



Blue Sky Book Club Volunteering

We are currently recruiting for the 2022-2023 cohort of Blue Sky Book Club Volunteers!

The deadline for applications is Friday 6 May 2022.

What are The Story Museum's Blue Sky Book Clubs?

Blue Sky Book Clubs is a club for students with stories at its heart. Each term, a group of 10 students are selected to become a member of the Blue Sky Book Club. The Club Leader arrives with twelve suggestions for books, from which the students collaboratively choose two to focus on for the following six sessions. These books are then ordered through the Story Museum to be gifted to the students, one per student. The students read sections of the book each week in their own time, and come together as a group once a week to talk about the story, the characters and themes, and to do an unusual activity – it could be puzzles, riddles, craft or role play.

Why have Blue Sky Book Clubs?

Students need stories, but reading can be a dispiriting process especially when students know they are being assessed. Blue Sky Book Clubs is intended to put joy into reading, by focusing on the story and associated creative activities to aid understanding. Books are chosen with the help of the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education's excellent resource lists of quality literature, Book for Keeps' latest recommendations, Cheltenham Literature Festival's Reading Teachers Reading Pupils Programme, and The Story Museum's Collections Team who keep up to date with the latest great stories. Working in a small group of no more than 10, and working with trained volunteers outside of the school staff, releases inhibitions that may arise from the structure of the classroom environment and allows students to have their voices and opinions heard. Blue Sky Book Clubs have been run as Lunchbox Clubs for over 10 years by the Bookfeast team, working in over 30 schools, and evaluation data shows outstanding impact every year.

What is the structure?

Each school has 9 sessions a term including a choosing session, then 4 sessions on each book (2 books a term). A "session" is between 30 and 40 minutes long, and maybe during a lunch hour or maybe during lessons depending on the school's strategy and timetabling.

10 students come to the first session, the Choosing session, to collectively choose the 2 books they will read. Sessions 2, 3, 4 and 5 are spent on the first book, with targeted places to get to each week. Sessions 6, 7, 8 and 9 are spent on the second book. The next 2 terms, the cycle is repeated but with a group of 10 different children. So, each school will allow 30 students to benefit per year.

Participating students will get a "Dream Ticket" for the Museum to continue their journey through stories.

What will I have to do as a volunteer?

First, you will be sent 12 laminated Story Cards. Each card will introduce the new story, showing the front and back covers, and two selected pages which show the students the size and varieties of the font, the use of illustrations, and the accessibility of the language. Each student takes a card and talks about it to the rest of the group; the group then decides whether or not to put the book forward as a possible Lunchbox book. The groups then vote on the various books until they reach a decision on the final 2 books they as a group would like to read.

At the end of that session, you email the Learning Team the 2 chosen books for the school. These books are then be ordered, and you'll need to collect them (about 20 books – bring a big bag!). The Story Museum will provide you with session plans for the 4 sessions on each book but equally, there is some flexibility to run the sessions as you would prefer. You will be supervising the group of 10 and will therefore need the adequate positive behaviour management, enthusiasm and patience needed to command a group of students. Remember the students may also have been selected due to their low literacy levels which statistically correlates with lack of self-esteem, attention or poor behaviour in the classroom, so you will need to be a positive role model and presence to interact smoothly with these students, and be comfortable with potentially lively behaviour.

You will need to send a brief report on each session each week, but it should take no more than 2 minutes to fill in, unless you'd like to give extensive anecdotes, which we would more than welcome (it makes for a more interesting report for our generous funders to read!).

We are also interested in seeing how you, as a volunteer, find the experience of leading the Blue Sky Book Clubs sessions and whether it has any impact on you in your life and in the skills you gain. We may ask you from time to time to give us some brief feedback on your personal experience (not the children's – though we'll ask that too) and we would be very grateful if you could feed back to us.

What Skills do I need?

Essential

- The ability to commit to volunteering for the whole academic year, running 9 sessions a term for all 3 terms.
- Must be able to use private or public transport in and around the project's area.
- Must consent to and provide all relevant documentation for a DBS check.

Desirable

- Experience of working with or supporting young children.
- Enthusiasm, knowledge and passion for reading, and ideally some knowledge of children's books.
- Self-confidence and the ability to share their enthusiasm and motivate others.
- A sense of humour, patience and resourcefulness.
- Excellent communication skills, both speaking and listening.
- An ability to be organised and to keep effective written records.
- Basic IT skills such as use of the internet and email would be helpful.



What Skills will I gain?

- Knowledge and experience of working within students on a literacy project in Oxfordshire Primary Schools.
- Knowledge of contemporary children's books and their authors.
- Experience of volunteering within a network of other volunteers.
- Access to activities and shared interest groups within The Story Museum's volunteer programme.
- A reference at the end of the project, if desired.

What support will I get?

- Training sessions during the summer from the Learning Team to prepare for the year ahead.
- Resource packs for each book designed by The Story Museum's Learning Team.
- Visits during the academic year from the Learning Team to support.
- Ongoing support from the Volunteer Coordinator by email or phone contact.
- Shared resources from other Blue Sky Book Club leaders and The Story Museum.
- Full travel reimbursement.
- Your DBS check, organised by The Story Museum.

For more information, email volunteer@storymuseum.org.uk.