

# The 2017 Softlink UK School Library Survey Report



*Findings from Softlink's 2017 UK School Library Survey into school library budgets, staffing, and library usage.*

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## Introduction

The Softlink UK School Library Survey was first launched in 2015. A similar survey has been conducted by Softlink Australia since 2010. The first Softlink Australia survey was launched in response to the 2010 Australian Federal Governments request for submissions to the 'Inquiry into school libraries and Teacher Librarians in Australian schools'.

Softlink has continued to conduct the survey annually, extending the scope to include UK and New Zealand schools in 2015. Continuing the annual survey builds a critical reference point for understanding regional and global changes, impacts and trends over time.

This report provides an analysis of the survey findings including budget, staffing levels, school library objectives, future trends, and challenges libraries are facing.

Publication date: 20 Mar 2018



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All text quotes included in this report are drawn from two open-ended questions in the survey - *What is the one thing you would you change about your school library or your role?* and *Do you have any other comments you would like to add?*

“Better advocacy of library services within schools would ensure staff are used in areas of expertise to improve student learning.”

## 1.0 Purpose of the survey

School libraries are central to a student’s learning experience and their preparation for further education. School librarians, teacher librarians and volunteers play very important roles in a school library.

The annual survey provides a reference point for understanding changes, impacts, challenges and trends in school libraries over time.

## 1.1 About Softlink

Established in 1983, Softlink has school library and education department customers across 60 countries.

Our Oxford based UK office provides support for customers across the UK, Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

Softlink works with school libraries and educators to provide solutions which engage students and support school library staff. Our flagship school library system, Oliver v5 is continually developed to meet the changing needs of libraries, educators and students and our new information curating tool, LearnPath provides an easy to use platform to guide students, support the development of research skills and promote the value of school libraries and resources.

Softlink products offer deep digital integration with eBooks and streamlined integration with virtual learning environments and school administration systems.

We have had a long partnership with the library and information industry and understand the challenges and opportunities the 21st Century learning and teaching environment presents for school libraries.

## 2.0 Survey findings summary

Key findings from the 2017 Survey include:

- 65% of respondents feel their library is not adequately resourced including staffing and budget.
- 54% of respondents indicated that their library budget has not changed from the previous year, 13% indicated it had increased, and 33% indicated it had decreased.
- 78% of respondents indicated no change to their staffing levels from the previous year, 6% indicated it had increased, and 16% indicated a decrease.
- 57% of schools indicated they now provide access to the library from outside the school; 83% of respondents agree or strongly agree that anywhere, anytime access to the library is important.
- 60% of respondents indicated that they now include eBooks in their collection.
- 59% of respondents indicated that they now include eResources - subscription databases in their collection.

It should be noted that 73% of respondents to the 2017 UK survey were from Secondary schools. While response data is analysed by school type, the high number of Secondary school responses impacts overall findings.





## 3.0 Allocation of school budgets

Respondents were asked to provide an indication of budget from a selection of annual budget ranges not including staff salaries.

Responses to this question have been analysed by school type, education provider, and school size.

### 3.1 School library budgets by school type

The most common budget range for Primary, Middle and Secondary schools was £2,001 - £5,000. The most common budget ranges for Sixth form schools was both £2,001 - £5,000 and Greater than £10,000. All-through school respondents were most likely to fall in the Greater than £10,000 range.

Note: 76% of All-through school respondents were Independent schools.

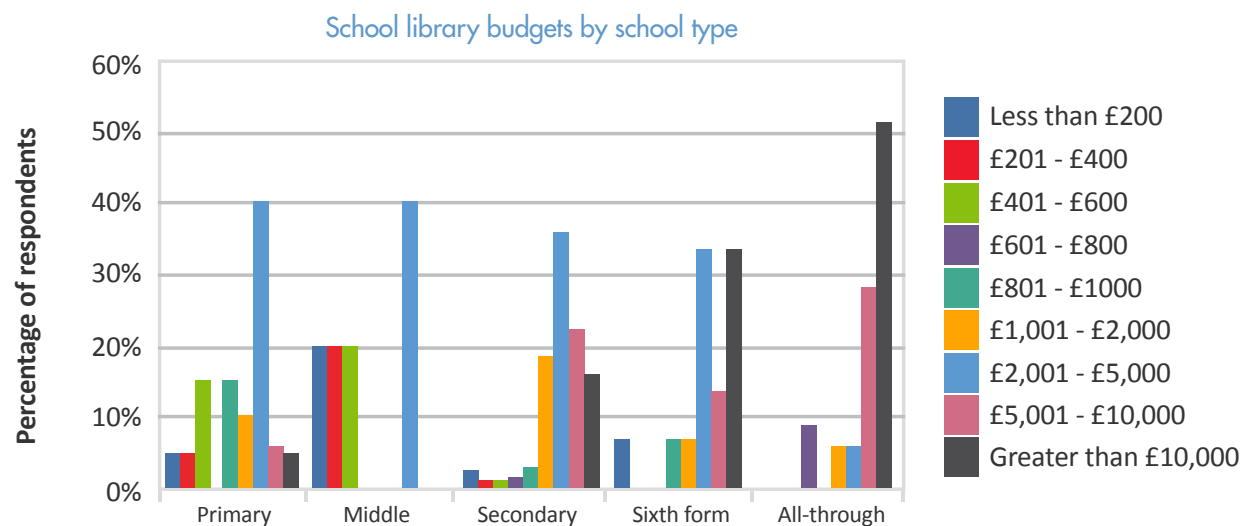


Figure 1: School library budgets by school type in 2017

"If given the funding, I would redesign the library to make it more open to pupils and staff."

### 3.2 School library budgets by education provider

The most common budget range for Academy and State schools was £2,001 - £5,000. For Independent school respondents, the most common range was Greater than £10,000.

Sample sizes of less than 5 have not been included.

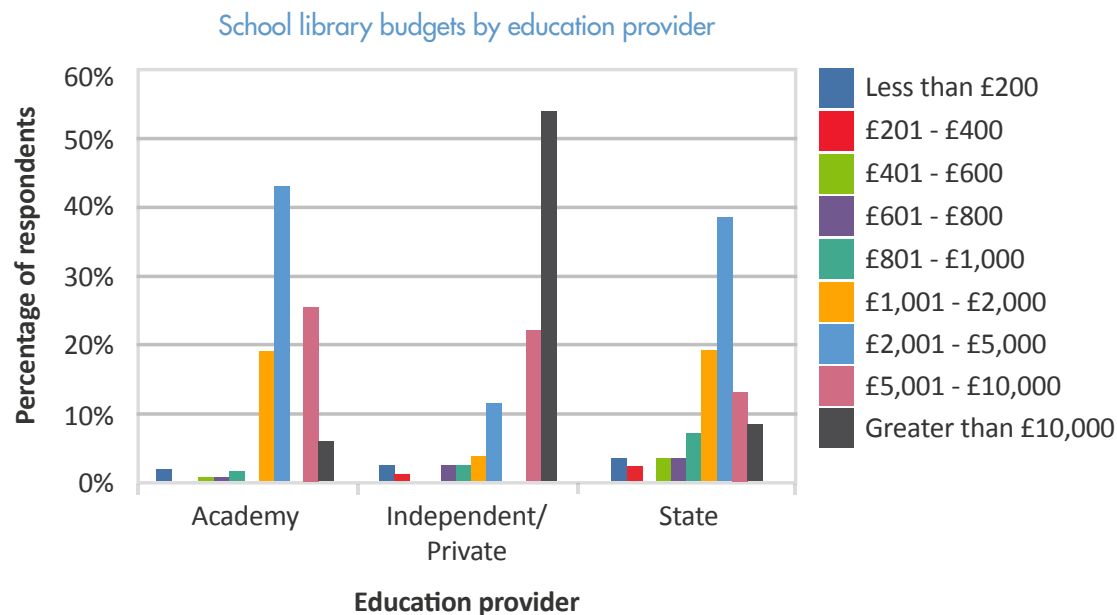


Figure 2 : School library budgets by education provider

"I would like the library to be bigger so more people could visit.

At the moment, I always have a queue of people to turn away."

### 3.3 School library budgets by size

Additional analysis was completed that shows school library budgets by school size. This is provided in figure 3 below.

It should be noted that the majority of respondents in the 800 -1099 and 1100+ category were Academy or Independent schools, and 42% of respondents in the 400-599 category were Independent/Private schools.

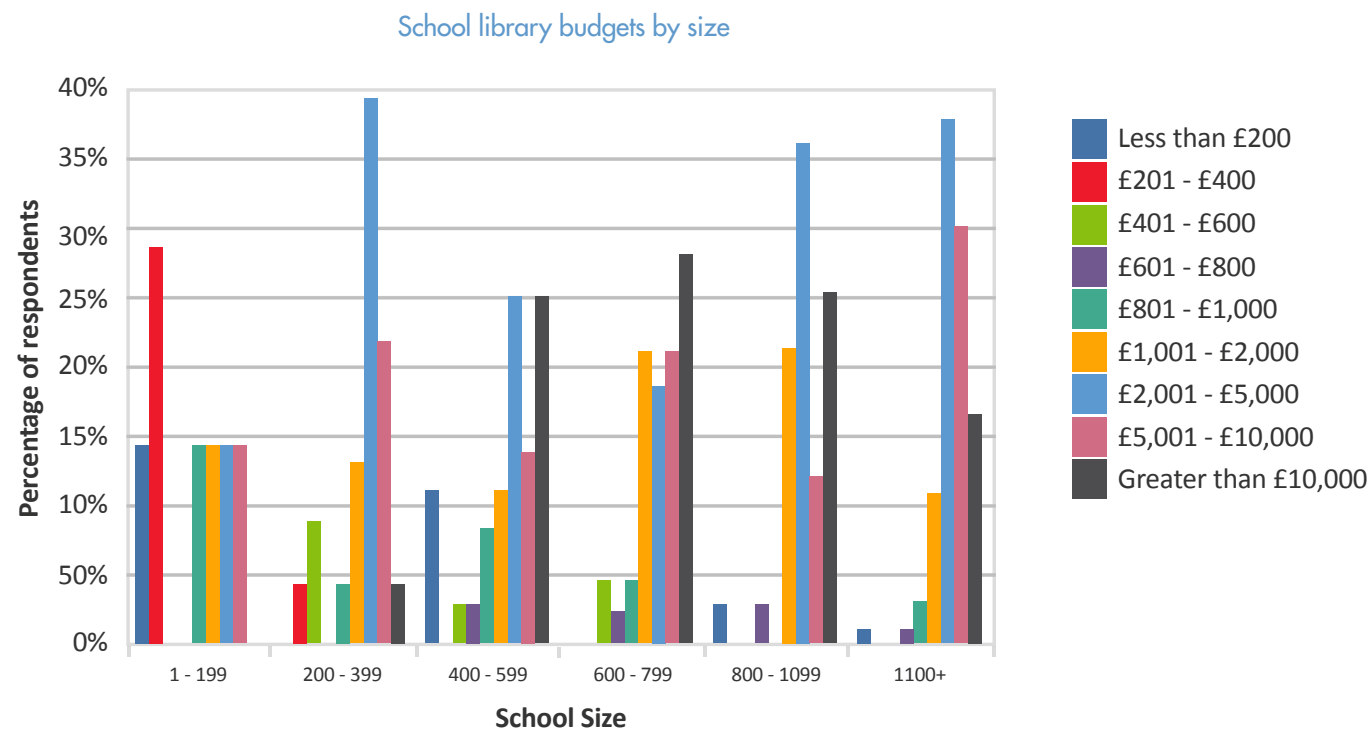


Figure 3: School library budgets by size



## 4.0 Changes in school library budgets

Respondents were asked to provide an indication of how their annual budget had changed from the previous year.

Responses to this question have been analysed by school type and education provider.

Additional analysis is also provided comparing overall reported budget changes between 2016 and 2017.

### 4.1 Changes in school library budgets by school type

Figure 4 shows the reported changes in school library budgets by school type.

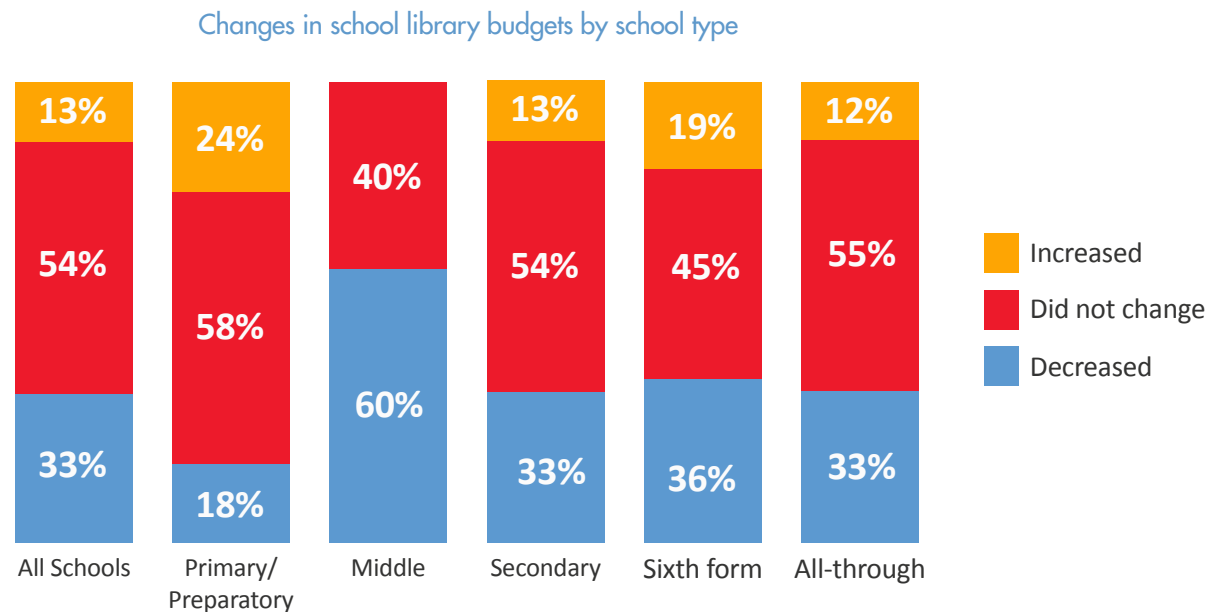


Figure 4: Changes in school library budgets by school type 2017

## 4.2 Changes in school library budgets by education provider

Figure 5 shows the reported changes to school library budgets by education provider.

Sample sizes of less than 5 have not been included.

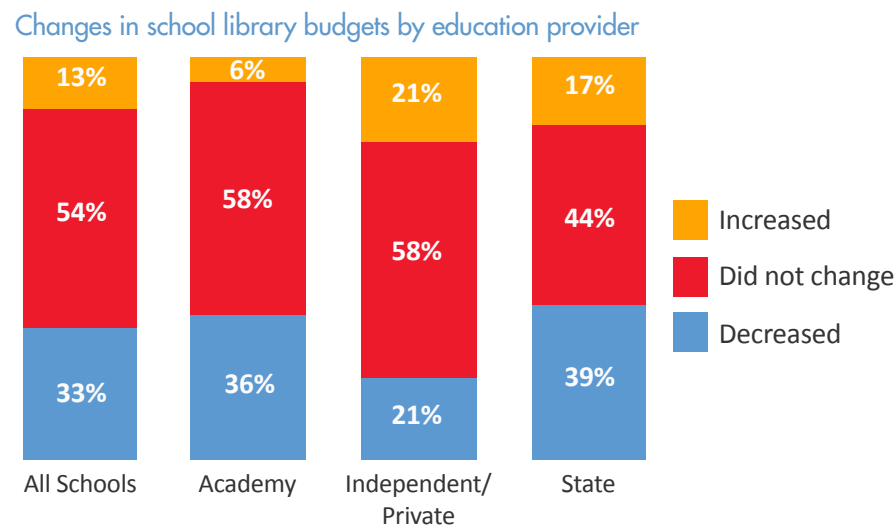


Figure 5: Changes in 2017 school library budgets by education provider

## 4.3 School library budget comparison 2016 - 2017

Figure 6 compares annual budget changes between the 2016 and 2017 responses.

When comparing overall library budget changes between 2016 and 2017, more schools reported budget increases, while the same percentage of schools reported a decrease.

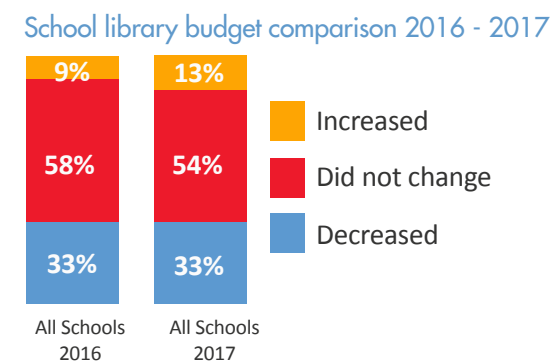


Figure 6: School library budget comparison 2016 and 2017

"I would like a bigger budget to allow for more new resources to be brought in and a wider variety of resources such as magazine subscriptions and digital media."

## 5.0 School library staffing

Respondents were asked to provide information about staffing, including Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staffing levels and library role type.

Responses to these questions have been analysed by school type, education provider, school size, and role type.

### 5.1 Staffing by school type

Sixth form and All-through schools reported the highest number of FTE staff with an average of 2 per school.

Middle schools reported the lowest number of FTE staff with an average of 0.8 per school.

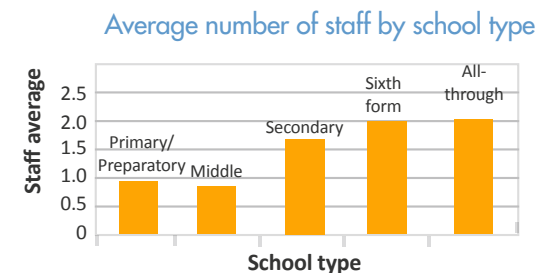


Figure 7: Average number of staff by school type

### 5.2 Staffing by education provider and size

When applying school size and education provider type, State school libraries in the 1100+ category reported the highest FTE staff average of 3 per school.

Independent schools in the 200 - 399 category reported the lowest FTE staff average of 0.6 per school.

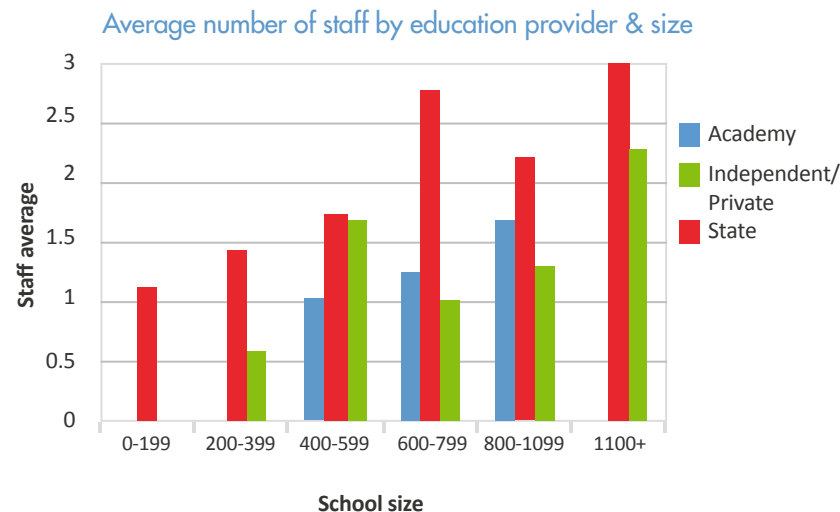


Figure 8: Average number of staff by education provider & size

"I would like more staffing to enable greater reading intervention and promotion with pupils."

### 5.3 FTE staff by role and school type

Figure 9 shows the breakdown of school library staffing by role and school type.

The percentage indicates the number of respondents in each category with at least one of these role types.

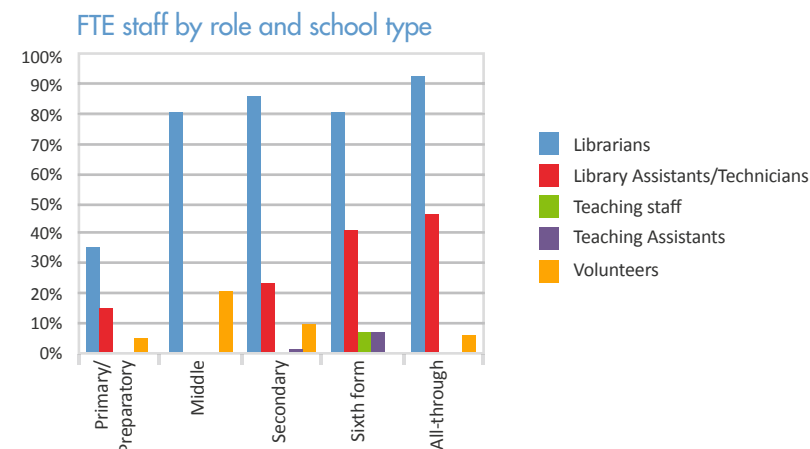


Figure 9: FTE staff by role and school type

### 5.4 FTE staff by role and education provider

Figure 10 shows the breakdown of school library staffing by role and education provider.

The percentage indicates the number of respondents in each category with at least one of these role types.

Sample sizes of less than 5 have not been included.

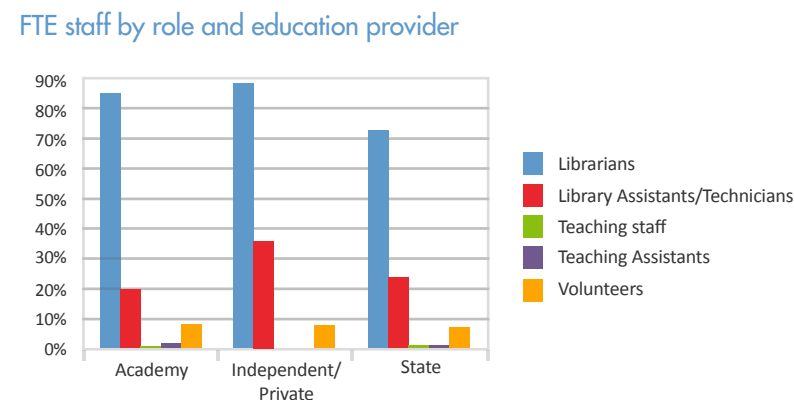


Figure 10: FTE staff by role and education provider

## 6.0 Changes in school library staffing

Respondents were asked to provide an indication of how their staffing had changed from the previous year.

Responses to this question are presented below.

When comparing reported changes in school library staffing between 2016 and 2017, more schools reported staffing decreases, while less schools reported staffing increases.

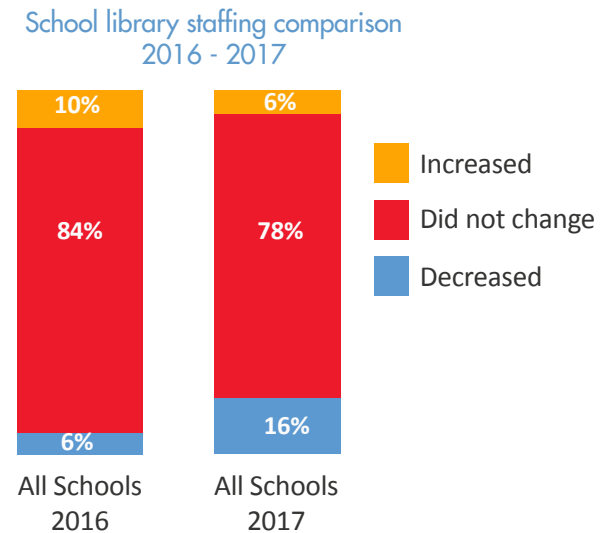


Figure 11: Comparison of 2016 and 2017 school library staffing changes

## 7.0 Library usage and support

Respondents were asked about library usage including average number of loans per month and number of active borrowers. They were also asked about the level of support they receive from the senior management team and the level of teacher engagement with the library.

Responses to these questions have been analysed by school type, size and provider for *average number of loans per month* and *number of active borrowers*, and by all schools and school type for *level of support they receive from the senior management team* and the *level of teacher engagement with the library*.

### 7.1 Average number of loans per month

Schools in the 600 - 799 students category reported the highest average loans per month, with schools in the 200 - 399 students reporting the lowest.

When comparing average loans per month by school type, Middle schools reported the highest, while Sixth form schools reported the lowest.

When comparing average loans by provider, Academy and State schools reported similar averages; Independent/Private schools reported the lowest.

Sample sizes of less than 5 have not been included.



Figure 12: Average number of loans by school size

Average number of loans per month by school type

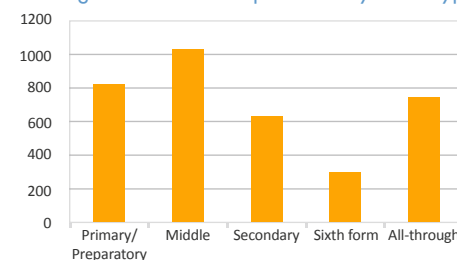


Figure 13: Average number of loans by school type

Average number of loans per month by provider

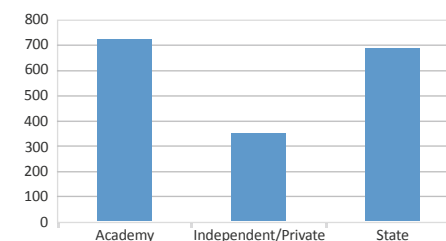


Figure 14: Average number of loans by provider

"Staff engagement with the library is paramount to its success and use by students."



## 7.2 Number of active borrowers

Schools in the 1100+ students category reported the highest average number of active borrowers, with schools in the 200 - 399 students reporting the lowest.

When comparing average number of active borrowers by school type, All-through schools reported the highest, while Primary/Preparatory schools reported the lowest.

When comparing average number of active borrowers by provider, Academy schools reported the highest average; Independent/Private schools reported the lowest.

Sample sizes of less than 5 have not been included.

Number of active borrowers

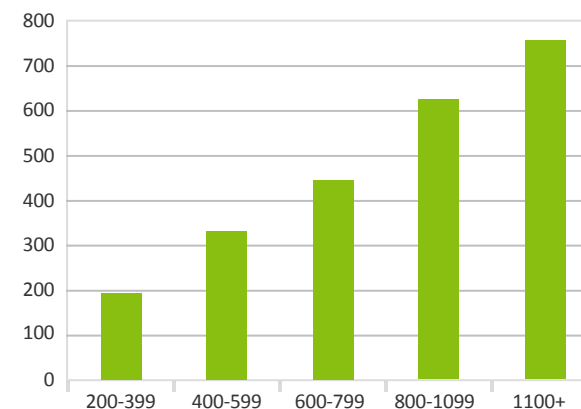


Figure 15: Average number of loans by school size

Number of active borrowers by school type

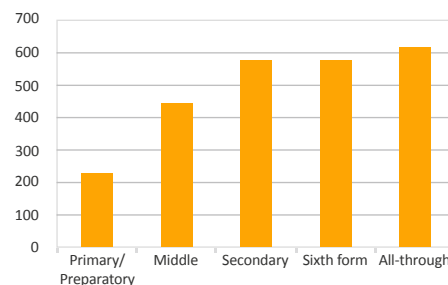


Figure 16: Average number of active borrowers by school type

Number of active borrowers by provider

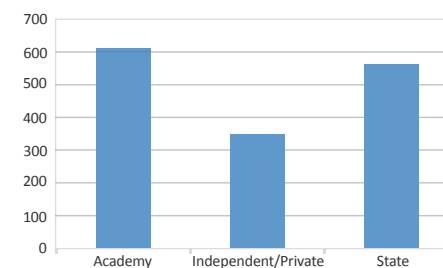


Figure 17: Average number of active borrowers by provider

### 7.3 Level of support from senior leadership

40% of respondents indicated that they had a moderate level of support from the senior leadership team, 34% indicated a high to very high level of support and 26% indicated a low to very low level of support.

Primary/Preparatory schools had the highest percentage (60%) of respondents indicate a moderate level of senior leadership team support. Middle schools had the highest percentage of respondents (50%) indicate a low to very low level of senior leadership support. Secondary schools had the highest percentage of respondents (36%) indicate a high to very high level of senior leadership support.

Level of support from the senior leadership team - all schools

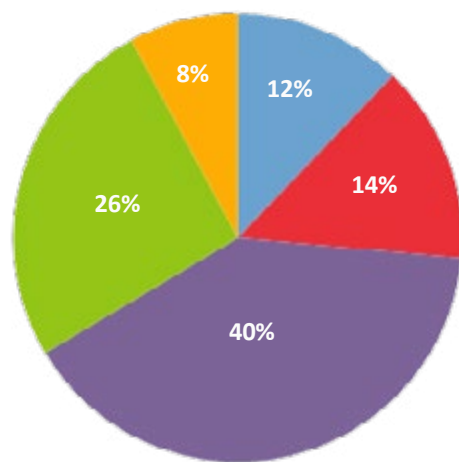


Figure 18: Level of support from the senior leadership Team - all schools

Level of support from the senior leadership team by school

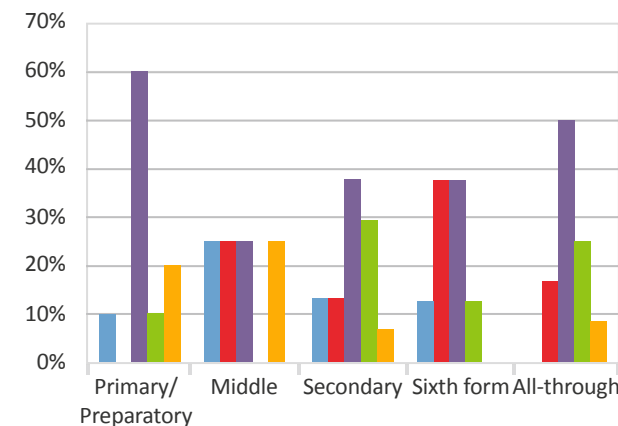


Figure 19: Level of support from the senior leadership team by school type

Very low Low Moderate High Very high

"I would benefit hugely from more staff who could take over 'higher level' administrative tasks, such as cataloguing and finance, so that I had more time to engage with staff and students."

## 7.4 Level of teacher engagement with the library

48% of respondents indicated that they experienced a moderate level of teacher engagement with the library, 28% indicated a high to very high level of support, and 24% indicated a low to very low level of support.

Middle schools had the highest percentage (75%) of respondents indicate a moderate level of teacher engagement with the library. Primary schools had the highest percentage of respondents (40%) indicate a low to very low level of teacher engagement with the library. Secondary schools had the highest percentage of respondents (30%) indicate a high to very high level of teacher engagement with the library.

Level of teacher engagement with the library - all schools

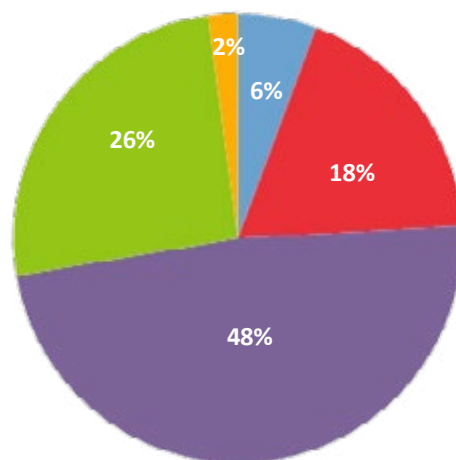


Figure 20: Level of teacher engagement with the library - all schools

Level of teacher engagement with the library by school type

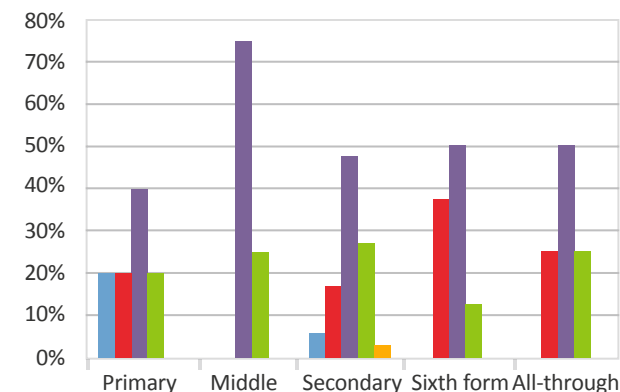


Figure 21: Level of teacher engagement with the library by school type

Very low Low Moderate High Very high

"I really enjoy my job and have been the librarian here for 17 years.

It is wonderful to see a reluctant student enjoy a book, whatever it is about, fiction or non-fiction.

I enjoy implementing competitions, displays, and author visits.

I also regularly read the fiction stock so I can recommend books to students. I get enthusiastic when I can tell them a little gem about the author and how the book came to be.

Sometimes, the students teach me too."

## 8.0 School library services

Respondents were asked what they considered to be the most important services the library provided.

The top 3 services for UK schools included:

1. **Promoting & supporting reading for pleasure** with 100% of respondents indicating that this is an important or very important service.
2. **Providing an engaging & welcoming space for learning & leisure** with 98% of respondents indicating that this is an important or very important service.
3. **Developing & managing the schools resource collection** with 95% of respondents indicating that this is an important or very important service.

Most important services that the library provides

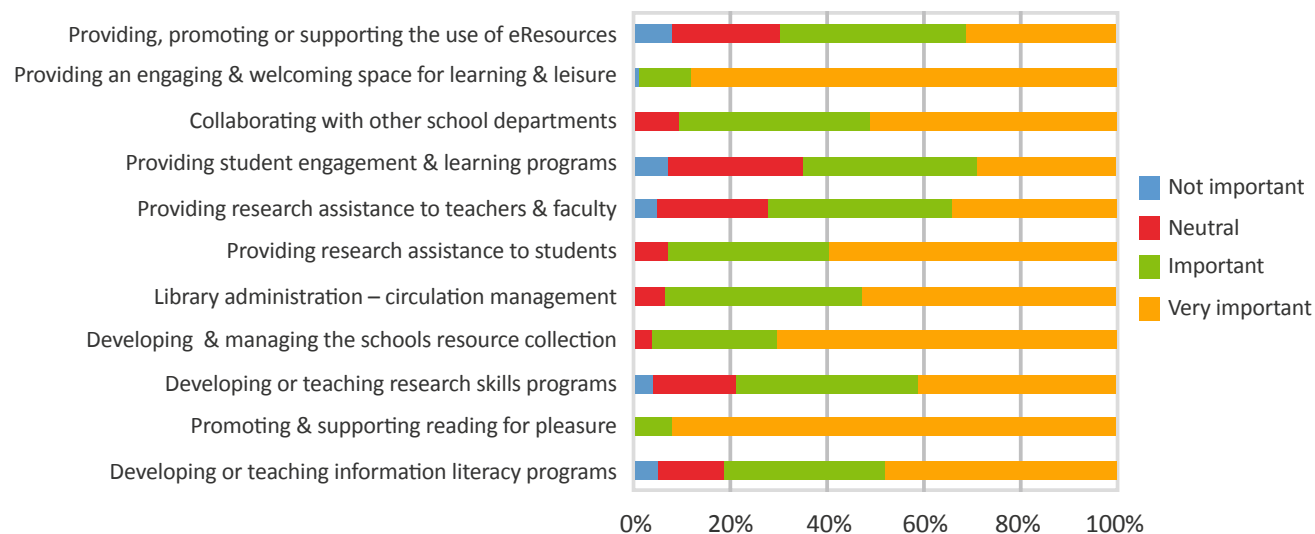


Figure 22: Most important services that the library provides

Other services not listed included providing a safe space for students, organising author visits, running the Accelerated Reader program, and IT support.

## 9.0 Emerging trends

Respondents were asked to rate the following technologies or trends in relation to how they will impact school libraries in the future.

The top 3 emerging trends for UK schools included:

1. **Increased technology integration** with 80% of respondents indicating that this would have a moderate to high impact.
2. **Digitisation of resources** with 78% of respondents indicating that this would have a moderate to high impact.
3. **Virtual Learning Environments** with 77% of respondents indicating that this would have a moderate to high impact.

Impact of emerging trends on school libraries

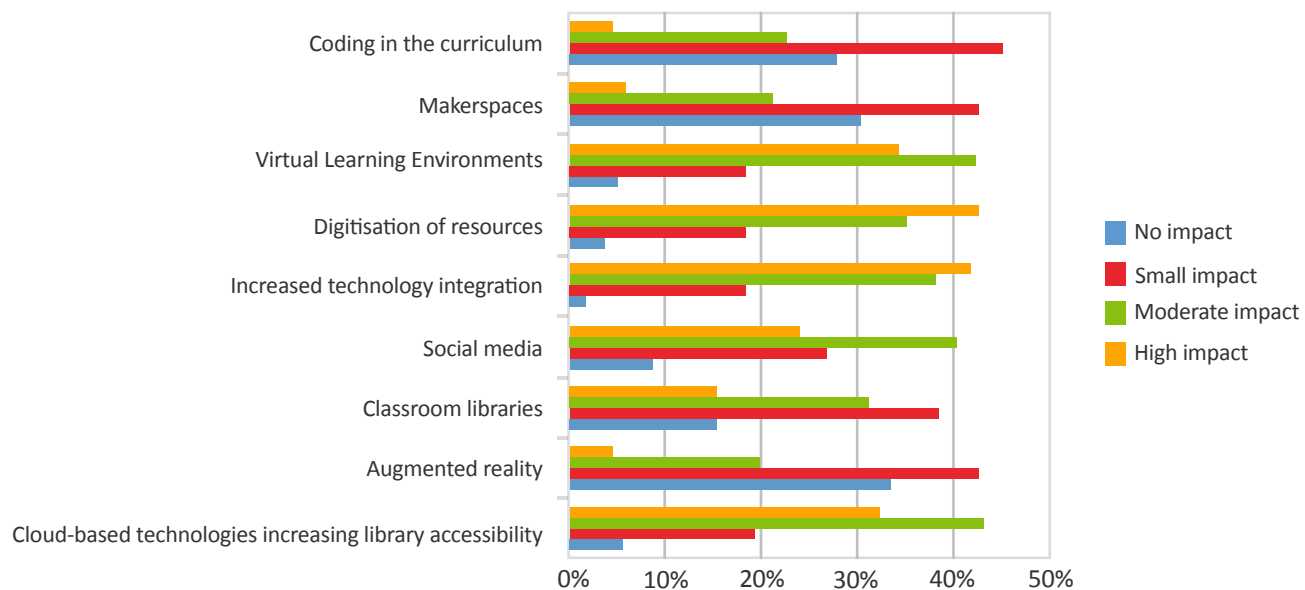


Figure 23: Impact of emerging trends on school libraries

## 10.0 Online access to the library

Respondents were asked what level of online access they provided to the library and if they thought online access to the library was important.

The graphs below show the level of online access to the library and whether respondents feel that anytime, anywhere access to the library is important.

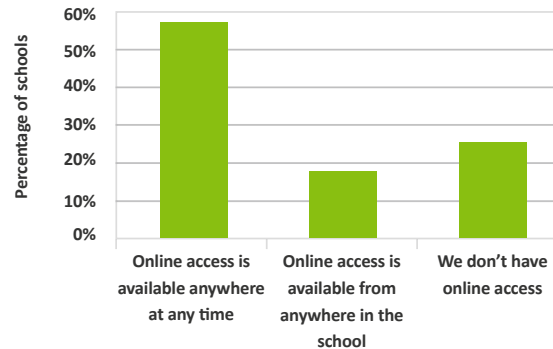


Figure 24. Level of online access

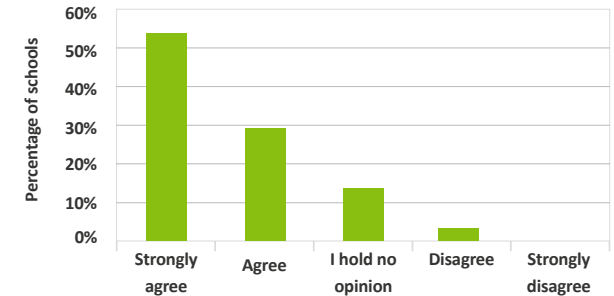


Figure 25. Do you think anywhere, anytime access to the library is important?

## 11.0 eResources

Respondents were asked what percentage of their collection was made up of eBooks and other multimedia and what percentage of their collection was made up Subscription databases. Figures 26 and 27 show this percentage for all school types, figures 28 and 29 on the following page show the distribution by school type.

Percentage of collection made up of eBooks and other multimedia

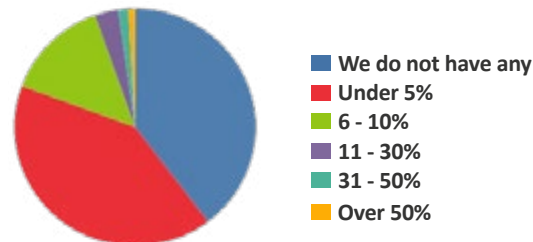


Figure 26. Percentage of collection made up of eBooks and other multimedia

Percentage of collection made up of Subscription databases

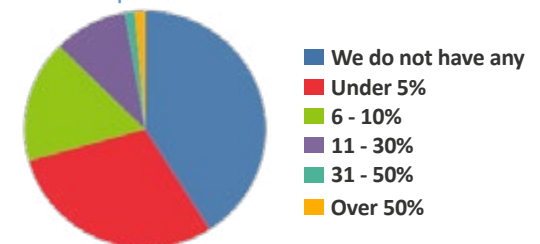


Figure 27. Percentage of collection made up of Subscription databases

"Given the number of students now entering further education the need for the school library to promote information literacy skills is greater than ever.

Students need to have, at least, a basic understanding of how to go about their own research, how to narrow their searches, and how to evaluate their resources.

It is here where the school library can be invaluable in setting them on the right path at an early age.

For those who do not go on to further education, the techniques for evaluating resources remain just as important so as to stop the acceptance of 'fake news' items."





Percentage of collection made up of eBooks and other multimedia by school type

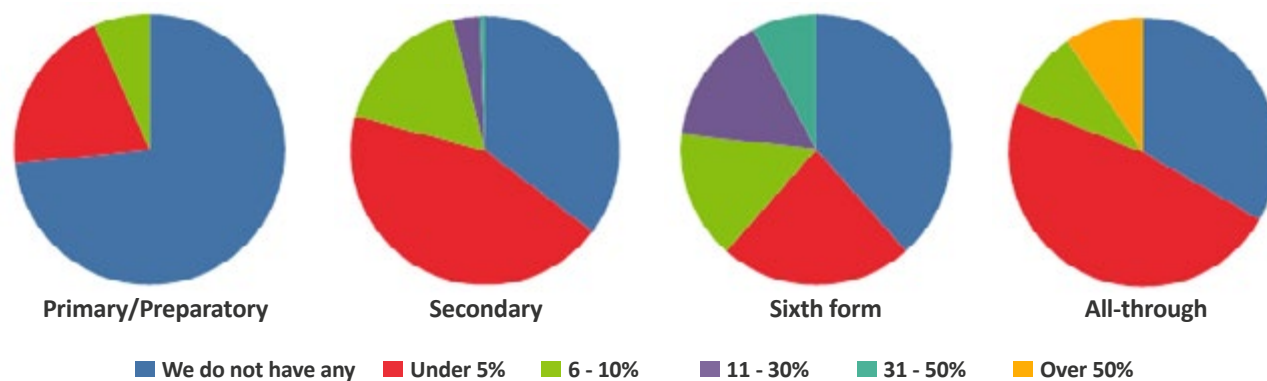


Figure 28: Percentage of collection made up of eBooks and other multimedia by school type

Percentage of collection made up of Subscription databases by school type

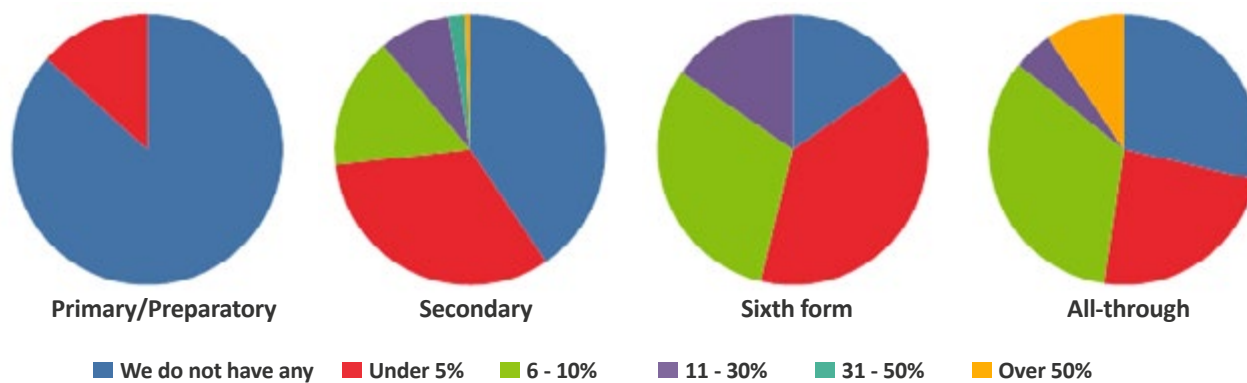


Figure 29: Percentage of collection made up of Subscription databases by school type

"I would change the physical environment - it is too small for such a large school and desperately in need of refurbishment."

## 12.0 Feedback themes

Respondents were asked two open-ended questions about the library and their role. They were also asked to share ideas for collaboration between the library and the rest of the school. We had a number of respondents share these ideas, which you can read in our whitepaper "[School libraries share ideas for school-wide collaboration](#)" available on our website.

Recurring feedback themes included:

### The library space

Respondents indicated that they would like to upgrade shelving and furniture to modernise the library and to create more flexibility in the library space. They would also like a bigger space for the library to enable them to expand the collection and give students dedicated reading and study spaces.

### Resources

Respondents indicated that they would like a bigger budget to invest in resources to support the curriculum and to purchase eResources including eBooks and Subscription databases.

### Students and staffing

A number of respondents indicated that they would like more staffing to support them by performing administrative functions, cataloguing, and resource management to give them more time to engage with students, teach, and collaborate with staff to support the curriculum.

### Raising the library profile

Respondents shared the importance of promoting the school library and the services it provides to the staff, students, and broader community. They indicated a lack of knowledge of what they can and would like to do within the school, the importance of a proactive approach to raising the library profile and the success they have had when taking a proactive approach.

## 13.0 Survey scope

The 2017 Softlink UK School Library Survey was promoted and conducted online with the generous support of our partners JCS online resources and Schools Catalogue Information Service (SCIS). Invitations were open to all UK school libraries and consisted of 32 questions that covered the following topics:

- School library resourcing
- Library usage and support
- School library services
- Emerging trends
- School library collection
- School library trends
- Viewpoints on opportunities, challenges and collaboration

## 14.0 Respondents

This year the survey received 432 responses with the majority of respondents being from Secondary schools. Table 1 below shows the breakdown of survey respondents by education provider and school type.

Type of School	Education Provider					TOTAL
	Academy	Free	Independent/Private	SEN	State	
Primary/Preparatory	2	0	9	0	20	31
Middle	3	0	0	0	4	7
Secondary	163	3	64	2	85	317
Sixth form	7	0	2	0	15	24
All-through	7	2	40	0	4	53
TOTAL	182	5	115	2	128	432

Table 1: 2017 Survey respondents by education provider and school type

## 15.0 Conclusion

The 2017 UK School Library Survey provides an informative insight into the school library industry and a basis for comparing with past and future surveys. By comparing the survey results with those gathered in 2016 and those that will be gathered in 2018, the identification of trends and changes is made possible.

Continued investment in school libraries is vital for the development of literacy and improved educational outcomes. Librarians and library staff play an important role in student academic development. It is clear there is a growing requirement for digital and online resources and that school-wide access and integration is important for engaging students in learning.

The survey identifies that school librarians and library staff in the UK face a number of challenges, including insufficient funding and resourcing which hinders their ability to provide services to engage and encourage student interaction. This is a significant issue as students prepare for university or further study.

## Thank you

A special thank you to everyone who participated in and shared the 2017 Softlink UK School Library Survey.

