

15th January 2018

Number 10,
Downing Street,
London,
SW1A 2AA

Dear Prime Minister,

Pupil Library Assistant Award 2018

My name is Maia Hipwood and I am a finalist for the Pupil Library Assistant Award. I have worked as a Library Assistant at the Howard of Effingham since year 7 (four and a half years). During my time here, I have discovered myself and come to realise how important school libraries are to students and to schools.

Our library is a safe space to explore our intellectual capabilities. Our librarian and us have worked hard to provide a friendly community. The books and other resources in our library are well used by students, teachers, and staff. Our librarian is passionate about reading for pleasure and we love stamping the Howie Owl Bingo cards, which is the reading scheme that our Librarian made for year 7 and 8's. During the morning, before school and during break and lunch, the library is always full with students for either reading, do homework or playing board games. Every Friday we have a chess club where we set out chess boards for anyone to use as well as a chess tournament every year for everyone to play chess and represent their house and earn points so the house with the most points win.

In the library, we have a work experience office where people can look up areas for work experience. One of these places to do work experience is at the library and learn skills like organisation and working with kids. The library also gets many donations of books, which helps keep stories around. The library has around 20 computers, which allows all students to be able to do homework and research if they do not have a computer at home. Sixth Form use the computers and the library in general to be able to do coursework at school in their free time.

The library is a safe space for me, especially during any exams as I get anxious about them, and was a really safe space when I was doing my mocks earlier this year. The librarian has always helped, comforting me with hot chocolate and inspirational pictures from the internet. The library has helped me to raise my self-confidence as well as help build a resilience. Being in the library has given me more adult responsibility, for example, recently being in charge of the library while the librarian is away, which also helped in developing my people skills. Friendships are built with the other student librarians and it feels like a family and a small community.

When I first joined year 7, I was being bullied and went to the library as a safe space, over time I became a student librarian. An older student librarian was the first person to teach me the ways of the library. Which was great as he became my friend and no one bullied me after that. Another librarian helped build my resilience as I bossed ex-student librarians' who were boys 3-4 years older than I was! This has helped me to become more mature and has helped to keep me more grounded. In Year 7 I had very negative view of myself and not just in my appearance but also in what I was able to do and I wished I never existed but when I was in the library there were always lots of laughs as well as being cared about. I started feeling better about myself and appearance halfway through Year 10 and this is thanks to the Library. This helped improve my mental attitude through those years.

The librarian is always able to suggest any books she thinks would suit that person, gets to know people very quickly, and remembers people who enters the door. The student librarians are very lively but do help with any job that I need help with. They cheer me up whenever I look like I need it and are very energetic! We all love to make jokes and have fun. I'm now year 11 and look out for those year 7's just like those older boy librarians did for me.

I think libraries impact people because of how well the library is used and the community around it. This makes people feel like they can belong somewhere and know a place to relax as well as a place of refuge. It is not just school libraries that have an impact on people, as I think that public libraries do as well.

When students grow up and leave school, they remember the library and how it helped them. I know I will. I hope you do too. However, if you have forgotten then please can you come to our school library as I am sure Mrs Woods would love to remind you?

Yours sincerely,

Maia Hipwood

Year 11 Student at The Howard of Effingham School

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