

SoA GUIDE | MEMBERS ONLY

Book Sales at School Events

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Many children's authors and illustrators sell books at school events and this guidance sets out the various options for handling sales.

However you choose to sell books, be aware that schools need a significant amount of notice to organise sales and encourage parents to buy books. We advise that, as soon as you book your visit, you remind the school how exciting it can be for a child to have a signed book. Urge the school to tell parents/carers about your visit. The experience of having a book signed by an author is one that stays with a child for life and encourages reading for pleasure.

Contents

1. Sales via a bookshop	2
2. Bringing books yourself	3

1. Sales via a bookshop

I ask my local independent bookshop to help with this. I often find that children want extra books after they've heard my talk, and because the bookshop is near me, I can pop in and sign additional orders, and the shop can post those orders anywhere in the country.

Top tip from author Abie Longstaff

Using a local bookshop, ideally one with experience in school visits, is a good way to build local connections and support. Tell them about your upcoming visit. They may have worked with the school before.

Pre- and post-orders: In plenty of time before your visit, ask your local bookshop to send the school a list of available books. The school sends that list to parents/carers; the parents pre-order books; and the bookshop delivers the books to the school. This way, the books are waiting for you when you arrive at the school. This works well for the younger section of the school and it also means that if children want a book in the days following the event, the shop can assist with post-orders.

On-day sales: Most schools are cashless these days but have a system eg 'thumb' where a child can pay. Ask the school to organise that book sales take place straight after the event and in the

same location if possible. Otherwise, the enthusiasm and energy generated by the event is often lost.

After school sales: Your local bookshop could attend your event and sell books straight after. The school may set you and the bookseller up in the hall or playground so parents can attend and buy books.

2. Bringing books yourself

Have posters, postcards or bookmarks that can be handed out during event (e.g. for participation and/or answering a question), then use these to 'start' the signing queue by inviting those students up to have their item signed. This encourages kids to come and get books, and removes the 'stigma' of getting up first to buy a book. It also creates a positive image of interest in reading your book.

Top tip from author Chris Bradford

Obtaining copies: you can purchase your own books from your publisher (usually at the discount set out in your publishing contract), or another retail outlet, and bring them to the school yourself. You will want a member of staff to sell the books so you can concentrate on meeting the children, answering their questions and signing copies.

Taking payment: cash-free options are to use the school's set up, although this will require permission and the cooperation of the school's accounting department; or invoice the school post event if they collect orders; or use a card/online payment system like Square, Settle or SumUp to manage pre/on the day/post orders.

Pricing: will you offer the books at cover price or discounted? A multi-buy deal can encourage reading and offer value for parents and carers e.g. 2 for £12. Rounded book prices make it easier to remember and for change if you choose to accept cash. You could consider offering a discount for pre-sales to encourage early sales. If you send any books to the school after the event, bear in mind postage costs.

However, there can be a downside with this method...

Nielsens: NielsenIQ Bookdata collect data on book purchases for market research purposes. This data is used to inform book charts, and acts as a record of your sales, and publishers often make commissioning decisions based on this sales track.

Only sales with a clear electronic trail via a validated retailer are counted by Nielsens. The issue can be complicated and the best way of making sure your sales are tracked is to organise the sales via a physical bookshop.

If you bring in your own books to sell, these sales will not be recorded with Nielsens. Similarly, if the school buys copies on a sale-or-return basis from a wholesaler or distributor, these sales will not be recorded.

If sales do not go via a bookshop, we recommend keeping track of the school visit book sales of each of your books so you can share this information with your agent and/or publishers.

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