



Picture News

Advanced

26th April 2021

What's going on this week?



Children's Laureate, Cressida Cowell, has written a letter asking the prime minister to allocate £100m a year to help school libraries. The writer said she wanted "something hopeful to come out of the darkness of the pandemic. If you want to level up, libraries have to be a key part of that."

She had said she would like funding to be guaranteed, in particular for primary school libraries, in the way that it is for other areas such as sport. The letter has also been signed by former Children's Laureates including Michael Rosen, Quentin Blake and Jacqueline Wilson.

Cowell added how one in eight primary schools don't have a library and that statistic doubles in schools with a higher proportion of children on free school meals. She also said that in prisons, libraries are statutory, but not in schools.

This week's news story: <https://bbc.in/2Qi50DZ>

This week's useful video: <https://bit.ly/2OKoGQD>



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Main question: Should all schools have a library?

Listen, think, share

- Read through this week's story. Is there a library at your school? If so, what is it like? If not, where is your nearest library?
- Research commissioned by the Great School Libraries campaign in 2019 showed that one in eight schools doesn't have a dedicated library space. Does this figure surprise you?
- Talk about what you think is the main role and purpose of a library? Do you use them? Do you know people who do? Who do you think benefits most from libraries?
- The amount that has been proposed by Children's Laureate, Cressida Cowell, is £100m to support all primary schools with library funding. Do you think that this type of funding should also be allocated to secondary schools?
- Teacher Rob Smith doesn't believe that the proposed amount is sufficient, "£100m for primary school libraries is not enough! That's about £4K per primary school on average. That could buy about 500 paperbacks, but kids need high-quality non-fiction too which is expensive. Many schools will need to build a space for a library as pupil numbers rise and schools struggle to cope with the space that they have. £4000 will not get books and a trained librarian too. Then there is the need to replenish stock and get the latest titles which means money every year and not just as a one off." Do you agree that the amount would need to be higher to have an impact?
- Do you think that all primary schools should have librarians?
- In her letter, Cressida says, "Children reading for joy is one of the two key factors in children's future economic success... they will also be healthier and happier." Discuss this comment and decide if you agree.
- Cressida wants funding to be guaranteed for primary school libraries in the way that it is for physical education. The PE premium was introduced in 2013, which provides all schools with ring-fenced money to only spend on physical education. "It's just as important as sport - it's about children's life chances," she said. Do you agree with this statement? Do you agree that money for libraries should be allocated to schools?
- Do you think libraries are more or less important following the disruption to schools during the pandemic? Explain your reasons.

Further questions for discussion

- Do you think it is a good idea to provide schools with money which they can only spend on certain areas, e.g. PE or libraries? Or do you think it is better for schools to have freedom on how they should spend their funding?
- If you had to describe the concept of a library to someone who didn't know what they were – what are the essentials that make a library a library?