

Great School Libraries

Every child deserves
a great library

The Great School Libraries campaign

End of phase 1 report



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Reflecting on the Great School Libraries campaign

Since its inception in May 2018 the committee behind the Great School Libraries campaign has been working tirelessly to push school libraries higher up the agenda for schools, and highlighting real world examples where this has been successful for pupils.

The work started in May, before the campaign was formally launched in September 2018. The primary focus of those early months was to work on the data gathering, and to introduce the campaign to those within the sector. Before this could happen funding had to be secured, and we are incredibly grateful to Peters and the Foyle Foundation for their support. The focus on data gathering was because it was one of the recommendations of the 'Beating Heart of the School' report from the 2014 Libraries All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG). As school libraries (staff or spaces) are not included in the schools census (and our request to have it included was denied) there's no definitive data on how many schools have school libraries, and many of those are staffed. The aim was to generate some insight into what this figure may be. BMG was appointed, having experience delivering similar projects with similar aims.

The results were a report (which you can download here: <https://www.greatschoolibraries.org.uk/news>) which indicated that 1 in 8 schools don't have a school library, and far fewer are staffed. It also indicated that schools with a higher proportion of pupils eligible for Free School Meals were

less likely to have a school library. Although the data collection provided some challenges, BMG took an active role to secure responses (rather than just being reliant on people filling out the survey) to ensure the results were as representative as possible. The report concluded with recommendations to the library sector, school leaders, and policymakers.

Following on from the launch of the report the campaign then focused attention around engagement of the sector by developing two specific threads of school library activity: Inquiry Learning and Health & Wellbeing. Case studies and reports of activities in these areas, as well as Reading and collating information and experience of Ofsted inspections (view them all here: <https://www.greatschoolibraries.org.uk/case-studies>). Planning was underway for an event with policymakers, however, by this point the campaign was in early 2020 and events unfurled in an unexpected way.

The reaction of school libraries to the pandemic was one of supporting their communities as necessary, and examples can be explored through the 'School Libraries through Lockdown/s' thread which collated stories from the sector (<https://www.greatschoolibraries.org.uk/school-libraries-during-lockdown>).

Work continued behind the scenes on various projects, and we are delighted to launch two toolkits for the sector, one on how to support

Health and Wellbeing, and one on Inquiry Learning. In addition, GSL has commissioned research on 'Understanding the Impact of Inquiry Learning', 'The Role of School Libraries in Pupil Wellbeing' and 'Understanding Senior Leaders' Understanding of and Attitudes towards School Libraries'.

In addition, the work of the Great School Library campaign inspired other sector organisations to take a lead on school libraries, with both the National Literacy Trust and BookTrust unveiling programmes and campaigns of their own.

The Great School Libraries campaign provided essential and unique information on the state of school libraries, and highlighted their vital importance particularly for the most disadvantaged children. It was a catalyst for action including the launch of The Waterstone's Children's Laureate Lifechanging Libraries campaign. There is an urgent need for new information and a continued push for the importance of school libraries in closing the gap between disadvantaged children and their peers.'
– Diana Gerald, CEO BookTrust

'It was good to see the Great School Libraries campaign moving forward on the recommendations of the Beating Heart of the School report. The campaign has helped develop understanding of school library provision and the disparity that exists in different areas of England, and the case studies are a useful resource for those looking for insight into what a school library can provide.'
– Jonathan Douglas,
the National Literacy Trust

What the Great School Libraries campaign has achieved over the past three years:

- Produced a report into the levels of school library provision which is still being referred to 3 years later
- Created a website which highlights the work of school library staff
- Collated and produced case studies which highlights the current work in school libraries
- Drew together school library workers and other interested parties through social media
- Inspired other organisations to focus on school libraries
- Commissioned research into school libraries

Quote from the Chair of the campaign, Caroline Roche:

I am proud to have led the campaign over the past few years, in collaboration with Alison Tarrant, the CEO of the School Library Association. Even through the pandemic the campaign team were busy collecting information that benefitted school librarians. You can see the results in this document, and we hope these resources will prove to be a tool to create positive change and influence conversations between school library staff and senior leaders. I am excited about the future, and how we take this Campaign forward.

RESEARCH

Understanding the impact of inquiry learning:

Literature review

Alex Dediu (Nottingham Trent University)

In 2011, Kyung Hee Kim carried out a study looking into creative scores of American students. With a large sample size of 272,599 participants from kindergarten to 12th grade students and adults, the study used the Torrance Tests of Cognitive Thinking, and its findings were akin to a wake-up call for many teachers and researchers across the country. Its findings suggested that, since 1990, creativity scores have decreased by a large margin, even if IQ scores have increased. Moreover, the biggest loss of creativity seems to take place for children in ages 5 to 8. Kim argues that the high stakes testing model has led to the gradual elimination of subjects such as arts, and it has left little room for critical or creative thinking. Consequently, he argues that teachers should shift their focus, and adopt a different approach, one that is focused on encouraging and developing imagination and critical thinking.

Other sources in the scientific literature have suggested that the existing models of education are not optimal at teaching pupils to deal with contemporary problems (Barron & Darling-Hammond, 2008; Perkins, 2010). As a consequence of such worries, school librarians, teachers and researchers have been trying to develop new approaches in education, and this has led to new kinds of teaching models: inquiry-based learning, project-based learning, problem-based learning. Such models, similar yet different from each other, move away

from the structured traditional learning methods, to an approach that focuses on the learners instead: inquiry-based learning is based on pupils' questions, curiosity and on open conversation, problem-based learning is based on pupils seeking solutions to real-world problems, and project-based learning is based on them working on certain problems in the long-term. Despite the differences between those, they all share important points of focus: giving the pupils more freedom and autonomy, developing creativity, curiosity, problem-solving, and critical thinking. This has led to some of these models being referred to interchangeably in the literature (Buchanan, Harlan, Bruce, Edwards, 2016).

Inquiry Based Learning (IBL), specifically, is a type of learning based on the encouragement of students' curiosity. It allows them to individually dictate the subjects and issues they want to investigate, to experiment and to learn in more natural, individualised ways. Rather than the teacher having complete control over the structure of learning, IBL is based on the student being inquisitive and asking questions. Inquiry-based teaching has been defined in the literature as "the art of developing challenging situations in which students are asked to observe and question phenomena; pose explanations of what they observe; devise and conduct experiments in which data are collected to support or contradict their theories; analyze data; draw conclusions from

experimental data; design and build models; or any combination of these.”

At the core of inquiry-based experiences is the student’s autonomy, which not only helps with the acquisition of knowledge and skills (Thomas, 2000), but it can also potentially lead to an increase in intrinsic motivation (Nooijen, 2017). Intrinsic motivation likely leads to increased interest, enjoyment, self-regulation, well-being, and to better academic outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Deci & Ryan, 2010; Deci & Ryan, 2017). Intrinsic motivation is also more consistently shown in the scientific literature to have a positive effect than extrinsic motivation (Areepattamannil, Freeman & Kilnger, 2011; Lemos & Verissimo, 2014; Gottfried, Marcoulides, Gottfried, Oliver, & Guerin, 2007).

With this information in mind, it is easy to imagine ways in which IBL is beneficial for a learner: while encouraging creativity and inquiry, it places more freedom on the student, also increasing their autonomy in learning, therefore their motivation, and hopefully engagement.

Supporting this idea, there is research suggesting multiple positive outcomes of IBL: academic outcomes, motivation, academic achievement, student satisfaction. For example, Chu 2009 compared students who experienced IBL to a control group of students who did not, and their findings showed higher grades in the IBL group, regardless of academic abilities. Zafra-Gomez, Roman-Martinez & Gomez-Miranda (2015) have used longitudinal data to assess the impact of IBL on outcomes and student satisfaction, and they concluded that students become more involved in the learning, and consequently gain increased knowledge, when they go through an IBL-based experience. Other studies have found benefits in motivation (Tuan, Chin, Tsai & Cheng 2005; Madden, 2011) and in positive attitudes towards learning (Gibson and Chase, 2002). Lastly, Saunders-Stewart et al. (2012) derived, from a literature review, a 23-item criterion-referenced inventory for IBL, having identified a wide range of potential benefits.

While there are certain gaps and limitations in the literature, they concluded a wide range of benefits of inquiry-based experiences, such as task commitment, self-efficacy, creativity, or the previously mentioned intrinsic motivation, development of knowledge, and positive attitudes on learning. Examples of limitations in the literature are the lack of empirically based support in metacognition, societal contributions and lifelong effects of inquiry, and mixed results for critical thinking. It has also been noted that there is a lack of qualitative research focused on the experience of students, especially in the models more focused on their autonomy (Buchanan, Harlan, Bruce, Edwards, 2016).

In short, inquiry-based learning places the focus on the students being inquisitive and active, rather than simply giving them information in a pre-structured and pre-defined way. This seems to lead to increased engagement, motivation and positive attitudes, which likely leads to better academic outcomes.

Despite this literature, however, there is not a definitive consensus on inquiry learning. It might seem like the benefits are conclusively and overwhelmingly positive, but IBL has also received criticism.

Sweller (2021) and Kirschner, Sweller & Clark, (2006) provide analyses based on cognitive psychology, arguing against the use of such educational models. Sweller (2021) claims that support for inquiry-based learning usually comes from those with “little familiarity with advances in our knowledge of human cognition”. It asserts that inquiry-based learning sounds good on paper, but it is no longer compatible with how we’ve come to understand human cognition in recent years. Sweller (2021) provides an overview and a cognitive-based analysis on learning: he argues using considerations in how memory works and what its limitations are, how novel information is acquired, cognitive load theory, and a good amount of empirical data. In short, Sweller argues on a few key points:

Firstly, the information that schools were invented to teach in the first place can be taught “slowly and with considerable effort” with inquiry-based approaches, or “easily” with direct instruction from teachers. It is argued that problem solving indeed leads to learning, but there are no benefits over simply having the information provided. Given limitations of capacity and duration in working memory, learning via problem solving is likely simply more difficult, without any benefits once the information is stored into the long-term memory. Secondly, there is recent evidence from correlational studies and from randomised, controlled trials, that the students who solved problems with minimised guidance, or who participated in IBL, actually had worse outcomes, in measures of problem-solving performance or in results of international tests. (Renkl, 2014; Jerrim, Oliver, Sims 2019).

With all the literature that’s available, it becomes apparent that inquiry-based learning, and other such approaches, are still a debated topic in psychology. Due to conflicting results and ideas in this area of research, it remains useful to further empirically assess the effects of IBL on students’ well-being and academic performance.

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RESEARCH

Understanding School Leaders' Understanding of and Attitudes Towards School Libraries

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Executive Summary

- In June 2021 the Great School Libraries campaign commissioned a student researcher to undertake some preliminary work to understand how school leadership teams understand the role of school libraries and librarians.
- A review of previous research indicates the importance of school libraries and the programs they offer in supporting children's attainment and reading behaviours, but has also shown that headteachers appear unaware of these benefits and what school libraries offer pupils.
- Over the Summer of 2021 a survey of school senior management teams was launched.
- The survey revealed that in schools where there was no school library, this was because school library space had to be repurposed for teaching due to lack of space elsewhere.
- School leaders reported quite 'traditional' views of what the primary function of libraries and librarians should be (e.g., lending books, managing stock, study space, provision of resources) rather than more active roles in curriculum delivery and skills teaching.
- Libraries were recognised as offering a 'safe space' to students, but most leaders' views indicated that this was not seen as a primary function of a school library.
- Most school leaders did not believe that children valued their school library.
- A follow up interview with a Deputy Head of a combined primary and secondary school illustrated how they saw and used the school library as a space for pupils, a means for promoting wider reading and engaging pupils, and underscored the need for a qualified librarian in these activities.

Background

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, there are no legal requirements for schools to have libraries. As a result, only 1 in 8 schools have libraries, and out of those 1 in 8 only 47.7% have a fully qualified librarian (BMG Research, 2019; Scott & Inskip, 2017). Although research has shown the usefulness of school libraries, especially for pupils who come from low income families (e.g. Gehner, 2010; Wood et al., 2020),

it seems that school senior managers may not fully understand the positive impact of school libraries; this may explain why in the last 10 years, there has been a decrease in the number of school libraries (Siu-Runyon, 2011), especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, (Samanta, 2020) where libraries have had to shut down due to lack of funds (Ifijeh & Yusuf, 2020).

School libraries have been shown to be linked to reading enjoyment, behaviour, and ability.

Research from the National Literacy Trust's Annual Literacy Survey (Clark and Teravainen-Goff, 2018) found that school library use was positively related to reading ability. They found that 63.2% children and young people said that they used their school libraries (a number that was lower than in 2016 as there was a decrease in libraries) and the main reason for this was to find interesting reading materials and because it was a friendly place. Literacy engagement was linked with library use; 73% of those who use the library had higher literacy engagement.

Not only are school libraries important for building/developing literacy skills but so are school librarians, who also play a significant role in helping students to develop their skills. Research from Scott and Inskip (2017) found that school librarians can help promote reading, and develop literacy skills in students, this was found to be extremely valuable by the library stakeholders. They found that qualified librarians were able to give better help and support than those who were not qualified; qualified school librarians were able to create relevant reading lists, summer reading programs and work with teachers which shows why students may work better with qualified librarians. This highlights the importance of libraries and librarians in supporting students, and can allow us to gain a greater understanding of how libraries can improve skills for the students.

The role of libraries and school librarians have proven to be important, however as there are no requirement for schools to have libraries; it is important to explore the understanding and views of headteachers towards school libraries. Research from Asselin (2021) investigated the effectiveness of school library programs and compared the teachers', librarians', and headteachers' perceptions of library programs. They looked into schools where there were more lower income and EAL families. They asked teachers, librarians and headteachers to fill out questionnaires and comment on the school library programs and services. They found that only a few headteachers provided

support in planning library programs, they would often allow a flexible library schedule to allow librarians to embed school libraries into the schools instructional programs. The budgets that should be used to fund school libraries are of varying amounts meaning that some libraries had many different facilities whilst others may not, indicating an inequity between school libraries between the schools in the district. The headteachers who did not provide support were likely to have inadequate staffing, with librarians hired who were not be able to support the curriculum.

An insight into how stakeholders of school libraries view library programs can help us to understand their attitudes towards school libraries. Research from Everhart, (2014) has found that most stakeholders were unaware of the programs and support offered by the school libraries, and raised awareness of how important libraries are and why there needs to be policies to ensure all schools have a library and a full time librarian. They presented the participants with a presentation of library research findings about school library programs and the impact it had on student learning. Participants found this information to have given them a new insight on how libraries work, and discussed that they will use the information learnt to spark conversations with their colleagues about the usefulness of school libraries.

Understanding how stakeholders view quality can help us to identify why some libraries may not attract many users. Al Musawi and Amer (2017) investigated this by focusing on different parts of the learning resource centre (LRC), these included the organisational, educational and technological sides of the LRC . They assessed results from specialists, principals, administrators, teachers and supervisors by conducting survey questionnaires. Al Musawi and Amer (2017) found that the stakeholders responses on service quality of the LRC was ow on internet speed, interactions and the staff's lack of qualifications. The responses for the following services were high, borrowing books, support for entire curriculum and traditional

and e-resources. This study shows that understanding perceptions of stakeholders on the quality of library services can allow others to see areas of improvement needed in libraries and LRCs this can improve the overall library experiences for users and create a better learning environment for them.

In conclusion, research has shown the importance of school libraries and the programs they offer, but has also shown that headteachers are unaware of these benefits and what school libraries offer for pupils in schools. As a consequence, a mixed methods study was designed with two parts: an initial survey of school senior management teams, to assess their understanding and perception of school library services, and follow up interviews intended to provide greater insights into the perceived benefits and issues related to investment in school library provision.

Method

The Survey

A questionnaire was created using Qualtrics, an online survey platform (www.qualtrics.com), and explored the extent to which respondents' schools had a school library and employed a school librarian, and how much they investing in library resources, as well as their attitudes to school libraries and what they saw the primary functions of a school librarian to be. The questions mostly used Likert scale response options, with some open text entry questions, for example "Why does your school not have a library, and do you see any benefits/drawbacks of not having a library? Please explain".

Respondents were provided with an online consent form and information sheet which they read and completed before they could start the main questionnaire. They were asked to provide a unique identifier code so that if they wished to remove their data at any point they could do so. After finishing the questionnaire participants were thanked, debriefed then provided with the researchers information if

they wished to contact us. Participants were also asked if they would be interested in taking part in an interview, and if they agreed a link was provided to a separate questionnaire where they were asked for their contact details so that this could be arranged.

Participants

Participants were recruited through social media platforms and group forums use opportunity sampling during the Summer of 2021. The survey was accessed 57 times but only 17 respondents consented to participate and completed the survey. One follow up interview was conducted. Of those who completed the survey, this included two heads, two deputy heads, three assistant headteachers, four teachers, one head of Sixth Form, one Library Media Specialist and one EYFS and KS1 Lead. Six respondents works within the Primary School phase, five worked at Secondary School level and two worked with Sixth Form students.

Survey Responses

Not all respondents answered the question 'Does your school have a school library. Of those that did, 10 said that they did and three said they did not. The three who did not have a school library all cited lack of space or need to repurpose classrooms as a reason why a library was not provided. For example:

"We did have one but it has been used as an additional room when we went into bubble as a result of COVID." [Head of Sixth Form]

The loss of a designated library space represents a threat to the need to promote engagement with books and reading, although other advantages were noted by this respondent:

"Not enough space for a library. Benefits are books are more evenly distributed around classrooms. Drawbacks: it's harder to promote reading for pleasure. There isn't a central

place to look for books. Money isn't invested in new books and promoting reading." [Primary School Teacher]

Pragmatic decisions were made in one instance where it was possible to exploit co-located public libraries:

"We closed the library to use the space as a classroom. We have a public/trust library next door to the school with gated access on school premises. We felt this facility is more beneficial to us as they update their stock regularly and we can't afford to. They have a large children's section and we can have access to topic/project/subject specific books without having to buy, store and upkeep them." [EYFS and KS1 Lead]

Of those who did have a library, all mentioned that there was someone responsible for it, with most (7) indicating that they employed a full or part time librarian, of whom only three were qualified librarians. Two schools used a class teacher, and another two used a teaching / learning assistant as the school librarian, and another respondent indicated that s/he did not know who was responsible. Respondents with school libraries were asked to indicate

whether a range of different programmes or services were offered by their school library and to rate their important where they were offered. The responses to this are summarised in Table 1 below.

The responses point to quite a traditional view of library provision, with the most important functions seen as lending books, running reading groups and providing quiet areas to read and study. There was a split opinion on online services, with half the schools with libraries not offering them, but those that did recognising their value. Wellbeing clubs, book awards and literacy skills sessions were also not often offered, but their value recognised where they were.

When asked to explain how they were investing in their school library each year, three school indicated that they were employing a trained librarian, four were creating a weekly timetable of programmes run by the library, two were creating a bigger space for the library, one was creating sessions on research skills and information literacy to pupils struggling with literacy skills, and five were investing to make the space a more engaging place to be.

Table 1: Summary of Responses to: "What are the current services and programs in your current school library? Please rate them."

Service	Not Offered	Not at all Important	Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Very Important	Extremely Important
Study Areas	2	0	0	0	6	1
Reading Areas	2	0	0	1	4	2
Online Services	5	0	0	1	3	0
Support for Academic Writing	6	0	1	2	0	0
Games Club	2	1	3	2	1	0
Wellbeing Club	4	0	2	0	3	0
Book Awards	4	0	0	3	2	0
Literacy / Reading Skills	4	0	0	1	3	1
Reading Groups	1	1	1	0	5	1
Borrowing Books	0	0	1	0	5	3
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 2: Summary of Responses to “Which of the following do you consider to be primary functions of a school library space?”

	Primary Function	Secondary Function	Not a Function	Not Sure
To curate appropriate reading material	12	0	0	0
To motivate children’s reading habits	11	1	0	0
To provide a book loan service	9	2	1	0
To enable children to find information	8	4	0	0
To enable independent learning opportunities	7	4	1	0
To introduce children to new genres	6	6	0	0
To support the delivery of the curriculum	5	6	1	0
To enable children’s critical literacy skills	4	7	0	1
To provide access to internet-based resources for their learning	2	10	0	0
To create a safe space for vulnerable children	1	8	3	1
To support children with their homework	1	9	2	0

All respondents were asked about what they considered to be the primary functions of a school library, from a list of options (see Table 2)

The responses indicated that libraries were seen as primarily there to curate reading material and motivate reading, alongside book

loan and supporting information finding. The most frequently listed secondary functions included access to internet-based resources and supporting children with their homework. Support with the curriculum and other aspects of teaching and learning were also seen as secondary activities. Perhaps surprisingly given other research, the senior managers in

Table 3: Summary of respondents’ attitudes towards school libraries.

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
School libraries are essential to student learning.	6	6	0	0	0
School library use is linked to student achievement.	7	4	1	0	0
School libraries are valued by children at my school.	4	4	1	3	0
The programmes run in my school library are very beneficial.	5	3	4	0	0
School libraries provide a safe space for children.	5	6	1	0	0
School libraries help vulnerable and disadvantaged children.	5	5	2	0	0

this survey did not see the provision of a safe space to vulnerable children as a key function of libraries.

When surveyed on their attitudes towards school libraries, the respondents were positive about the role and function of school libraries, although some doubted the extent to which they were valued by pupils (see Table 3). Similar to the previous question, we see that the statements linking school library use to learning and achievement attracted the strongest agreement, but that the programmes offered by school libraries were not always clearly valued.

With respect to school librarians, respondents were asked to indicate which of the activities listed in Table 4 were, in their view, the primary functions of a school librarian. Consistent with earlier responses regarding libraries, librarians were primarily seen in quite limited terms, organising and managing the library and its stock, and supporting pupils' choices of books. The development and organisation of programmes was seen as secondary activity and opinion was split with respect to support for excluded groups of learners.

Table 4: Summary of responses to “Which of the following do you consider to be the primary functions of a school librarian?”

	Primary Function	Secondary Function	Not a Function	Not Sure
Managing Stock	11	1	0	0
Keeping the library organised	11	1	0	0
Supporting reading choices and discovery	11	1	0	0
Managing and updating electronic resources	8	3	1	0
Promote the library through events, displays, talks	8	4	0	0
Support the curriculum	8	3	1	0
Delivering IL / Research skills	3	6	2	1
Organising events and programmes	3	8	1	0
Provide services to socially excluded groups	2	6	3	1
Work with other agencies / companies such as museums to develop services	2	8	1	1

Interview Summary

As noted earlier, one respondent was interviewed in detail to gain additional insights into the areas covered by the survey. The responses to the interview questions were organised into four themes: creating a space for students, encouraging wider reading, engaging with students, and the importance of having a librarian.

Creating a space for students

The school library was characterised as a space in the school that was very much for students, sitting within but somewhat outside the main activity of the school:

“The school library is open as a safe space before school for students to access, they can use it to complete homework, they can use it as a quiet space for reading or to speak to our librarian”

“We focus on particularly on social time and the importance of reading for pleasure”

The identification of the school library as space where reading for pleasure is promoted is in line with work by Rudkin and Wood (2019), which found that children who used their school library had better levels of reading for pleasure and reading confidence, compared to those who did not. They also tended to read a greater variety of text types. However, the representation of the library to the students was very traditional in nature, with the emphasis being on academic activity and support:

“We advertise it as a space for working and for support, but its also a library so students will go in to take part in book groups and challenges”

These activities provide students with services that are supportive of both their academic and social development, as the book clubs and challenges can help socially (Gao et al. 2018). Using the library as a work space can help

students to complete homework and do extra reading which they may not be able to do at home, as has been reported by other studies examining low income pupils' use of school libraries (Wood, et. al. 2020).

The respondent recognised that not all children will have engaged with a local library outside of school, and therefore need to be encouraged and supported to visit and use the school library so that library use can become part of their lifelong engagement with books:

“Not everybody knows how to access a school library and if you are walking past one in town you might not know what's there and what's in it. Whereas if its in your school and you have been taken to it, then it doesn't become a daunting space... it makes it something accessible later in life”

This deputy head aimed to make a library a familiar space for students so that in the future they will continue to use one, to build on their wider-reading, take part in challenges and/or use it for work. By introducing the students to the library whilst they are in school can open up many opportunities for them in the future outside the school.

These quotes show how the participant has tried to keep the library as a space primarily for the students, by organising challenges, book groups, support sessions, or just for work. Having the space for students to complete work, especially if they can't do so at home is vital as the library may be the only space where they can use a computer, use books or time to complete work. By having social aspect to the library can allow the students to enjoy hobbies like reading and to also allow students to feel more confident and comfortable within the school environment

Encouraging wider reading

“During form time we work with our year 8 students to do our accelerated reader programme that is run by our school librarian, this is to encourage wider reading in Year 8”

"We use it (the library) as part of our curriculum, every student in Year 7 in every subject will access the library at some point ... We are using it to encourage wider reading"

Using the library has been integrated with this school's curriculum so that every student in Year 7 will get to use the library at least once in the academic year. By including this in the curriculum it can help normalise and encourage the use of the library within the school, teaching the students how they can use it and what facilities/services they are able to access, this is an effective way to ensure that the students are able to use it as part of the curriculum at the minimum. This can open up more opportunities for the students.

"We are using it at different points of the year to engage students in pleasure reading and wider reading,... we have challenges for Year 6 and Year 7, sixth form book group and lower school book group"

"We focus on reading for pleasure.. It's incredibly valuable to have something that isn't necessarily measured, its about finding that perfect book for them that they can take away and engage with"

Again, we see reading for pleasure located as part of the business of the library – something promoted by the school, but characterised as sitting outside of normal assessed activity, although research has shown that some forms of reading for pleasure are linked to longer term academic outcomes (Torppa et al. 2020). And yet encouraging wide reading is characterised as something that has to be achieved by stealth in the school context:

"To me it is absolutely vital (to have access to a library). One of the things we have done as a school is we found a way to reach our students with books without then actually realising... We would encourage reading books and encourage people to bring books"

The interviewee also observed the need to engage parents as well as pupils with the school library:

"Engaging with parents, evenings where parents come in to find out what we do and how to access the library at home"

Engaging with parents and ensuring they know how access the library and what the library offers is important as then the parents are able to help their children and give them better support and remind/encourage the children that they can use the library and the facilities/services they offer. The use of library at home has proved to be important as the during COVID-19 school closures the only way pupils could access the library or the librarian was through Microsoft Teams or Show my Homework. Teaching parents about this means that when students are at home and do not have teacher support they are able to turn to their parents for help.

These quotes have shown that encouraging students to read is an important factor for the participant. It is something they dedicate to within their curriculum as well as extra-curriculum, this means that students have support in wider reading as well as library use. Engaging with parents alongside the students is also important so that they have support at home as well at school. The use of a librarian is also vital as they are able to provide the right literature and support for students. The librarian would engage with students through Microsoft Teams and Show my Homework so that students were able to get into contact with the librarian remotely if they needed support.

Engaging with students

The respondent gave several examples of how the library and librarian was used to engage the pupils more generally with support for their school work and related skills development:

"During COVID we weren't able to use it (library) as much... our librarian was using Show My Homework and Teams as a way of engaging with students"

"We work with our Year 8 students to do our Accelerated Reader programme"

The respondent highlighted that they work with different year groups closely, for example they have book groups and competitions dedicated to each year group/lower school/upper school. This means that they can create relevant programs for each age group, therefore increasing engagement with the students.

“We do a lot of study stuff and supporting with revision, learning skills”

In these ways, it can be seen that this school catered to other academic needs as well as extracurricular activities by helping students with their studies, revision and also to expand their skills. This can be beneficial for the students as they can get extra support outside the classroom to aid with their studies. The learning skills can be a sustainable approach to preparing students for exams later on in their academic life. (Dweck, Walton, Cohen & Geoffrey, 2014)

Importance of Having a Librarian

In this deputy head’s view, a librarian can not only create events for the students but can provide support for them with wider reading and learning skills. The participant explained that not only is a librarian important but having a fully qualified librarian is vital and it should be part of library services to have access to one.

“Having a qualified librarian is vital”

The respondent articulated importance of having a fully qualified librarian so that they can meet all the needs for the students in the school, as having the knowledge and appreciation of literature, ability to run events, and engage with the students is something that only a librarian with the proper training can do (Merga, 2019).

“Our advert is out and is asking for a fully qualified librarian... Understanding students and how they work and engaging with them alongside that, the knowledge of children’s literature and literature in general “

This is a school that understands the benefits of having a qualified school librarian servicing the needs of a school that covers a very broad age range. Having a librarian means that you have someone who is able to help students engage with wider reading as they have that knowledge in literature to do so. This builds on previous themes discussed above as it also highlights the importance of engaging with students and promoting wider reading.

Conclusions

The results from this report indicate that, from the modest sample who participated in this piece of work, senior school managers view the purpose and potential of school libraries in quite traditional, and perhaps limited ways, with the focus being on provision of resources. In the interview account of a single ‘all through’ school library provision, although a broader use of the school library and librarian was indicated, the focus was still somewhat curriculum driven, with the exception that promoting reading for pleasure was valued and seen as primarily the business of the library. It would seem that there is more scope for better integration of school library resource and school librarians in the work of school in order to maximise benefit to pupil development.

The fact that school libraries spaces were seen as expendable when school space was put under pressure in the three schools without a library also suggests that there is more work to be done in promoting and communicating the full breadth of activity that could be supported by a well-resourced school library, and the importance of protecting that space for pupils. The survey showed that there seemed to be some acceptance that school libraries offer a safe space for vulnerable students, but this was not a function seen as a priority for the library, although research has indicated that this aspect of school libraries will be critical for many students, and those from low income backgrounds in particular (Rudkin & Wood 2019; Wood et al., 2020). It is also worth noting that the survey indicated that senior managers

felt that the school library was not likely to be valued by students. Qualified librarians were also low in number in our sampled schools, even though research has indicated that qualified librarians give better quality support (Scott and Inskip, 2017).

Overall, we find that there is a need for greater awareness of the range of programmes and activities that qualified school librarians could offer that go beyond the traditional model of book lending and add significant value to pupil progress and school culture. The current focus on enhancing pupil outcomes through delivery of supplementary activity like Accelerated Reader or encouraging children to read for pleasure is unnecessarily narrow and in some cases assessment focussed. More work is needed to showcase best practice and alternative practices across school libraries and to evaluate how these activities contribute to pupil attainment and wellbeing, and staff development.

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RESEARCH

The Role of School Libraries in Pupil Wellbeing

Lauren James (Nottingham Trent University)

Executive Summary

The Great School Libraries campaign commissioned a research project over the summer to investigate the role that school libraries play in supporting the wellbeing of pupils. A review of existing literature revealed that

- wellbeing is positively associated with regular library usage for all age groups,
- there is a positive correlation between having a good provision of the library and pupil engagement in the library,
- disadvantaged children use the library more than their peers due to the safe space and resources provided,
- many disadvantaged pupils don't use their library due not having a library in their school or because it was poorly equipped, uninteresting or unwelcoming,
- children often do not see themselves represented in library resources and do not see it as a culturally safe space.

Ten interviews with school librarians in England were conducted to investigate the role of libraries in supporting pupil wellbeing. Key findings revealed that:

- libraries foster pupils' wellbeing through the provision of resources, roles and activities in a way that is discreet and can be selected by pupils without adult intervention,
- the relationship between the librarian and pupils is critical, with approachability of the librarian being key,
- the library acts as a safe and welcoming space for pupils,
- funding for library provision limits the ability of librarians to provide the support needed by pupils
- Librarians' held mixed views on whether pastoral support should be seen as part of their role.

Literature Review

Falling pupil wellbeing in the UK

The mental wellbeing of children and young people in the UK has been gradually declining since 1994 with many factors affecting the likelihood of a young person having a mental disorder, such as ethnicity, sexuality, physical health and social media use

(Sadler et al., 2018). It has been established that children's wellbeing decreases as they mature and as they progress throughout school which presents the importance of extra support during adolescent years (Løhre et al., 2010). Additionally, there has been a rise in the amount of mental health disorders in recent years, as shown in one study which found 1 in 8 young people aged five to nineteen had a mental disorder

with the majority of these being emotional disorders such as anxiety and depression (Sadler et al., 2018). The decrease in mental health and wellbeing for young people has showed how vital research into pupil wellbeing is to improving young people's immediate and future mental and emotional health.

With the effects of the numerous lockdowns occurring during 2020 -2021, children and adolescent's mental wellbeing was understandably predicted to decrease, and more anxiety, depression and post-traumatic symptoms were observed in young people (de Miranda & da Silva Athanasio, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic increased mental distress throughout the UK and being young or living with children had a strong influence on the amount mental distress increased 1 month into national lockdown (Pierce et al., 2020). One of the largest factors of a child's life which changed during lockdown was the lack of school routine, which could be seen to be a reason for the impact on pupil's mental wellbeing. A systematic review of 63 studies on loneliness and enforced isolation showed that loneliness correlated with future mental health struggles up to 9 years later and children that experienced enforced isolation were 5 times more likely to require mental health services (Loades et al., 2020). These statistics are evidence presenting the psychological effect the pandemic has had on children and adolescents and alongside the downward trend of young people's mental health.

Schooling and pupil wellbeing

One of the main influences in a young person's life is their school experience. The teacher plays a large role in children's wellbeing in school, as a correlation has been found between teacher likeability and school satisfaction (Løhre et al., 2010). Many teachers however feel as if they haven't had enough training to deal with a pupil's emotional health wellbeing (Kidger et al., 2010). Although pupils with better wellbeing perform better in school settings (McLennon & Steward, 2015),

there is often a compromise in wellbeing when it comes to academic achievement and the relationship between the two factors is complicated (Clarke, 2020). The social aspects of schooling are also impactful to students as one of their first and main social networks. Being in a lower ability class in primary school is associated with having a lower social status, affecting their wellbeing negatively. This has been found to be particularly true for minority ethnic children, causing a barrier between minority and majority ethnic pupils (McGillicuddy, 2021).

The importance of libraries in wellbeing

Wellbeing is found to be positively associated with regular library usage for all ages, as Fujiwara et al. (2015) found that library usage has been found to positively correlate with general health in adults. Academic libraries have been credited due to the financial, emotional and logistical support they provide students (Henrich, 2020). There is a noticeable correlation between areas in the UK which have the highest mental wellbeing scores and the highest likelihood of using a library. Greater London was found to be high in both fields whereas students from Yorkshire were found to have the lowest mental wellbeing scores and were least likely in the UK to use the school library (Clark & Teravainen-Goff, 2018a; Clark & Teravainen-Goff, 2018b). The correlation between these factors suggests the regular use of the library is an important factor in children's mental wellbeing, however it may be that the children that score higher on the wellbeing scores naturally gravitate towards the library as causation isn't implied. Academic wellbeing in pupils has often been shown to be higher when pupils are more likely to engage and use the library. Clark & Teravainen-Goff (2018b) found that 73% of children who use their school library facilities have higher literacy engagement scores when compared to children who do not use the school library.

Almost 4 percent of UK schools didn't have a library as of 2018 and many of the current

school libraries are understaffed and underfunded (Clark & Teravainen-Goff, 2018b). This is a prevalent issue as it can be assumed that funding and staff can add to the pupil's experience of the library and improve the resources within it. There has been found to be a positive correlation between having a good provision of the library and pupil engagement in the library (Gildersleeves, 2012). This shows that pupils are more likely to use the library if it is properly staffed, which could possibly be due to the relationship built between the librarian and their pupils. The National Literacy Trust (2017) found that 770,129 UK school children don't own a book and 1 in 8 disadvantaged children don't have a single book. The word "disadvantaged" here refers to being eligible for free school meals and male students and adolescents were most likely to report not having any books at home. This shows the importance of the resources the library provides, as many children and young people can't access those facilities at home. Additionally, this relates to reading ability as young people who own a book are 15 times more likely to read than young people who don't own a book (Clark & Teravainen-Goff, 2017)

The Library as a Safe Space

The library has often been labelled as a safe space or a refuge for children (Wittman & Fisher-Allison, 2020). Disadvantaged children have been demonstrated to use the library more than their peers due to the safe space and resources provided, however many disadvantaged pupils don't use their library due not having a library in their school or because it was poorly equipped, uninteresting or unwelcoming (Wood et al., 2020). This presents the importance of the library space on students who don't have the same financial resources as their peers.

Secondary school students generally see the library as a place where they can relax, read, study and enjoy quiet time both alone and with friends (Hughes et al., 2019). In a study where students drew their ideal

library spaces, common themes included comfort, peacefulness and feeling connected to the outside world through natural and technological links (Willis et al., 2019). Researchers stress the importance of having the library as a culturally safe space, where ethnic minority children feel respected and represented in the resources provided (Kirkland, 2021). This issue has been brought forward by Dupuis (2019) when she recalled that she felt "detached, disheartened and disconnected after reading a series of books about Indigenous peoples" and that the library "was not a culturally safe space". This research promotes a reassessment in the content provided in libraries as to ensure every student's wellbeing is maintained.

Library Facilities

There are many ways libraries support their pupils other than being a source of reading materials. Studies have found that librarians support their students through student engagement, running support groups for dyslexic readers and showing that books are socially acceptable (Merga, 2019). Many schools in Australia have taken modern routes into making the library a more engaging places for pupils. Henderson et al. (2020) found in Australia that dog-assisted reading programs improve reading confidence and competence and the social benefits affected not only the children in the program but positively affected the school community. Naidoo (2014) suggests incorporating cultural library programs into schooling to educate children on different cultures, whilst keeping a variety of updated inclusive material for all cultures that exclude harmful stereotypes.

Aims and Objectives

The current study was funded by Great School Libraries (GSL) to answer the research question of what the role of libraries in pupil wellbeing is. By adopting a qualitative approach it is possible to get detailed data on how school librarians perceive their role in pupil wellbeing and what they personally think the library does

to improve pupil's wellbeing. Another aim of the study was to understand who benefits most from the support from the library and why, from the librarian's perspective. Finally, communication between pastoral teams is another area which will be investigated during the interviews to understand how much of a pastoral role the librarian has in schools and whether the participants believe enough training is provided for them to handle pastoral concerns and situations.

Method

Design

The approach chosen for analysing the data was interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) Smith (2004, p. 43) describes IPA as "strongly idiographic" which allows the individual's personal experience to be investigated and to attempt to see how they make sense of the research question. Phenomenology allows an exploration of how the participants perceive the library's role in pupil wellbeing and aims to identify "the essential components of phenomena or experiences which make them unique or distinguishable from others" (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012, p. 362). The role of the researcher as an active participant is appropriate for the current study to allow conversations to arise about relevant phenomenon. The IPA approach was found to be the most suitable method of analysis due to the detailed exploration of an individual's perspective of their experiences with the researcher as an active participant in the investigation.

Data sources

Semi structured interviews were conducted. 10 female participants were acquired through volunteer sampling. All of the sample had to be employed as a librarian in a UK school, which also involved the participants being over the age of 18. To provide breadth of data and ease of recruitment of participants, there was no exclusion for any types of schools. This

meant data was collected from participants who worked in state, independent and public schools, as well as both primary and secondary schools. The interviews were 20-30 minutes in length and conducted via Microsoft Teams. Pseudonyms are used throughout the report in place of the names of the librarians who participated.

Analytic procedure

The analytical procedure in IPA includes familiarisation with the data, coding the data, detecting themes and then interpreting the data. Initially the recordings of the interviews were transcribed. The transcripts were coded in the three-step method involved in the IPA framework. The first step is descriptive coding where any descriptive data was identified. The data was then linguistically coded which involves identifying any language of importance, including metaphors, similes or repetition of words. The final step of the IPA is conceptually coding the data, where themes are identified in the data. Each recording was analysed using this approach. Themes were identified which were reoccurring in all or most of the transcripts.

Ethical considerations

A Participant Information Sheet was provided to the participants before the interviews to give an overview of the study and address what their involvement included. Participants were made aware that the study was part of a summer internship with NTU and that the findings may be made public, which consent was given. A consent form was signed by the participants and sent over via email. The interviews were conducted virtually via Microsoft Teams as to prevent the potential spread of COVID-19. The names of the participants were changed to pseudonyms during the transcription and any other identifying information such as the participant's place of employment were extracted from the data. The participants had a time period after the interview where they were able to withdraw their data from the study.

Table 1: Themes in the data

Superordinate Themes	Subordinate themes
Mental and emotional wellbeing support through the resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Programs and clubs in the library – Self-help for the pupils
Relationship with the pupils as the librarian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Approachability
Safe and welcoming space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The library as a refuge
The impact of funding on libraries	
The librarian’s role in pastoral support	

Findings

The themes identified across the interviews are presented in Table 1.

Mental and emotional wellbeing support through the resources

The theme of Mental and Emotional Wellbeing Support through the Library was found as a superordinate theme when analysing the data using IPA. This theme was vast as it covered several resources such as programs, clubs and books which were provided by the school library, so split into further subordinate themes.

Programs and clubs in the library

The subordinate theme of “Programs and Clubs in the Library” refers to the support offered through student-led or librarian-led programs or clubs which occurred within the library. Many of the participants talked about how the programs or clubs ran inside the library supported pupil’s wellbeing in different ways. Some of the libraries had reading groups or programs to help younger or less able students improve their reading skills or library mentor programs where a student helped with the running of the library. Other libraries ran more

informal groups inside the space, such as chess club and the variety of use in the library was a interesting theme that emerged.

Yasmine (lines 42-44)

“the reason that we run lots of different types of activities and events is to make sure that students who might not associate reading as, as a really positive thing will still associate the library with something really positive.”

Here Yasmine highlights how the activities and events ran in the library can make all of the children view the library positively. Clark and Teravainen-Goff (2020) found that 53% of children and young people enjoyed reading and 40.7% of children and young people thought reading was cool in 2019. These findings show many young people enjoy reading, but also present a large number of children who don’t enjoy reading. Yasmine notices this in her school and tries to cater for all of the children in the school, which may make the library seem like a welcoming inclusive space for those children who don’t enjoy reading.

Isla (lines 131-133)

“There’s a few kids with OCD and things like that, and and being in the library and working

behind the desk, and given that position of responsibility as well, has really, really helped, and we've had so many pupils in the past."

Isla shows how the program ran in her library includes children who experience mental health disorders. She makes the point of stating how it gives the children "that position of responsibility", which is an important attribute to children's development. Dweck and Reppucci (1973) found that children aged 10-11 who took less personal responsibility for the outcome of their actions had the largest decrease in performance. This shows that some level of responsibility is important to establish from a young age, as it leads to benefits for the child.

Hilda (lines 124-128)

"I would just set up like a mindfulness station and we've got activities and puzzles, anything like just to calm their mind and we've got breathing techniques and grounding techniques available for them to do so, that that it's just a walk-in thing really at the minute"

It is well known that mindfulness can improve adult's wellbeing and Hilda has incorporated the concept into the library through a mindfulness group. Previous studies have investigated the benefits of mindfulness in schools. Kuyken et al. (2013) found secondary school students who participated in the Mindfulness in Schools Programme reported lower stress, fewer symptoms of depression and a higher rate of wellbeing. With the increase in anxiety disorders in children (Sadler et al., 2018), mindfulness is more important than ever to implement in schools and the library is a neutral location which may not be as stressful to the pupils as a classroom would be. Hilda talks about getting the pupils to "calm their mind" and the quieter atmosphere in the library could help in this. The walk-in aspect of the group makes it more casual which could appeal to pupils more and can provide surface level support for young people.

Self-help for the pupils

The subordinate theme of "Self-help for the Pupils" describes the resources such as books which pupils can access independently that support their mental and emotional wellbeing. Most of the participants spoke about how pupils in their school came to library for support independently, in terms of the resources or actively helping themselves by being in the space.

Yasmine (lines 185-187)

"So that students don't have to come and show anybody what it is they're borrowing. They can just borrow the books with a little element of kind of privacy for that, so I think that's been really, really important in terms of changing physically how people use the library"

Here Yasmine states how her school library has a self-service system, which is used particularly for books regarding mental health. She notes the importance of confidentiality in this system and how this has changed the way people use the library. Lack of anonymity is a barrier for adolescents seeking help for mental health problems (Boyd et al., 2007), so this may make borrowing self-help books more difficult for students if they have to present the items they are borrowing to the librarian. The self-service system can be seen to make pupils feel more comfortable borrowing items from the library as there is anonymity and no risk of judgment from peers.

Eva (lines 151-152)

"I looked at the books on those lists and I liaised with our school counsellor and our head of pastoral Care and was able to buy nearly all of those Shelf Help books"

In this extract, Eva is talking about buying books which can support children's mental wellbeing. The Shelf Help book collection was released in February 2020 as part of the Reading Well scheme ran by The Reading Agency. The collection of 35 books is aimed at 13-18 year olds and is recommended by health professionals

and young people suffering with mental health issues (readingagency.org.uk, 2021). Eva also talks about the school counsellor's and head of pastoral care's role in the library and what they can do in terms of helping support the resources put into the library.

Audrey (lines 193-195)

"we have more accessible reading material for students who might sort of struggle to read in as just read. And so we've got. I don't know if you're familiar with the Barrington Stokes readers. They targeted it, dyslexia students, they're shorter, different font printed on slightly off-white paper"

Although most of the other participants mentioned self-help through books on mental health, Audrey talks about the material the library has which is targeted towards students who may be dyslexic or more reluctant to read. Barrington Stoke is an independent children's publisher who make easy-read books which are suitable for dyslexic children (barringtonstoke.co.uk, 2021). The content is high interest, low intensity and the books are aimed at a range of ages, from under 5's to young adults. Providing this content for struggling readers may encourage them to enter the library more and would make the library more inclusive for all abilities.

The Librarian's Relationship with the Pupils

The Librarian's Relationship with the Pupils was a superordinate theme, which was identified through IPA. It refers to the importance of the relationship between the librarian and the pupils for the pupil's wellbeing and what aspects help strengthen this relationship. This theme was broad, so it was separated into subordinate themes.

Approachability

Approachability is a subordinate theme which was drawn from the theme The Librarian's Relationship with the Pupils. It refers to the

importance of approachability in the librarian's role specifically for vulnerable students who need to access support.

Anna (lines 66-68)

"It's that approachability, because for some students in particular, members that whether they're a teacher, remember, support stuff is going to be that person who is their, their main support"

Here Anna views who a child would confide in as being whoever they personally felt was most approachable and that this can differ between pupils. This suggests that she thinks the personality of a staff member is more important in wellbeing support than their role in the school. Radford (1998) discovered that there were five categories that were vital in the choice to approach a librarian: 1) initiation, 2) availability, 3) familiarity, 4) proximity and 5) gender. The most common behaviour presenting that a librarian was approachable was eye contact which has also been found to be important in other studies such as Bonnet and McAlexander's 2013 study, where they found that female librarians who averted their gaze were less approachable than the male librarians who averted their gaze. This presents the importance of eye and body positioning to allow pupils to seek support and the possible gendered differences in approachability.

Natalie (lines 25-27)

"I'm not as intimidating as a member of staff, so you find yourself talking to the pupils and they invest a lot more into you than maybe they would necessarily talk to a teacher about, so I think it's, it's important to have a librarian"

A topic that came up under the theme of "Approachability" was the differentiation between a teacher and a librarian. Natalie comments on how a librarian is more approachable than a teacher due them being "not as intimidating", which differs from Anna's opinion that every member of staff has the opportunity to be the same level of approachability. The authority presented as a teacher in a classroom may be intimidating

for some pupils, which may make it more difficult for teachers to support pupil's wellbeing. Studies have demonstrated that teachers are important for ego support and conflict management (Frymier & Houser, 2000), however they may be less suited to other support due to the needed authority required in the role of a teacher.

Hilda (lines 69-72)

"...we use our first names in school as well ... and I think that is really, really great way to make us more approachable and it allows the space to be different from the rest of the school"

In this extract, Hilda perceives of the use of first names in the library as allowing "the space to be different from the rest of the school". The formality that surrounds the use of last names and proper titles may make the teacher figure seem more intimidating to pupils as suggested by Natalie. The informality of the first name of the librarian may make them appear more as a peer than a authority figure. McDowell and Westman (2005) explored the use of first name to address faculty members for undergraduate students and they discovered students rated faculty members who used their first names as warmer and more approachable than those who used their formal title. This can be applied to a school setting and shows how names and titles can affect the librarian's approachability.

Safe and Welcoming Space

One of the superordinate themes found in the analysis of the data is the library as a safe and welcoming space. This theme involved many aspects of the space and the people it could possibly support so was subsequently split into a subordinate theme.

The library as a refuge for all students

The subordinate theme of The Library as a Refuge refers to how vulnerable children access the library as a secure place of safety and was taken from the superordinate theme of The Library as a Safe and Welcoming Space.

All of participants spoke on the types of pupils which accessed the library and why.

Isla (lines 59-61)

"I would say that one of my main roles is to give the pupil somewhere safe to go and, and we've noticed that especially over the last 18 months, when I've not been allowed to have pupils in the library - when they were asked what they were looking forward to the most about coming out of the restrictions it was to come back into the library with so many of them just need that safe space"

In this extract, Isla talks about the effects the library closure during COVID-19 had on pupils.

Hoffman and Miller (2020) emphasise how the pandemic revealed the importance of a) schools in meeting children's non-academic needs and b) having the necessary funding to ensure children's needs are met in school. In the annual Child Protection Medical Examination (CPME), there was a 39% decrease in the amount of CPME referrals from 2018-2020 (Garstang et al.,). This heavily suggests child abuse was being hidden more than usual during COVID-19, which increases the importance of the school in pupil's wellbeing. As the library has previously been found to be a safe place for students (Wittman & Fisher-Allison, 2020), it is expected for vulnerable students to gravitate towards a place of safety.

Anna (lines 89-91)

"but we also, I would also say as well over the years that I've done this job at a larger number of like LGBTQ kids who perhaps feel vulnerable and need somewhere to be."

The increase of LGBT+ children entering to the library is apparent to Anna and she understands how they may feel vulnerable in their new identity. The amount of young people (16-24) who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual has increased to 6.6% in 2019 and compared to older age groups, young people are more likely to identify as LGBT+ (Office for National Statistics, May 2021). This increase in LGBT+ youth can be seen to be due to the

more acceptable social context regarding sexuality and gender, but there is still a higher risk of depression symptoms when relating to their heterosexual cisgender peers (Johnson, et al., 2019). These findings show how a safe space in the school is needed for them and some studies have noted the importance of the library for LGBT+ youth. Suggestions have emerged which include collecting LGBT+ resources and books, positioning the library as a safe space and creating a bully-free zone in the space (Oltmann, 2016). Anna's use of the word "perhaps" suggests she doesn't actually know how the pupils are feeling but is aware of the difficulties of identifying as a different sexuality or gender and can see how that struggle in school would lead to a safer non-judgmental space being necessary.

Talia (lines 266-268)

"You can see it's a library, but it's also it's almost like a almost it could verge on a on a living room, you know. Sort of, you know, uh, room at home."

In this extract, Talia presented a concept which some of the other participants also spoke on. She talks about how the design of the library and the physical space is important for pupil's wellbeing and how it could be seen as a "room at home". This link to homeliness in the library could be important for vulnerable children accessing the library, especially those who have difficult home lives. Pikulski et al. (2020) found that poor school connectedness (which involves a sense of belonging and safety in the school) was significantly associated with greater anxiety in children and school connectedness decreased as the age of the child increased. This shows why the feelings of homeliness and belonging in a school are directly important in children's mental health and why the physical space should be invested into.

The Impact of Funding on Libraries

The superordinate theme of the impact of funding on libraries refers to how the amount of funding put into library facilities has affected

the role of the library within in the school and consequentially pupil's wellbeing within it. All of the participants had opinions on funding for the library and participants who received more funding generally seemed to be happier in their libraries than those who perceived the department as being underfunded.

Isla (lines 314-316)

"But to give us the financial support to be able to do that because you know that the facilities that we offer are so important and we could do so much more if we had that, you know the fundamental backing and the money"

In this extract, Isla emphasises the role the government and council should in her opinion play in school libraries. She can see the potential the library has but possibly can't fulfil it as there isn't enough money for the resources she needs to improve the facilities. 1 in 8 school-age children who are eligible for free school meals do not own a single book (National Literacy Trust, 2017), which is why funding for resources is so important in libraries. The way Isla presents her extract shows how passionate she is about the topic of funding in libraries, with the repetition of the word "so". This implies that she feels that the library isn't reaching it's full potential and that the quality of the library and the support it offers the students is something personally valuable to her.

Anna (lines 357-359)

"...funding as well to, you know it's a student who's, who's been struggling a little bit has been asking me for that particular items which we don't have. We normally have been quite generously funded, but not this year"

In this extract, Anna highlights the impact of COVID-19 on the library. She mentions the decrease of funding over the last year and suggests how this impacts struggling pupils. In-between April 2020 and April 2021, the government borrowed almost £300 billion to help fight COVID-19 (King, 2021). Despite the government attempting to keep to their previous agreements such as the £2.2 billion increase in school funding for 2021/2022,

1500 schools are still at risk of financial hardship due to costs relating to COVID-19 such as additional cleaning costs, costs for extended opening of the school during the holidays and extra support needed for pupils (Julius, Hillary & Faulkner-Ellis, Dec 2020). This impact has been shown through Anna's extract as she specifies "not this year", so the library has become less of a priority in the school. This has had an effect on the resources available in the library and she can't provide the pupils with some of the resources they want.

Natalie (lines 295-297)

"the time and the lack of staff thing is a real issue and a real barrier to improving anything in terms of mental health."

Here Natalie doesn't directly mention the lack of funding in the library but implies it when referring to the lack of time and staff in the library. She suggests she's overworked as she has a lack of time and recognises that this makes it more difficult to focus on pupil's mental health when there are other duties. The annual cost of school staff is rising as there was an estimated £3.6 billion increase put towards teaching staff costs between 2015-16 and 2020-21 (NAO, 2021). The increase in teaching staff costs may mean schools have to cut staff in other areas, which may affect the likelihood of having library assistants in school libraries. This could contribute to the lack of time Natalie experiences as a librarian.

The Librarian's Role in Pastoral Support

The librarian's role in pastoral support is one of the superordinate themes identified in the data. Most of the participants had evident opinions on how much of a pastoral role the librarian should have in the school and these opinions differed between participants. All participants were questioned on the training they receive to help support the student's mental and emotional wellbeing and their opinions on it. The answers between participants varied quite significantly, with

there being a range in the amount of training received and opinions on whether it is their role to provide support. Some participants felt they had adequate training and didn't want to overstep, such as Rebecca who mentioned that providing official support "absolutely isn't [her] role". Other participants such as Eva would appreciate further training, saying how she "would love to develop [her] role" in the pastoral sector. The line between pastoral support and the role of the librarian seems to differ between schools and individuals.

Talia (lines 340-342)

"They do that, but I, it's almost like I'm at the front line and I notice things 'cause it 'cause 'cause [sic] they're there because they spend time in the library with me. So I might know I'll have more time to notice things like that"

Talia infers that the vulnerable students gravitate toward the school library in this extract as they spend time in the library with her. Talia presents herself as being on "the frontline" which means she has the initial pressure of identifying more serious issues in struggling children. This means having enough training is vital for identifying issues before the individual's mental health possibly decreases further. Shaper and Streatfield (2012) identified three approaches to the pastoral role as the librarian: "play it down", promote the social role of libraries within the school or focusing on the pastoral needs of individuals. They suggested librarian may take the third approach as a way of engaging with the pupils or if they personally decide that pastoral support is a needed area in the school. This could be an explanation for the librarians which want more of a role in pastoral support, or they may witness a good quality of support from the school and want to get involved due to the positive effects the support has on the pupils.

Lily (lines 160-161)

"it's more than just blocking the books in the library. We have the potential as well to be so much more in terms of supporting student's wellbeing."

Lily could be seen to be frustrated at the stereotype of a librarian as a being purely a guardian of the books in this extract. She may feel this due to the way the library is perceived as part of the school. Merga (2019) found that teacher librarians often felt as if their profession wasn't valued - staffing vulnerability, low administrator regard and understanding and the decline in the value of the profession over time were some of the themes that emerged in how valued the librarian felt. Lily wants to convey how important the role of a librarian is and presents how vital she sees the library in supporting in pupil's wellbeing.

Conclusion

The school library facilities were found to have an overwhelmingly positive effect on pupil's mental and emotional health. Through the process of IPA, five superordinate themes were found: mental and emotional wellbeing support through resources, the librarian's relationship with the pupils, the library as a safe and welcoming space, the librarian's role in pastoral support and the impact of funding on the library. A strength of the study was the breadth of participants as there was a range of viewpoints on aspects of the library such as the librarian's role in pastoral support. Every participant demonstrated a level of care for the pupils in their schools and all had the common interest of improving the pupil's mental and emotional wellbeing in their school.

The current study expanded upon previous research by probing for a more detailed understanding of the ways in which the school library supports pupil wellbeing. There were a few limitations to the current study. The first limitation is that the data was collected during the COVID-19 pandemic where library usage has been limited due to lockdowns and school closures. This limitation was addressed when deciding on the design of the study, but future studies would get a greater understanding of the role of school libraries without the effects of closures.

There are many possible implications of the findings of the current study. As English schools are not legally required to have a library within their institution, these findings can be used to present to schools and councils the importance of the space, staff and resources on pupils' mental and emotional wellbeing. Future research could focus on the role of libraries in pupil's wellbeing from their perspective, as although there is a fair amount of quantitative research, there are few qualitative interview-based studies from the pupil's perspective. This would allow for the elaboration of the current study's finding and would be interesting particularly to observe whether pupils would discuss the same topics as the librarians.

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Starting with Inquiry Learning Using FOSIL

Curated by Elizabeth Hutchinson,
Created by The FOSIL Group

Introduction

This toolkit will guide you through the inquiry learning process using a framework to support student learning. Starting with exploring the why, we will then step through the different inquiry stages before a brief discussion of inquiry design, and end by looking at the school library within an inquiry environment. Schools within the UK approach inquiry learning with a significant range of approaches, and this toolkit will lay out an approach to inquiry learning, whether for implementation in a school or for personal development or interest.

There are a range of Inquiry models available, such as Informed Learning (Australia) model, the Alberta (Canada) model and for primaries the Begin Action Tell (BAT) model, however, this toolkit will focus on FOSIL, which has largely been developed in the United Kingdom.

This toolkit has been created for all staff who work in school libraries, regardless of their designated title. The generic terms “librarian” and “library” have been used to denote any library staff and any school library, regardless of its size or services offered. It will also be useful for teaching and other support staff who work with students.

Throughout the toolkit, ‘student’ has been used to denote any child – your preference may be for student, or pupil or something else. There are no values attached to this term; inquiry learning can and does work equally well at primary school (under 11s) as at secondary.

Some definitions:

- Inquiry learning process – learning through the process of “connecting to personal interests and a desire to know, gaining background knowledge, asking questions that probe beyond simple fact gathering, investigating answers to gather evidence from multiple perspectives and sources, constructing new understandings and drawing conclusions with support from evidence, expressing the new ideas through a variety of formats, and reflecting metacognitively on both the process and the product of learning” (see *Inquiry as a learning stance and process* below)
- Inquiry design – the steps in designing an inquiry learning process (see above and also *FOSIL-based inquiry design* below)
- Information literacy - is the ability to think critically and make balanced judgements about any information we find and use. Full definition available here: https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.cilip.org.uk/resource/resmgr/cilip/information_professional_and_news/press_releases/2018_03_information_lit_definition/cilip_definition_doc_final_f.pdf

Why a focus on inquiry?

Firstly, inquiry is a fundamental human activity. It “is a stance of wonder and puzzlement that gives rise to a dynamic process of coming to

know and understand the world and ourselves in it as the basis for responsible participation in community” (1).

Secondly, inquiry-based learning serves the fundamental purpose of school “as a model for curriculum development, instructional design, teaching strategies and learning behaviours” (2) by helping students come to know and understand the world.

Thirdly, the school library exists as a learning centre because of inquiry (3), an evolution that has been underway since the 1960s (4), and inquiry, therefore, both aligns the library with the fundamental purpose of the school and is integral to this fundamental purpose. This is reflected in the *IFLA School Library Guidelines* (5), which frame teaching and learning through inquiry as a core activity within the library's offering.

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Inquiry and information literacy

There is a close relationship between inquiry-based learning and information literacy. Inquiry-based learning comprises a range of open-ended, learner-centred approaches to teaching and learning driven by students undertaking research and inquiry. In order to

be effective inquirers, students must have well-developed information literacy capabilities¹ in order to interact with the knowledge-base of their subject. Research has shown that appropriate support to develop process skills for inquiry is essential to the success of this constructivist pedagogical approach.²

For many years, information literacy has been a feature of school librarians' work with school students. As described in CILIP's **2018 definition**, information literacy enhances and enriches taught subjects in the school curriculum, being embedded as a contribution to critical thinking and knowledge development. It therefore has particular relevance for students involved in inquiry-based learning, underpinning several elements of the inquiry cycle. There are many opportunities for school librarians and teachers to embed information literacy into the curriculum, not just to support learning but to equip students with critical thinking and lifelong learning abilities. Librarians who can confidently discuss both inquiry-based pedagogies and information literacy with education professionals can have demonstrable impact on the success of inquiry based learning.

Information literacy provides the intellectual and cognitive know-how to help transform information into knowledge through the application of discernment and reasoning. As such, it provides indispensable tools to support students' capacity to learn and make sense of the world. In inquiry learning the qualities of the inquirers determine the metacognitive, cognitive, social, emotional, and cultural

1 For a detailed examination of how IL and IBL relate to each other see McKinney, Pamela (2018) *Facets of Inquiry-based Learning: the role of Information Literacy, collaboration and reflection in the support and development of inquiry-based pedagogies in Higher Education*. PhD thesis, University of Sheffield. Available at: <https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/22840/>

2 Levy, P. Lamer, P. McKinney, P. Ford, N. (2011) *The pathway to inquiry Based Science Teaching: D2.1 The Features of Inquiry Learning: theory, research and practice*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3kY7DXV>

skills that are needed for them to develop deep understandings of the information they encounter and form their own opinions, interpretations, and conclusions.

Inquiry as a learning stance and process

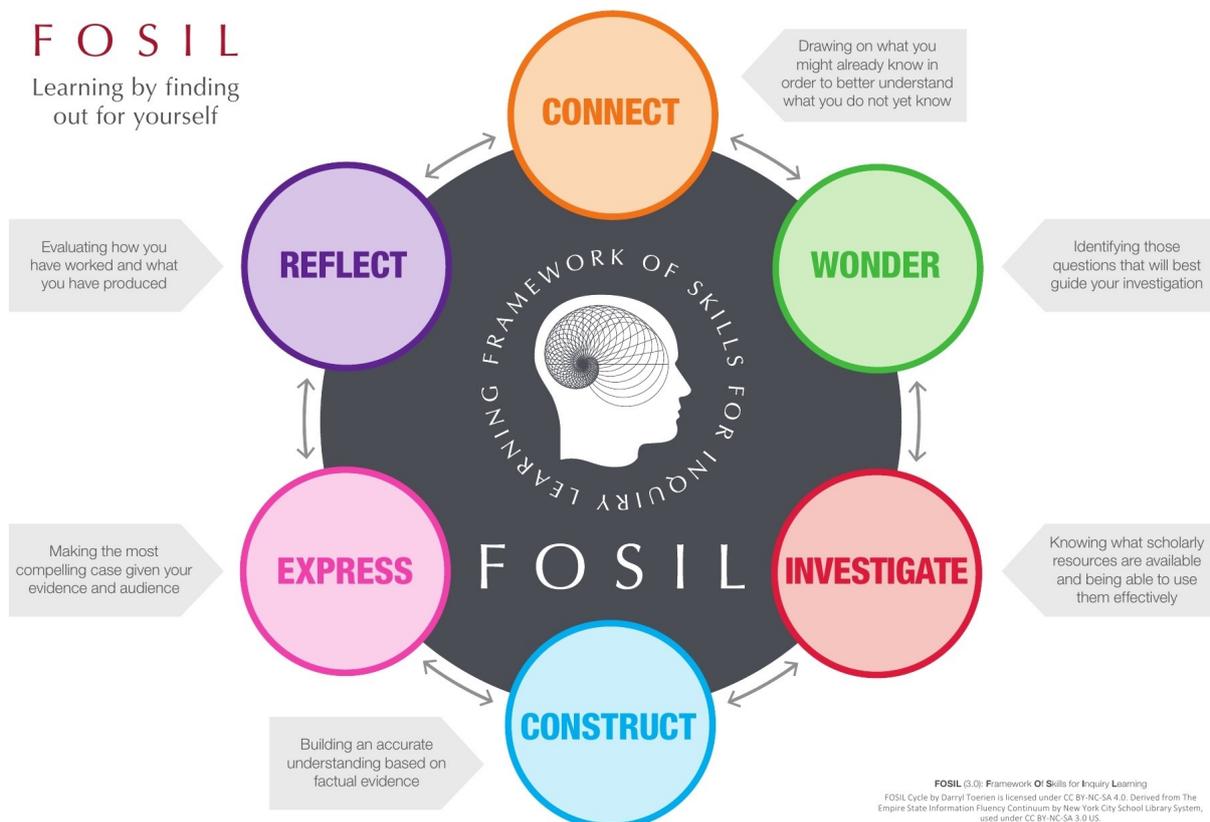
As a learning process that engages the student fully *as an inquirer* – cognitively, emotionally, socially and culturally – inquiry is characterised by students “connecting to personal interests and a desire to know, gaining background knowledge, asking questions that probe beyond simple fact gathering, investigating answers to gather evidence from multiple perspectives and sources, constructing new understandings and drawing conclusions with support from evidence, expressing the new ideas through a variety of formats, and reflecting metacognitively on both the process and the product of learning” (1).

The FOSIL Inquiry Cycle

The **Framework Of Skills for Inquiry Learning** (2) was adapted by Darryl Toerien from the **Empire State Information Fluency Continuum** (3), and is licenced under **CC BY-NC-SA 4.0**. FOSIL is, therefore, a sound instructional model of the inquiry learning process (4). Because this learning process emerges from a stance, or ingrained attitude of wonder and puzzlement, FOSIL is also a mindset, *the conviction that effective learning is learning by finding out for yourself*. As this learning process is enabled by skills, FOSIL is also a **skill set**; because the skills that constitute this skill set need to be developed systematically and progressively, FOSIL is also a **tool set** for doing so. Finally, because FOSIL is a collaborative inquiry into the nature and practice of inquiry learning, FOSIL is also a growing international **community of inquiry**.

Although the inquiry process begins with the **Connect** stage and proceeds logically through

Figure 1



Wonder, Investigate, Construct, Express, and Reflect, as a dynamic learning process it is cyclical and recursive rather than linear. Furthermore, while a full inquiry will include all 6 stages, inquiry-based lessons may focus on one or more individual stages, paying particular attention the skill sets and skills that underpin those stages. Finally, the instructional use of colour, while not always practical, further helps students to navigate the inquiry learning process.

Stages in the FOSIL Inquiry Cycle

CONNECT
Drawing on what you might already know to better understand what you do not yet know

Connect and **Wonder** are often overlooked, but distinguishing what you know from what you don't makes a huge difference at the start of the inquiry process. Less confident students can feel overwhelmed because they don't know where to start, while more confident students may be tempted to leap straight to **Express** without spending any time in **Investigate** because they think they know all the answers already.

Students can cultivate an inquiry stance – an ingrained attitude of wonder and puzzlement – by developing an awareness of themselves, their multi-faceted identities, and their personal interests and prior knowledge. Then students can be guided to use those strengths and interests as a starting point for further exploration on their own.

Consider:

- A 'brainstorming' or 'mindmapping' session at the start of an inquiry
- Asking students to find definitions for key terms in the statement of inquiry
- Enabling students to use their own interests and personal curiosities as motivation for pursuing inquiry

- Allowing for a period of preliminary investigation for longer more open inquiries before asking students to narrow their focus

WONDER
Identifying those questions that will best guide your investigation

The second stage in the FOSIL Inquiry Cycle, **Wonder** is often skipped on by educators who know what question they want students to answer, but have not grasped how important the questioning stage is if students are to take ownership of the inquiry for themselves. Even if your inquiry has a single, overarching teacher-defined question (and some may not), an important part of engaging with the process is to help students to break that question down into a series of smaller questions that they understand how to go about looking for answers to. This is usually the point where students feel optimistic and excited, so careful work here will sustain them through **Investigate** where they should initially expect to feel somewhat confused and frustrated.

Students can nurture an inquiry stance when they are encouraged to follow up on their own curiosities and are guided to develop questions that fill gaps in their own knowledge and that matter to them.

Consider:

- Creating a list of questions thrown up by the original statement of inquiry together
- If working in groups, dividing responsibility for answering various sub-questions among team members
- Teaching students to develop deeper questions by asking "What if?" "Why?" and "So what?"
- Where students are coming up with their own inquiry question, helping them to generate questions that fit assessment

criteria. It is important to explore lines of inquiry at this stage, but for more open inquiries the precise wording of the final question is only likely to emerge at some point between **Investigate** and **Construct**.

INVESTIGATE
Knowing what scholarly resources are available and being able to use them effectively

This is the stage people often identify as 'research'. The focus should be on finding relevant, age-appropriate and authoritative resources, and gathering information in response to the broad inquiry question. This stage will often throw up new questions as students start to **Construct** a deeper understanding of their topic and should be characterised by a movement from "confusion, frustration and doubt" towards "clarity, direction and confidence" (5). Students are likely to need help to persevere in the initial stages.

It is vital to consider resourcing in inquiry design, and teacher / librarian collaboration has traditionally centred on this stage. A major source of frustration for students, which pushes them towards unreliable resources and to copy-and-paste answers they do not understand, is a (perceived or real) lack of suitable and readily available resources.

Students can become confident and motivated to pursue their investigations (and, in fact, future learning) when they are taught social and emotional competencies along with the cognitive skills of inquiry. Students can begin to recognize, respect, and empathize with the diverse perspectives, opinions, and cultures that surround them, both within school and in the larger world. In that process of discovery, students clarify their own perspectives and develop confidence in their own ability to learn.

Consider:

- Having a quick go at the inquiry from a student's perspective well before it starts,

to check that suitable resources are available and accessible

- Collaborating as a teacher / librarian instructional team before the inquiry begins to address resourcing, discuss who will teach the students how to access subject specific resources, both print and online, and discuss who will teach them how to identify a reliable source, particularly online – California State University's CRAAP protocol (readily available online – see also **Featured Investigate Resources** on the FOSIL Group website) or SIFT (Stop, Investigate the source, Find better coverage, Trace the original) <https://guides.lib.wayne.edu/sift> can be a very useful starting point
- Giving the class an age-appropriate Investigative Journal (see **Featured Investigate Resources**) to encourage them to think about how they are planning to use the information they gather and to record their sources
- Teaching students to reflect on and assess their own learning throughout their investigation and enabling them to backtrack and ask new questions when their investigation leads them in new directions

CONSTRUCT
Building an accurate understanding based on factual evidence

Construct is the critical stage during which information is transformed into knowledge. It is skipping or spending insufficient time on this stage and moving straight from **Investigate** to **Express** that leads to copy-and-paste answers that do nothing to advance students' understanding of a topic.

Copy-and-paste 'research' where students produce a record of facts that they may not understand and will likely not remember is a key sign that the Construct phase has been

missed. This is common where the focus is on the product and not the learning experience.

When students are taught to form their own opinions and conclusions based on the evidence they have found, students learn that their thinking matters. They begin to take responsibility for the validity of their ideas and are motivated to share their expertise with others. The **Construct** stage leads students to develop agency and empowers them to take an inquiry stance and pursue further learning on their own.

Consider:

- Teaching students the skills of forming opinions, drawing conclusions, and making claims
- Not telling students what their product will be until after the **Construct** stage. This isn't always appropriate but can be effective in moving the emphasis from product to understanding.
- Giving students a scaffolding tool appropriate for your assessment criteria to help them to integrate all the information they have found to build a new understanding (see **the Construct resources** on the FOSIL Group Resources page)

EXPRESS

Making the most compelling case given your evidence and audience

Students are often tempted to start creating a product before they fully understand the case they are making. Once the case has been understood, they need to think carefully about the target audience and the most appropriate and effective way to present their case. This is also the point at which all sources used should be carefully referenced in an age-appropriate manner.

Clarity about what is required from **Express** is critical, because both product and process come under close scrutiny in the **Reflect** stage.

Teaching students to share their new understandings effectively with their peers and other audiences incorporates the social and emotional competencies of self-confidence, agency, self-management, organization, and assessing the needs and interests of different audiences. The **Express** stage is when students develop their own voice and the motivation to share their voice with others.

Consider:

- Enabling students to be creative in their expression products and to decide the most appropriate formats based on their own expertise and the needs of the audience
- Providing students with a marking rubric so that they can pre-assess their own work and make improvements before handing it in, which should include some credit for using relevant, age-appropriate and authoritative resources and referencing appropriately
- Giving students opportunities to pre-assess each other's work and give constructive criticism, allowing time for improvement before work is handed in

REFLECT

Evaluating how you have worked and what you have produced

Although reflection and metacognition are encouraged at all points in the Cycle, reflection is particularly important at the end of an inquiry, both before the product is submitted for feedback (to make sure that everything that was required has been done while there is still time to make adjustments) and also after feedback has been received (to give students the opportunity to consider what they have learnt, both about the subject material and

the inquiry process, and what they may do differently next time).

The [Reflect](#) stage at the end of an inquiry experience becomes valuable and robust when it leads students directly into an inquiry stance and a growth mindset. During [Reflect](#), students are not only given the opportunity to assess their successes and challenges in both final product and inquiry process, but also the encouragement to think about what new questions they have and what they want to learn about next. They are motivated to follow their own sense of wonder and empowered to learn on their own.

Consider:

- Providing a brief reflection sheet inviting them to reflect on each stage of the process or to suggest what they would do differently next time
- Inviting them to comment on their finished product. Are they proud of what they achieved? Why/ why not? Do they understand why they got their mark? What would they do differently next time?
- Encouraging students to revisit reflections from a previous inquiry just before the start of the next
- Encouraging students to capture their new questions in a Wonder journal and pursue those questions whenever they wish

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FOSIL-based inquiry design

Inquiry is a stance of wonder and puzzlement that gives rise to a dynamic process of coming to know and understand the world and ourselves in it as the basis for responsible participation in community. This is a fundamental human activity, and leading students ever deeper into this activity is the fundamental purpose of school, which requires effective collaboration between classroom-based teachers and library staff.

In school, inquiry is, more often than not, relegated to extracurricular learning, for example standalone projects like the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) or the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme Extended Essay (EE). Important as these learning opportunities are, the full benefit to students of inquiry is to be found in directing this stance and process towards curricular, or subject area, learning, because the skills that undergird inquiry need to be developed systematically and progressively over the course of a student's time in school and from all of the perspectives that their subject areas provide.

Coming to know and understand the world and ourselves in it depends on information, some of which comes to us from our own experience of the world, but most of which comes to us from information about the world that has been recorded, and which is contained in, but is not limited to, the library's collections. This is important for us to bear in mind as we turn our attention to designing inquiries for curricular learning, because the librarian's expertise lies *not only* in the sourcing of the information necessary for coming to know and understand, *but also* in the learning process of coming to know and understand from that information. Julian Astle and Laura Partridge (2018, p. 10), in describing an education for enlightenment, eloquently and powerfully capture this

movement from information to knowledge and understanding as “inducting our children into the great conversation of mankind – the unending dialogue between the living, the dead and the yet-to-be-born ... introducing them to the best that has been thought, said and done, and equipping them to appreciate it, interrogate it, apply it and build on it”.

Because many of us will be new to the process of designing an inquiry for curricular learning, we have, below, stepped through the process of designing an inquiry for two different scenarios: one in which severe time constraints limit the inquiry to a single source under discussion, and one in which more generous time constraints extend the inquiry beyond the source under discussion.

When designing an inquiry for curricular learning, it is essential to establish a conceptual frame at the beginning in order to focus on the core ideas that will shape the instructional design. An inquiry frame introduces the major concept(s) to students and, at the same time, opens the possibilities for student-driven inquiry guided by that frame. A valuable inquiry frame is an essential question, and while essential questions are impossible to answer definitively, they nevertheless provide necessary direction, boundaries, and inspiration for inquiry investigations.

Given that science fiction could be considered to be the literature that speaks most cogently to our time and our condition, we have chosen the increasingly literal question of *what it means to be human* as our essential question, which does not ignore the timelessness of this concern. The source article is **Rise of the cyborgs: Inside the technology transcending humanity’s biological limits** (Hayley Bennett, 2021.067.02), which is free to read at *Science Focus: The Home of BBC Science Focus Magazine* (<https://bit.ly/3DICMeG>).

Further framing that ensures that students remain focused on the content that is most

important for specific curriculum objectives is defining a curriculum lens. The librarian is uniquely positioned to contribute to this, because from the perspective of developing the library’s collections to support and extend the curriculum, the librarian has a specialist overview of how the overlapping branches of subject area knowledge cohere into the magnificent tree of recorded human knowledge - an overview that is necessary for the curriculum lens and essential question to be authentic and engaging.

Possible curriculum lenses for this essential question (Figure 2) (download a larger version from: <https://fossil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/The-Day-Curriculum-Lenses.png>):

Having decided on the curriculum lens through which to view the essential question, there are important instructional considerations that will influence the instructional activities of each stage in the inquiry, as well its overall design.

Instructional design considerations and possible instructional activities for this essential question are shown in Figure 3.

Download this diagram separately here: <https://fossil.org.uk/fossil-cycle/#:~:text=Inquiry%20is%20an%20approach%20to,support%20students%20engaged%20in%20inquiry>.

Because “libraries are where most forms of inquiry, not just academic ones, begin... either by design or learners’ needs...and the librarian is responsible for energizing and maintaining the inquiry process” (IBO, 2018, p. 9), considering the library’s broader role in inquiry, or the library *as* inquiry, is both important and helpful.

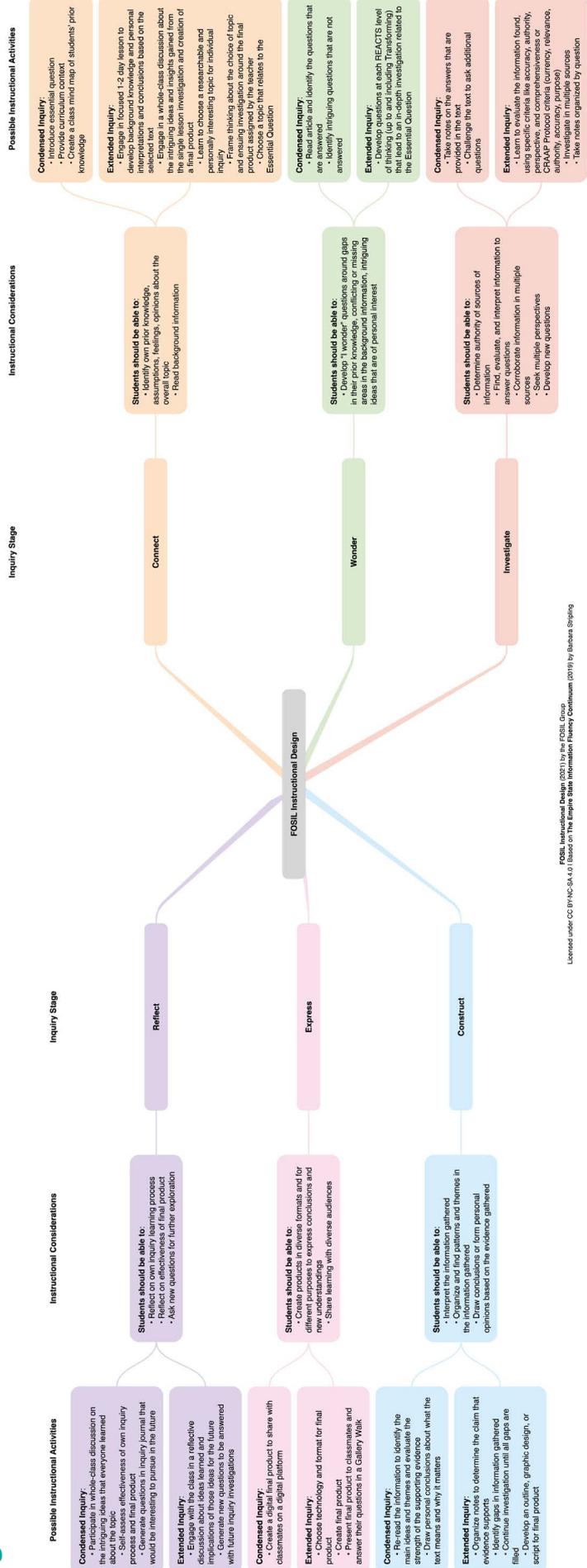
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Figure 2



Figure 3



The school library as inquiry

The school library is a concept that is larger than the sum of its parts. The components of space, climate, resources, instructional program, and policies / procedures have traditionally worked together to define the role of the library in supporting the teaching and learning life of the school.

But the school library world is changing. With the increasing emphasis on inquiry in international standards and guidelines for school libraries, librarians are recognizing that they have the power and responsibility to adopt the mindset of an inquiry stance and, as a result, to transform the role of the library from sideline support to becoming a centre of inquiry for the whole school.

Re-imagining a library through an inquiry stance means asking questions and evaluating every aspect of the library: How does this / could this program component contribute to the students' ability and motivation to engage in inquiry? How does this / could this enable teachers to incorporate inquiry into their classrooms? How does this / could this bring the joy of inquiry to the school?

Often, the answers to these questions involve simple, low-effort, low-risk changes in the library, but the cumulative effect will be an evolution to a library that fosters inquiry-based teaching and learning. The following are a few examples of questions a librarian might ask to enable moving the library toward an inquiry stance.

Space. Does the arrangement of the shelving and furniture allow students to work individually, in small groups, or as an entire class receiving instruction on inquiry skills? Is the arrangement flexible enough that students can change it to accommodate their current learning needs? Does the organization of the resources invite students to browse, find the best resources to support their investigations, and discover new ideas for exploration? Is there a makerspace – a space in which students are provided with resources, such

as LEGO or 3D printers, for making things – or writing centre to encourage creativity and design thinking?

Environment. Does the library environment invite students to interact with others and collaborate on projects and also to work alone and engage in quiet reflection? Is there a Wonder Wall – a display board that records student questions, which personalise and energise inquiry – or some other opportunity for students to share their curiosities or be intrigued by the wonderings of others? Are students given opportunities to share their learning products with others? Is the environment safe, friendly, and joyful?

Resources. Do the print resources offer access to appropriate, current information that supports both the academic and personal learning needs of all students? The inclusion of information resources is vital. Do the resources enable students to pursue diverse points of view, different cultural perspectives, in-depth as well as overview information, primary and secondary sources, and social and emotional growth? Are database and web-based sources readily accessible? Are resources made available in a variety of formats, including video, audio, and graphic nonfiction?

Planning learning. Have the librarian and classroom teachers collaborated to identify priority inquiry skills and design a coherent instructional program to teach those skills? Does the teaching of and expectation for students to use inquiry skills permeate all aspects of the library program (e.g., during inquiry-based instructional units, as a part of story hour, in library contests and special activities like Question of the Week)?

Policies and Procedures. Does the collection development policy – a statement that defines the purpose, scope, and contents of the collection, available both in and through the library, and that helps to ensure a wide range of high quality resources that meet the perceived and actual need of the whole school community – support acquisition of

resources that promote intellectual freedom? Does the library have a schedule that is flexible enough to accommodate collaboration between the librarian and classroom teachers and time for in-depth inquiry investigations? Do policies about talking/activity in the library, checking out books, using technology, and accessing online resources foster the creative and productive energy required by student inquiry? Do the policies and procedures of the library create a safe and nurturing environment?

A library that fosters an inquiry stance in teachers and students is not created overnight.

Librarians can follow the inquiry process themselves to move their library programs toward inquiry by assessing the library's current state, asking important questions, developing new approaches to different aspects of their program, reflecting on the impact, and then asking new questions. As the library becomes a learning center of inquiry for the school, the students, teachers, and school management will strengthen their commitment to and passion for inquiry and adopt an inquiry stance in their academic and personal information-to-knowledge journeys.

School Libraries – Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing

Barbara Band

If you were to ask the general public what school librarians do, the majority are likely to give a response that encompasses books and reading; something along the lines of supporting literacy, getting the right book to the right student at the right time, guidance on what to read next, and providing a diverse and wide range of reading material. Some may mention teaching and learning; providing resources to linked to the curriculum, a place to study, help with searching for and accessing relevant resources, and delivering an information skills programme that develops independent learners. Fewer people, however, will consider the pastoral role of the school librarian; not just providing curated resources and links to external sources of information but also creating a space with a trusted adult that supports the physical health, mental health and wellbeing of all students.

This toolkit has been created for all staff who work in school libraries, regardless of their designated title. The generic terms “librarian” and “library” have been used to denote any library staff and any school library, regardless of its size or services offered. It will also be useful for teaching and other support staff who work with students.

How do you define it?

The World Health Organisation¹ (WHO) defines **health** as “*a state of complete physical, mental,*

and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”

It describes **mental health** as “*a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, and can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.*”

Furthermore, the WHO defines **health literacy** as “*the personal characteristics and social resources needed for individuals and communities to access, understand, appraise and use information and services to make decisions about health.*”

These three things – physical health, mental health and health literacy – are important. Good health, particularly mental health and wellbeing, are crucial to developing social and emotional skills, and are the basis for a productive and fulfilling life. Social-emotional learning, that is the ability to manage your own emotions and to recognise the emotions of others, is an essential skill that children and young people need to develop. These skills enhance academic performance, improve health and behaviour, and help to create independent successful individuals.

Being healthy helps prevent chronic diseases and long-term illness, and helps you live longer. Without good health, it can be difficult to achieve aims and ambitions as poor health can result in tiredness and low energy levels

¹ <https://who.int>

meaning all activities – work, study, even relaxation – are harder, and even minor health problems can impact on other aspects of your life. Everyone also has a condition of mental health the same way we all have a condition of physical health, and good mental health is essential as it impacts on how you think and feel, how you are able to cope with everyday life, your self-esteem and self-confidence, and how you handle stress.

Prevention is always a better option – young people need to be educated so they are aware of the impact of poor physical health, mental health and wellbeing. They need access to a range of resources – in print and online - and they need to be taught how to understand and use information to make informed decisions about their own health. School libraries are the perfect place to engender this. They are able to provide trusted resources, offer guidance, and help deliver health literacy so that young people have the skills needed to make the best decisions about their own health, to recognise when it is important to seek professional medical advice, and to understand medical conditions and instructions.

What are the problems?

According to Health Education England (Improving Health Literacy, NHS HEE²), 43% of adults do not understand written health information. The financial consequences of this lack of health literacy costs the UK 3% - 5% of its annual health budget and there are many examples of how misunderstandings can lead to serious consequences. For example³:

- A person who thought their “positive” cancer diagnosis was a good thing and did not understand why they were not getting better
- A person who did not understand the

connection between what they ate and how this impacted on their ability to self-manage their diabetes

- A person who sprayed their inhaler on their neck because they had been told to “spray it on their throat”

Health literacy requires a basic level of literacy as well as an understanding of simple medical terms and knowledge of the human body. For example, when you are told to take medication twice a day you need to understand this is two times or when it says an ointment may cause inflammation you need to know this is characterised by redness and soreness. People do not lose literacy overnight; literacy can decline with age but generally adults with low literacy levels had been children and young people with low literacy levels. It is also worth noting that parents who have low health literacy are unlikely to be able to provide suitable self-help care and make the best health decisions for their children

Young people aged 10 – 24 years make up 19% of the population and adolescence is a critical time for embedding health and wellbeing knowledge and practices. Teens and young people often lead overscheduled lives where they are overwhelmed by the curriculum, homework, extra-curricular activities, and pressure from their teachers, parents and even themselves. This can result in anxiety and stress.

The Mental Health Foundation⁴ reports that:

- 20% of adolescents may experience a mental health problem in any given year
- 50% of mental health problems are established by age 14 and 75% by age 24
- 10% of children and young people (aged 5-16 years) have a clinically diagnosable mental health problem yet 70% of children

² <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/knowledge-library-services/improving-health-literacy>

³ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/blog/jonathan-berry/>

⁴ <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/statistics/mental-health-statistics-children-and-young-people>

and adolescents who experience mental health problems have not had appropriate interventions at a sufficiently early age

These statistics are backed up by The Children's Society⁵, who have worked with Young Minds, a mental health charity, and they report that:

- 1 in 6 children aged 5 – 16 are likely to have a mental health problem with 17 – 22 year old women being the most at risk group
- 75% of young people with mental health problems are not getting the help they need and 34% of those who do get referred into NHS services are not accepted for treatment
- 55% of 16 – 25 year olds said they had seen their GP about mental health at some point in their lives and 67% would prefer to be able to access mental health support without seeing their GP

The evidence from mental health charities shows that mental ill health amongst young people is increasing. In 2018, NHS Digital⁶ published the results of a survey on the mental health of children and young people in England; previous surveys had been carried out in 1999 and 2004. The survey grouped mental disorders into four broad categories: emotional, behavioural, hyperactivity and other less common disorders. Emotional disorders were the most prevalent type being experienced (8.1%). The survey also noted an increase in mental disorders with age and over time, and that some groups, such as lower income groups, children that faced adversity, those being bullied and those questioning their identity, were more likely to experience mental disorders.

Why is this occurring?

Although most people experience a certain

⁵ <https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/our-work/well-being/mental-health-statistics>

⁶ <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-of-children-and-young-people-in-england/2017/2017>

level of stress, this can usually be managed with good mental health and wellbeing habits. It is when the levels of stress increase or the habits are reduced that problems can occur. Adolescence is a time of emotional development and there are additional factors that have led to an increase in mental health problems:

- A focus on tests and exams resulting in increased pressure to perform to meet targets and grades. Children are tested before they enter formal education; the Early Years Foundation Stage (birth to 5 years) has learning goals in literacy and mathematics. The Standard Assessment Tests in Year 2 (6 – 7 years) are due to be replaced by a baseline assessment in Reception but they are still carried out in Year 6 (10 – 11 years). Many secondary schools undertake internal exams and there are national exams at age 16 and 18 years. Although these are only relevant to the English education system, the devolved nations also have a range of assessments and exams.
- Social media can be a source of information and it engenders communication, but it can also have a negative impact. Its use reduces the time available for other wellbeing activities; The Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO) can create tension, anxiety, and a need to stay constantly connected; the increase in misinformation and Fake News has resulted in increased levels of stress; the media portrayal of perfection has resulted in concerns over body image and subsequent rises in eating disorders; and cyberbullying has also increased. A study by the Royal Society of Public Health⁷ linked social media use with increased rates of anxiety and depression.
- Schools already have a safeguarding duty with regards to mental health as well as a statutory duty to promote good mental health and wellbeing. However, a 2018 research report "Mental Health and

⁷ www.rsph.org.uk/our-work/campaigns/status-of-mind.html

Wellbeing Provision in Schools⁸ found that only 4% of schools had stand-alone student mental health policies and only 50% provided some sort of mental health support.

– Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) is the NHS service that assesses and treats young people with mental health disorders. This is also sometimes referred to Child and Young People’s Mental Health Services (CYPMHS). In January 2020, the Children’s Commissioner published a report, “The State of Children’s Mental Health Services”⁹ that highlighted issues with CAMHS and emphasised the important role of schools in providing help and support for low level mental health issues. It noted that:

- Only about 1 in 4 children with a mental health disorder were referred to CAMHS in 2018/19 and more than a third of those referred did not receive treatment
- The average waiting times varied from less than three weeks to nearly four months
- In 2018/19, 398,346 children were referred to CAMHS
- At the end of the year, 131,878 children were still on the waiting list
- For the Government to deliver its own recommendations, significant resources would be needed for both specialist and low level services

Additional factors

There are a range of additional risk factors that make some children and young people more likely to experience mental health issues and poor wellbeing, including: life changes; bullying;

belonging to an ethnic minority; identifying as LGBT+; and having a neurodiverse condition.

Life changes

Life changes such as divorce, transition to a different school, accident or illness, and bereavement can all increase stress and anxiety levels. If children and young people are not given support to help them cope during these times, these can develop into longer term anxiety disorders, such as panic attacks or phobias, requiring specialist intervention.

Bullying

Bullying and mental health problems have a bi-directional nature; bullying can lead to mental health issues but, likewise, mental health issues can result in bullying. A student who is being bullied will not feel safe and, with the prevalence of social media, this is likely to spill over into their life outside school in the form of cyberbullying meaning they have no escape from it. Children and young people who are being bullied are likely to experience: reduced school performance, lower self-esteem and self-confidence; increased risk of substance abuse; increased feelings of isolation; and increased risk of self-harm and suicide.

Ethnic minority groups

Studies¹⁰ show that people from an ethnic minority group are more likely to suffer from ill-health. Racism, discrimination, social and economic inequalities, and mental health stigma also all impact on mental ill-health. The physical and mental health needs of ethnic minority groups are often unrecognised and therefore unsupported.

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-and-wellbeing-provision-in-schools>

⁹ <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/cco-the-state-of-childrens-mental-health-services.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/b/black-asian-and-minority-ethnic-bame-communities>

LGBT+

Evidence from both the Mental Health Foundation¹¹ and Stonewall¹² suggests that people identifying as LGBT+ have a much higher risk of poor mental health. LGBT+ students are also more likely to experience isolation, discrimination and bullying, all of which impact on mental health and wellbeing.

Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity covers a range of conditions including: Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD); Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD); Dyscalculia; Dyslexia; Dyspraxia; and Tourette Syndrome. Having a neurodiverse condition can impact on self-esteem and cause stress and anxiety, particularly if the student is not receiving adequate support within school. These students can also experience social isolation and bullying, which further impacts on their mental health and wellbeing; it has been reported that children with learning difficulties are four times more likely to have a diagnosable mental health issue and nearly twice as likely to experience a depressive episode¹³.

The official situation

The Department for Education (DfE) is aware that mental health is an issue within schools. A consultation was undertaken in 2017 and a combined Government response to the consultation, from the DfE and the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC), was published in July 2018: "Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision: a green paper"¹⁴. This set out long-term proposals for mental health services within the NHS. It recommended:

¹¹ <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/>

¹² <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/get-involved/stonewall-research>

¹³ https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/staff/emersone/FASSWeb/Emerson_07_FPLD_MentalHealth.pdf

¹⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/transforming-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-provision-a-green-paper>

- A proposal for all schools to identify and train a Designated Senior Lead for mental health by 2025
- That this member of staff is to be responsible for overseeing the whole school approach to mental health and helping staff identify students with mental health problems
- The creation of mental health support teams linked to schools that would offer individual and group help to students with mild to moderate mental health issues
- The creation of a new national partnership to improve mental health services for young people aged 16 – 25 years

The Green Paper also set out plans for exploring how social media impacts on the health of children and young people, the creation of local parenting programmes to support families with children who have a higher risk of developing mental health problems, and guidance for schools to enable them to deliver mental health and wellbeing teaching via the National Curriculum. The appointment of a Designated Senior Lead for mental health is not mandatory and the report did not specify any details as to how these services would be provided, given that funding, workload and the curriculum could all present barriers to effective mental health provision.

In 2020, Relationships, Health and Sex Education (RHSE) was introduced as a compulsory subject; at primary this is RHE - sex education is not compulsory until secondary level though schools can choose to include it in the curriculum. However, RHSE is not compulsory in Sixth Forms, 16 – 19 academies or Further Education colleges yet this age group are possibly the students who need it the most given the high levels of poor mental health experienced by them.

Schools can decide how they teach the new content and the Government are planning to build on the range of free resources

already available from charities and other organisations. The full breakdown for both primary and secondary schools is available on the DfE website¹⁵ but the physical health and mental wellbeing aspects of RHSE cover:

- Mental wellbeing including the importance of mental health, how to talk about feelings, and where to get help
- Internet safety and harms including cyberbullying, the impact on body image, how to behave online, and online relationships
- Healthy eating
- The impact of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco on mental health
- Health and prevention

The role of the library and librarian

Self-care is important for mental health and wellbeing. It can help manage stress and anxiety, and, in some cases, stop low level mental health issues from becoming more serious. There are three areas that need to be considered - physical health, emotional health and social health - and various factors feed into these:

- Sleep
- Healthy diet
- Exercise
- Friendships
- Routine
- Me-time involving hobbies and interests

¹⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education/physical-health-and-mental-wellbeing-primary-and-secondary>

A school library is a positive and inclusive environment, welcoming all students and meeting their academic, emotional and social needs; in some schools it is the only space that does this. It is free from expectations and is not linked with targets, grades or exams so has a different ethos from the classroom. In many schools, the library is the natural place for students to go for information and when they are seeking sanctuary, a place where they are able to recharge during a busy, sometimes stressful, school day. It is also often the place where students who are suffering from poor mental health are sent if they need some breathing space away from their lessons. Librarians have a different relationship with students and the casual incidental conversations that can happen before or after school and at breaks can sometimes highlight more serious issues.

School library resources are curated to ensure they are accurate, relevant and up-to-date. The collection can provide general resources on health, healthy diets, sports and exercise as well as specific resources on mental health and wellbeing, aimed at all ages and abilities. These self-help resources enable the whole school community, including staff and parents, to further support students. In addition to both print and digital resources, the library can highlight sources of external help such as charities and organisations, many of which provide further information and resources.

School librarians are not mental health experts and should not be used instead of specialist services. However, by being aware of the common mental health problems that students may face, librarians are better placed to recognise symptoms, offer resources, and direct students to other sources of help and advice. The school librarian should be considered as part of the team that supports the mental health and wellbeing of students, one that includes their tutors, Heads of Year and the pastoral staff. They may also be able to assist with the delivery of the RHSE curriculum in collaboration with teaching staff.

Librarians run extra-curricular activities and clubs that engender friendship groups via common interests such as chess clubs, role playing games and craft activities. These activities can be linked to students' hobbies; indeed many clubs begin at the request of students and the library collection can hold resources that engender students to pursue personal interests. Additionally, the library is able to promote such events and activities that occur in the wider community outside of school and direct students to relevant clubs. The opportunity to volunteer in the library and become part of a team provides prospects for students to improve their self-esteem and self-confidence.

An important role of the school librarian is to develop the digital and information skills of students to enable them evaluate and understand health information thus reducing the misconceptions and misinformation that is often found when searching online. A study¹⁶ to increase young people's digital health-literacy skills found that whilst students had basic search skills and were familiar with search engines, they lacked the skills needed to successfully find, understand and assess online health information.

Bibliotherapy is a recognised therapeutic approach where targeted books are used to support mental ill health and The Reading Agency has a range of programmes¹⁷ that support wellbeing via selected titles recommended by children and young people, and endorsed by health professionals. Reading for pleasure is associated with several benefits¹⁸ including an increase in mental wellbeing and reduced levels of depression. It reduces stress, helping students unwind and leading to improved sleep¹⁹. Reading for

pleasure also enables young people to deal with issues at a "safe distance" via characters and stories in books. Research²⁰ undertaken by the National Literacy Trust shows that children who enjoy reading and writing, and do it regularly outside school, are three times more likely to have high levels of mental wellbeing than those who are less engaged with literacy. The school library facilitates reading for pleasure by providing the space, texts and access required for it to occur, and the librarian can further engender this by organising reading groups and assisting in the selection of books. It is the natural location within a school to promote, encourage, and support reading for pleasure with all students.

Supporting the mental health and wellbeing of students is essential if they are going to develop into self-reliant, happy, and successful individuals. It should start from a whole school perspective with policies and strategies that focus on all year groups as well as relevant training for all staff. Unfortunately this is not always the case for various reasons but with a growing number of students experiencing poor mental health, the situation cannot be ignored. As can be seen, the library can play a huge role in supporting the physical health, mental health and wellbeing of students. There is a symbiotic relationship between the sum of its parts – the physical space that is unique within a school, the curated, trusted and relevant resources, and the activities that develop and foster every student – and a school librarian uses all of these to create a nurturing and healing environment.

16 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15398285.2017.1279894?needAccess=true>

17 <https://reading-well.org.uk/>

18 <https://www.booktrust.org.uk/globalassets/resources/bookbuzz/benefits-of-reading-for-pleasure.pdf>

19 <https://mammothcomfort.com/ditch-the-screen-and-pick-up-the-paperback-heres-the-science-behind-reading-before-bed/>

20 <https://literacytrust.org.uk/news/children-who-enjoy-reading-and-writing-have-significantly-better-mental-wellbeing-their-peers/>

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