

Case Study: Henrietta Englefield, Librarian, Colfe's School, London

Encouraging Reading for Pleasure in Key Stage 3

Colfe's School is a co-educational independent day school in Greenwich, London with approximately 1150 students aged 3 – 18 years. In conjunction with the English Department, the intention of Colfe's Library has been to develop and increase reading for pleasure and provide time for sustained reading, particularly in Key Stage 3 (KS3), in the hope that habits will be formed which will extend into each student's future.

Library Lessons

Classroom reading lessons were introduced for KS3 in 2013. At that time, reading lessons took place in the Library on request. Since September 2016, each class in KS3 has had a timetabled period in the Library once a fortnight, and students have been given reading passports. In addition, Colfe's Library runs an annual reading challenge for each KS3 year group, a Library Club, a Carnegie Shadowing Club, and enters teams for book quizzes against other schools.

Library lessons are led by the school librarian, with the class English teacher present. At the start of Year 7, two lessons are used to introduce the students to the Library and to discover how they feel about reading. Moving onwards, the focus of the lessons is always purely on reading for pleasure. A short introduction (ten minutes) may feature book recommendations (either by the Librarian or peer-to-peer), themed books (for instance, in relation to the Armistice anniversary in November) or a short discussion (for instance, with regard to the relative merits of books and their associated movies). The students then read silently for at least half an hour. During these lessons, there is consistent emphasis on the value of sustained reading (as opposed to the incessant reading of bite-sized notifications on social media), both as a life skill and as a proven route to greater academic achievement. Equally, there is also an emphasis on the benefits of reading as a

means of discovery: entering other worlds, empathising with different people and giving rein to imagination. During the silent reading part of the lesson, the librarian and the English teacher read too, as a means of modelling sustained reading to the students. The school librarian has a wide knowledge of children's and young adult literature, and great care is taken to match book recommendations to individuals. Students are encouraged to try books, but to exchange them for something different if their interest is not held. There is an ongoing policy of seeking to stock the Library both with fiction which reflects the identities of Colfe's students and with books which challenge students to identify with the lives of others.

Reading Challenges

The annual reading challenges are more prescriptive, but nonetheless focused on reading for pleasure. All three challenges offer a wide range of books, authors and genres, so that there will be something that each student can enjoy. Reading Round the World in Year 7 (books set in different parts of the world) and Reading Through Time in Year 8 (books set in different historical periods) are challenges lasting for half a term, during which students choose a minimum of three books to read and review, from an extensive but carefully curated list. There is a competitive element to the challenges at house, class and individual level. Every student must complete each challenge, after which they may elect to return to free reading, or continue to read more widely from the Round the World or Through Time selections. At the end of the competitive phase of each challenge, there is a grace period to allow students who have read more slowly to reach their targets. There have been some astonishing totals of books read and many thoughtful reviews. The Year 9 Genre Challenge has no competitive element, but is a means of ensuring that students experience a variety of different genres in the course of the year.

Reading Passports

Each KS3 student has a Reading Passport in which they record their reading for pleasure, note down recommendations, write their reading challenge reviews and make notes for a book talk. The passports also contain information about using the Library and behaviour expectations, plus a list of suggested books for the relevant year group, with micro-blurbs (three or four words) to assist with book selection.

Clubs

Library Club takes place in the Library once a week during lunch break. The focus is on word games with a strong element of comedy. The club is for Year 7 and Year 8 only and is very popular. There is no pressure to attend every week, which allows space for many students to attend at some point during the autumn or spring terms. In the summer term, Library Club gives way to Carnegie Club, which also includes Year 9, and takes the form of relaxed discussion of books nominated for the Carnegie award, by a small group of committed readers, led by the school librarian and an English teacher.

Book Quizzes

Colfe's has enjoyed entering local and international book quizzes with students in Year 7 and Year 8 and has been very successful, largely due to the enthusiasm of the students involved. Quiz team trials are always over-subscribed, which has allowed the selection of strong teams. There is much enthusiasm for team practice and it has been a great pleasure to see students representing the school and having value placed on their book knowledge. The Kids' Lit Quiz, which the school entered for the first time in the current academic year (2018–19), opened the eyes of the students to the fact that English-speaking students across the UK and the world are reading the same authors as them. The students were delighted to reach the National Final, and enjoyed both the competition and the experience of meeting published authors.

Other Library Activities

The school Library is open from 8 am – 6 pm and is a popular place to spend time at break and during lunchtime. Many students take the opportunity to speak to the Library staff about book choices at these times. The Library also produces themed displays, sometimes as competitions (for instance, incoming Year 7 students are asked to contribute Extreme Reading photographs). The promotion of reading extends off-site: Year 7 and Year 8 students have reading time built into their residential Outdoor Pursuits trips, and a pop-up Library is taken to Outdoor Pursuits venues.

One of the school's Teaching and Learning goals is "Developing pupils' effective learning skills which prepare them for independent study and adult life". There are other Library functions beyond this case study which support this goal, but it is important to note here that reading for pleasure has a documented impact on academic success. A literature review by Coventry University's Centre for Research in Psychology, Behaviour & Achievement entitled *Reading for Pleasure: Reviewing the Evidence*¹ amply supports this assertion and also validates reading for pleasure as a means of enriching each student's extra-curricular life. At the end of the literature review, the summary picks out (amongst others) the following key influences on reading for pleasure:

- Reader identities – schools need to foster positive reader identities
- The creation of environments where students feel comfortable to read
- Ensuring students have choice over the text they are reading
- Ensuring students know how to select a text they will want to read
- (i.e. a text they will find interesting, enjoyable or suitably challenging)
- Make sure that reading material is relevant to everyday lives.

All these points are key to Library lessons at Colfe's.

¹ www.booktrust.org.uk/globalassets/resources/research/reading-for-pleasure-in-secondary-schools-literature-review.pdf

It is difficult to assess the growth of reading for pleasure quantitatively, other than by considering loan statistics. Fortnightly Library lessons for KS3 began in September 2016. In the previous year the Library made 3161 loans. Since then, loans have grown steadily, and are now almost twice that number: in 2016-17 there were 4300 loans, in 2017-18 there were 5773 loans, and in 2018-19 there have been 6314 loans (all data measured 14 June to 14 June). Now that regular Library lessons are fully established, so that all students in KS3 have been part of the programme since Year 7, it is likely that the loan statistics will begin to level off.

Qualitative evidence is even harder to pin point, but there are indicators of success. All students have completed the Year 7 and Year 8 reading challenges with no need for sanctions. The number of students using the Library at break and lunchtimes is reassuring. The school's success in book quizzes speaks for itself, and the teams are proud of their achievements. The younger students enjoy recommending books to one another. The challenge now is to encourage students to retain the habit of reading for pleasure through the exam years and into the future.

Some brief quotations are indicative:

"The lively and supportive atmosphere in the library encourages pupils to develop their reading skills." (Independent Schools Inspectorate 2016)

"It was lovely to see so many of them genuinely engrossed in their books." (from a teacher)

"Lots of interesting suggestions regarding what to read - I wish I had had someone like this to guide me when I was at school." (from a teacher)

"I wanted to drop you a line to say how pleased I am with the library facilities. My daughter xxx is a voracious reader and she is absolutely loving the unlimited access." (from a Year 7 parent)

"Thank you for taking xxx to the quiz - he has enjoyed the experience immensely and is still telling us all about it." (from a Year 8 parent)

"You have really helped spark a real interest and enjoyment in reading with him at the moment so thank you." (from a Year 8 parent)

"It's surprising how when you like a book you actually want to read." (from a Year 9 student)

KS3 students at Colfe's have always been encouraged to read, but as described above, the current approach was formalised three years ago with the now well-established format of fortnightly Library lessons, reading challenges and reading passports. The target now is to continue to refine the KS3 reading strategy by making small improvements as necessary and to carry it forward to KS4, when there is less scheduled time available to spend in the Library. Older students are brought to the Library for reading lessons on an ad-hoc basis. Going forward, students will all go into Year 10 having had regular Library lessons since Year 7, and we hope to sustain some of the momentum into the public exam years.

Advice:

- Be enthusiastic about reading and encouraging to all students: work on the assumption that if a student "does not like reading" it is just that they have not yet found the right books to excite them.
- Be consistent: students must understand Library lesson expectations so that reading time is maximised.
- Keep the Library's fiction stock current: promote new books and authors, and ensure that book lists for challenges and lists of recommended books in passports are updated annually.

Encouraging reading for pleasure in KS3 is a deeply rewarding task, potentially enriching every student, extending beyond the curriculum into each child's recreational and imaginative life. It has been a joy to be part of the expansion of reading in KS3 at Colfe's.