

Case Study: Valerie Dewhurst, Head of Library, Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Blackburn

Bookmark Workshop

Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School is a coeducational independent Free School with over 1200 students from ages 4 to 18. Valerie Dewhurst is the librarian and runs a weekly Bookmark Club in the library. In order to enhance this she brought in an outside crafter to run a workshop during the recent Book Week. The Bookmark Club has been running for over 5 years – and has gone from strength to strength. The club is themed, but sometimes students just use their individual creativeness to design and make a bookmark. It relies on craft material donations and are very fortunate as in 5 years it has never run dry. The aim of the club is to craft, be creative, and relax. The club is informative, friendly, chatty and thoroughly enjoyed by all who participate. It is held in the library which is a warm and inviting space; lots of ideas are shared, brought in and researched, and often other people (crafters and parent helpers) are invited to join in.

The craft workshop was a ticketed only event and had over fifteen attendees. The event itself was a success but it also raised awareness of the Book Week as well as resulting in an increase in attendance at the weekly Bookmark Club. All students taking part left with a jewelled bookmark. SMT were also very supportive and gave Valerie the time to run the session without being disturbed during lunchtime. The workshop has now become an annual event each year during Book Week.

Valerie started the Bookmark Club to provide a place for students to relax and reenergise during their busy day. The school library is a safe space, crafting activities are linked to mindfulness and a reduction in stress. She also tries to link themes with subjects. For example, a recent science book award saw the Bookmark Club making Bunsen burner bookmarks, musical events result in musical note bookmarks, etc. She feels that whilst this is quite a basic and simple activity, it is noticed.

Valerie's reference for this activity are studies around links between crafting and wellbeing and her ideas and resources come from conversations with colleagues, books, online research, etc. She has received a lot of positive feedback both from pupils and parent helpers. The Bookmark Club continues to thrive and is well-attended; it is featured on the school calendar amongst the many other clubs run in the library and is also part of the clubs & societies event which takes place annually.

Tips:

- You require an enthusiastic bunch of crafters (there are many in school) If you can cream your Art students then even better.
- You require a space just for your crafters – a large table space is best.
- You require helpers at the end to tidy the crafting materials away.
- You require donations – so you really need to advertise/promote what you are doing in your club to gather interest. Contacting publishers has helped me tremendously.
- Sharing your work via social media is also another way of getting attention and resources.