partnership with primary schools and nurseries to implement the Every Child a Library Member (ECALM) initiative, ensuring all children and their families have access to library services and the activities they provide. All children in P1 are automatically given library membership and provided, via their local library, with ongoing access to a range of high-quality children's books in English and Gaelic and other resources that will stimulate their imagination. Children and families also participate in the Read Write Count and Bookbug programmes in English and in Gaelic to develop their love of books and reading, and support emerging literacy skills. Library staff at HighLife Highland also offer training to teachers and classroom assistants in implementing Bookbug and Read Write Count effectively as part of their lessons. The training equips teaching staff with the resources, skills and knowledge to lead Bookbug sessions within their own nursery or school environment and enables the library to reach families who may not traditionally engage with the library service. The training and follow up visits are designed to strengthen the links between home, school and the public library. These sessions have led to increased family participation in the school and increased engagement from children in shared reading sessions. The success of the partnership with the nursery led to an expansion of the ECALM offer and at the request of the headteacher, the library was able to provide automatic library membership to every child in the school. To make this truly meaningful for pupils, timetabled mobile library visits were introduced. This ensured pupils could experience first-hand visiting a public library and borrowing books - for some pupils this was the first time they had visited a library.



## 4. Health and Wellbeing



**School libraries in Scotland contribute to health literacy, social and mental wellbeing, and provide a safe, trusted space for children and young people to be nurtured.**

To support health and wellbeing, children and young people require access to a flexible space for reflection and conversation where learning and creativity are encouraged in a nurturing environment. Primary schools often have designated spaces in classrooms for reading, relaxation and quiet-time. Secondary schools have an independent space in the school building to provide a library, separate to classrooms with dedicated resources and materials for cross curricular learning. The space should be multi-purpose and provide access for pupils who may experience barriers to learning, such as those with Additional Support Needs (ASN), including reluctant learners and pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL). They also encourage reading for pleasure, which studies have shown is linked to reduced stress, increased empathy and higher levels of individual wellbeing.<sup>4</sup> On site visits, vulnerable pupils, reluctant learners and pupils with ASN have stated that the school library is an essential part of their learning experience. School librarians will work closely with Learning Support and should be supported by the pastoral policy of the school, with appropriate development programmes.



**The library gives me a breather.**

S1 Pupil, Inverclyde Academy

School librarians should ensure the stock reflects the health and wellbeing needs of the school community, providing access to a variety of information on topics from anxiety and stress to LGBTI issues and identity. By reflecting the diversity of pupils,

having material in different languages, and organising activities celebrating different



**The library is a safe space - it's a mini community.**

S4 Pupil, Inverclyde Academy

cultures, the school library can also support engagements with EAL pupils.

As previously outlined, the school library service should put the child at the centre in line with [Getting It Right for Every Child](#) (GIRFEC) principles and should give consideration to the child or young person's overall wellbeing using GIRFEC wellbeing indicators - how safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included they are, in order that the right support is offered at the right time. Reflecting the vision of [How good is our school library?](#) and the aspirations of the Scottish Government's [Mental Health Strategy](#), the school library should be made available outwith class time and provide a positive culture between home and school that pupils trust and feel able to engage with. Site visits have shown the positive impact this access can have on young people, with one pupil using the library before class and during lunchtimes describing it as his "second home" and the school librarian as "somewhere between a parent and a teacher."

School librarians should be trained and given CPD opportunities on how to handle sensitive issues with pupils and other school staff. The school library can support young people's understanding of how to

access, interpret and evaluate information regarding health and wellbeing. With guidance from school librarians, young people are encouraged to assess their health and wellbeing needs using programmes such as Shelf Help and social-prescribing. Headteachers and school managers will recognise this role in the school library service and promote it as a nurturing space. For primary school children and early years, public library services can supplement the in-school service and provide guidance on a range of health and wellbeing topics to pupils and teaching staff, and offer programmes of activities to support general wellbeing.

This learning can be extended through partnerships with Skills Development Scotland in schools to promote health-related placements for pupils in the context of the high demand for employees in the

health sector, which also supports national ambitions around STEM. School librarians can collaborate with other schools, libraries and external organisations to provide workshops and visits from the health sector and beyond. Primary and secondary pupils reported the positive experience they had when organisations and authors were invited to schools to talk about health and wellbeing, citing a memorable and meaningful impact on learning. Education Scotland and SLIC will ensure that examples of best practice and resources are shared, highlighting the role school libraries and the school librarian play to support health and wellbeing in education. They will create resources that inspire school librarians to explore ways of incorporating health and wellbeing provision into services.



## Reading with Ears Alford Community Campus, Aberdeenshire

The community centre at Alford is made up of a primary school, secondary school, library and public leisure facilities. The Network Librarian at Alford Library introduced an approach for pupils with Additional Support Needs who were experiencing barriers to learning and worked with the Learning Support Department to improve their attitudes and engagement. The initiative promoted literacy in the school library, with a relaxed learning environment for reluctant readers to encourage pupils to read and present aloud. The gradual improvement in the pupils' reading ages was clear, and their attitudes and engagement with learning improved. There was a clear impact on the wellbeing of the pupils, who were visibly more relaxed and comfortable in this type of learning space. The relaxing, safe and trusted environment of the library was of great value to their learning experience. The atmosphere that the librarian created in the space meant that the pupils also felt welcome in the library out with the project and during lunchtime clubs. As a result, the librarian was able to improve the learning experiences of the pupils, build their confidence, and increase their engagement with the curriculum.



## Actions

To capitalise on the capacity of school library services to positively impact health and wellbeing, the Advisory Group recommends that:

- ▶ Headteachers and school librarians develop a nurturing, safe and trusted school library environment.
- ▶ School librarians work closely with Learning Support departments to ensure that families and carers are aware of the support that the library offers.

- ▶ School librarians collaborate with other schools, libraries and external organisations to provide stakeholders with diverse health and wellbeing provision, and are given CPD opportunities to develop an understanding of health and wellbeing in schools.

**It's a quiet, safe, space  
- that's what is special about it.**

Headteacher, Aviemore Primary School



## Mental Health First Aid Kits St Joseph's Academy, East Ayrshire

A collaborative project which involves eight secondary schools across East Ayrshire, the school librarian at St Joseph's Academy was awarded funding from the School Library Improvement Fund to promote mental health and wellbeing in school libraries in the area. The Mental Health First Aid Kits include a number of different resources to provide assistance to pupils who are experiencing issues with their mental health and wellbeing, and equip young people with the means of short term management of their mental health issues. They help to enable and promote the self-management of pupils' wellbeing and encourage them to think about the different options available to them at school to support their health. The scheme also aims to improve literacy in terms of emotional needs and subsequently hopes to improve class attendance. The librarians at each school have a key role to play in distributing the kits, explain their purpose, and in turn show the diversity of their role in promoting equity in the wider school. This example shows the impact that the library has when collaborating with other schools, and the central role the school library and school librarians play in supporting health and wellbeing in their school.





## 5. Leadership, Standards & Working Models

### Strategic Aim

**School libraries in Scotland are essential to closing the attainment gap in schools, support all curriculum areas, are well-supported by the school management team and operate under a successful working model.**

Local authorities use differing models of school library provision across the country and should present a school library service that is appropriate to each area. School library provision at early years and primary school level varies from secondary school level in Scotland. Achieving a standard of provision across schools will further support the educational needs of children and young people. This will improve the chances of reducing the attainment gap, promoting equity and increasing equality in education.

**It's not a school if it doesn't have a library.**

Headteacher, Culloden Academy

The publication of *How good is our school library?*, which aligns closely with *How good is our school? 4th edition*, means that school librarians have a set of specific quality indicators which are used to evaluate the work and feed into planning for improvement at whole-school level. The good practice examples provided in each quality indicator in *How good is our school library?* are there to stimulate professional discussion and help school librarians reflect on how they can improve in their own contexts. Rather than trying to replicate this practice, librarians can refer to the features of best practice described to evaluate key aspects of their work.

Headteachers will ensure that the work of the school library is included in the wider school's strategic plan and objectives, and is involved in the monitoring of the school improvement.

School librarians and headteachers should work closely with other school staff to ensure the library is embedded in the overall improvement plan for the school and recognise the value in continually reviewing and monitoring the quality of the service, using the quality indicators in *How good is our school library?* School librarians will be well-supported by the school management team and included in the wider school management, attending meetings to review inspection results and improvement plans. The development plan will be conducted in line with the wider school's improvement plan. Education Scotland will ensure that the work of the school library is included in school inspections and inspectors will look at the contribution of the library to wellbeing, inclusion and achievement across the curriculum. Work conducted by the Regional Improvement Collaboratives will also help ensure that schools are driven towards continuous improvement.

**What a school thinks about its library is a measure of what it thinks about education.**

Harold Howe,  
former U.S. Commissioner of Education

A close partnership between school libraries, public libraries, primary schools and ELC settings can provide an effective support system for pupils. Currently such models take many forms, and where pupils do not have access to an onsite school library, a partnership with the secondary school library

or Learning Resource Centre provides access to resources, and activities, as well as school librarians. Using a shared Library Management System (LMS) for schools and public libraries can facilitate ease of access and improved efficiency. This is currently used across over half of local authorities in Scotland with different models depending on the service and schools. It is a model that may not be appropriate for all schools, but presents an alternative for services that, for instance, do not have a suitable LMS. This approach is flexible enough to allow for reconfiguring of settings depending on the needs of the school, and allows for greater efficiency with information management, data protection and privacy. Site visits have also shown the positive impact a shared LMS has in secondary school libraries where school librarians managing the service are consulted. School librarians will be able to continue managing dedicated budgets and resources while having access to a wider variety of stock. Evidence shows that local authorities have benefited from adopting this operating model.

Ensuring the success of partnerships and working models depends on the leadership

capacity of headteachers and school librarians. The freedom that comes with the flexibility of the curriculum means that headteachers have scope to ensure school library services meet the strategic vision and wider plan for the school. School librarians will use the opportunity to be creative, applying for support for projects through funds such as the School Library Improvement Fund, leading development of provision and sharing practice with partners. To complement this, as outlined under previous strategic themes, school librarians and practitioners working with the school library service will have the opportunity to develop professional skill-sets to ensure the provision is consistent with the current National Outcomes and National Improvement Framework - to ensure Scotland's young people grow up well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society, and children grow up loved, safe and respected so they reach their full potential. Education Scotland will give school librarians the opportunity to develop leadership skills, helping them to articulate the contribution to learning and Curriculum for Excellence that they make, and to become confident and resilient leaders.

## Reaching Rural Primary Schools AngusAlive

AngusAlive Libraries run a fortnightly schedule rota for their mobile library service and are currently visiting primary schools in the more rural areas of the local authority. There is a positive working relationship between the public library service and the schools, where pupils are encouraged to get library cards, visit the local library, and learn more about the library service. The library staff have also used the mobile libraries to carry out vital outreach work, such as the Bookbug Library Challenge with a local nursery, and are currently involved in the 4-4-2 reading challenge with four primary schools. The librarians were able to extend this service after successfully securing LEADER funding to purchase two new mobile libraries. These smaller vans will allow for visits to a number of primary schools and nurseries currently not receiving visits due to their rural location. The funding has also allowed them to purchase IT equipment to introduce a digital connection to the service, enabling access to the internet, eResources and social media. By improving accessibility to digital resources, areas where 'technology poverty' has been identified have been given further support, enabling the wider community to develop their digital skills. This shows the positive impact on children and the wider community from implementing a flexible and effective working model, and the opportunities that are available to schools when able to access a well-supported library service.



## Actions

To promote leadership and ensure high standards and appropriate working models are in place, the Advisory Group recommends that:

- ▶ School librarians and headteachers lead a proactive school library service to an excellent standard, with the support of managers.
- ▶ Headteachers and school librarians ensure the school library service is continually reviewed and monitored for evaluation as part of the wider school improvement plan.
- ▶ Head teachers and Education Scotland will ensure that the work of the school library is included in school inspections and inspection results are used to encourage improvement of the service.
- ▶ Local authorities implement a shared LMS between schools and public libraries where possible to deliver effective and efficient use of library resources.

**It's not about the room, it's a feeling in the school  
- we all read.**

Headteacher, Inverclyde Academy







## Creating a Reading School Inverclyde Academy, Inverclyde

Inverclyde is identified on the [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation \(SIMD\)](#) as being one of the more deprived areas of Scotland, with over 60% of pupils at Inverclyde Academy living in the lowest deciles 1-3. As a result, there is a wide disparity between pupil's reading and chronological ages, with the poorest readers of the 2016 intake (24/130 pupils) having a reading age of P2. In order to improve literacy within the school, the school librarian decided to develop a number of reader-based projects for pupils and teachers throughout the school – these included Boys in Books with Magic Torch Comics, Drop Everything and Read, and a pupil-teacher activity called Desert Island Books. Across the activities, engaging and empowering the pupils was the priority for the projects and connections were made online and offline in the wider school via Inverclyde Academy's Twitter. These projects have also resulted in greater engagement with the library and literacy across the school, with World Book Nights and Book Week Scotland being celebrated annually. Following this, the school librarian applied to the first round of the School Library Improvement Fund to continue working with Magic Torch Comics on a heritage-based project to give pupils the opportunity to contribute to a published piece of work. The leadership qualities and drive of the school librarian has had a meaningful impact on the learning of pupils and has defined the library as the cultural and reading hub of the school for pupils, parents and teaching staff in the school.



# Implementing the Strategy

The Advisory Group recommends that a School Library Strategy Implementation Group is established, bringing together key partners with a commitment to work together to deliver the vision in this document that every child and young person in Scotland should have access to a vibrant school library service.

The School Library Strategy Implementation Group will: -

- Lead on the implementation of the strategy to ensure the actions are undertaken accordingly
- Report to the Scottish Government and COSLA on progress and receive support from SLIC
- Advocate for the continuous quality improvement and self-evaluation of school library services in each school through use of the *How good is our school library?* framework and Continuous Professional Development for school librarians
- Support collaborative and partnership working through sharing of ideas and resources on Education Scotland's [National Improvement Hub](#) and Regional Improvement Collaboratives
- Promote the development of the school library service in the education sector to ensure school library services are well-supported and appropriately-resourced
- Provide support to staff managing school library services and showcase best practice from across Scotland

There are a number of bodies in Scotland that currently have a role in promoting the development of the school library service within the education sector. They are as follows:

- Education Scotland
- Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES)
- Association of Headteachers and Deputies Scotland (AHDS)
- Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)
- Scottish Government
- Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC)
- Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland (CILIPS)
- Connect & the National Parent Forum of Scotland (NPF)

The formation of the School Library Strategy Implementation Group will include membership from the above organisations. It is intended this collaborative matrix approach to implementing the strategy will ensure broad and collective ownership for the success of school library services and drive forward the value of a strong school library service across ELC settings, primary and secondary education.

# Summary of Actions

Outlined below is a summary of the key actions of the strategy which will be developed and undertaken by members of the Implementation Group. Completing the actions will ensure that stakeholders have access to excellent school library services that meet the learning needs of children and young people across Scotland.

Implementation	Action
	A School Library Strategy Implementation Group will be established, bringing together key partners with a commitment to work together to deliver the vision in this document that every child and young person in Scotland should have access to a vibrant school library service.

Strategic Aim	Action
<b>1. Curriculum, Learner Journey and Developing the Young Workforce</b>	Headteachers should decide how their school library service will be delivered to all pupils from ELC to secondary school and should ensure this is understood by pupils, practitioners and parents.
	Headteachers will reinforce and proactively support school library services in the wider school and curriculum.
	Headteachers will support school librarians in Continuous Professional Development, which is reviewed and improved in line with CPD for other school staff.
	Secondary school librarians will provide pupils with opportunities to develop employability skills by volunteering in the library and arranging pupil committees, as part of a managed service.

<b>2. Information, Digital Literacy and Digital Creativity</b>	Key partners will ensure that the school library makes best use of the WiFi and digital infrastructure available for delivery of digital learning across the curriculum, including STEM related activities
	School librarians, supported by other staff across primary and secondary schools, will facilitate information literacy lessons.
	School librarians will use and promote Makerspaces, STEM resources and digitally creative opportunities.
	Headteachers will support school librarians in using Glow and a dedicated platform on Education Scotland's <a href="#">National Improvement Hub</a> will be extended to librarians to share digital learning resources with other education practitioners.



### 3. Literacy, Numeracy and Family Learning

Key partners will ensure the school library service supports creative approaches to literacy and numeracy for all ages and abilities.

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School librarians and teachers will embed a calendar of activities to promote literacy and numeracy in the school and wider community.

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Secondary school librarians will create links between the service and local primary school clusters.

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Key partners will ensure that the school library service fosters and encourages connections with families and carers of pupils from ELC to secondary level.

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### 4. Health and Wellbeing

Headteachers and school librarians will develop a nurturing, safe and trusted school library environment.

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School librarians will work closely with Learning Support departments to ensure that families and carers are aware of the support that the library offers.

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School librarians will collaborate with other schools, libraries and external organisations to provide stakeholders with diverse health and wellbeing provision, and are given CPD opportunities to develop their understanding of health and wellbeing in schools.

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### 5. Leadership, Standards and Working Models

School librarians and headteachers will lead a proactive school library service to an excellent standard, with the support of managers.

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Headteachers and school librarians will ensure the school library service is continually reviewed and monitored for evaluation as part of the wider school's improvement plan.

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Headteachers and Education Scotland will ensure that the work of school libraries is included in inspections and inspection results are used to encourage improvement of the service.

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Local authorities will implement a shared LMS between schools and public libraries where possible to deliver the effective and efficient use of library resources.

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