



# The Best School Library In The Land?

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The Pan-Macmillan School Library Award came about because we, as publishers, recognise the importance of the School Library and the role it plays in the development of the reading habit.

Far too many teachers are working in difficult conditions without proper resourcing - yet the early years are vital in building the readers of tomorrow.

Pan-Macmillan feel it's important to assist the enthusiastic teacher-librarian in any way we can; hence the Award. But how to pick an overall winner?

We asked for entries, in the form of a book or journal, giving an account of the school's library and all related activities. It was important that the school showed the library as a core to the curriculum and promoted reading as a pleasurable experience. The vast majority of the entries did just that! The judges (including representatives from **Books for Keeps**, **the Children's Book Foundation**, **Books for Students**, **SLA** and **SLS**) were impressed by the variety of activity including book clubs, shops, fairs, author visits and fund-raising. (Sadly, the latter was all too evident, given the obvious lack of resources due to underfunding.)

Nevertheless, the enormous amount of work and obvious enthusiasm from so many schools made the Award an extremely close-run competition.

**The winning schools were as follows:**

**OVERALL WINNER** (first prize of £5,000 worth of books):

Emmbrook Junior School, Wokingham, Berkshire

**CATEGORY WINNERS** (£500 worth of books each):

**Infant:**

St Peters C of E First School, Droitwich Spa, Worcestershire

**Primary** (joint winners):

East Ayton County School, Scarborough, Yorkshire

St Thomas' School, Blackburn, Lancashire

### **Middle/Lower Secondary:**

Manor School, Cheadle Hulme, Stockport, Cheshire

Two special awards of £100 worth of books were awarded to Manish Primary School in the Western Isles and Breakspeare School in Hertfordshire.

The Infant category was of an especially high standard with some impressive entries. Many schools provided a lively, imaginative library environment with a good deal of emphasis placed upon pre-school. Parental involvement was greatly encouraged.

The Primary and Junior categories were also enthusiastic with outside activities such as book weeks, clubs and author visits in strong evidence.

Surprisingly, the largest entry category was Middle/Lower Secondary but the standard here was very mixed. The general library environment across this entry was often uninspiring; these libraries had the most comprehensive selection of books but there were few posters or attractive displays. The depressing lack of modern fiction in some schools was also noted (and this was evident in all categories). Although there were excellent classics being read, many schools were missing out on first-class current fiction.

To sum up the entries in the first year of this Award, it's probably best to use the words of the judging panel:

‘What we think stood out, over and above the effort and excellence of entries, was how grossly under-resourced the schools were, particularly Primary schools. It makes us wonder what teachers, especially those working at the sharp end of the teaching of reading, would do were they to enjoy proper resourcing.

This Award has shown clearly the inventiveness and dedication that teachers still possess despite the appalling difficulties of recent years,. One worries for the future at the implementation of LMS.’

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