

Organising . . . Author, Poet or Illustrator Visits

Good author events should be enjoyable for all involved and a great way to inspire young people to read.

If you would like to arrange a visit to your school or library from an author, poet or illustrator but aren't sure how to do so, don't worry. This guide explains how to organise such an event, what to do on the day and how to help your pupils make the most of the experience.



Contacting Individuals or Publishers

You can search online for authors or look on publishers' websites. The staff in our Children's Books and Reading Promotion department can also advise you, and we also have a list of authors, poets and illustrators who have agreed to having their details shared with schools and libraries who want to arrange visit. Contact the department by emailing children@books.wales.

When contacting an author or publisher to arrange a visit, give as much information as you can, such as:

- Full contact details for your school, including address, contact name and email address and phone number.
- The name of the author(s) you have in mind.
- The age group you'd like the author to speak to.
- Number of children in the event.
- How many sessions you'd like the author to do (usually, an author won't do more than three sessions a day, but this should be discussed with the author).
- The type of event you'd like the author to do e.g. workshop or a talk.
- Event location (school hall, library or classroom).
- Author fee.

Applying For Financial Support

Literature Wales offers financial support of up to 50% towards the fees of author visits. The application process is simple and quick. www.literaturewales.org/funding-for-events/

Be aware that some authors can get booked up months in advance. We advise you to give as much notice as possible.

Preparing for an Event

To get the maximum benefit from an author visit it helps greatly to prepare the children beforehand. Authors are always very grateful when their work has been discussed in advance of a visit, and in our experience, it enables children to engage more fully with the event.

We recommend where possible reading some of the book, researching the author or creating a classroom/library display. It is also very useful if the children are able to think of some questions they would like to ask the author in advance of the visit.

Welcoming your Visitor

It is always nice for the author to receive an enthusiastic welcome when they arrive at an event. An offer of tea or coffee, being introduced to staff members and shown the event space all help to make the author feel comfortable and relaxed before an event.



The Event Itself

Most authors will speak for approximately 45 minutes and will leave an additional 15 minutes at the end for questions (one hour in total). This will vary slightly according to the audience's age group. Book signing is usually additional to this time so please advise the author if this is to be part of the hour event.

Please be aware that the author may require additional equipment for the talk or workshop. For example, an author using a PowerPoint presentation will require equipment to display this, and others may need a flipchart or a table. This information should be confirmed before the event so that all requirements can be catered for. A glass of water should be provided.

There should always be teachers/librarians in attendance at these events and the author should not be left alone with the children. If the staff are seen to be enjoying as much as the children, then everybody will get more out of the event.



Selling Books

While authors and publishers fully appreciate that not all children attending an event will want or be able to buy books, we do ask that the option to buy is given. Contact your local bookshop and arrange for them to manage book sales at the event. Please be assured that this is common practice and an excellent way to forge a good relationship with local booksellers. The bookshop should be able to organize stock, provide a member of staff for selling, and handle all monies. We recommend that letters be sent home to parents and guardians in advance of the event advising that books will be available to buy. It often helps if the books are on sale a few days before or after the event as children often forget to bring their money in on the day and some will decide they would like a book only after hearing the author speak.

Signings

Authors are always very happy to sign books at events. Usually this will take place at the end of the session. We ask that a member of school staff be on hand to organise children who would like signed books into an orderly queue, preferably with their books open at the title page ready for the author to sign. It also helps to stick post-it notes on the books with the child's name clearly written to prevent any spelling mistakes when signing.

Unfortunately, signed books cannot be returned to the bookshop or publisher. The children are also very welcome to bring in any of their own books from home by the speaking author, should they wish to have these signed. It is often during the signing that the author will really appreciate a hot drink!

