



**SOCIETY OF
AUTHORS**
Children's Writers
& Illustrators

SoA GUIDE

School visits toolkit



Contents

<u>Introduction</u>	3
<u>About the toolkit</u>	3
<u>SECTION ONE</u> – for authors undertaking in-person school visits	4
1. <u>Why do authors visit schools</u>	4
2. <u>Designing a visit</u>	4
3. <u>Equipment</u>	7
4. <u>Fees and expenses</u>	8
5. <u>How to promote yourself for school visits</u>	9
6. <u>How to manage book sales</u>	11
7. <u>Before, during, and after</u>	11
8. <u>Further resources and acknowledgements</u>	14
<u>SECTION TWO</u> – for school librarians and staff responsible for, or interested in, organising in-person author visits	15
1. <u>Why should schools organise author visits?</u>	15
2. <u>Maximising an author visit</u>	16
3. <u>How to find an author</u>	17
4. <u>Budgeting</u>	17
5. <u>Book sales</u>	19
6. <u>Pre-visit checklist</u>	20
7. <u>What to do on the day</u>	21
8. <u>Creating a positive experience for authors and pupils</u>	22
9. <u>Post-visit</u>	23
10. <u>Patron of Reading and Writer in Residence</u>	23
11. <u>Further resources and acknowledgements</u>	24

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Introduction

This school visits toolkit comes from the Children's Writers and Illustrators Group (CWIG), a special interest group within the Society of Authors (SoA). We support and empower our community of children's book creators by providing information, advice, and professional development opportunities. We monitor conditions within the children's publishing industry and advocate for our members' interests through our campaign work.

The SoA is the UK's largest trade union for all types of writers, illustrators, and literary translators, at all stages of their careers. We have been fighting for authors' rights and advising individual authors for over a century.

School visits can be enjoyable, rewarding and financially worthwhile, but they are not an essential part of an author's career. If you do not enjoy working in schools, there are many other ways to connect with readers and promote your books. The SoA has a range of resources on **promotion** and **making a living**.

About the toolkit

Many authors visit schools to talk about their work, give readings, or lead writing or illustration workshops, and a successful visit can have a long-lasting impact on a school's reading culture. We have designed this resource to support and empower authors and schools to deliver impactful in-person school visits.

Wherever the word 'author' appears, it should be taken to include illustrators and poets too.

Section one of this resource will provide authors with information and advice about how to secure, plan for, and carry out school visits.

Section two equips school librarians or other staff with all the information they need to effectively deliver an author visit, including what to do if your school is struggling to find the budget.

This toolkit focuses on in-person author visits and does not currently cover virtual visits.

The guidance draws on the experiences of children's authors, teachers, booking agents and school librarians. It reflects common practice and shared experience rather than formal guidance.

The toolkit aims to cover the issues most authors and schools are likely to encounter, but it cannot address every situation. We welcome feedback, suggestions and additional points that could help improve future editions. For this, and for further advice, please contact the **SoA**.

SECTION ONE – for authors undertaking in-person school visits



“You are an important role model in their lives, making indelible impressions that children will remember forever.”

Ian Billings, author, from **‘Preparing for school visits’**

1. Why do authors visit schools?

To earn income – schools pay **a fee** for author visits, workshops or assemblies.

For book sales – visiting a school enables your books to be sold directly to your customer.

To raise awareness of your books – even if sales are modest, your visit may result in children talking about your book, asking parents to buy it, or sending you fan mail.

For your own enjoyment and inspiration – reading your book to a hall full of children can be a wonderfully uplifting experience.

To engage with young readers – children’s questions, opinions and ideas can provide valuable insights into what interests and excites your audience.

To ignite a lifelong love of reading – meeting an author in person can fundamentally improve a child’s relationship with reading and books.

2. Designing a visit

Understanding school age groups

Primary:

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)
Nursery – not all schools have one – (ages 2-4)
Reception (ages 4-5)
Key Stage 1 (KS1) Years 1 and 2 (ages 5-7)
Key Stage 2 (KS2) Years 3-6 (ages 7-11)

Secondary:

Key Stage 3 (KS3) Years 7-9 (ages 11-14)
Key Stage 4 (KS4) Years 10 and 11 (ages 14-16)
Key Stage 5 (KS5) Years 12 and 13 (ages 16-18)

Content

The content of your talk will depend upon the age of your audience, and your own personality, book and style.

Stay within your comfort zone. You don't have to juggle, play the ukelele or tell jokes if you don't want to. The most successful visits are authentic. Think about the kind of writer you are and the kind of books you write.

- If you like detailed character exploration, you could do small classroom sessions where you lead the children in writing or designing a character.
- If you prefer plotting, you could ask children to pick a place/character/problem out of a hat then work in groups to invent a story.
- If you write non-fiction, you could include fascinating facts, demonstrations or objects.

As you gain experience, you will learn what makes your age group laugh, what captures their attention, what calms them down, and when it is time to move on to the next activity. Even within one class, abilities and confidence levels vary greatly, so it is worth having simpler and more challenging versions of each activity.

"I include personal details about myself in my presentations and explain how they inform my books. It models how we can use our own individuality to shape our unique stories. But also, it makes me relatable and human! Depending on the situation these can be anything from experience of being privately fostered; living in a multiethnic family; being an older sibling; loving Marvel films; struggling to keep my hair tidy etc."
Patrice Lawrence, author.

A useful technique is 'chunking,' ie dividing your session into several short sections rather than planning one continuous activity. That way if the children get wriggly you can move to the next segment or skip a chunk.



Picture books

Events for EYFS are usually around 30 minutes long, and may involve a simple reading and play-based activity using the themes of your book. The SoA has a talk (available to members only) on sessions for young children, **School visits with picture books: working with young children.**

KS1 and KS2

A one-hour session for KS1 or KS2 might look like:

Welcome and introduction.

How you became an author, including childhood photos, stories or early writing.

Introduce your book and read a short extract. A creative activity such as writing, drawing, brainstorming, drama or a workshop exercise. If you need teachers to support the activity, discuss this with the school beforehand.

Explain your writing process and how a book develops from idea to publication.

Questions and answers.

Poetry

“Presenting a poetry book or verse novel at a school event can be a lot of fun, and that’s always how I approach it. English classrooms are the space for analysis and solemnity. School visits remind all the students that poetry belongs to them. Regardless of age, it’s best to make sessions silly and participation easy by doing things like putting up the words to a rap or poem (so everyone can follow along) or asking willing teachers to do the mortifying bits! Call-and-response activities work brilliantly with poetry. Teenagers can take 10 or 15 minutes to get on board, but do persevere as deep down they want to know poetry is still for them too!” **Sarah Crossan**, author.

Young Adult (YA)/ Teen Fiction

“With YA, you need to keep students engaged and interested from the very start. I do a short activity or ask a question to get them focused within a few minutes of starting a session, something like asking students to tell me what a set of obvious photos are showing. Some photos are of people with different identities, some are of buildings and shops they might find familiar. Once students have found their confidence to engage in the session and their voice, I introduce my book and tell them what inspired me to write it.

After a short reading, we’ll do another short activity, perhaps making a list or developing character profiles. We’ll go through some of their answers together, engaging everyone once again, and then we’ll do a longer writing activity for about 15 minutes which is usually plotting a story, after I’ve explained how I plot stories using the three-act structure, always having a beginning, middle and end, and a gripping inciting incident!” **A. M. Dassu**, author.

Non-fiction

“As a non-fiction author, I find that one of the most powerful ways to connect with kids on school visits is by sharing my absolute favourite facts, most out-there artworks, and other things that really made me stop and think ‘Wow!’ when I first learned about them. And then to really pay attention to, and value, whatever they want to share with me in return. For me, it’s about creating a space where it feels safe to be full of enthusiasm and wonder about the world, and to follow your own unique interests even if they’re different to other people’s. This can feel pretty vulnerable so I try to lead by example, being unapologetically excited about the weird things I love, and to give choices in activities that let kids talk and write about what particularly interests them.” **Alice Harman**, author.

Practicalities

Be prepared to be flexible. Schools are busy places, and timetables sometimes change at short notice. A class may arrive late, a year group may be larger than expected, or a planned room may no longer be available. You may also find that you need to adapt your content to suit the children in front of you.

Time your sessions in advance. Schools run to tight timetables, and even overrunning by five minutes can disrupt lessons, lunch or transport. If you're running short of time, it is usually better to skip an activity than to overrun.

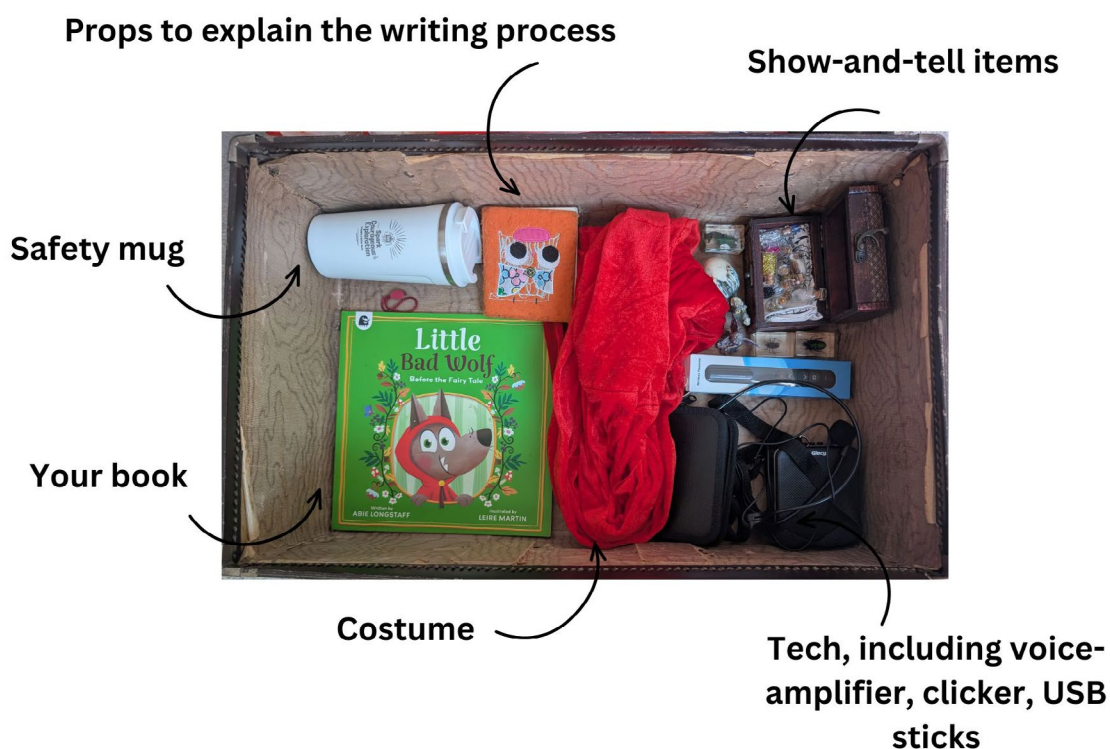
However, flexibility should not come at the expense of your professional boundaries. Decide what you will offer and what you are willing to do. Consider:

- **Your fee.**
- **Time** - whether you will do a whole day at a school, a half day, or a single session.
- **Sessions** - how many sessions in a day you will offer and what type, eg reading plus Questions and Answers (Q&A), interactive workshops, drama sessions, writing classes.

- **Group size** - how many people you are comfortable talking to in any one session. Presentations in the hall to a whole year group are very different to small classroom sessions.
- **Your access needs** - let the school know in advance if you require disabled access, a parking space, audiovisual equipment, a quiet room between sessions, or any other adjustments including how long you need onsite to set up your event.
- **Additional audiences** - consider whether you are willing to speak to other groups, such as nursery children, parents and carers, teachers or school staff, and whether these sessions are included in your fee.
- **Travel** - decide how far you are prepared to travel in a day and when overnight accommodation or additional travel expenses will be required.

3. Equipment

You can ask the school to provide you with a laptop and projector, a whiteboard, a display table and other basics. They may be happy to print out activity sheets for you to use with the



"I love a prop – and have a little suitcase of inspiring objects I take to schools. If I take part in a residency day, I will take along my patchwork storytelling quilt. It offers possibilities for many interactive creative writing sessions linked to the stories. I speak of my need since childhood and for every generation to feel that culture, history, belief, identity and sense of belonging is valued in the stories I read and write."

Sita Bramachari, author.

children. Send these well in advance and remind the school on the week of your visit.

It is wise to be as self-sufficient as possible. Technology can fail, rooms can change, and equipment may not be available on the day. Here is a suggested list of items you might want to bring yourself:

- **Props** – costume items or 'show-and tell' objects.
- **Tech** – even if you have sent presentations in advance, bring backups on a memory stick (check with the school before connecting it). Schools do not always have a clicker for their projector screen. These are not expensive, and very worth carrying. A headset-amplifying mic can save your voice when talking to large groups in an echoey hall. Always have a backup plan in case the tech fails on the day and bring a physical copy of your book in case you have to read it tech-free.
- **Comfort** – safety mug to hold hot drinks, water bottle, snacks, throat sweets, hand gel, painkillers.

- **Promotional material** – bookmarks, postcards or activity sheets for children to take home. Some publishers may help you fund this.

4. Fees and expenses

Fees

Fees for author visits vary widely. As a broad guide, authors tend to charge anywhere from around £200–£1,000 or more, depending on the length of the visit, their experience, demand for their books, and the nature of the sessions. Well-established authors with bestselling books and a strong reputation for school visits are generally able to charge higher fees.

To work out where you sit in this range, consider:

- How many sessions you will do per day (three or four sessions is quite common for a whole-day visit, two for a half-day visit).
- How much experience you have in presenting to children.
- How many children you will cover in one day, and the kind of event you offer.
- Your own profile and reputation, including how many books you have published.
- The popularity of your books – a bestselling book will always be more in demand.

Ensure you take into consideration travel and preparation time, and think about the annual salary you would expect to earn as freelancer. See the **Freelance day rate guide**.

Sometimes your publisher may ask you to undertake a promotional school visit without charging a fee, with the expectation that the visit will generate book sales and publicity. Many authors have a shorter, more streamlined format for promotional visits than for paid workshop days. For example, they may offer a whole-school assembly featuring a talk, reading and Q&A, rather than classroom workshops. This enables them to reach more pupils in less time while maximising the potential for book sales.

Expenses

Schools would normally be expected to cover reasonable travel expenses. Before agreeing a booking, calculate the likely cost of petrol or train travel, parking, taxis if required, and overnight accommodation for longer journeys. It is not common to ask for per diem expenses to cover food.

The SoA recommend charging a single all-inclusive fee, rather than listing individual expenses. This gives the school clarity and certainty, and reduces admin.

Consider your travel time carefully. Schools do not pay for your time spent travelling, so far-away schools may not be financially worth your time. Some authors will only do a half-day visit if the school is situated in their local area.

Invoicing

There are a range of ways to deal with payment, including:

- Full payment to secure the booking.
- A deposit (commonly 50%) at the time of booking, with the balance to be paid on the week of the visit.
- An invoice issued after the school visit for full payment due within, for example, 14 days.

Each of these methods comes with advantages and disadvantages. Choose the system that best suits your business and make your payment terms clear before confirming the booking.

Cancellations

School visits are occasionally cancelled, sometimes because of circumstances beyond the school's control, such as severe weather or an emergency closure, and sometimes because plans change. Likewise, there may be occasions when you are unable to attend because of illness or other unforeseen circumstances.

It is worth having a clear cancellation policy that explains:

- Whether deposits are refundable;

- What happens if either party cancels at short notice;
- Whether the visit can be rearranged instead of cancelled.

Some authors have a contract or agreement document they send to the school, however, not all schools are comfortable with this approach, and clearly-worded email exchanges can be an equally reliable way of reaching mutual understanding. If you do use a contract, members of the SoA can send their agreements to the advisory team for vetting. You can also watch [this recording of a panel discussion about contracts for school visits](#).

5. How to promote yourself for school visits

Securing school visits takes time and persistence. In recent years, many schools have faced increasing budget pressures, and some are only able to fund author visits with support from parent associations, grants or fundraising.

Although this can make bookings harder to secure, remember that you are offering a professional service. Your experience as an author has value, and you should not feel obliged to reduce your fee simply because a school's budget is limited. It is common to approach many schools before receiving a booking.

Promoting by email

Emailing schools is one way to introduce yourself, although it can be time-consuming. Setting aside dedicated marketing time can make the process more manageable.

You can identify schools through local authority websites, academy trust websites or school directories. Many authors keep a spreadsheet of schools they have contacted so they can follow up in future years without duplicating work. If you keep contact details, make sure you store them securely, only keep information you need, and comply with UK [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#) and data protection requirements.

Email the 'literacy co-ordinator' or school librarian. Keep the initial approach short, but include:

- Who you are.
- What you have written.
- Your previous experience with schools/ children/events.
- A description of your workshops or sessions – you can link to your website if this section is too detailed.
- Your fee, and VAT if you are registered. Travel/accommodation costs (potentially plus recharged expenses if you are VAT registered). Remind Scottish schools they may be able to apply for Live Literature Funding.
- Consider adding an offer, eg 'The first three schools to book will receive a 10% discount' or 'Three free books included in every booking' or a set of teaching materials, pre-work, or follow-on work to go alongside your book or talk. You could also offer to reduce your fee in return for a significant number of book sales.

Do not be discouraged if your response rate is low. Many schools receive large numbers of emails and may not have the budget or capacity to reply. A lack of response is not necessarily a reflection of your work.

Schools that are interested are likely to ask for further information before confirming a booking. Common questions cover: your availability, your travel costs to their location, or the link between your workshops and the national curriculum, or additional requests such as a session for parents on how to read with their child, for teachers on reading for pleasure, or a speech to open a school library. You may want to increase your rate if the school asks for too many extras, or if the school is not happy to support book sales.

Once a school decides to proceed, expect several emails to confirm practical arrangements and agree a timetable. Clear,

"As a self-published author, social media has been extremely helpful, enabling me to connect with educators and share information about my books and my visits, so that teachers/schools know what I have to offer. Building a profile via social media meant that eventually, schools started reaching out to me to invite me to deliver readings and workshops."
Davina Hamilton, author.

professional communication at this stage helps establish expectations and avoids misunderstandings later.

Promotion via an agency

There are a number of well-respected agencies that handle school visits, including Authors Aloud UK and Authors Abroad. They have significant experience in co-ordinating events with schools.

These agencies put you on their books and contact you if a school is interested. They take a fee from the school and sometimes a small fee from you for admin. In return, they will handle all the required negotiations and organisation.

Other helpful websites

Contact an Author is a database of author details, promoted to schools. Authors pay a fee to have a page on the site.

Members can list themselves for free on the SoA's **'Find an author'** service, a searchable directory.

Social media can be a useful source of information and provides a way to promote yourself.

Interest groups such as the Scattered Authors Society have a network of fellow children's authors who pass on enquiries from schools and give one another advice.

Facebook groups on reading for pleasure, school visits or author visits.

Your own website could include a page about your visits that covers basics such as a list of your workshops, age ranges, testimonials and contact details.

6. How to manage book sales

Aim to make book sales as easy for the school as possible. The **SoA** has a detailed guide to book sales for members, but in short:

Using a bookshop

Ask your independent local bookshop how they prefer to work – they have the experience. Many will send the school a list of available books in advance. 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.

Some bookshops will also do sales on the day. Many schools are cashless, and children buy books on the school's payment system (eg a 'thumb'). Ask the school to organise for book sales to take place straight after the event and in the same location.

If you don't have a local independent bookshop, consider using Waterstones, **Bookshop.org**, Roving Bookshop, Bookwagon or booksellers like **Rosemary Hill Books** or **H & H Spalding Books**.

Bringing books yourself

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. Be aware that, if you bring in your own books

to sell, these sales will not be recorded with NielsenIQ Bookdata.

You will want a member of staff to assist so you can concentrate on meeting the children, answering their questions and signing copies.

7. Before, during, and after

Before the visit

Make sure you have considered the following:

- An agreed timetable for the day, including exact times of the sessions as well as the number and age ranges in each session.
- The event space (will you be in a hall or a classroom?).
- Equipment – for example, a projector and laptop, a whiteboard, activity printouts or other resources.
- Sales – if book sales are a required element of your visit, state this at the time of booking. If you are offering a free promotional visit, you may wish to agree a minimum number of pre-orders before confirming the event. Where possible, encourage the school to work with a local bookshop and to schedule time for signing and sales on the day. Remind the school that the experience of having a book signed by an author is one that stays with a child for life and encourages reading for pleasure.
- Building excitement – encourage the school to hype you up to the children. You could send activity sheets or extra information in advance. You could record a short video of yourself that they can play in assembly pre-visit. You could ask the school to put your visit into the newsletter to parents/carers. If children see authors as celebrities, they are more likely to be excited about the visit, and more likely to engage with books.
- Permissions for photography and social media content from both sides – schools may have a 'no photo' policy. You may also not want your session recorded. Where you agree to a recording, make it clear what date the recording needs to be deleted and that

the recording should not be shared with any other schools or otherwise circulated. If the recording is not for a finite time, consider the terms carefully, including copyright and your additional fee. The SoA can give advice on this.

- Lunch - you can ask the school to give you a meal on the day. Let them know if you have any dietary requirements.
- Your access needs where required, including a parking space.
- Your insurance - the SoA offers **public liability insurance** to members for £10.
- Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) - the rules relating to DBS changed in September 2026 and there may now be occasions where you will be asked for an Enhanced DBS check. If you do regular visits, it might be worth having an Enhanced DBS because schools may begin to ask for this as a matter of course. The SoA provides a **DBS vetting service** for members.
- CEST - some schools may ask you to complete a CEST form (Check Employment Status for Tax) to comply with HMRC guidance. They are entitled to have your Unique Taxpayer Reference (UTR) and information to establish that you run your own business, but you should not need to give any personal tax information such as National Insurance number, tax returns, SA302s or bank statements. However, if schools try to put you on the payroll, do remind them that you are freelance.
- Visa requirements - if your visit is to a school abroad: If you are invoicing a foreign school direct and are a UK tax resident, it is worthwhile getting a Certificate of Residence from the HMRC (free online process) to present with your invoice to avoid Withholding Tax (WHT). The SoA can provide further guidance to members on avoiding double taxation.

During the visit

Practicalities - when you arrive, you will usually be asked to sign in at reception and wear a visitor badge. Bring photo identification, such as

a driving licence or passport, as some schools may ask to see it.

Ideally, the person who booked you will greet you and take you to set up your event but very often it will be a different teacher and you may need to explain your equipment requirements again. Be very clear about what you need. Schools are busy places and it's easy to feel overwhelmed, especially if you are about to address a hall of children and you do not have the right equipment.

Find out right from the start basic things like: where the toilets are, where the staff room is, whether you are allowed to use the kettle, how you will get from room to room if you are in multiple places, how the signings will work.

Safeguarding - follow the school's safeguarding procedures at all times. If you do not have an Enhanced DBS check, the school should ensure that you are appropriately supervised in accordance with its safeguarding policies. Even if you do have a DBS check, you should follow the school's guidance about working with children.



If you take photographs for your website or social media, be careful about what appears in the background. Noticeboards, name labels and displays may contain children's personal information. Never photograph or share images of children unless the school has confirmed that the appropriate permissions are in place.

Working with teachers - managing behaviour is the responsibility of school staff, not the visiting author. You can ask about the 'quiet, please' signal (for younger children, often a handclap in rhythm; for older, one hand held up in the air) and use this to calm the children down. If a group becomes too unsettled, teachers should support you. Focus on delivering your session and treat every child with patience, kindness and respect. You don't know what a child may have been through in their life, or even that morning.

One frustration many authors mention is staff talking, marking work or moving around during a presentation. This can be distracting, particularly in a large hall. Every author develops their own approach: some politely ask for quiet, while others simply continue with the

"There is no better way to learn than from a massive cods-up, either your own or one that's exploded around you. And there's definitely no better way to boost your own confidence because, planning forward, whatever happens in the event, you'll know you can cope. You survived, and you're stronger for it."

Steve Cole, author, from 'Five ways to avoid disaster during an author event'.

session. Try not to take it personally. Schools are busy environments, and there may be unavoidable interruptions or urgent issues that staff need to deal with.

You will also need to work around the everyday sounds of school life: bells, pupils moving through corridors, music lessons next door, catering staff preparing lunch, or other distractions.

Have a plan B - school tech can be unreliable. Projectors can break; laptops may not load or display your presentation properly; passwords may be intermittently required. You could be given Year 6 when it was agreed you'd have Year 3. Flexibility is one of the most valuable skills a visiting author can develop.

Try to enjoy it! A school visit should be engaging and fun for both you and the children. If for whatever reason it does not go well, don't take it personally. You can do the same presentation with two classes and one will go brilliantly and the other not so. Learn from it and work out where you could adapt your talk but remember it could be that the class is having an off day. Talks at 2pm are always harder. The children are tired and ready to go home. Remember you are building your skills. You will improve with every talk you give.

After the visit

Invoice the school (if you haven't managed to get advance payment). Frustratingly, you may need to chase for payment more than once.

Send a thank you email in which you:

- Ask for a reference.
- Remind the school where to buy additional books.
- Offer to rebook for next year or offer a 'recommend me to another school' reward eg a free book.

8. Further resources and acknowledgements

From the SoA

Contractual terms for authors visiting schools

Preparing for school visits

The SoA Advisory Clinic: Attention, class!

Guide for authors speaking at events
(member-only resource)

Other resources

Authors Aloud UK offer a training course 'How to handle school visits.' Contact **info@authorsalouduk.co.uk** for more information.

Many authors have written guides to school visits, including:

Steve Cole for BookTrust: **'Five ways to avoid disaster during an author event'**

Abie Longstaff's Peptalk Publishing Substack: **'How do I ACTUALLY do a school visit'**

Jane Porter has useful tips: **Helpful hints for authors and illustrators new to school visits**

Nicola Morgan has advice on contracts, money and being professional: **Author events – how to earn a living**

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The Children's Writers and Illustrators Group is a special interest group within the Society of Authors, representing and campaigning for the interests of creators of children's books.

If you are interested in finding out more about membership of the SoA, go to our website. Don't worry if you aren't yet eligible for full membership; you can still join as an Associate and access all the same membership benefits. Subscription rates start from £23.75 per quarter and are tax-deductible. Get 20% off your first year of membership by using the code SVT20.

SECTION TWO – for school librarians and staff responsible for, or interested in, organising an in-person author visit

(Wherever 'author' appears, it should be taken to include illustrators and poets too.)

1. Why should schools organise author visits?

An author visit can inspire a lifelong love of reading and writing, deepen learning across the curriculum and give children a firsthand insight into the ideas, experiences and processes behind the books they read.

Research consistently shows that reading for pleasure is one of the strongest predictors of children's future educational success and wellbeing, outweighing factors such as family income or background.

“There is a positive correlation between reading for pleasure and happiness, in both reading behaviour and in the psychology or consciousness of being a reader. In terms of reading behaviour, among heavy or medium readers the proportion who were ‘very happy’ increased to 40%, and among light or non-readers decreased to 24%.” *The Farshore and HarperCollins Children's Books Annual Review of Reading for Pleasure, 2024.*

Here are just some of the benefits of an author visit:

- Increasing children's engagement with the curriculum - authors can bring topics such as history, science, geography, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and citizenship to life, making connections across subjects and helping pupils engage with ideas in new ways.
- Promoting a whole-school culture of reading and writing for pleasure - meeting an author can inspire children to read more widely, write more confidently, and see literacy as an enjoyable lifelong activity rather than simply a school subject.



“When run well, author visits can have a life-changing impact on a child's reading journey and contribute to reinvigorating a school's reading culture. Authors can bring a unique perspective on books and build fun and excitement around reading in way that no one else can, acting as inspirational reading role models. The SLA believes author visits are a vital way to sustain children's interest in stories and reading, to build and sustain reading communities, and encourage the writers, poets and illustrators of the future!”

The School Library Association

“Free time writing enjoyment and engagement have declined sharply over the last 15 years... Pupils who experience an author visit are more likely to enjoy reading and writing in their free time.” Research by the National Literacy Trust, *Children and young people's writing in 2026; Author visits in schools, and children and young people's reading and writing engagement in 2023*.

- Developing creativity, empathy and understanding - books act as both mirrors and windows. They help children recognise themselves and their own experiences while also offering insights into the lives and experiences of others.

“The wonderful Jean ‘Binta’ Breeze came to my school to do an author visit. She was a successful writer and a brilliant performer. She sat on our school stage and read a poem and my entire class was spellbound. That’s when the thought occurred that I could be a writer. That was the first time I saw a writer who looked a bit like me.” **Jospeh Coelho**, author, **Why author visits to schools matter**.

- Raising the profile of the school - author visits create excitement across the school community and give pupils a literary festival-style experience. Schools may wish to invite local press to cover the event and celebrate the school’s commitment to reading, writing and creativity.
- Support personal development - visits build confidence, communication skills and emotional literacy. Pupils listen, ask questions and discuss ideas with a professional writer, while hearing about perseverance, resilience and empathy from someone who has turned imagination into a career.

2. Maximising an author visit

A visit from the right author can inspire a whole term’s work. Schools can build on the visit by creating activities around the author’s books, themes or writing style, or by holding a special assembly where pupils share what they learned and celebrate the work they have produced.

Many authors are happy to suggest pre-visit activities or follow-up work, and welcome

“School librarians are perfectly placed to organise visits and ensure they go smoothly. Working with your school librarian as the liaison in planning and promotion can help you get the most from your investment. Research tells us that after an author visit, reading engagement increases as do visits to the school library.”

The School Library Association

receiving examples of pupils’ responses after the visit. Sharing this work can give children a sense of pride and show them that their writing and ideas are valued.

Other ways to maximise an author visit include:

- **Celebrating the school library** - an author can raise the profile of the library, encourage borrowing, launch new reading initiatives, or mark special occasions such as the opening of a new section or refurbishment.
- **Enhancing parental engagement** - some schools invite parents and carers to attend part of the visit, for example a special assembly or author talk. You could also ask whether the author would be willing to run a separate session offering ideas and encouragement around reading with children at home.
- **Strengthening partnerships between schools** - cluster events allow schools to share costs, broaden opportunities for pupils, and build collaborative relationships across a local area.

- **Celebrating pupils' work** – displaying pupils' writing, artwork or projects inspired by the visit around the school helps celebrate their creativity and encourages others to engage with reading and writing.
- **Building anticipation** – assemblies, competitions, book displays and reading challenges before the visit can help create excitement and ensure pupils are prepared to make the most of the experience.
- **Extending the impact** – encouraging children to borrow or purchase the author's books before and after the visit can maximise the impact of a visit.

3. How to find an author

Different authors work in different styles. Some do whole-school assemblies, some do small classroom sessions. Some are lively with joke-telling, some do calmer writing-focused workshops. It is important to find the right author to suit your school. Authors will very often have done many, many school visits and they know what works best for their style.

"It's a good idea to plan well ahead – six to nine months is a good guideline, as authors can often get booked well ahead, especially around times of popular book celebrations such as National Poetry Day and World Book Day."

Creating a School Library with Impact: A Beginners Guide

Here are some possible routes to finding the right author:

- **Using an agency** – there are a number of different agencies that will match you with an author, such as Authors Aloud UK and Authors Abroad. Authors Aloud UK provide curated lists of recommendations to fit a brief and you can contact them to set out exactly what your school needs.
- **Using a directory** – The Society of Authors has a **'Find an author'** service, a free, searchable directory. The Contact an Author website lists authors, and is searchable by region.
- **Word of mouth** – ask other schools for recommendations, speak to your local bookshop or library. If you have an author visit, ask the author who to recommend for next year.
- **Social media** – many authors put information about their events on social media.

4. Budgeting

Budgets are tight but the value of a good author visit cannot be oversold. Authors are professionals with experience in talking to children and in explaining the writing or illustration process. They should be treated, and paid, as such. Authors usually earn very little from the on-day sales of their books, so even high sales is not a sufficient way to compensate an author for their time.

The average income for an author is £7,000, and the vast majority of authors need an additional income to live. From a book that sells for £5.99, an author may often only receive 20 pence, and in some cases far less.

Expect to pay a reasonable day rate, plus expenses such as travel or accommodation if required. Be aware you might need to pay a deposit to secure the booking, or pay the full fee in advance.

Fees for author visits vary from around £200–£1,000 depending on whether authors visit for a single session, a half day or a whole day. Authors at the top end tend to be well-known names with an excellent reputation for school visits and high-selling books.

There are a number of ways you could help fund a visit. A combination of approaches can often make the difference, so consider who in your community, network and wider reading ecosystem might be able to help.

- **Approach the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and parent groups** – set out why a visit will help the children and what you hope to achieve from it. Parents may also have useful contacts or work for organisations with community funding schemes.
- **Find an author who covers a wide range of ages** – some authors have sessions for pre-school to the end of Year 6, allowing every child in a primary school to enjoy the visit; other authors will cover all of secondary, or even primary and secondary. A whole-school visit can provide better value for money because every child can take part and read books by the same author, helping to create a shared enthusiasm for reading.
- **Use Pupil Premium Grant money** – PPG money is provided by government for ‘raising the attainment of disadvantaged pupils.’ There is clear research on the link between reading for pleasure and attainment, and an author visit is part of a wider strategy to encourage reading engagement.
- **Ask local councillors** – there are sometimes small budgets available to support community activities and projects. An author visit that benefits children and families in the local area may be a good fit.
- **Pitch to local businesses, including large supermarkets.**
- **Partner with a nearby school** – working with a nearby school can reduce costs and make a visit more achievable. If you have space, you could host both schools together. Alternatively, an author may be able to spend half a day in each school, reducing travel and accommodation costs. Some authors offer discounts when two schools book together or when an additional day is added.
- **Pre-ordering books** – some authors may be able to reduce their fee if the school can guarantee a number of pre-ordered books.

- **Contact publishers** – publishers may subsidise author visits for books they are keen to promote. Authors Aloud UK organise author tours and events on behalf of publishers, so keep an eye out for offers. You can express your interest in being considered as a tour school by completing the form on the Tours tab of the website <https://authorsalouduk.co.uk/tours/>.

- **Engage with your local bookshop** – independent bookshops may know about authors who are already visiting the area on a book tour. This can help reduce travel costs and may create opportunities for book sales or partnership events.
- **Speak to reading or community organisations** – **The Federation of Children's Book Groups** may occasionally be able to offer funding support. You could also approach local charitable trusts, educational foundations, Women's Institute groups, Rotary Clubs and other community organisations.
- **Look for a local author** – choosing an author who lives nearby can significantly reduce travel and accommodation costs.



Organisations such as Authors Aloud UK and directories such as Contact an Author can help schools find suitable local writers.

5. Book sales

Sales are a hugely important part of an author visit. Bear in mind that they are not a 'money spinner' for the author, as authors usually earn little in royalties from their books. Nevertheless, book sales help authors demonstrate to publishers that there is demand for their work, supporting their long-term careers and enabling them to continue writing books for children. Authors are always appreciative of seeing their books in the hands of young readers.

Book sales also extend the impact of the visit beyond the day itself. When a child is inspired by an author and takes home a signed copy of their book, the excitement can continue for weeks, months or even years. Seeing friends reading and talking about an author's books can encourage other children to get involved too, helping to create a positive whole-school reading culture.

"In 2025, nearly four times as many children and young people with a book of their own at home said they enjoyed reading compared with those without their own book (40.0% vs 11.3%)."

The National Literacy Trust, Children and Young People's Book Ownership in 2025

Having books at home gives children more opportunities to read independently, revisit favourite stories and share books with family members. This develops positive associations with reading, with books seen as a source of enjoyment, comfort and connection.

How you can help

Purchase copies of the author's books for the library, classrooms or for future year groups.

"Tell parents in advance that their child will be meeting an author and that there will be an opportunity for them to buy a book. This helps emphasise positive messages about books and reading for pleasure." **Ten Top Tips for a Successful Author Visit, Authors Aloud UK**

Display the author's books prominently in classrooms and the library, and in the school's office/reception area before and after the visit. This helps build anticipation and keeps the author's work visible throughout the school.

Ask the author how they prefer to do book sales. Some authors will suggest using a local bookshop to provide pre-order forms to send to parents. Allow plenty of time for this process, as parents may need several reminders. The bookshop will deliver the books before the visit, enabling the author to sign them on the day. Remember that some children will prefer to buy a book after the author visit, when they have engaged with the author, so continue to encourage book sales in the weeks following the event.

"Children who are read to daily at home are almost three times as likely to choose to read independently compared to children who are only read to weekly at home." **Alison David, Consumer Insight Director at Farshore and HarperCollins Children's Books, interview with The Bookseller**

Other authors may prefer to bring books themselves and manage sales on the day. Discuss the arrangements in advance so everyone knows what to expect. Authors will usually have lots of experience organising book sales, but they will not know your school's systems and routines. If your school uses a

cashless payment system, consider how this will work and share the information with the author beforehand.

6. Pre-visit checklist

The following steps will help the children get the most value out of the visit:

Practicalities

Agree a timetable with the author well in advance. Author visits can involve complex logistics, particularly in split-site schools or where spaces such as halls have multiple uses. Be clear about any potential challenges and allow enough time for pupils to move between sessions. Authors will usually be flexible, but need to know the school's arrangements in advance.

Ensure the author has time for breaks between sessions and a lunch break. Arrange a suitable space and time for book signing, and confirm what equipment will be needed, such as a table, signing area, whiteboard or other presentation equipment.

“Allow the children to be familiar with the author’s books before the visit – read books to the class, devise art projects around the books, develop research skills by encouraging children to discover information about the author.”

Ten Top Tips for a Successful Author Visit, Authors Aloud UK

Arrange for the school canteen to provide a meal for the author, and offer drinks throughout the day.

Inform the author of any safeguarding considerations required by your school, including Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) requirements or accessibility needs that may affect the visit. Where school policy requires the author to have an Enhanced DBS, inform them in plenty of time. If the school has a policy regarding photographs, make sure the author is aware of this in advance.

Ensure that any required deposit has been paid. Authors are usually freelance professionals and should not be added to the school payroll unless they are employed through a separate arrangement.

Preparing pupils

Before the visit, encourage teachers to plan activities that connect with the author's books, themes or writing style. This could include designing a new book cover, creating a display about the author and their work, reading extracts aloud, or exploring themes from the books in class.

Other ways to build excitement include asking the author whether they can provide a short video message to share in assemblies, showing pupils the author's website, displaying the author's books prominently and encouraging children to prepare questions to ask during the visit.

“Competitions linked to the author's books can also be a great way to generate excitement linked to the author visit. Following the event, children should be given access to the author's books. By working with other school staff to get them to help with pre-preparation and follow-up work, the school librarian can make the visit more effective.” **Zoe Rowley**, Head Librarian, Wolverhampton Grammar School in **Creating a School Library with Impact: A Beginners Guide**

Share information with parents and carers through the school newsletter or other communication channels. Explain the purpose

of the visit and how it supports the school's reading culture and reading for pleasure. Encourage book sales.

Preparing staff and the school environment

In the run-up to the event, remind the teachers of the visit and prepare them to be warm, welcoming and respectful to the author. Ensure everybody understands the value of the visit and how it will boost the whole school's reading culture.

The value of the event will be hugely enhanced by everyone in the room (pupils and teachers alike) being fully engaged in proceedings. Remind teachers not to hold mini-meetings, mark work or prepare lessons at the back of the event. These are very distracting for both the author and the children.

Double-check scheduling to make sure the relevant classes are free and that no competing events are taking place in the school. Post the timetable on the staff noticeboard and make

sure all staff are aware of plans for the day. Plan for a back-up staff member in case the lead person is not well on the day.

“Make sure the school receptionist/office knows to expect the author.” **Ten Top Tips, for a Successful Author Visit**, Authors Aloud UK

Technical checks and resources

If the author has sent presentations in advance, check they work on the school laptop and that the roll-down projection screen works. If your school doesn't accept USB sticks, make sure you give the author enough notice of this so they can email the presentation.

Print out any activity sheets the author needs. Note required equipment such as a whiteboard, table, signing area.

“On the day, an event call sheet is invaluable for making sure everyone knows what to do and when – and a cup of tea on standby to welcome the author is always a win!”

The School Library Association

7. What to do on the day

Check last-minute tech and other equipment.

Greet the author and show them the staff room, kettle, toilets, event location, signing location, and library (authors love seeing the library). Introduce them to the Head. Be aware that authors will need time to set up their presentation before the event begins.

Ask the author how they want to be introduced. Prepare a few facts about them and their books to tell the children in your opener.

During sessions, the event should be treated like a theatre-event. No teachers should be talking, marking work or on their phones. Children will get less out of an event that teachers do not respect and enjoy. Model to children how to behave at an event.

Remember that authors are not teachers. They are not there to discipline children, and they don't know your school or your children. Let them know your schools 'quiet, please' signal for

“Promoting the event to families so they complete administration around photo permissions or book sales in good time will help with logistics. Stocking some of the author's books in the school library, or creating a display with copies that you already have, and encouraging children to read the visiting author's books will build excitement and get them thinking about what questions to ask.”

The School Library Association

calming down large groups. If children get too overexcited, teachers should intervene to help calm them down.

Give the author space and time to recover. While chatting to them during lunch is friendly, it can also mean that the author has no time to rest before the next sessions.

8. Creating a positive experience for authors and pupils

Authors and schools are partners in creating a successful visit. While unexpected things can happen on the day, thoughtful preparation, clear communication and a warm welcome can make a significant difference to the experience for everyone involved.

Authors talk to one another about their experiences of visiting schools, and good visits are often remembered and shared. The SoA has a **'Reading for Pleasure Award'** which was founded to allow individual authors to give thanks and appreciation to schools and librarians that have made impressive efforts to promote reading for pleasure. If a SoA member visits and has a good experience, they may nominate your school for an award.

A successful visit does not require everything to go perfectly. Schools are busy places and unexpected challenges can arise. The most important things are that the author feels welcomed, pupils and staff are engaged, and everyone understands the value of the event.

Things that can make a visit more challenging include:

- Staff being unable to support the visit fully because of other commitments.
- Where the organiser is off sick on the day and no one else has been allocated to look after the event.
- Equipment not working because problems were not identified in advance.
- Teachers holding meetings, marking work

or preparing lessons at the back of the hall during the author's session, making it harder for pupils and the author to engage fully.

- The author not being made aware of practical arrangements, accessibility requirements or school policies before the visit.
- A major school event, such as a pantomime or performance, being scheduled at the same time as the author visit, leaving pupils and staff divided between two competing activities.
- Staff comments or behaviour that make the author feel that the visit is an inconvenience, rather than a valued opportunity for the school community.

"Key ingredients to successful visits include ensuring the author, and their publisher if needed, have all the necessary information about your school and the size and year group of the audience for the event, so they can deliver a successful visit. Involving all school staff so they can join in with the anticipation, talking to pupils about the visit and being aware of any impact on their usual schedules will increase excitement and buy-in across the school."
The School Library Association

9. Post-visit

Do pay the author on time.

Email the author to say thank you and pass on any positive comments from children and teachers.

If the author asks for references, provide thoughtful and meaningful short sentences that the author can use to approach other schools.

If you like an author, recommend them to other schools.

Continue to build on the visit, encouraging children to share what they have learned. In the weeks following a visit, children are often very enthusiastic about reading and writing. Keep this momentum.

Talk about the visit in the school newsletter. Remind parents they can still buy books from the author or borrow them from the school or public library.

“After the event, following up with everyone involved will help embed the experience in the memories of children (and school staff!), this could be with post-visit library lessons; capturing highlights in the newsletter to share impact, and feeding back to the author so they can share the impact with their audiences too.” The School Library Association

10. Patron of Reading and Writer in Residence

Patrons of Readings are usually local authors who visit the school regularly, running competitions, opening the library and encouraging reading and writing across the school. In return, the school pays the author a fee and provides access to children of the right age group to brainstorm characters, plots, or give review quotes.

“If you would like an author to work with your students over a longer period of time, then consider a Writer in Residence. A residency is the period of time a writer spends working with a particular organisation. Residencies can last weeks, months or even a year. Hosting

“Our Patron of Reading, Abi Elphinstone, raised the profile of reading with the students in our school, creating a real buzz around books and creativity. We had children who really struggled to find books they enjoyed, suddenly picking up her books and reading. As a result, the reading culture across the whole school hugely improved.”

Jo Clarke, author and school librarian

a writer in residence can bring benefits to the school in terms of the creativity writers can inspire, the perspectives they can offer and the relationship that the writer can build with the students and staff.” *Creating a School Library with Impact: A Beginners Guide*



11. Further resources and acknowledgements

The SoA has free guidance on **Engaging freelancers for speaking events**.

Author Andy Seed has a useful article on **what makes a great school author visit**.

Creating a School Library with Impact: A Beginners Guide, Facet Publishing, 2022, ISBN 9781783305537. Caroline Roche, Barbara Band, Nick Cavender, Lucy Chambers, Annie Everall, Ellen Krajewski, Sarah Pavey.

The School Library Association

“The School Library Association is the only UK charity dedicated solely to supporting school libraries and the children and young people who benefit from them. For almost 90 years, we have championed the right of every child and young person to access a high quality school library that supports reading, learning, wellbeing, enrichment and opportunity. Membership to The School Library Association provides your school with training, advice and practical support, as well as regional networking through our active branch network, and regular opportunities to connect with publishers, authors, illustrators and children's book creators.” Find out more: **sla.org.uk** **The School Library Association**

Authors Aloud UK

“Authors Aloud UK represents a wide range of authors for school visits and is the leading agency specialising in arranging author, illustrator, poet and storyteller visits to schools, libraries, festivals and conferences, in the UK and Internationally. They are passionate about enabling children to experience the magic of books and reading and want to make it as easy as possible to bring children, books and authors together. Authors Aloud UK will streamline the whole process of booking an author for schools by handling all the set-up arrangements as well as providing background information on their guest and guidelines on running a successful event. From nursery to secondary, they have a range of speakers to help find the right one to meet the needs of a school. They also work

closely with publishers and other organisations to arrange author tours and events with schools and offer training and support for authors and schools.”

Find out more: **www.authorsalouduk.co.uk** or contact: **info@authorsalouduk.co.uk**
Authors Aloud UK

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The Children's Writers and Illustrators Group is a special interest group within the Society of Authors, representing and campaigning for the interests of creators of children's books.

If you are interested in finding out more about membership of the SoA, go to our website. Don't worry if you aren't yet eligible for full membership; you can still join as an Associate and access all the same membership benefits. Subscription rates start from £23.75 per quarter and are tax-deductible. Get 20% off your first year of membership by using the code SVT20.



**SOCIETY OF
AUTHORS**
Children's Writers
& Illustrators

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24 Bedford Row, London, WC1R 4EH

E info@societyofauthors.org

T 020 3880 2230

www.societyofauthors.org

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