



IDEA STORE AND CHILDREN

Public library services in Tower Hamlets are delivered through Idea Stores. There are five Idea Stores in Tower Hamlets which combine library services and adult and community education. With their 7 day a week opening and convenient high street locations, they're a popular destination for Tower Hamlets residents and attract an amazing 2 million visitors every year.

Resources for schools are provided by the Schools Library Service which has a collection of over 170,000 books, big books, posters, artefacts, costumes and more. Members of staff in subscribing schools can borrow up to 70 resources at any one time usually lent for a term. The subscription also includes a whole-school ticket for 400 books that can be used to support reading programmes or supplement the school library. For more information see the Schools Library Service website www.towerhamlets-sls.org.uk/

In Idea Stores the focus is on **individual children and their families**. We provide a service for children from babyhood up to sixteen. Our emphasis is very much on families. Children who visit public libraries regularly are above average readers – but they tend to visit only if their family does too. For older children we provide an out of class service: after school, at weekends and during the school holidays.

We aim to:

- Promote reading for pleasure
- Encourage children to choose their own books to take home
- Support reading at home
- Establish visiting the library as a regular family habit.

All Idea Stores are located where families do shopping. Ideally for children visiting a library with their family should just be part of everyday life. Children who visit libraries regularly experience reading as something that is a normal activity enjoyed by people of all ages in the local community, not only as a skill that is learned in class. This regular out of school experience of reading is one of the reasons that children who use libraries are twice as likely to be above-average readers.



THE IDEA STORE OFFER TO CHILDREN

The Idea Store offer to children consists of these main elements:

1. The children's programme
2. The Summer Reading Challenge
3. Family Learning
4. One to one reading support

1) Children's programme

Our children's programme runs throughout the year and is universal across all Idea Stores in Tower Hamlets. There are free activities after school every day of the week and at weekends. All activities have books and reading at their heart. For more information on each activity see the Idea Store for Children booklet or follow this link:

http://issuu.com/ideastores/docs/childrens_offer_booklet_final_final/1?e=1138203/5356624

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday*
10:30am	Storytime	Storytime	Storytime	Storytime	Storytime	Storytime	
11.15am						Dads' Club	
2:15pm						Family Reading Group	Art Club
3:30pm	Reading Aloud	Reading Aloud	Reading Aloud	Reading Aloud	Reading Aloud		
4:00pm	Boys' Book Club	Girls' Book Club	Code Club	Teenage Club	Homework Club		

*Please note Art Club will only take place in Idea Store Bow, Canary Wharf, Chrisp Street and Whitechapel

The programme includes a strong pre-school element: a storytime each weekday and Dads' Club every Saturday at all Stores. Regular attendance at these sessions supports parents and will give children a head start at school.. Research from the Sutton Trust demonstrated that: "comparing children with the same family income, parental characteristics and home environments, a child taken to the library on a monthly basis from ages three to five is two and a half months ahead of an equivalent child at age five who did not visit the library so frequently"



2) Summer Reading Challenge

The Summer Reading Challenge is the biggest single out of school reading initiative in Tower Hamlets. The Summer Reading Challenge (SRC) is the national reading incentive scheme run every year in partnership with The Reading Agency, the charity set up to promote reading. Children aged 4-11 read books throughout the holidays and are incentivised by winning prizes along the way – which culminates in the award of a medal and certificate to those children who read 6 books and complete the Challenge. The emphasis during the SRC is very much on reading for pleasure and children are encouraged to choose their own books.

Impact research into the SRC nationally has shown that it helps prevent the 'summer dip' in reading motivation, especially in children without books at home. This is why, in Idea Store, we work hard to increase participation rates, with staff visiting schools during the summer term to promote the SRC. To increase the ratio of staff to children we allocate as many members of staff as possible to children's libraries over the summer. Idea Store staff organise activities, read with individual children and discuss their chosen books with them. Regular staff are supported every year by volunteers from local secondary schools. The volunteers - aged between 14 and 16 are excellent role models and enhance the experience for the children.

The Summer Reading Challenge: key facts

- SRC takes place in 5 Idea Stores and 2 libraries throughout the summer holidays
- There are around 3,500 participants every year
- Based on experience from the last few years 85% children participating are aged between 4 and 11; there are equal numbers of under 4s and over 12s
- About 45% of participants are boys
- Children come from all primary schools in Tower Hamlets. Some of the children are home educated and others attend out of borough schools (mainly Hackney and Newham)
- Just under half of all participants are in family groups with 2 or more children from the same family doing the challenge together.
- Tower Hamlets is used in national publicity for the SRC as an example of good practice.

We keep records of all participating children and track their progress in the Challenge. We are very happy to share this information with schools so that teachers are aware of how their students have continued to engage with reading across the holidays. We also run a smaller Winter Reading Challenge in December.



3) Family Learning

Idea Store learning offers a range of FREE family learning courses for parents and children learning together. These take place on weekdays and at weekends. Examples of some of the current courses are:

Reading Stories with Your Child (5-7 years). This course teaches techniques to encourage parents and children to interact with each other whilst reading and use the story text as a basis for language learning, vocabulary boosting and literacy.

Creating Stories with your Child (5-7 years). Parents will create story boards and keep a simple record of the stories created together with their children.

4) One to one reading support

Idea Stores have Reading Buddies in all sites. These are volunteers, aged 14 and over who give one-to-one reading support to children (and sometimes their parents).

- Buddies can help build up a child's fluency by allowing them opportunities to read aloud without the pressure of peers being in the audience.
- Buddies help build self-esteem and reading skills by providing individual attention.

Although they are not formally 'reading buddies', who work throughout the year, our Summer Reading Challenge volunteers also give one-to-one reading support. Research on the SRC in Tower Hamlets, commissioned by The Reading Agency, indicated that children related especially well to the SRC volunteers as they were so close to them in age.



READING FOR PLEASURE – COMPLEMENTING SCHOOLS

Reading for pleasure gives children an advantage in school - even more than having well-educated parents in well-paid jobs. Idea Stores are very much about reading for pleasure – for adults as well as children.

Idea Stores complement schools and reinforce what children are learning in class. Children who use Idea Stores benefit from encountering books out of school and learn how to navigate a different reading environment. The reading experience in Idea Store adds a different dimension:

- Children are free to choose anything they want to read – from old favourites to something new and challenging. Children who choose the books they read usually read more books and spend more time reading
- There's no pressure to progress: children can read the same book over and over again, if that's what they want. They're the one in charge.
- It's absolutely fine to take risks. Children can take home up to 12 books at a time: if some of these turn out to be mistakes it doesn't matter..
- Displays are retail-style, deliberately designed to attract interest.
- There's an opportunity to read aloud – to a member of staff or a Reading Buddy, and reading experiences can be shared in one of our reading groups. Or children can choose to look at books themselves, for as long as they like.
- Children can aloud in groups (see programme) – or just read on their own or with a Reading Buddy.
- Idea Store staff support children in choosing their own books and give children strategies for comparing and contrasting books
- There are positive role models for children who will see a wide range of people engaging with reading. This includes Idea Store staff – nearly half of who are male - ; and older children. Children can see adults – including their own parents – reading and choosing books to take home.



IDEA STORE AND PRIMARY SCHOOLS

We offer:

Idea Store tours.

A one off visit, or a series of up to three visits, designed to show a class of children what their Idea Store has to offer them – and to whet their appetite for more.

Our aim is to encourage children to become regular independent visitors and for this reason we very much recommend that parents are invited to accompany their children where possible. With the support of parental engagement teams we have also organised parents-only tours.

Visits to school by Idea Store staff

We very much welcome the opportunity to come into school and talk about the benefits of reading to small groups of parents or at more formal parents' evenings. We will support any book fairs or similar activities.

Promotion of school events

Using plasma screens in Idea Stores will help promote any school event to a wider community.

Summer Reading Challenge

All Tower Hamlets children 4-11 are encouraged to participate in the Summer Reading Challenge. Idea Store staff plus an additional 150 plus secondary school Activists (volunteers recruited especially for the SRC) work throughout to ensure that children carry on reading across the summer holidays and maintain – and increase – their reading skills.

Idea Stores keep a record of the progress of all participating children which we can share with their teachers.

We would like to see:

Greater collaboration over the Summer Reading Challenge including:

- Inviting Idea Store staff into assemblies
- Endorsement of the SRC by heads
- Promotion of the SRC in school newsletters and websites.
- Celebration of SRC achievements of children

Schools promotion of the Idea Store children's programme

- agreeing to have physical copies on display
- Promotion of the programme in school newsletters and websites



Greater work with parental engagement teams

- Promoting the opportunities for out of class reading provided by Idea Stores
- Promoting the benefits of pre-school use of idea stores by families.

READ ON GET ON: the importance of partnership in encouraging reading well



All available research including, most recently, the Save the Children report: Read On, Get On points to the importance of out of school reading for children. These are the four key drivers of reading well identified in the report of the Read On Get On published in 2014:-

1. Celebrating the enjoyment of reading in all our communities – When children enjoy reading they are far more likely to learn to read well.
2. Support for very young children before they start school – In the critical early years of a child's life, what happens before he or she even sets foot inside a classroom can shape their life for ever.
3. The right support for schools – While thousands of headteachers, teachers and schools already make a huge difference, in order to achieve even more, they need support, resources and the right degree of autonomy.
4. Support for parents – While mothers and fathers can be the most important teachers and want the best for their children, some need more support and help.

Get On, Read On acknowledges that 'while schools are critical, they cannot achieve a national goal of all children reading well by 11 on their own'ⁱ Idea Stores in Tower Hamlets offer a different but complementary environment celebrating reading in the community and deliver on three out of four of these drivers.

ⁱ Save the Children, Read On, Get On: how reading can help children escape poverty. Published by Save the Children on behalf of the Read On, Get On campaign, September 2014. p 19