

To: Principals of all Grant-Aided Primary Schools

Rathgael House  
43 Balloo Road  
Rathgill  
Bangor  
BT19 7PR

Dear Principal,

17 November 2015

## **LIBRARIES NI**

The Department of Education (DE) is encouraged by the existing relationships between schools and Libraries NI, the Public Library Service for Northern Ireland, and is aware of the value of these in providing a wide range of resources for our children and young people. DE, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) and Libraries NI have a Memorandum of Understanding which sets out the basis for us to work together to encourage a love of reading and to improve literacy.

The purpose of this letter is to remind you of the facilities that are available for your school and your pupils in public libraries, to encourage your staff to visit your local library with some of your pupils and to suggest that you look for opportunities to remind parents what is available in their local library for their child.

With 98 branches throughout the province, Libraries NI has a wide range of resources for all ages.

At the heart of the library are books and we all know the value of reading and indeed being read to from an early age. Recent research has stressed the value of reading and being read to. One such study of 15 year-olds found that those whose parents had read to them often in Year 1 did much better at school than those whose parents did not. The simple act of reading a bedtime story at age five can lead to improved outcomes a decade later.

There are many activities for all the family on offer in libraries. These are all free and can provide an excellent opportunity for children and parents alike.

Libraries encourage shared reading experiences from birth with activities such as 'Rhythm and Rhyme'. Many libraries run 'Storytime' for children aged 4 – 8 and reading groups for ages 7 – 9, 9 – 11, and 12 – 15. This is an excellent opportunity for your pupils to further their reading outside school and also to get their parents involved.

Libraries also have an extensive range of resources for study. With a wide selection of curriculum-related information books, revision and study guides, books to support the Accelerated Reader programme, books published for pupils with dyslexia,

photocopying and scanning facilities, and study space, the library is an ideal place to study, research a school project or complete homework in a quiet environment.

Libraries NI offers a number of class-visit programmes. This can involve a one-off visit for Year 4 and/or Year 6, a programme of three visits for Year 4 and/or Year 6 and a book exchange service for other primary school years. Your local library will be more than happy to assist you in arranging any of these programmes.

Library membership is free. It's possible to borrow up to nine items for three weeks. Books can be borrowed from and returned to any library across Northern Ireland. If you can't find the book you're looking for it can be requested from another library.

If you would like further information please contact Claire McKee, Standards and Improvement Team on 028 91 279343 or at [claire.mckee@deni.gov.uk](mailto:claire.mckee@deni.gov.uk) or Kim Aiken, Libraries NI on 028 25 664145 or at [Kim.Aiken@librariesni.org.uk](mailto:Kim.Aiken@librariesni.org.uk).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Hughes'.

**DAVID HUGHES (DR)**

**Director of Curriculum, Qualifications and Standards**