Bringing the Bible to life for every child in every primary school

How to get started

- Ask who has a heart for taking Bible stories into primary school and see what people can offer, the more the merrier. A good team size is six people but our records show the average team size is 12, which allows for people doing once a month, fortnightly or weekly fitting with their lifestyle. Ask them if they have the time to commit to the programme, given that it takes time to rehearse and present at school or make props.
- Approach the local primary school and build on any natural links – contact through the church leaders, school governor, midday supervisor or parent.
- Appoint a Team Leader and Deputy Team Leader, but preferably not from the same household please so that illness and holiday breaks are still covered.
- The team should be members of churches and can include part time school staff that belong to a church.
- Arrange DBS checks for each Storyteller through their church's Safeguarding Officer.
- We can provide you with information on how to get an Initial Training Day set up for either a group interested in or people considering forming a team from one or more churches.

How to get training

Our best practice is that you seek training from an approved trainer with Open the Book – please see our website for our current training. Our training sessions tend to come from the requests we receive (so they can be geographically haphazard). We may have a local volunteer trainer near you, but a national trainer could be a possibility too.

Ideally we need 12 or more people for a training event and if you are able to cover our travel costs it means we can use our valuable funding to continue to spread and promote Open the Book.

Where there is no trainer in the area or it's not cost effective for us to travel, it is possible that a training DVD can be sent for you to use. Someone in the group needs some facilitation skills. Get in touch and we will do our best to support your training needs. Email us at training@openthebook.net with more details so we can begin to look at how best to help you.

How to register your team

- Complete the Team Registration Form, **remembering that each team member should complete and sign their section so we can ensure data compliance.**
- Include the school details.
- Include the church details.
- Send the completed registration forms to us at Open the Book, Bible Society, Stonehill Green, Westlea, Swindon SN5 7DG, or email them to enquiries@openthebook.net.

Please allow 10-14 days for registration to be completed. Resources are only available once you are registered and can be ordered by telephone or online, with our distributor aiming to despatch orders within three working days.

Our Code of Practice

We ask all team leaders to discuss our Code of Practice with their team and that all Storytellers agree to…

- Stick to the script and present the story simply, without addition or improvisation following the guidelines in the Open the Book handbook
- Allow each story to speak for itself, as a Bible story, not as a sermon
- Liaise closely and sensitively with schools, and be mindful of the educational environment
- Make minimal demands on schools and be aware of being invited visitors
- Show respect and sensitivity to those of other faiths, and to those with none
- Fulfil the relevant safeguarding requirements
- Uphold the copyright of Open the Book material

Volunteer Storytellers should be accompanied by members of school staff during all storytelling sessions.

What to expect next

Open the Book will issue registration numbers for each team member, which will be sent to the Team Leader for them to pass on. These numbers will enable Storytellers to purchase the handbooks and merchandise, as well as additional online resources like DIY prop ideas on our website.

- We expect each Storyteller to have a copy of *The Lion Storyteller Bible* and handbook for the year you are working with.
- You or your church might also like to give a handbook to the head teacher and a *Lion Storyteller Bible* to the school as a gift.
- Most of all – have fun and remember that *when people engage with the Bible their lives can change for good.*

Safeguarding summary

We take our commitment to maintaining a safe environment for children seriously, and want to make sure our Storytellers are well-equipped and supported to deal with safeguarding issues.

Volunteer Storytellers are expected to adhere to our Safeguarding Policy, Code of Conduct and Code of Practice all of which are available in full on our website including some FAQ documents.

We require each church to ensure that their storytellers have been appropriately recruited and vetted as suitable for Open the Book work prior to the commencement of their role and should receive a clear DBS[1] check by their church with a clear audit trail.

[1] In England and Wales. Storytellers in the Isle of Man or Channel Islands should be cleared by their local safeguarding vetting authority.

Within each primary school a person will be responsible for safeguarding (often the head teacher). They are referred to as the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) in England or Designated Senior Person (DSP) in Wales.

Each Storyteller should know who this person is. Open the Book Team Leaders should be kept up to date by the school on their Safeguarding Policy and procedures and share this information with the team. The update should include:

- How to operate when on school premises as a storytelling team e.g. the agreed procedure to collect and rehearse children to be part of the assembly/act of collective worship
- The procedure for reporting any concerns about individual children
- The procedure for reporting any inappropriate behaviour of Storytellers
- The procedure for reporting an incident which happens outside of school premises
- And anything else the school's DSL /DSP feel is appropriate to protect all parties.

We will do all we can to promote good practice of behaviour around children through our written communication, training and follow-up workshops. Some dioceses, church organisations and Social Services will run Safeguarding courses or training days. Schools may also run these for their volunteers. We encourage all Storytellers to enquire about these and attend wherever possible.

Please go to our website for the full Safeguarding Policy, Code of Conduct, FAQs and role descriptions of Storyteller, Team Leader and Deputy Team Leader roles at openthebook.net or call our office team on 01793 418355.