

## LEARNING OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM HERITAGE SECTOR PARTNERSHIP

### Case Study

### LOCAL STUDIES LIBRARY

#### **Getting the most from this case study.....**

- When you read this case study, you will find it useful to have a copy of the Quality Indicators or the Quality Badge SEF to hand.
- You will see that the case study has sections of text highlighted in bold. This text indicates an aspect of practice at this organisation that can be directly linked to a Quality Indicator.
- At the end of a section of bold text or at the end of the sentence containing that text, you will see a reference number in brackets. To find out what that number means, go to the last page of the case study, which contains a table listing all of these reference numbers. Next to each reference number there is a Quality Indicator number/s.
- Look up the Quality Indicator number/s on your SEF and to find out how a specific aspect of practice at this organisation might help them to get the Quality Badge.

#### **Introduction**

Hannah Moss is the Local Studies Librarian for Cleeshire County Council. The Cleeshire Reference and Local Study Library (RLSL) is situated within the county's Central Library and holds a wide variety of collections relating to the local area. The RLSL offers a varied schools programme and this example focuses on a visit by pupils from a newly established secondary school - Doughty Academy. This institution opened in 2007 with the aim to provide high quality teaching in an area of considerable social-deprivation. The visiting group of Year 8 (12-13 years) pupils came as part of booster group, for those with low literacy levels, and were interested in material documenting the changing face of their locality.

#### **Description of Practice**

This spring term I was contacted by Jane Merry who is the literacy coordinator at Doughty Academy. She had accessed **information about our offer** via the council website together with a number of in-house leaflets that are distributed in schools mailing (1). The FAQ (**frequently asked questions**) section, which details services and facilities at the library, had inspired her to think about visiting (2).

My contact details are included in the information and users are encouraged to get in touch to make a booking. I often email further information at this first point of contact. Experience has taught me that a **booking form is invaluable** in capturing all the information about the school and **what they would**

**like to get out of the visit (3).** However, after chatting to Jane on the phone I realised we would benefit from meeting in person. I arranged to visit the school to discuss how the RLSL could support the group.

During the subsequent meeting I **used the booking form as an aid to structure the conversation**, as both Jane and I were limited on time **(4)**. The **pre-visit meeting** enabled Jane to find out more about a couple of the workshops that had caught her eye from the RLSL schools programme. By the end of the conversation we had **agreed on the most suitable format for the learners and discussed any special needs (5)**. I was also able to discover what they would be **learning prior to the visit and made suggestions on the resources they could use to support this (6)**. Prior knowledge of where the group is, in regard to their topic, proves invaluable in offering advice on session selection. Therefore, the booking form includes a section in which the school can provide information. I had also brought along a copy of our **risk assessment form**, which I had drawn up after training from the Health and Safety department in the council **(7)**. Jane asked me about our **insurance cover** and as a council employee with direct contact with young people I also hold a current **enhanced CRB check (8)**.

Due to time constraints I am not always able to have a meeting with group leaders in advance. However, I will always try to have a **telephone conversation as well as emailing them the booking form (9)**. The RLSL is a small area, which is also open to the general public. Therefore, it is important to build a relationship with the group organiser, so that I can provide the maximum benefit to pupils and that they also realise the constraints of the space. At the point of booking I also **arrange a time for the group leader to visit to make their own risk assessment and ensure that staff are available to answer any questions (10)**.

The group visited a month later and were greeted at reception by a library assistant, who was expecting them. With such a large and disparate staff it is important that everyone is made aware of the visits and I use the **weekly staff meeting to brief everyone about my booked groups (11)**. The majority of the library's users visit both independently and often on their own, therefore it helps to have advance notice of groups.

Jane had briefed the children about the objectives of the visit and the group of eight students had come prepared with numerous research questions! I began the session with a warm welcome to the RLSL and my usual **house-keeping and health and safety briefing (12)**. Whenever I go through the working conditions in the RLSL with a school group I encourage the students to think through the rationale to the answers. By becoming active participants they not only realise what the facility has to offer but also the importance of maintaining the collections – therefore no drinks, sweets and gel pens!

This was week two of their project and each pupil had identified their own area of interest in regard to research. We only had 75 minutes, as the group had to get back for other lessons – time was at a premium! Due to the restrictions in space and usage in the RLSL, **I had organised a number of activities that the children could rotate around as appropriate**. These were **designed to complement their project and be interesting to a diverse group of pupils - some with quite limited literacy skills (13)**. I started with demonstrating the microfilm readers and letting everyone have a go. Once they had mastered that art of accessing information I showed some examples from the historic photographs collection and had inspection copies of local maps and reference books on hand. Internet access was also available for research purposes. Pencils and paper were available for recording information and students were also allowed a specific amount of copying – dependent on the nature of the material. As is **council policy, all users are actively encouraged to recycle used paper - bins are available in the RLSL (14)**. Moreover, by having a restriction on photocopying usage it encourages students to focus on their research and develop judgement in how they manage their time and what evidence they need to gather.

The very nature of local history material means that it has not been written specifically for a younger audience. However, both my own experience and feedback from teachers and pupils has demonstrated, that **interest can be generated and the learning experience enhanced by this hands-on approach. (15)**. I see one of my main roles during the workshop to be on-hand as the person who knows “their stuff”. Therefore when one girl asked me about Stanley Street I was able to direct her to not only the map I had on display, but also some books and material in the **Reference collection (16)**.

The workshop ended with a **question and answer session between all participants**. This is a **valuable opportunity to assess how the session has gone (17)** with a captive audience. I have a notebook set aside, in which I **jot down comments and also my own reflections (18)**. It is a useful tool for when I come to discuss my work with my manager as part of my appraisal system and something that I always **feed back at the weekly staff meeting (19)**.

Before the group left I asked how many had their own library card and signed up those that didn't! With one of our Local Area Agreement indicators focusing on increasing participation, a main objective for running sessions is to encourage students to become active library users. Therefore, during the pre-visit I had left Jane with some parental consent forms for library registration. Finally **I explained what other things are on offer through the library service - such as the weekly homework club and independent return visits to the RLSL for further research or support (20)**.

I greatly enjoy working with students, although, my experience is as a chartered librarian not as a teacher and, I therefore have really benefited from **pre-visit meetings and feedback from teachers** to improve what we offer **(21)**. In regard to this session, Jane was able to give me additional feedback via a **teacher evaluation form (22)**. This is important because although the session is free to schools in the county it still requires a time commitment on both sides. Furthermore, I had recently hosted a **placement for a local teacher as part of the regional Educational Business Partnership workforce development (23)** which had **fed into workshop and policy development (24)**. All these types of feedback and professional advice help shape the menu of activities we offer. The vast array of new initiatives in education can be very confusing to the outsider and I don't have the time to research them, in any depth, on top of my day-to-day duties. However, by **using the expertise on offer I can offer sessions relevant to the recent changes (25)**.

During the next month I had a number of independent visits from some of the pupils to conduct further research. On one occasion a dad had been dragged along by his son – they left an hour and a half later and promised to return. The library community is growing!

***Please see the next page for the Quality Indicator Reference List***

## Reference List

Reference no.	Quality Indicator
1	1a
2	2a, 2b
3	1b
4	1b
5	1c, 1d
6	1e, 1f
7	6a
8	6c, 6d
9	1a
10	1a
11	1e, 5a, 5b
12	3d, 6a, 6b
13	3a, 3b
14	5c
15	3a
16	3c
17	4b
18	3f
19	3f, 4c
20	3a
21	4b
22	4b
23	3e, 3f, 4a
24	4c
25	4c, 5d

### Further information

For more information about LOtC, the Quality Badge and learning through heritage, visit the following websites:

[www.lotc.org.uk](http://www.lotc.org.uk)

[www.lotcqualitybadge.org.uk](http://www.lotcqualitybadge.org.uk)

[www.gem.org.uk](http://www.gem.org.uk)

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