



**PUBLIC PETITION NO.**

**PE01581**

**Name of petitioner**

Duncan Wright on behalf of Save Scotland's School Libraries

**Petition title**

Save Scotland's School Libraries

**Petition summary**

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to set out a new national strategy for school libraries which recognises the vital role of high quality school libraries in supporting pupils' literacy and research skills.

**Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition**

We have been actively campaigning for action for a number of years

- In February 2011 a protest was held outside the Scottish Parliament to raise awareness of the issue. Protestors spoke with elected representatives Gordon MacDonald, Alison Johnstone, Iain Gray and Marco Biaigi at the protest.
- Following the protest a letter highlighting concerns was sent to the then First Minister Alex Salmond.
- Subsequently since then the professional body for Librarians in Scotland, the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals Scotland (CILIPS), has formally responded to various local authorities who have proposed, and subsequently cut services.
- Individuals have also engaged with local authority consultations but have often found their responses have been ignored. For example in East Renfrewshire in the spring of 2015 the proposal to cut the number of school librarians received the highest number of responses and yet the proposal was not dropped.
- CILIPS produced *School Librarianship: An Advocacy Strategy*, highlighting the positive contribution school libraries and school librarians make in supporting the curricular and developmental needs of young people. This was distributed to every school in Scotland and to Education Scotland and other Education leaders.
- During our campaigning many colleagues have met with local councillors and elected representatives to discuss the issue.
- A Facebook page has been created to highlight the issue. This currently has over 900 likes.
- We work very closely with both CILIPS and the School Library Association (Scotland) to advocate the importance of school libraries and school librarians.

**Petition background information**

We firmly believe that school libraries are unique in their ability to support teaching and learning and should be the central resource of every school, open every day and staffed by a professionally trained librarian. We believe that all learners should have equal access to a qualified school librarian.

As a result of recent cuts young people in Scotland are now subject to a postcode lottery in regards to the level of school library service they receive. As a consequence pupils in Scotland's schools are suffering educational inequality. The continuation of these cuts is very likely to lead to a drop in literacy rates and a widening of the attainment gap, which runs counter to Scottish Government policy.

Recent research from the Robert Gordon University entitled *Impact of School Libraries on Learning* highlighted a considerable body of international evidence showing that school libraries impact on:

- Higher test or exam scores equating to academic attainment: this includes academic attainment in the form of higher standardised test scores in reading, language arts, history and maths, and better grades in curriculum assignments or exams;
- Successful curriculum or learning outcomes, including information literacy: this includes higher quality project work, the development and practice of information literacy, increased knowledge and reading development
- Positive attitudes towards learning: including increased motivation, improved attitude towards learning tasks, self-esteem, and wider reading for pleasure.

In addition, the evidence clearly identifies the elements of the library which contribute to the impact on learning:

- A qualified, full-time librarian, who is proactive and has managerial status;
- A library that supports physical and virtual access to resources in the library, classrooms and at home, during school hours and beyond;
- An adequate physical and virtual collection that is current, diverse and supports the curriculum as well as appealing to students' leisure needs;
- Collaboration with teaching colleagues, senior management, librarian colleagues and outside agencies, including central schools library services, to ensure the most appropriate services are delivered in support of learning.

School librarians and school library services also have a direct contribution to reducing the attainment gap and offering equality to all by:

- Raising standards of educational attainment in the core skill of literacy through their expertise and knowledge in reading for enjoyment and information literacy;
- Offering a vibrant, safe and educational environment for all pupils in the school library and opportunities for all pupils to develop responsibilities of citizenship;
- Supporting pupils develop skills for life.

Further evidence to support these claims can be found in two reports published in the Spring of 2015. Firstly the Standing Literacy Commission (SLC) published their final report on the *Scottish Government's Literacy Action Plan*. The aim of the SLC report was to capture the impact of work undertaken across different sectors who have a direct influence on supporting literacy. The following quote is taken directly from the SLC final report,

*"...schools with school libraries and librarians achieved higher exam scores, leading to higher academic attainment; higher quality project work; successful curriculum and learning outcomes; more positive attitudes towards learning and increased motivation and self-esteem among pupils."*

The vital role the school library can play was also highlighted in the *3-18 Literacy and English Review*. The following passage comes from a case study which looks at the role Liberton High School Library, Edinburgh plays in promoting a reading culture.

*"Where secondary schools have a librarian, s/he often plays a key role in the promotion of a reading culture and many run information literacy courses and support the development of research skills. Secondary schools could do more to develop an ethos where reading is valued beyond S3"*.

The Educational Institute of Scotland, the main Union representing teachers in Scotland, has also spoken out on the effect continued cuts may have to school literacy programmes. The EIS General Secretary said in November 2014:

*“This may seem like a soft target, but being a librarian is not just a question of stamping out books. They are graduate professionals and often the linchpins of school literacy programmes, which may grind to a halt when they are removed.”*

In 2015 the following authorities have proposed cuts to school library services:

- East Renfrewshire
- South Lanarkshire
- North Lanarkshire
- Falkirk Council

Other proposals already approved include sharing librarians between schools in Glasgow, and replacing librarians in North Ayrshire, South Ayrshire and Fife with library assistants. Some schools, such as Dumfries Academy, have handed responsibility for libraries over to English teachers, and a number of councils have reduced librarians' duties to term-time only.

No research has been undertaken where services have been cut to evaluate any impact of literacy and learning and more councils are following suit in the desperate need to cut budgets. It is noticeable however that these type of cuts have not been undertaken in the private sector, leading to further inequality and widening of the attainment gap.

Where school library services are valued and completely integrated into the learning community, the school librarians' unique skills impact greatly on all aspects of literacy, including reading for enjoyment and information literacy. This in turn contributes to raising attainment for all and developing the young workforce.

*“There is no-one better than our super-librarian at promoting reading skills across the entire school campus. She flies the flag for literacy in every corner of QVS.”*

Senior Depute Head, Queen Victoria School

### Unique web address

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/GettingInvolved/Petitions/SaveScotlandsSchoolLibraries>

### Related information for petition

Weblinks to reports/organisations mentioned in the petition:

#### **Impact of School Libraries on Learning**

[http://scottishlibraries.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/SLIC\\_RGU\\_Impact\\_of\\_School\\_Libraries\\_2013.pdf](http://scottishlibraries.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/SLIC_RGU_Impact_of_School_Libraries_2013.pdf)

#### **Final report from the Standing Literacy Commission on the Scottish Government's Literacy Action Plan:**

[http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/22923/2/00475485\\_Redacted.pdf](http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/22923/2/00475485_Redacted.pdf)

#### **3-18 Literacy and English Review:**

[http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/3to18LiteracyandEnglishReview\\_tcm4-856583.pdf](http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/3to18LiteracyandEnglishReview_tcm4-856583.pdf)

#### **School Librarianship: An Advocacy Strategy**

<http://static1.1.sqspcdn.com/static/f/825826/25593957/1422010188403/advocacystrategy.pdf?token=l5eYJ5Uwkqn%2Fh9Qlrxr13Wvumrg%3D>

#### **Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (Scotland):**

<http://www.cilips.org.uk/>

**School Library Association:**

<http://www.sla.org.uk/>

**Do you wish your petition to be hosted on the Parliament's website to collect signatures online?**

**YES**

**How many signatures have you collected so far?**

0

**Closing date for collecting signatures online**

16 / 10 / 2015

**Comments to stimulate online discussion**

We firmly believe that school libraries are unique in their ability to support teaching and learning and should be the central resource of every school, open every day and staffed by a professionally trained librarian. We believe that all learners should have equal access to a qualified school librarian.

Currently in Scotland this is not the case and the situation is deteriorating rapidly. We firmly believe that this needs to be addressed. Please show your support by signing this petition and if appropriate highlighting how your school library helped you.