

## Case Study: Lucy Speck, Library and Resource Manager, Twynham School, Dorset

### **Embedding Library Lessons as a key part of the KS3 English Curriculum and the impact on the school culture of Reading for Pleasure**

Key Stage 3 Library lessons at Twynham School are timetabled for every two weeks but, since Lucy introduced a library programme, these lessons have undergone a big change. Originally, Years 8 and 9 were expected to read for a full hour. There was very little guidance on library conduct or suggestions for their independent reading. This was due to no particular fault of any party. There was no trained and dynamic library professional at the time (a case as to why schools with a library should definitely have one!), and the teacher (at times not an English teacher) was often busy with other work, at a loose end as to what to plan for just one lesson a fortnight for a class they didn't know. Most students (in Lucy's experience) can handle around half an hour of solid independent reading time but even those who enjoy reading for pleasure, when put into a class situation, understandably find it hard to concentrate surrounded by peers of differing attitudes to reading. As teachers or librarians who for the most part would love an hour of reading for pleasure, Lucy thinks we sometimes forget that for many students this reading time can be challenging.

Year 7 classes had always been split in half during library lessons - half an hour of independent reading time and half an hour of key literacy skills led by a literacy teacher. Literacy skill sessions combine brilliantly with independent reading time; Year 7 build on the basic but fundamental literacy skills learnt during primary school, which can slip slightly with the move to secondary.

Lucy was determined, coming into the librarian position, to lead all of the library lessons for two main reasons. Firstly, she wanted the students to know her well and therefore feel comfortable and welcome in the library outside of lessons; in turn encouraging a culture of library use and reading for pleasure supported by extracurricular reading incentives. Secondly, she was keen for library lessons to

to demonstrate to the students the importance of reading not just for education but for life skills in general, to inspire them to capture and build upon their own creativity through the power of stories.

However to do this, Lucy needed classroom experience to feel confident enough to stand in front of a class and lead every session. She began by becoming heavily involved with teaching literacy and supporting English lessons. She knew that for students to take her position within the school, and therefore the library, seriously she needed to get to know as many students as possible and understand as deeply as she could why and how students struggled with reading and writing.

At Twynham, the expert and dedicated literacy team work with the lowest ability English students, taking them from a language or humanities subject and instead giving them extra small group literacy sessions. Called 'OOF' groups or 'out of French' groups; these focus solely upon key literacy and English language rules/devices and small group reading sessions. With a sound knowledge of YA and lower grade books that appeal to all abilities of students, Lucy was confident that she could help the reading groups to become excited for their reading lessons, a first step towards improving reading ability.

Lucy began to support the literacy lessons at every opportunity. Getting to know certain challenging individuals (and delightful ones too!) meant that when it came round to the fortnightly library lessons with those classes, she could engage with the students on a personal level, had prior knowledge of their English ability, their behaviour and attitude to reading. After a year of supporting in literacy, Lucy felt she could solely take year 7 for the literacy part of their library lesson; in fact, the heads of literacy and English agreed that the combined literacy/library lessons were so beneficial for year 7, they would be extended to include year 8 as well. This meant that both year groups, during clearly structured library lessons, would have half an hour of independent reading time with a qualified English teacher in the library, and a half an

hour key literacy skills session with Lucy. The whole of year 7 and 8 were provided with a 'Twynham School Literacy Workbook' and each session worked through an exercise together. These included practising the use of correct punctuation, using simple, compound and complex sentences, and investigating how authors use advanced English language devices such as alliteration, assonance and sibilance.

Last year the English department brought in homework comprehension booklets and reading logs to be completed for library lessons so, as well as independent reading for half an hour, students had their reading logs checked and homework marked by their English teacher before or after their literacy session. This meant that even if the English teacher did not specifically know that class, they could engage with each pupil on a one-to-one basis when checking their reading choices and tracking reading progression. Although Lucy does not discourage students enjoying any book she feels it is important to guide students to extend and challenge their reading wherever possible, otherwise some stay on the same book all year!

It may seem rather against tradition that the librarian would not be present during library lessons and indeed, Lucy knows some may disagree with this approach. However, the huge difference teaching the entire years 7 and 8 and getting to know the students through the literacy sessions has been unprecedented; all students are aware Lucy is in charge of the library and she still runs a traditional library introduction at the beginning of each year.

This approach has had two main outcomes. Firstly, Lucy would have taught almost every student in the school at one time and therefore many feel comfortable with coming and asking for book recommendations or just using the library as a social space at break and lunch. Secondly, when it comes to the hour-long year 9 library lessons, she knows the classes well enough to engage with them completely and to lead activities they otherwise never would have been able to do. After 4 years of trying and sometimes failing to engage year 9 with library lessons, Lucy is now satisfied the programme really works for them and benefits their learning.

Year 9 library lessons have undergone the

most radical change. Students independently read for up to 20 minutes per lesson but, during the first term, undertake a group research project on a topic of their choice which is presented to Lucy and their English teacher. The structure of their English spoken language exam mark scheme (taken in year 10) is applied to the research project. The aim is to encourage all classes, no matter what ability, to undertake this project independently, using both library resources such as non-fiction books and articles as well as web-based research to build upon information literacy skills. It also reminds them how libraries can be used for research and learning, not just for silent reading! There are strict guidelines about copying and pasting chunks of texts, the PowerPoint part of the presentation must be in their own words and the presentation aims to improve oracy skills. During term 2 Year 9 focuses on a 'Well Read by Easter' project. In collaboration with the English department, a selection of challenging and unusual short stories and non-fiction extracts are chosen to read aloud to Year 9 each lesson whilst they track along using a bookmark. Sometimes students will join in with reading but mostly Lucy reads to them. These texts are then discussed, practising analysis skills essential for GCSE. Lucy feels there is a real power to being read to even as a teenager. The aim of tracking along aids the building of fluidity of eye movement across the page and therefore improves reading skill in general.

This year the Multi Academy Trust has introduced a 'Reading Canon' for all of their primary and secondary schools. This is where students are read to for 20 minutes during registration by their tutors or teachers whilst they track along and the school are currently trialling it with the Year 7s but so far it has been a huge success, with a mix of classical literature (*Alice in Wonderland* and *Treasure Island*) and a modern dystopian text (*The Giver* by Lois Lowry). Through the Reading Canon students, regardless of social or economic background, are given knowledge of a wide range of texts and can join in on the 'secret conversations' of those who are 'readers', whilst being exposed to a huge range of vocabulary and experience the pure joy of relaxing and being read to. The whole of the school up to and including Year 11 will join the Reading Canon from the next academic year.

Twynham School also begin each last lesson of the day with ten minutes of independent reading, helping students to calm down and focus after a busy lunchtime. All students therefore have to have a reading book with them at all times and the borrowing from the library has consequentially tripled since last year, with more footfall in general throughout the day and students engaging with the book choices available.

Ultimately, the way library lessons are designed for your school depends upon your capacity in the library and your priorities as a library professional. For Twynham School Lucy deemed the structure of successful and engaging library lessons at KS3 to be essential to the importance of the library within school life and therefore the encouragement and popularity of reading for pleasure. She believes that by creating a relationship where students know the librarian very well, and respect and trust their position as part of the teaching staff, the library becomes the core of the school.