

Interim Joint Position Statement: Censorship and Intellectual Freedom in School Libraries

May 2022

This statement has been produced jointly by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP), the CILIP School Libraries Group (CILIP SLG) and the School Library Association (SLA). It is intended to provide clear guidance for school librarians, school leadership and Governors when considering issues relating to intellectual freedom and censorship.

As leadership organisations for School Libraries, we believe that:

- i) Intellectual freedom – the freedom to read, to learn, to question and to access information – is central to a functioning democracy.
- ii) It is a core role of libraries, librarians and other library staff to promote intellectual freedom on behalf of their users, to empower users to enact their information rights and to oppose censorship in all its forms – both tacit and explicit.
- iii) School librarians and library staff are responsible for promoting and preserving intellectual freedom by working with school leadership and teaching colleagues to support children and young people in their development as informed and responsible citizens.

We affirm the principles set out in the AASL *School Library Bill of Rights*. Based on this, we assert that it is the responsibility of the school librarian or library staff to:

- iv) Provide materials that will enrich and support the curriculum, taking into consideration the varied interests, abilities, and maturity levels of individual learners;
- v) Provide materials that will stimulate growth in factual knowledge, literary appreciation, aesthetic values, and ethical standards;
- vi) Provide a range of information resources which will enable pupils to make informed judgments in their daily life;
- vii) Provide materials that illustrate and illuminate different views on controversial issues so that learners may develop under guidance the practice of critical reading and thinking;
- viii) Provide materials representative of the many religious, ethnic, and cultural groups in our society and their contribution to our national heritage and identity;
- ix) Place principle above personal opinion and reason above prejudice in the selection of materials of the highest quality in order to assure a comprehensive collection appropriate for the users of the library;
- x) Actively oppose censorship for any purpose other than material that is proscribed by law, which risks the incitement of illegal acts or which constitutes 'hate speech' as defined by the Public Order Act 1986, the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 and the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006.

We recognise the significant challenges faced by school librarians in embedding these beliefs into their practice and will be working to provide further support in the coming months.