

## **Exploring the Literacy Related Behaviours and Feelings of Pupils Eligible for Free School Meals in Relation to their Use of, and Access to, School Libraries.**

### **Abstract**

Although it has been argued that school libraries are important for supporting the reading engagement of pupils who receive free school meals, to date there has been **little** analysis of the extent to which use of school library spaces is related to these pupils' reading behaviors. We analyzed data from 6,264 UK children and young people entitled to FSM who completed the 2019 National Literacy Trust Annual Literacy Survey, to understand the extent to which these pupils' engagement with reading and writing is related to access to or use of their school library. We found their enjoyment of both reading and writing, their confidence in their own abilities, and the frequency with which they read or wrote for pleasure outside of school was significantly higher for those **pupils eligible for FSM** who used their school libraries relative to both those who did not, and those who had no school library. Consistent with this, **children eligible for FSM** who used their school library engaged with a greater diversity of reading material and writing than those who were not school library users. We argue that school library provision appears to be a significant resource in supporting **low income** children's engagement with self-motivated literacy practices.

**Keywords:** Reading Motivation, Low SES; Leisure Reading; Leisure Writing; School libraries.

**Abbreviations.** FSM – Free school meals. ALS – Annual Literacy Survey.

### **Exploring the Literacy Related Behaviours and Feelings of Pupils Eligible for Free School Meals in Relation to their Use of, and Access to, School Libraries.**

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, schools are not required to have a school library (e.g. see BMG research 2019), which stands in stark contrast to other areas, such as prisons, where library provision is mandated including the need for qualified librarians (Bowe, 2011). At the same time, school library use has been connected to a wide variety of improved outcomes for children and young people. Existing evidence suggests that school libraries are beneficial to not only pupils' reading attainment but also their reading enjoyment, reading frequency, reading confidence and attitudes towards reading (Clark, 2010; Teravainen & Clark, 2017; Clark & Teravainen-Goff, 2018). In addition, school libraries have been linked to improved outcomes in academic attainment in general and specific areas such as writing skills (Teravainen & Clark, 2017). Studies that have examined the impact of school libraries have also shown that both parents and school staff believe that libraries do impact pupils' personal development (Fodale & Bates, 2011).

**Previous findings have shown that children from low-income backgrounds tend to use their school library more than their peers (Clark & Teravainen-Goff, 2018). Indeed, it has also been argued that school libraries have a crucial role to play in relation to supporting children from low income backgrounds to become engaged readers (Williams, 2008). This is particularly important as socioeconomic status appears to impact children's academic performance, and literacy-related attainment in particular. For example Strand (1997) showed that children who received free school meals**

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(FSMs), where eligibility is determined by their families' financial need, started school (aged 4-5 years) with lower baseline scores on general abilities and on a test of reading readiness compared to peers, and that this attainment gap widened over the course of Key Stage 1. A recent government analysis (Department for Education, 2018) reported that pupils who were eligible for FSM showed lower attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 relative to non-FSM eligible peers, and that this attainment gap was larger if they attended schools in areas of disadvantage. They were also found to be 23% less likely to be in sustained employment at the age of 27 and three times more likely to be receiving out of work benefits compared to non-FSM eligible peers.

This paper centres on understanding how the apparent attainment gap experienced by UK children eligible for FSM may be related to their use of school libraries. We explore this because evidence also suggests that pupils receiving FSM are less likely to enjoy reading and writing or engage in reading and writing outside of school than their peers. For example, data from the National Literacy Trust's Annual Literacy Survey between 2005 and 2018 has consistently suggested that pupils eligible for FSM are less likely to enjoy reading than their more advantaged peers (Clark, 2017). We argue that this might also contribute to reduced reading attainment for children eligible for FSM, as the affective and behavioral aspects of reading have been linked to increased proficiency in reading (Clark & Teravainen, 2018). Reading motivation, attitudes and self-efficacy are reported to influence the frequency with which children engage with reading; for example; if children hold positive attitudes to reading then they are more likely to be intrinsically motivated to read, whereas negative attitudes inhibit motivation to read (McKenna, Conradi, Lawrence, Jang & Meyer, 2012; McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth 1995). It is important to motivate children to read

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(Gambrell, 2015), as the more frequently children read the better readers they become (Clark & Teravainen, 2017; Gambrell, 2015). We argue that school libraries and librarians have the potential to engage children from disadvantaged backgrounds with books and other print-based resources and go some way to providing learning resources and environments that these children may be unable to access elsewhere. Such access may be transformative for some children in stimulating interest in books and literacy in a way that could benefit their attainment in reading and writing. Competency in reading is critical for enabling children to access the rest of their school curriculum. However, we lack research that specifically examines a large sample of children eligible for FSM, and compares them *to each other* (as opposed to their better off peers) on their use of school library facilities, whilst also assessing their engagement with literacy-related activities that we know are linked to higher attainment (e.g. Clark & Teravainen, 2018).

Inequalities in access to school libraries is not just an issue in the UK – research from the USA has previously identified similar concerns. A brief review by Krashen (2011) identified that American children in poverty have an increased risk of not achieving academically and very poor access to books both at home and in their community. Similarly, Pribesh, Gavigan & Dickinson (2011), examined the variability in school library staffing, accessibility and provision across schools with various socioeconomic (SE) backgrounds. They used online questionnaires to acquire data from a sample of 176 library media specialists in North Carolina (64%) and Virginia (36%). 43% of the total sample had 40% or more of their students on free school meals, and 51% of these were elementary schools. They discovered that, schools with the highest proportion of students living in poverty had the least access

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to resources, were less likely to have full-time librarians or even more than one member of library staff and were unlikely to have up to date collections of material, compared to those from higher SE backgrounds. Pupils from low SE backgrounds were further disadvantaged by charges that were implemented in some instances for overdue books, and by their ability to access, evaluate and use information.

More recently, Adkins (2014) explored the results of the 2009 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) to examine the effects of school libraries on student attainment, with specific focus on socioeconomic influence. It was found that lower SES schools had lower levels of school library staffing. Like Clark & Teravainen-Goff (2018), Adkins found that children from low SES backgrounds reported greater school library use than higher SES peers. Family wealth was a strong predictor of math, reading and science performance. However, interestingly, school library adequacy and technology were negatively associated with reading scores. Adkins concluded that low SES students made greater use of school libraries that were not necessarily well resourced.

When we consider international data on this topic, we again see evidence to suggest the importance of both socioeconomic status and school library provision on student attainment. Krashen, Lee & McQuillan (2010) analysed a subset of the 2006 PIRLS data consisting of 34 countries. The authors examined intercorrelations between factors including socioeconomic status (SES), sustained silent reading (SSR), school libraries (only including those with over 500 books), and direct instruction. It was discovered that higher SES countries had greater levels of independent reading and greater access to school libraries. SES was identified to be the strongest predictor of

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reading achievement when controlling for the effects of the other factors, with school library access also being a strong predictor.

In January 2019 nearly 1 in 6 children and young people (15.4%) attending school in England were in receipt of free school meals (FSM) (Department for Education, 2019), suggesting that a large number of children and young people are at risk of falling into the ‘attainment gap’. An analysis of how far such pupils’ behavior may be linked to their ability to access a school library, and whether they use it, could help us to understand how the observed long-term inequalities in literacy attainment and subsequent life prospects might be disrupted by effective use of school libraries.

In this paper we address this by characterizing the reading and writing behaviors that pupils eligible for FSM engage with and how they feel about reading and writing, and relate individual differences in these variables to the availability of school library provision and the pupils’ use of that provision. This focus on the potential links between school library use and children’s reading and writing activity provides a novel broadening of our understanding of pupils’ engagement with literacy when they come from low income backgrounds, and the ways in which school libraries could contribute to reducing the attainment gap going forward.

We report an analysis of 6,264 children who were receiving FSM in the UK and who responded to the Annual Literacy Survey between January and March 2019. This online survey is conducted yearly by the National Literacy Trust and covers all regions of the UK. In 2019, the survey included a total of 36 questions, two of which asked about the pupils’ library use. These two questions were included to inform

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the National Literacy Trust's own work with school libraries as well as to provide information for a wider school library campaign in the UK.

The National Literacy Trust and XXXXXXXXXXXX University collaborated on supporting the wider school library campaign with up-to-date research.

XXXXXXXXXX University conducted a literature review, while the National Literacy Trust also made data from their Annual Literacy Survey available to the University for additional analyses, which specifically looked at pupils' school library use. This paper is an outcome of this collaboration.

The purpose of this paper was two-fold:

1. To consider whether access to, or use of, school library facilities could differentiate pupils eligible for FSM with respect to their levels of engagement with, and feelings about, reading and writing.
2. To understand some of the reasons why children who receive free school meals either use or do not use school library facilities.

This work therefore locates within the traditions of critical and equity-based education theory and practice. Our epistemological approach to our work is one of critical realism. This position proposes that there exists a reality, but it cannot always be observed directly because of the societal structures and systems that operate at any time (e.g. McLeod, 2011; Sayer 2000). As a result we offer an interpretation of that reality based on our data, but we accept that our interpretation may differ from that of other people, and that our data may not always give us full access to what is really going on.

## Method

### Participants

56,905 pupils, recruited from 240 schools (representing about 1% of all schools in the UK), completed the Annual Literacy Survey between January and March 2019. Of these 6,264 (11.0%) reported that they were eligible for free school meals, and these pupils formed the sample for this report. 3,666 of these pupils were male, 3,464 were female, with a further 110 identifying as having a non-binary gender identity, and 160 preferring not to state gender at all. The pupils were drawn from Year 3 (aged 7-8 years old) through to Year 13 (aged 17-18 years old). All regions of the UK were represented (see Table 1), and 74.2% of pupils were from urban areas, and 17.6% from rural areas. The pupils were drawn from the full range of school types, including academies (57.8%), community schools (2.3%), independent schools (2.4%), local authority schools (27.7%) voluntary aided schools (1%) and other types (0.7%).

### The Annual Literacy Survey

The National Literacy Trust has conducted the Annual Literacy Survey since 2010. It is designed to ask pupils aged 9 to 18 about their enjoyment of reading and writing, their reading and writing behaviors and how they feel about reading and writing. The online survey is free to schools and open for eight weeks, and in 2019 was conducted between beginning of January and beginning of March. Schools are recruited through a range of channels, including newsletters, social media, and through partner organizations. As a thank-you for taking part, schools receive their own school-specific report of their pupils' responses.



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On average, the survey takes 20 minutes to complete and consists mainly of multiple choice options that ask about pupils' reading and writing in their free time, resulting in mainly ordinal and nominal data. In 2019, 89% of participating children and young people completed the survey during school hours, with the remainder completing it at home.

### **Data Analysis**

As a result of the ordinal nature of the majority of the data produced by the questionnaire, all analyses conducted are based on non-parametric tests. Kruskal-Wallis tests were used to compare the distribution of responses across the three groups of interest (i.e. school library users, non-users and children without library access), and post hoc pairwise comparisons were Bonferroni corrected, and adjusted p values are reported in all cases. Associations between categorical variables are based on Chi-Squared Tests.

## **Results**

### **School Library Use**

All pupils completing the survey were asked if they used their school library. In line with earlier findings (Clark & Teravainen-Goff, 2018), the data showed that pupils eligible for free school meals were more likely than their peers to use the school library daily (66.5% vs. 60.3%;  $\chi^2=99.385$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

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From this point on we only examined the responses of the 6,264 children who were eligible for FSM. When we consider their pattern of school library use, the majority (4,167) responded that they did use their school library, with 1,893 pupils reporting that they did not. A further 204 pupils reported that their school did not have a school library. Looking at gender and age differences within the sample of pupils eligible for FSM (see Table 2), we find that in all four gender categories, the pupils were more likely to be library users than not, with girls most likely to be users of these spaces ( $\chi^2=60.503$ ,  $df=6$ ,  $p<.0005$ ). UK school children are grouped into so-called ‘Key Stages’ based on their age and where they are at in terms of covering key subjects and learning outcomes. There are attainment goals set for children at the end of each Key Stage, with Key Stages 1,2, and 3 focusing on core curriculum areas. Key Stages 4 and 5 work towards the completion of qualifications. We found evidence that children from Key Stage 2 and 3 were more likely to use the school library compared to those in Key Stages 4 and 5 ( $\chi^2=457.3$ ,  $df=6$ ,  $p<.0005$ ).

### **School Library Use and Enjoyment of Reading and Writing**

The pupils receiving FSM were asked how much they enjoyed reading and writing in their free time and were asked to indicate their response on a four-point Likert scale that ranged from “very much” to “not at all”. There were significant differences in the distribution of responses when we compared pupils who used their school library to those pupils who did not, and to pupils who did not have access to one ( $H = 623.889$ ,  $N=6264$ ,  $p<.0005$ ). Specifically the pupils who used the school library showed greater enjoyment of reading than those who did not use the library ( $p<.0005$ ), and those who did not have access to one ( $p<.0005$ ) (see Figure 1). There were no significant differences between those who chose not to use their school library and

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those who don't have access to one in terms of their reading enjoyment ( $p=.055$ ). The same pattern emerged for the children's enjoyment of writing ( $H=467.667$ ,  $N=6201$ ,  $p<.0005$ ), with children who used the school library showing greater enjoyment of writing than both of the other two groups did ( $p<.0005$  in both cases), and there was no difference between the non-users of school libraries and children without access ( $p=.091$ ) (see Figure 2).

### **School Library Use and Reading and Writing Behavior**

There were significant differences in the distribution of how often **the pupils eligible for FSM** read in their free time according to library use ( $H=599.880$ ,  $N=6264$ ,  $p<.0005$ ), with the library users reading more frequently in their free time than both the non-users of the school library and those without a library ( $p<.0005$  in both cases). The pupils who did not have a school library read in their free time more often than those who did not use their school library ( $p=.01$ ) (see Figure 3)

This pattern was repeated for writing in their free time ( $H=326.707$ ,  $N=6247$ ,  $p<.0005$ ), with the pupils who used the library showing significantly more frequent writing outside class than both of the other two groups ( $p<.0005$  in both cases). The pupils who did not have access to a school library showed significantly more frequent writing behavior than the children who elected not to use their school library ( $p=.044$ ) (see Figure 4).

From the pupils' responses to questions about the different types of reading and writing they engaged in outside of school, we were able to compute a measure of how diverse their engagement with texts was. It seems reasonable to propose that there

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would be a relationship between how widely pupils read and wrote and the extent to which they used their school library. We therefore directly compared the text diversity scores of the pupils depending on whether they used their school library, did not use a school library, or had no access to a school library (see Table 4). This revealed that there were significant differences in the distribution of scores across the three groups. With respect to the number of different text types read by the children in their free time, there was a significant overall effect ( $H=580.822$ ,  $N=6264$ ,  $p<.0005$ ), with those who used the school library reading a greater range of texts compared to both the non-users ( $p<.0005$ ) and those without library access ( $p<.0005$ ). The pupils who did not have access to a school library also reported engaging with significantly more diverse reading material relative to children who were non-users of their school library ( $p=.003$ ).

This pattern was repeated with respect to writing, ( $H=513.053$ ,  $N=6264$ ,  $p<.0005$ ), with library users writing the greatest range of material in their free time relative to non-users of libraries ( $p<.0005$ ) and those without school library access ( $p<.0005$ ). Again, pupils without school library access tended to produce a greater range of different text types in their free time relative to non-users of school libraries ( $p=.003$ ).

### **Reading Confidence**

The pupils were asked to rate on a scale of 1-10 how confident they felt they were with respect to reading, and again with writing. Overall there were differences in the distribution of confidence scores across the three groups ( $H=180.302$ ,  $N=6118$ ,  $p<.0005$ ). Specifically, the **pupils eligible for FSM** who used their school library had significantly higher reading confidence ratings than both of the other two groups

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( $p < .0005$  in both cases). There was no difference between the confidence levels of those who did not use their library and those without a library ( $p = 1.0$ ) (see Figure 5).

We also found the same pattern with respect to writing confidence, with differences in distributions of scores across the three groups ( $H = 139.030$ ,  $N = 6058$ ,  $p < .0005$ ) and school library users rating their writing confidence more highly than both of the other two groups ( $p < .0005$  in both cases). There was no difference in confidence scores between those who did not use their school library and those without access to one ( $p = 1.0$ ) (see Figure 6).

### **Understanding the Children's Use and Non-Use of School Libraries**

The pupils who were eligible for FSM were also asked why they did or did not use the school library: **a selection of reasons were provided for the children to select from, but the children were also able to input their own open ended responses to the question if they wished to.** The pre-provided reasons selected by the pupils are ranked in Table 5 in order of frequency. There was a strong sense that the library was a friendly and fun place to be, and a place that could support the children's learning. This was also reiterated in the children's open-ended responses. There were 690 responses to the open-ended question of what they used the school library for. These responses were then categorized using content analysis and frequencies calculated. *School curriculum, quiet place, safe haven, book access, equipment access and self-improvement* were the most frequently mentioned reasons for using the school library. **To arrive at the themes, key words and phrases were categorized, for example if the children mentioned safe/safety or they described the library as a safe space for them, these were grouped together under the theme safe haven. If the children mentioned**

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they visited the library only for class these were grouped under school curriculum.

Table 6 provides an example of how the themes were developed via content analysis for three of the main themes, with the keys words highlighted.

The most frequently mentioned reason for visiting the school library was because such visits were part of the school curriculum (138 responses), with either a timetabled English lesson for the library, or a time for Accelerated Reader (9 responses). Associated with the use of the school library for schoolwork, 33 responses mentioned the library was where they went to change or obtain a new reading book. For other pupils the library was a place they could complete classwork, homework or study (8 responses).

The library was recognized by the **pupils eligible for FSM** as providing the opportunity for self-improvement (62 responses) either with reading or generally for school. Pupils mentioned how they used the library for revision (15 responses). The library for these pupils was a place where they could '*practice a test that you have to do the next day*'.

For 51 pupils the library provided a place where they could access books. Analyzing the comments, this appears to have been for personal use. The library was described as a '*magical place filled with books that I can read*' offering pupils a '*wide range of books from fiction and non-fiction*'; '*I like to use the school library as I can find interesting books to read*'. This was linked to another reason pupils mentioned: that they used the library because they enjoyed reading (47 responses).

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School libraries enabled access to equipment whether that be a laptop, computer, printer or to purchase a pen (14 responses). For pupils who may not have had access to a digital device at home, the school library enabled access to the facilities needed to complete schoolwork, *'I can print things and use word for school and outside purposes'*.

For many pupils the library offered a quiet place (113), where they could read, concentrate, relax and be calm. The quiet element of the library offered these pupils a something different to the rest of the school: *'because it is quiet in the library whereas outside it is loud'*, *'it is calm and quiet and the perfect reading environment'*. 47 pupils mentioned how quiet the library was, and this helped them to concentrate (18 responses). For these pupils the library was a place to go: *'because it is a calm place to get on with your work without being disturbed(sic) and it makes me feel comfortable (sic) to read.'*; *'because it helps me concentrate especially when I am with mu (sic) siblings and they try to distract me'*.

Associated with this theme of a quiet place, is the use of the library as a safe haven (21 responses), *'it's a safe haven from bullies.'*; *'only safe place in the school'* and *'a good place to get away from all bad things.'*; This is perhaps summed up best by the following response: *'I just feel it a place where I can be my self (sic) and where I can be me it like my little sancery (sic)'*.

The reasons why some children **eligible for FSM** did not use the library were also captured using a mixture of pre-populated options within the questionnaire and an open response box. The reasons provided by the survey were ranked in order of

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popularity and are summarized in Table 7. Key reasons included a perception that the library was boring and their friends did not use it, that the books were not interesting enough (including that they preferred to use their own books) and that they could find information they needed online. 344 pupils provided open ended responses to the question. The majority reported finding the library boring or not interesting (54 responses) and others mentioned ‘hating reading’ (39 responses). Eight responses mentioned they did not have a school library or a school librarian, *‘our library is not an actual library its just a bookcase at the back of my English teachers classroom’*.

Other reasons for not using the school library were preferring to read or complete schoolwork at home (22 responses). This may be associated with social identity, with pupils mentioning avoiding the library because it was for ‘nerds’ or for those to be bullied, the overall message being that going to the library was not cool (24 responses). Twenty-two mentioned disappointment in the reading material available: *‘does not have the genre I’m interested in/am reading (manga)’*; *‘there’s nothing edgy or even slightly good in school everything is so politically correct and there are so many rules’*.

Interestingly, 35 respondents mentioned that they did not have time to visit the library during the school day, and 19 mentioned how busy their library was, *‘never enough space and if there is no space you have to go’*. Other reasons for not using the library included not having access to computers (5 responses) or being banned from the library (4 responses).

## Discussion



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We found that the extent to which children were able to access a school library, and whether they used it if they could, was able to differentiate the children eligible for FSM in terms of their reading and writing related feelings and behaviours.

Specifically, we found that pupils eligible for FSM who used the school library were more likely to enjoy reading and writing, and to read and write more frequently outside class compared to pupils eligible for FSM who were not library users. They also reported reading and writing a wider variety of texts and had higher confidence in their reading and writing ability. Our analysis of the children's open ended responses to the Annual Literacy Survey underscores the importance of school libraries for these pupils' ability to engage effectively with literacy. Libraries afford children eligible for FSM safe spaces not only for their learning but, for some, from school life in general, and access to resources that they need to engage with the school curriculum and find it rewarding and motivating.

Perhaps most noteworthy is the evidence here that school library use may be somehow linked to the frequency with which the children eligible for FSM read and wrote outside of school. The status of these activities has been recently recognized as important for schools to encourage (e.g. see Cremin 2014; Cremin & Locke 2017), with reading for pleasure now forming part of the school inspection framework for schools in England and Wales. It would seem that such activities may be critical in enabling pupils who are eligible for FSM to close the attainment gap. For example, Flowers (2003) found that Black High school students' reading for pleasure positively impacted their performance on standardized tests of reading (Flowers, 2003). More recently, Torppa, Eklund, Sulkunen, Niemi & Ahonen (2017) found that individual differences in 1,309 Finnish children's leisure reading explained variance in their

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PISA reading scores. Perhaps most convincingly, Torppa et al. (in press) have also found that increased levels of leisure reading (of books in particular) was related to growth in children's reading comprehension over time. We argue that that school libraries may afford children spaces where they can develop identities as readers and writers and thereby increase their engagement with such activities, such that they can **improve their attainment** in literacy over time.

**The qualitative data we have presented here has highlighted** that access to school libraries is important to **children who are eligible for FSM** for other reasons. They represent a highly vulnerable group of young children, and their open-ended responses indicate the importance that the library holds for them. It affords them a quiet space in which to work, which may be the only quiet space available to them for study, depending on home conditions. The issue of safety was raised, and the importance of the library as somewhere that offered respite was key to some of those who used it. By restricting children's access to school libraries, especially in primary school (as indicated by the findings of the BMG research report), we are not just limiting the academic potential of pupils from low income backgrounds, but we are also potentially putting their wellbeing at risk.

Although our report is based on a large and diverse sample of pupils, we recognize the cross-sectional nature of our data as a limitation: **our results should not be taken as indicative of a causal association between school library use and reading outcomes, as without longitudinal evidence over multiple time points, or some form of intervention-based design, there is no way of being sure that it was the children's use of the school libraries that was driving their reading behaviour, enjoyment and**

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**confidence scores.** It could equally be the case that those pupils who were the most engaged, and the most able, were the most motivated to use the resources available to them. It should also be noted that pupils' school library use and their status as receiving free school meals was self-reported and, therefore, may not have been accurate reflections of their actual school library use or their level of disadvantage. We also note that our content analysis is based on 690 open ended responses from 6,264 respondents. This was because respondents did not have to complete this section if they felt that their reasons for using or not using the libraries was adequately captured in the fixed choice options made available in the previous question. However, we feel it is important to recognise that the qualitative analyses reported here are based only on a modest subset of our sample.

Whilst noting these important limitations, we argue that this paper represents an important dataset for beginning to understand better the needs of children who are eligible for free school meals with a view to reducing the attainment gap that is now characteristic of children from low income homes. Our data have shown that within a large sample of UK children eligible for FSM, there is variation in the extent to which they can access a school library, and if they can access one, there are children who choose not to use it, and the reasons for this lack of use are varied. There is work to be done within schools to act on the feedback provided by these pupils. The perception of the library as a 'boring' place, with unappealing texts is the first area that needs to be tackled. The reduction in qualified library staff in English school libraries, for example, may be part of the reason why this perception has been allowed to develop – school librarians are important curators of literature and the information held by libraries and therefore have the ability to enthuse children about texts in a way that is

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much broader than the focus of individual class teachers. If a school library has been allowed to date, and to become 'functional' rather than a place of stimulation and new material, this will compound children's sense that libraries have less to offer them than their own collection of books at home. Similarly, librarians need to recognise the influence of peer groups and create spaces where groups of young people will want to spend time and treat as a safe space to explore their identities as readers. A sense of belonging is important to children's academic motivation and emotional reactions to school (e.g. Gillen-O'Neel & Fuligni, 2013; Gray, 2017), and it would seem from our data that the school library can afford this to some children, but if their peers are resistant to this idea it may be difficult to overcome negative perceptions of library use for others.

We consistently found the best outcomes in terms of confidence, enjoyment and frequency of extra-curricular reading and writing in the group of students who reported that they used their school library. We propose that school libraries may be important in encouraging children from disadvantaged backgrounds to engage with a wide variety of texts, to enjoy reading and writing, and to have confidence in their reading and writing abilities. These positive attitudes have been linked to increased reading frequency in other studies (McKenna, Conradi, Lawrence, Jang & Meyer, 2012; McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth 1995). Increased frequency of reading and writing outside of school has, in turn, been associated with better reading attainment (Clark & Teravainen, 2017; Gambrell, 2015; Torppa et al. in press). What is needed now are longitudinal data which track children's use of library spaces at school, and how their reading behaviors, confidence and reading attainment develop over time and in line with the ways in which they are using those spaces. Such studies need to

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use sensitive measures of school library engagement that can be verified independently. It would be helpful in particular to break down and focus on specific aspects of school library provision when analysing the benefits of this resource on pupil attainment, such as the impact of having qualified librarians, the nature and extent of library access for pupils, frequency of book borrowing, e-book provision, access to quiet study spaces and so on. Given the pressures on school funds, the more detailed the account of 'what works', the stronger the case we can make for getting the right kinds of library provision in all schools, for the benefit of all pupils, but especially those most vulnerable to underachievement.

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## SCHOOL LIBRARY PROVISION AND FSM CHILDREN

*Table 1: Distribution of Participants by UK region*

<b>Region</b>	<b>No. of Participants</b>	<b>% Total Sample</b>
North East	723	9.8
North West	508	6.9
Yorkshire	443	6.0
East Midlands	240	3.2
West Midlands	1049	14.2
East of England	833	11.3
Greater London	2044	27.6
South East England	386	5.2
South West England	397	5.4
Wales	116	1.6
Scotland	344	4.6
Northern Ireland	213	2.9
Not Reported	104	1.4

## SCHOOL LIBRARY PROVISION AND FSM CHILDREN

*Table 2: Contingency table indicating distribution of participants by school library access group relative to gender and school 'Key Stage'.*

	School Library Use		
	Yes	No	No School Library
Boy	1974	992	106
Girl	2069	831	75
Other	46	26	8
Prefer not to say	78	44	15
<b>Key Stage 2</b> (Aged 7-11 years)	1444	295	74
<b>Key Stage 3</b> (Aged 11-14 years)	2383	1131	88
<b>Key Stage 4</b> (Aged 14-16 years)	274	415	37
<b>Key Stage 5</b> (Aged 16-18 years)	65	52	5

## SCHOOL LIBRARY PROVISION AND FSM CHILDREN

Table 4: Median Diversity of Material Read or Written Outside of School (Range in Parentheses), by School Library Use Group.

	<b>Reading Diversity Score</b>	<b>Writing Diversity Score</b>
<b>Library Users</b>	4.0 (13)	3.0 (12)
<b>Library Non-Users</b>	2.0 (13)	1.0 (12)
<b>No School Library</b>	3.0 (13)	2.0 (12)

## SCHOOL LIBRARY PROVISION AND FSM CHILDREN

*Table 5: Reasons why the children used the school library (suggested reasons) in rank order of importance.*

<b>Reason</b>	<b>N Agreed</b>	<b>Percentage of Sample</b>
Friendly space	2156	29.1
Interesting books	2143	29.0
Helps me to learn	1948	26.3
To do homework	1968	26.6
Fun place	1695	22.9
There are computers there	1596	21.6
My friends go	1300	17.6
Other material than books	1236	16.7.
Meet friends	1212	16.4
Good first visit	967	13.1
Clubs	516	7.0
I am a pupil librarian	408	5.5

## SCHOOL LIBRARY PROVISION AND FSM CHILDREN

*Table 6: Table of examples which illustrate how the themes were identified for three of the main themes.*

School Curriculum	Quiet Place	Safe Haven
<p>A <b><u>reading lesson/English lesson</u></b></p> <p>'We have library lessons where we read books and take quizzes on them to get points and reach our point targets'.</p> <p>As a <b><u>class we go</u></b> the library</p>	<p>Allows me to read in <b><u>peace and quiet</u></b> most of the time</p> <p><b><u>Relax</u></b> and do my homework</p>	<p>A good place to <b><u>get away from all bad things</u></b></p> <p>I am friends with the librarian. I <b><u>feel safe</u></b> in the library because I get to go behind the desk as I help out (you could say I am a training or pupil librarian)</p>
<p>Because I <b><u>have to for school work</u></b></p> <p>Because I <b><u>have to go there for library</u></b></p> <p>Because <b><u>our teachers make us</u></b></p>	<p>Because it <b><u>calms me down</u></b></p> <p>Because it is the <b><u>perfect place to calm down</u></b></p> <p>Because it is a really <b><u>quiet and peaceful</u></b> place to read and it has a great variety of books to choose from.</p> <p>Because it is a <b><u>quiet</u></b> in the library whereas outside it is loud</p>	<p>Because <b><u>I don't want to go outside</u></b></p> <p>Because I have <b><u>literally no friends</u></b>. And I stay by myself</p> <p>because it is the <b><u>only safe place</u></b> in the school</p> <p>It's a <b><u>safe haven</u></b> from bullies</p>

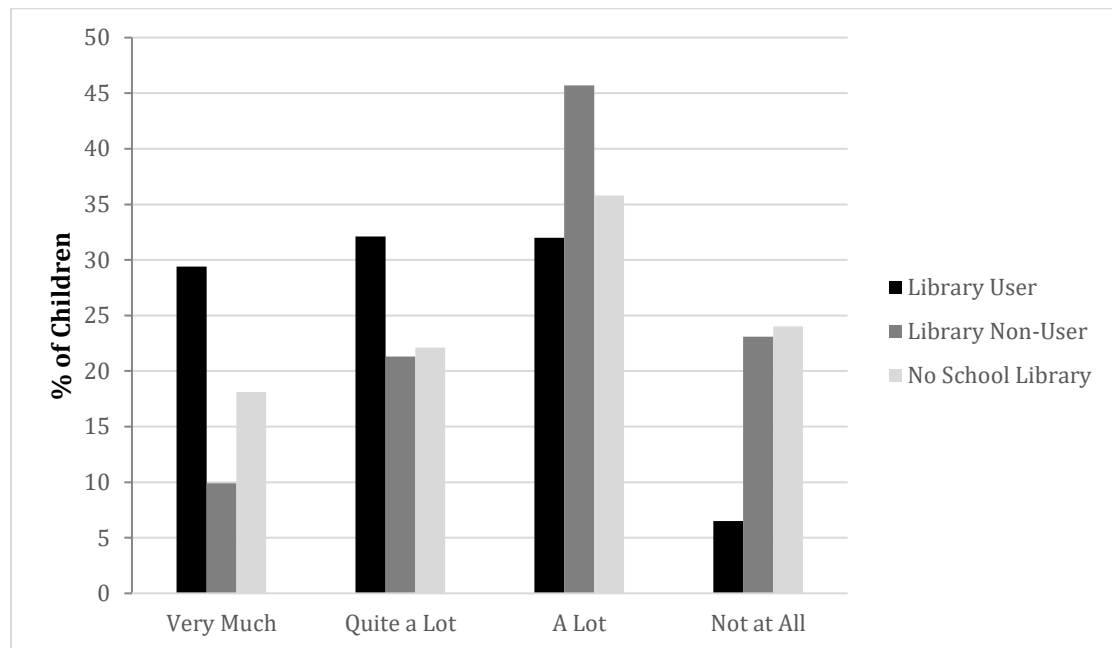
## SCHOOL LIBRARY PROVISION AND FSM CHILDREN

*Table 7: Reasons why the children did not want to use the school library (suggested reasons) in rank order of importance*

<b>Reason</b>	<b>N Agreed</b>	<b>Percentage of Sample</b>
It's boring	1043	14.1
No interesting books	878	11.9
Friends don't use it	775	10.5
I prefer my own books	734	9.9
I can find information online	632	8.5
Doesn't help me learn	470	6.4
It's for younger pupils	392	5.3
No computers	321	4.3
No other materials	293	4.0
Isn't a friendly space	229	3.1
No clubs	181	2.4
I haven't visited it	143	1.9

## SCHOOL LIBRARY PROVISION AND FSM CHILDREN

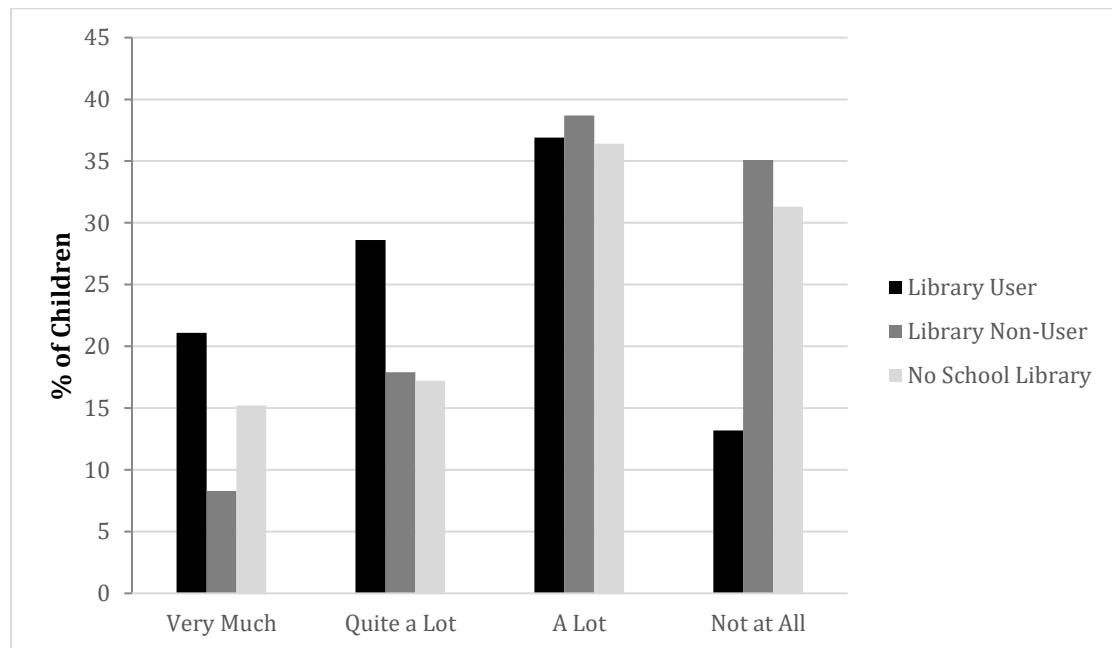
Figure 1: Percentage of children in each library use group reporting enjoyment of reading.





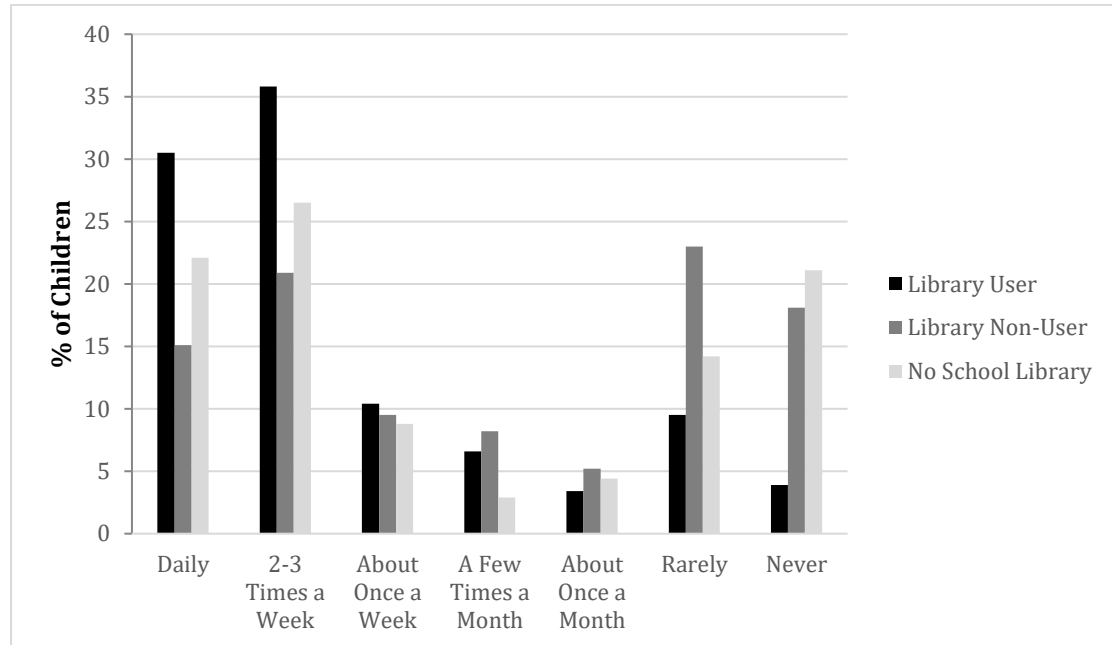
## SCHOOL LIBRARY PROVISION AND FSM CHILDREN

Figure 2: *Percentage of children in each library use group reporting enjoyment of writing.*



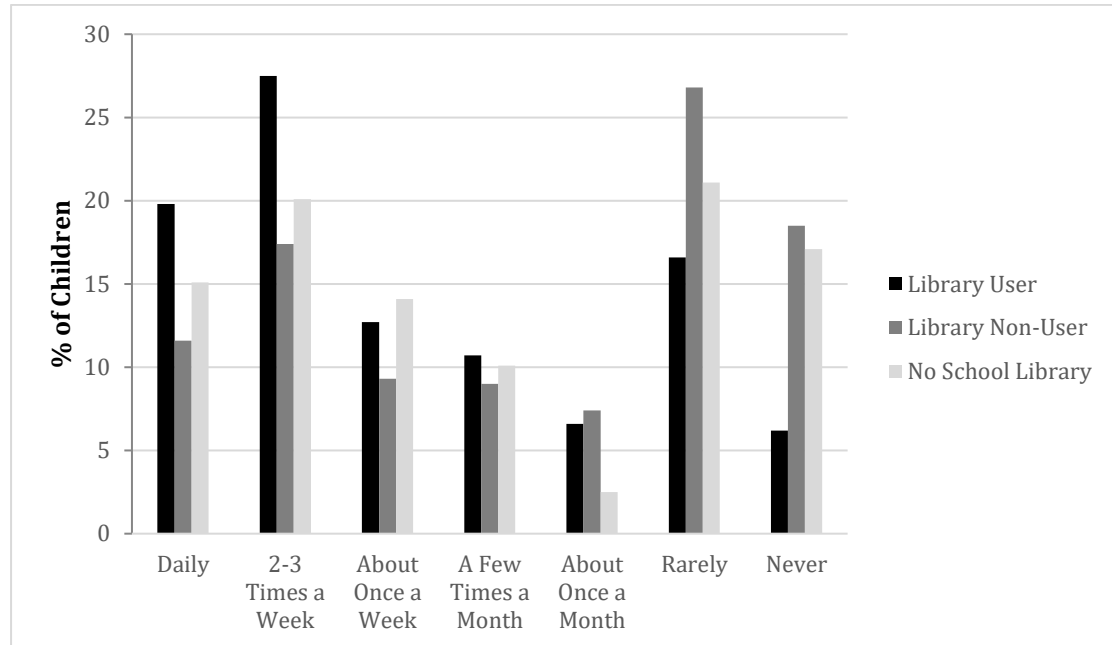
## SCHOOL LIBRARY PROVISION AND FSM CHILDREN

Figure 3: *Percentage of children in each library use group reporting how often they read for pleasure outside of school.*



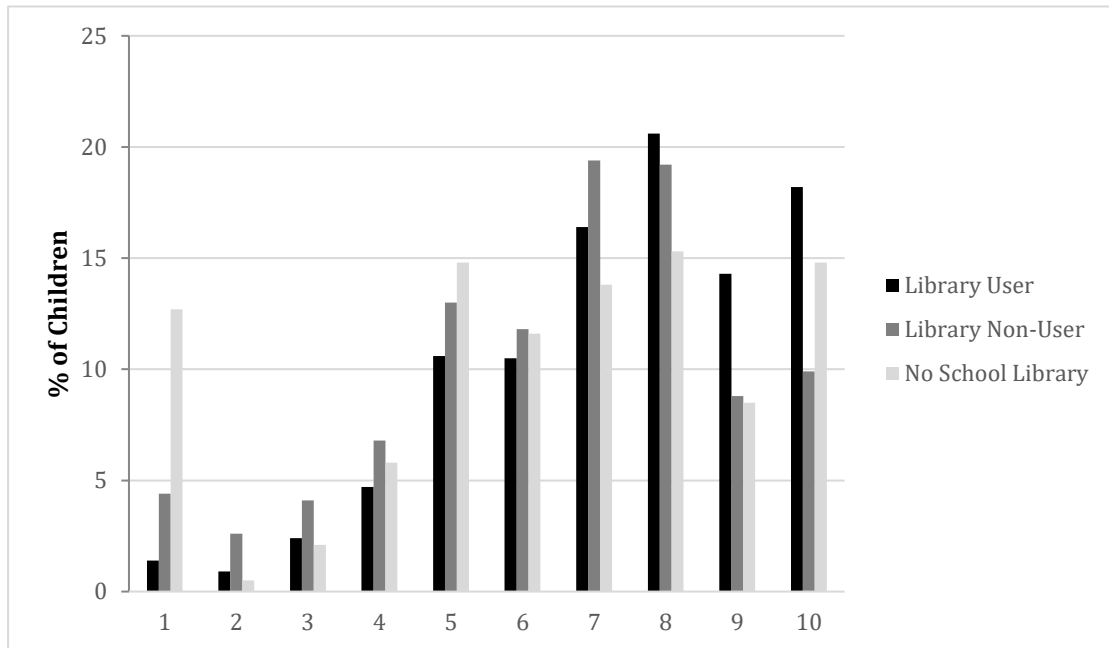
## SCHOOL LIBRARY PROVISION AND FSM CHILDREN

Figure 4: *Percentage of children in each library use group reporting how often they wrote for pleasure outside of school.*



## SCHOOL LIBRARY PROVISION AND FSM CHILDREN

Figure 5: *Percentage of children in each library use group reporting how confident they were in their reading ability on a scale of 1 to 10.*



## SCHOOL LIBRARY PROVISION AND FSM CHILDREN

Figure 6: *Percentage of children in each library use group reporting how confident they were in their reading ability on a scale of 1 to 10.*

