



investing in children

Re-evaluation for Investing in Children membership

Clayport Library

Since the last re-evaluation the staff at Clayport Library have continued to involve children and young people in opportunities for dialogue.

During my visit I met with library worker Carol Attewell and two young people from the teenage writer group.

Teenage Writers

I was told that the group was initiated in response to a young lad requesting a group being set up. The group has been running for a few years now and offers young people the opportunity to get together with others to use creative writing to write articles etc... There is not a set agenda for the meetings and anyone can bring ideas to the group.

Nell and David told me the following:-

'We are currently working on a magazine/leaflet that the teenage writers can contribute to! The library is going to produce it and send it out. It's aimed at everyone.'

'I like it in the group as it's interesting to see what other people are doing and its helpful to see what other people think of our work'

'I have been a member of the group since the beginning three years ago. The group generally varies in size. There are 6 regulars and two other young people'

'The group is flexible on age ranges'

'Last September notices went out to schools in the immediate area'

'We meet the last Thursday of every month, but once the magazine is up and running we will be meeting twice a month'

Chatterbox Reading Group

Until recently this was one of the IIC groups. At the beginning of the year the group visited Waterstones to choose books. They have done this several times before, and the staff are always helpful and give the young people a little talk about how to choose books.

One idea the group did come up with was a buddy scheme to help those who aren't such good readers. This would run during the summer holidays, in conjunction with the Summer Reading Challenge – every Saturday morning there will be a group member, or a member of staff, who would sit and hear someone read. They will also recommend good books. This would help the “dip” in reading which schools always note in September.

‘Evelyn (9) asked Carol to arrange a writing workshop for gifted and talented children. She has now done this and sent it to primary schools so that the Heads can identify potential students.’

‘I’ve tried to get new members for the group, but it comes down to the major obstacle that under-11s aren’t usually allowed to come into town themselves, or they have out-of-school activities. So if they won’t come to us, we go to them, targeting the more deprived areas’ Carol

Manga group

This is a loose group of about 25 young people (ages 14 – 25), who are heavily into the Manga culture. It began when the library introduced a Manga collection, and noted the number of people who were borrowing them. After getting into conversation they agreed to help Carol choose the stock and meet occasionally. In July last year they helped to arrange a Manga Day, which was very successful – which included book sales, art workshops and films at the Gala. This is going to be repeated on June 28th, with the film show here at the library this time.

Outreach

Caroline, one of the senior assistants, does outreach visits monthly to St Hilda and St Joseph’s primary schools to take reading groups. She has put post-its in the Junior Library for children to request books.

‘I go monthly, with another colleague Linda, to tell stories at Laurel Ave Primary’.

The 3 schools above are combining together for an author visit on Tuesday 10th, by Pete Johnson and are planning an art project in the autumn on a multicultural theme.

‘I visit St Leonard’s RC school monthly for an informal reading group, which shadows the Carnegie prize every summer. The staff and students are very responsive, and we’ve had some excellent author visits there.’

‘Geoff is a member of a working group which includes Roberta the MP and other youth agencies, to look at the lack of facilities for young people in the City. The extended schools co-ordinators at Framwellgate Moor and Durham Johnston schools are also working to a similar end.’

General Library Activities

Both Nell and David were keen to tell me all about the library and what is on offer to children and young people.

‘I prefer this library to the local ones as there is a much better range of books’ David

‘I come 3 – 4 times a week and odd times to the reference library’

‘It’s all very open and the staff are very good. They are very encouraging when you give suggestions’

‘Whenever I have asked for things they generally get it for you! You just have to ask at the desk if there wasn’t a book in you wanted!!’

Internet

'You can come and go on the computers and use the internet. There are about 30 of them. You get ½ hour or 1hour slots. You can get on most of the sites i.e. Messenger, Facebook and Myspace.'

Printing

'The printing is cheap and so is the photocopying'

Room Hire

'You can hire out this room for free! When I was at college we needed a room for media and got it. We just asked at the desk'

Film Club

'There is a film club. It's only £5 a year membership. Then £3 a film if you are a member and £4 if you aren't'

Suggestion Box

'There is a suggestion box in the library where you can leave comments'

'In the past young people had requested more books and computers and so they got them'

'Young people asked for a PS2 and they got one'

Carol informed me that in the past more headphones had been requested and since the request two new ones have been bought.

Recommendations

I would recommend that the library set up an IIC focus group again to support the progress of the issues identified by the children and young people. This offers a formal way for children and young people to liaise directly with library staff to make improvements and changes. The comments and suggestions that are made informally can then feed into this.

Conclusion

It is evident that Clayport Library continues as an established community resource who have a real commitment to improving and developing services for children and young people. Some very positive comments have been made by the young people I met with and it is on their recommendation that Clayport library has its Investing in Children Membership renewed.

This report has been endorsed by members of the teenage writers group.

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June 2008**

