

To what extent does current school library stock meet the reading interests of pupils?

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What did you plan to do and why?

At the close of the 24/25 academic year we moved our school library from its cramped, shared location to a much larger, bespoke room. It quickly became apparent that this new location did not seem to increase pupil interest in the library, causing me to wonder why. When I began to lead our school's drive for Reading Schools certification in the 25/26 year, the use and suitability of the library was at the forefront of my thoughts. I was particularly interested in the question of why pupils were not engaging. From helping resite the library I was aware that much of our library stock seemed dated or in poor condition, so wanted to explore further whether this was a specific barrier to engagement. My intention was as follows:

- PLAN – Research methods of building pupil engagement with libraries, and the importance of stock choice within this.
- DO – Examine library stock and compare against a survey of pupils' favourite authors and titles, ensuring pupil voice.
- COLLECT – Weed stock as part of general library refresh. Order new books from pupil suggestions.
- REVIEW – Monitor library use to view engagement and inform future stock purchases.

What has happened in your enquiry?

My background reading highlighted the importance that relevant stock had on pupil engagement. Student choice has been described as "at the heart of pupil engagement," (Sabol) and "one of the most important things to create a successful busy library" (Suffield).

I used the initial Reading Schools survey form to assess pupils in each of our nine classes. P1-4 completed this with the assistance of the class teacher, while our older pupils completed the survey online. This immediately revealed that there was a glaring divide between the books and authors that pupils were interested in and what we had in the school library. Notable absences included *Dog Man*, *Bunny vs Monkey*, JK Rowling, Julia Donaldson and Jeff Kinney books. With the assistance of our P4/P5 Reading Leaders, I continued to solicit and monitor feedback from pupils. This included pupil requests for titles they wanted in playground book boxes, feedback to our weekly reading challenges, and books that students chose from school library bus visits.

What impact has this enquiry had?

This enquiry has helped ensure that an acknowledgement and appreciation of pupils' reading interests is now at the heart of our library structure. Over the course of the enquiry, evidence has helped to build a clear picture of pupil library stock interests. Initial survey results highlighted that we did not have many of the titles most requested by pupils.



Of the ten most popular authors, shown above, we only had titles in our library from three. This immediately stood out to me as a concern. Although each class had a timetabled weekly library slot, I worried that pupils would disengage if there was not engaging material within.

Following advice from the Scottish Book Trust, myself and colleagues weeded library stock, offering these books as free to a good home. The fact that many of them were still not taken highlighted their unattractiveness to pupils.

Further surveys examining the type of reading materials pupils requested showed that graphic novels were a popular choice, particularly *Dog Man* and *Bunny vs Monkey*. As a stop-gap measure until such stock could be ordered, and building on the success of class topics in P2/3 and P4, we incorporated *Beano* materials into the library, which proved very popular.

We also created a pupil recommendation area in the library, allowing pupils to share their enthusiasm for titles and authors. This has been very popular, with pupils enjoying recommending titles to each other.

The Usborne book fair visited our school in March 2026, providing an ideal opportunity to assess what titles excited and engaged pupils. After the visit I carried out a further survey of pupils, to see what books had interested them. In cooperation with pupil Reading Leaders we then used the proceeds from book sales to order approximately 70 new titles for our school library, filling many of the gaps we had identified. This has generated much excitement, with pupils eagerly awaiting the arrival of these books.



What are the implications and next steps?

Our school is in the process of investing in a library catalogue system. Alongside this it is planned that Reading Leaders will act as school librarians on a rota basis, allowing us to keep track of what books are checked in and out. This, in turn, will highlight what titles and authors are of interest to pupils, allowing us to keep the library current and limit gaps in provision.

Existing library measures such as our recommendation shelf and book suggestion jar will also continue as a means of monitoring pupil feedback and ensuring pupil ownership.

The experience, and the enthusiasm of the pupils, has increased my familiarity with children's literature I now feel more comfortable with recommending books to children across age groups, helped by professional dialogue and resources such as SBT Book Discovery lists.

**The focus of this enquiry was amended in light of available evidence, from the effect of new stock on pupil interest towards the effect that current stock had on pupil engagement and interest.*

References

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