



## PREPARING FOR A VISIT

Just as a teacher or librarian needs to ask certain questions about why they want an author visit, so you will have to ask yourself some fundamental questions in order to be able to outline the structure of your visit and sessions offered.



### Questions to ask yourself

How much time can you commit to visits and how far are you willing to travel?

Visits involve more than just the few hours the sessions last, consider the impact of preparation and travel – particularly that which might necessitate an overnight stay. Some authors will only consider a single visit local to them.

What age range(s) do you write/illustrate for?

What age range(s) are you comfortable talking to? The four Key Stages are:

Key Stage 1	Ages 5-7	Years 1 and 2
Key Stage 2	Ages 7-11	Years 3, 4, 5 and 6
Key Stage 3	Ages 11-14	Years 7, 8 and 9
Key Stage 4	Ages 14-16	Years 10 and 11

How many people are you comfortable talking to in any one session?

How many sessions in a day will you offer?

Some authors will do three a day, but others offer more – perhaps up to five – depending on the nature and length of sessions.

What type of session(s) will you offer?

Reading with Q&A, talk, interactive workshops or drama sessions? Will your session cover aspects of the curriculum? To avoid any misunderstandings discuss the nature of your talk, the schools' needs and expectations and confirm any specifications in advance,

### Photography

Not all authors are comfortable with being photographed during a talk and it can be distracting if it is unexpected. You may prefer to have a designated photo session before or after the event. All plans should be confirmed in advance.

### Recording

Unexpected filming can be very disruptive and can not only affect your performance, but how pupils will respond. Filming requests should *always* be discussed well in advance and you should think carefully about what type of permission you are comfortable with: perhaps an extract or Q&A session rather than the entire talk. A recording of your talk could, if you do not assert certain rights, end up

being shared with other schools and affect future income. Do not feel pressured into anything you feel uncomfortable with, particularly if it will negatively affect your performance. If giving permission, consider:

- Whether your appearance fee should be higher, to reflect further use of a recording. The simplest licence would be a buyout for classroom use-only within the specified school. If you would like to grant a wider licence bear in mind the duration of the recording, length of the licence – number of years and/or showings – and the availability when setting your fee.
- That you and the copyright of your talk are credited on the recording (the recording itself will belong to the school).
- That any featured copyright material (including quotes and images) are licenced, acknowledged and credited.
- That a copy or link to the recording is sent to you. You may like to negotiate use of the recording on your own platforms
- That any editing of the performance is to be subject to your approval.
- Whether there are any restrictions you would like to impose within the licence e.g. non-commercial use with the specified school with showings restricted to appropriate year groups; not for commercial use; not for YouTube etc.
- Whether classroom showings should be restricted to the appropriate year groups.

### Bookselling

It is horribly common for an author to be deeply disappointed by sales, most often because parents miss letters informing them of the book sale, so children do not have money to spend. Before the visit, impress on the organiser that without book sales there are no authors and that you would appreciate their help. Emphasise how exciting it can be for a child to have a signed book and how it can boost enthusiasm for reading. **Make sure that the school sends a letter home to the pupil's parents/carers**, outlining what books will be available and the prices. You could provide posters advertising the talk to distribute around the school and pass on publisher contacts who may be able to provide any advance promotional materials. Clarify who is responsible for providing books to sell (it is recommended that **you don't just rely on a school book fair** – it is quite likely that there will be limited, if any, copies of your books available).

With this in mind there are three options:

- The school organises a local bookshop to provide copies (they should be able to offer the school a discount on books or 10% commission if selling works themselves).
- The school buys in books on a sale-or-return basis from a wholesalers/distributor such as Gardners.
- You take books in yourself (you could negotiate a discounted seller account with your publisher). Ask for supervision and a member of staff to sell the books so you can concentrate on meeting the children, answering their questions and signing books without having to worry about giving the correct change! Alternatively, you could leave an order form with the school and send on signed books at a later date. Some authors will encourage sales by offering promotional deals or free books for the school if an agreed sales threshold is reached.

### What fee will you charge?

The negotiation of fees is a matter for individuals. Fees should take into account travel and preparation time as well as actual performance time and should be based on the annual salary you would expect to earn as a freelancer. To avoid any disputes around travel and accommodation expenses clarify what these are likely to be on booking as well as which party is booking and paying for them.

In 2013 the SoA's Children's Writers and Illustrators Group members reported a wide range of fees (excluding travel and expenses) from £350 to £1,000 per day (for authors in high demand). Half-day rates ranged from £150 to £800. Single session fees were quoted at £150 to £250 plus travel for a single session (not exceeding an hour) when the author or illustrator is visiting a local school/library or carrying out a number of separate visits in the same area. Average rates were around £400-500 for a day, £300 for a half-day.

We also recommend [Andrew Bibby's reckoner](#) which shows daily rates to equate with different salaries. Using that reckoner a day rate of £400-£600 equates to a NASUWT 2013 salary for a Leading Practitioner (excluding London and the Fringe) of £37,836 - £57,520.



Scottish schools and libraries may be able to apply for Live Literature Funding when using Scottish authors registered at [www.scottishbooktrust.com/author-search](http://www.scottishbooktrust.com/author-search). Author fees are a minimum of £150 (£175 from January 2017) for an hour event. All travel and subsistence expenses are reimbursed. Please note that authors can charge more within the scheme if the school/library agrees to cover the difference.

These figures and suggestions are taken from a survey which can be found in the *SoA school visits fees guide*.

How will you be paid?

As a freelancer, registered as self-employed by HMRC, you are responsible for your own tax and National Insurance arrangements. Some schools or local authorities will try to pay you from their roll, deducting tax before paying you. This is wrong as their limited engagement does not create a contract of employment. Make sure that your agreement is clear on this point as it can be an administrative nightmare to recover any deducted tax. We recommend including this point in Terms and Conditions which you ask the school to sign at the time of booking. It is also useful, because the accountant may not see this agreement, to include a footer on all your invoices saying that you are self-employed, are responsible for your own tax returns by self-assessment and therefore tax should not be deducted at source.

Are you VAT-registered?

If you are VAT-registered you are legally obliged to charge VAT on your fees. You are also legally obliged to charge both VAT on your travel and expenses (even for items that are not usually VATable) unless the organiser has booked and paid for the travel or accommodation.

What legal and administrative requirements are there?

The school should inform you well in advance of any requirements. These may include:

- Public Liability Insurance

Many authors have public liability insurance. This is not a legal requirement, but is requested by many councils. A condition of such insurance is that the author will be accompanied at all times and will not be left alone with children. The SoA has set up a scheme to allow our membership access to a suitable and affordable form of PLI. There are two liability levels of cover available; up to £5 million for an annual premium of £16.00 and up to £10 million for £21.00. To find out more visit [societyofauthors.org/insurance](http://societyofauthors.org/insurance)

- Disclosure Barring Service Clearances

The Department of Education and Ofsted are clear in their guidance that a Disclosure and Barring Service (formerly CRB) **check is only needed when there is 'Teaching, training or instruction of children, carried out by the same person frequently (once a week or more often), or on 4 or more days in a 30 day period, or Overnight'**. It is not required for a one-off, supervised visit.

For authors undertaking frequent visits and residencies schools should be aware that subscribers to the DBS Update Service can take their certificate with them from school to school. See [www.gov.uk/dbs-update-service](http://www.gov.uk/dbs-update-service) for more detailed information. An enhanced check (if the author is providing a frequent service) is £44. Applicants cannot apply for their own DBS check themselves, and there is no specification on who should pay for a DBS check for freelancers. Checks must be applied for by the employer (who may take on the costs) or via an umbrella organisation (who may charge a fee for this service).

DBS checks have no expiry date - it is up to an employer to decide how frequently they want the check to be renewed. However, since June 2013, an applicant can pay for the DBS Update Service which means an author can have your DBS certificate kept up-to-date and take it with them from role to role, within the same workforce, where the same type and level of check is required. Subscribing each year may mean that only one DBS check is ever required. Once the DBS certificate is received (usually four weeks from application) an applicant must apply within 19 days. The cost is £13 a year and gives the subscriber a unique pin to pass on to potential employers so that they can immediately check your certificate status online, and see who has checked it. An author can also add or remove a certificate (some authors will have multiple checks). Changes to certificates are noted, but are not detailed. If there are changes the employer is likely to request a new check to confirm that you are still suitable. See [gov.uk/dbs-update-service](http://gov.uk/dbs-update-service) for more detailed information.

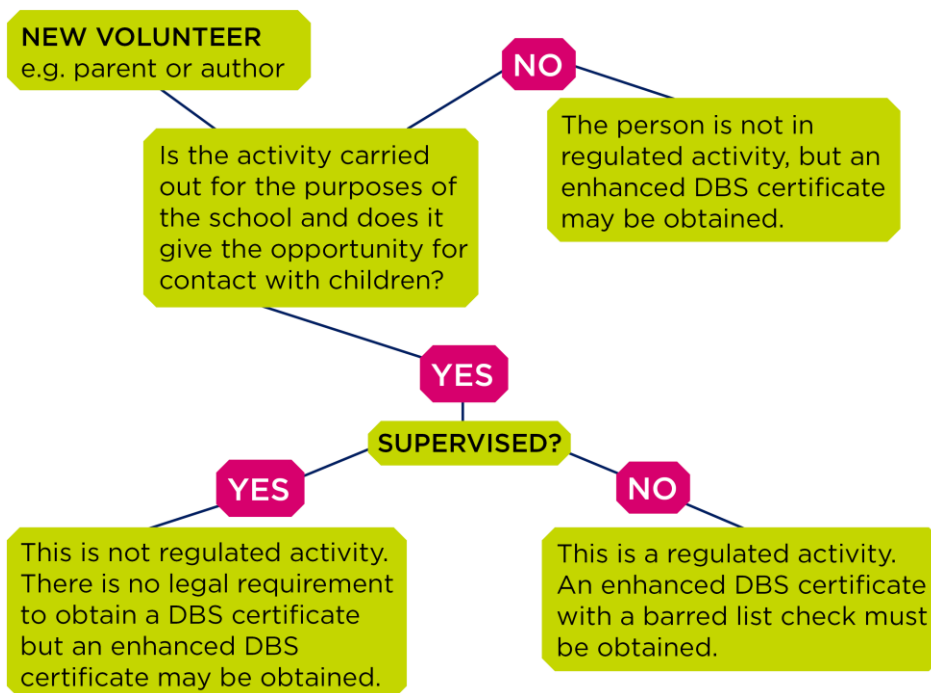


Diagram based on flowchart by DBS 1

- Identification – if the school requires ID, it needs to be clear what forms of ID are acceptable (especially if it has to be photo ID, e.g. passport or driving licence).

## How to promote yourself

You may have your own website where you can advertise and your publisher's publicity department may be able to pass on requests and if you are a member of the SoA you can add your details to our [searchable database](#). There are also several other websites and various agencies that list authors willing to undertake visits or organise events. Some of those listed may charge a hosting fee or commission on any visits they organise.

- [Contact an Author](#)
- [Centre for Literacy in Primary Education](#)
- [National Literacy Trust](#)
- [National Association of Writers in Education](#)
- [Patron of Reading](#)
- [Reading Zone](#)
- [Reading Force](#) (resources to support schools, community groups etc. that host children who have family in the Armed Forces)
- [Scottish Book Trust](#) provides subsidies for talks for Scottish schools and authors. See [Live Literature Funding](#)
- [Start the Story](#)
- [World Book Day](#) (now a year-round resource)

There are agencies that specialise in the organisation of author visits. Please note that agencies will charge schools **a commission on top of the author's fee**. Agencies include:

- [Apples and Snakes](#) (performance poetry)
- [Authors Aloud UK](#)
- [Pop Up Education](#)

## Planning the visit

Once an interested party has made an enquiry, it is usually a good idea to correspond directly with the organiser(s) and confirm the following points in writing in advance of the visit. Once details are finalised immediately confirm all the arrangements in one document and/or issue your standard contract. We recommend this is done no later than two weeks before an event.

1. Date and timings
  - The date of the visit.
  - The number and timing of the session(s).
  - Length of the session(s) including time to reach each session and possibly recalibrate or have a comfort break.
  - Be aware that the organiser may not also be the person scheduling the time-table for the day, so it could be useful to have the scheduler's contacts and copy them in to any agreed specifications.
2. Nature of session
  - Age group of the pupils.
  - Group size.
  - What format the session(s) will take – e.g. reading and Q&A, workshop, etc.
  - Any specifications or curriculum requirements the school would like you to address.
  - Whether pupils are familiar with your work and whether they would like suggestions for any follow-up work.
3. Venue and equipment
  - What type of venue you require.
  - Any technical equipment (projector, flipchart, etc.) you require and whether someone will be on hand to operate the equipment and provide passwords.
  - Any artistic equipment you or the children will need for your session. You may like to tactfully encourage the school to invest in new/good materials to capitalise on the excitement and enthusiasm for this special occasion.
4. Books and publicity
  - The book(s) you will be discussing and how the organisers will be briefing the audience about your titles.
  - Who is providing promotional materials and whether they can be sent in advance.
  - Confirmation of the arrangements for sales and signing. How are books going to be supplied? By yourself, the publisher or a local bookseller? Who will arrange this and will someone (not yourself) be on-hand to sell the books? If yourself, will you be competing against a book fair?
5. Transport and accommodation
  - Outline likely travel expenses (including a taxi if required) and whether advance approval is required for the final bill.
  - Accommodation arrangements, if needed.
  - Whether the school or you will book and pay for the transport and/or accommodation.
  - Whether parking is available if you are arriving by car.
  - Map and arrangements for getting to the venue – will you be collected at a station or welcomed on arrival at the school?
6. Refreshments
  - Arrangements for refreshments and meals - you may be asked whether you are willing to eat in the canteen with children, with teachers in the staff-room or prefer to go outside.
  - Whether you have any dietary requirements.

## 7. Audience and photography

- If press or parents have been invited and are attending.
- Whether you are to be photographed during or after your talk. Clarify whether you would like to be sent photographs cleared for use on your website/blogs/social media.

## 8. Recording

- Whether permission is required in advance, terms and potential uplift to the fee.

## 9. Administrative and legal requirements

- Public Liability Insurance (if required).
- Disclosure Barring Service Clearances (if required).
- Identification (if required).

## 10. Fee and expenses

- The fee per session.
- The expenses (travel & subsistence) who is booking them and whether these need to be approved in advance.
- Whether VAT applies to the invoice (including any expenses that you pay for in advance).
- Details for payment. Would you like to be paid before the visit or on the day? If so stipulate this in your contract or letter of agreement with the school. When and whether do you need to supply an invoice? Assuming yes, does it need receipts and a reference number? To whom, at what address, should the invoice be sent? You should invoice promptly and be paid, at the latest, within 30 days of the event.

## 11. Cancellation

- Any cancellation fees and timings must be made clear and if the booking is conditional then this must be clarified at the outset. We suggest:
  - The author must be paid in full if the event is cancelled within six weeks of the event date;
  - The author must be paid 50% if the event is cancelled earlier;
  - Any out of pocket expenses already incurred must be reimbursed whenever the event is cancelled.
- Your cancellation policy. If you need to cancel for any reason (other than reasons beyond your control such as transport cancellations) we would recommend that neither fee nor expenses will be charged and that the organiser will be reimbursed for any pre-paid expenses. If you cannot reach the school due to, say the sudden cancellation of train services or closure of the school due to snow, we suggest that you do not charge a fee for the missed session, a new date is mutually agreed and that you are reimbursed for any pre-booked expenses.

## THE VISIT

The best laid plans can go wrong, so be ready to be pragmatic and adapt to a change in circumstances. If you do feel that the situation is getting out of hand, then speak to the organiser and see how things can be resolved.

Obviously every visit is different – these are suggestions to help make the day a success.

### Arriving

- Give yourself plenty of time to get to the venue – there's **nothing worse than arriving feeling stressed and tired.**
- If you are being picked up from hotel/train or bus station, have the mobile number of the person collecting you.
- Check that all necessary equipment or arts materials are in place before the audience arrives.
- Make sure arrangements are in order for book sales.



*Author Michaela Morgan visiting a school*

## The sessions

Every author has a different way of working and a different tolerance level of what is and isn't acceptable during a visit. These are baseline suggestions:

- Insist that you are not left alone with the children at any time. You are not to be regarded as substitute teachers and left with a class or classes (there are PLI implications).
- Ask that the members of staff who would normally teach the children in the audience be present, (and other teachers/teaching assistants, if available) and ask that they are fully engaged with the presentation, not filling in forms or marking books. It may be worth pointing out to teachers that their attitude during the session can have a huge influence on the children's response.
- It is a good idea to enquire at the beginning of the day whether there are any children with special educational needs (SEN) or behavioural problems that you should be aware of.
- Make sure that you are not going to be interrupted by wandering staff/children or noise from other classrooms/parts of the library. Find out if any children have to go to any unavoidable extra-curricular activities and discuss how this disruption can be minimised (by engineering a natural break, the children not returning to the event, exclusion from the outset etc.)
- If the school has invited a local press photographer, ask to be made aware of this in advance, and that they do not arrive mid-session and interrupt your talk.
- And perhaps the most important of all: enjoy the visit!

## After the visit

There will often be follow up letters from the children you have spoken to – it is always good to respond to them (a letter to the class or the school will usually suffice, rather than individual replies).

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84 Drayton Gardens London SW10 9SB  
E [info@societyofauthors.org](mailto:info@societyofauthors.org)  
T 020 7373 6642  
[www.societyofauthors.org](http://www.societyofauthors.org)

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