

PE1581/P

Theresa Breslin letter of 21 September 2016

I am writing to you as I am a well established author with knowledge of how the book trade operates and as a former professional librarian whose remit included Youth Library Services. I've over 40 titles produced by various publishers and am aware of how books are commissioned and edited, and also (and with regard to Scotland this is of particular importance) of how stock is publicised, marketed, distributed and purchased. I have visited a huge number of schools within Scotland and world-wide. With this wealth of experience I feel that I am uniquely placed to make first-hand comment on the value of Scotland's School Library Services.

Our school libraries are vital in supporting the Curriculum at all levels, including certificate examinations. In addition to the promotion of literacy, literature, knowledge and information-retrieval skills, a professionally delivered library service within a school embeds the joy of reading in our young people - building self awareness, articulate self expression, confidence, validating their life and culture - and leads to social and emotional literacy. In the company of their peer group, the pupils have the best chance of accessing the materials which are absolutely crucial to their development as mature well-informed citizens of our country and of the world.

Other than a professionally staffed school library there is nowhere else able to provide this service at that level.

Via extension activities: Buddy-Reading schemes with local primary and nursery schools, book clubs, poetry slams, arranging author visits, taking pupils to Book Festivals, and liaising with key organisations such as Scottish Book Trust, the pupil is exposed to a multitude of experiences which would otherwise be inaccessible to them.

Currently there is a public outcry on this matter as Argyll and Bute school pupils openly appealed for help because the post of school librarian was to be deleted in every secondary school within the authority. They are deeply concerned for future prospects, and, being senior students, they are able to foresee the detrimental effect the removal of the post of school librarian will have on their education and well being. They also pointed out that children living in remote areas have great difficulty reaching any library service.

A survey undertaken this year by the TESS (Times Educational Supplement Scotland) showed the unevenness of the provision of professionally staffed school libraries across Scotland. This situation results in creating areas of unfair educational disadvantage to pupils.

It is a critical time for this issue and I would ask the Petitions Committee to support Petition PE1581 SAVE SCOTLAND'S SCHOOL LIBRARIES.

Yours sincerely,

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