



Changing life stories

## A National Literacy Trust evaluation report

# News. **wise**

## Evaluation report 2018-19

Chiara Cappellini and Irene Picton

“I cannot overstate the impact the project has had on the children I teach. They are so much more engaged and questioning of the news, and they have been encouraged to go home and teach their parents and siblings about fact checking websites, how to conduct interviews without judgement, and how to assess whether a report is biased or not. They have rightly relished the chance to be ‘experts’ and it has been a hugely empowering experience for them.”

Roz Porter Tibbey, Grafton Primary School, London

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T: 020 7587 1842 W: [literacytrust.org.uk](http://literacytrust.org.uk) Twitter: @Literacy\_Trust Facebook: [nationalliteracytrust](https://www.facebook.com/nationalliteracytrust)

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## About NewsWise

NewsWise is a free, cross-curricular news literacy programme for 9- to 11-year-olds across the UK. The programme aims to empower children with the skills and knowledge to engage with and enjoy news, to feel confident to ask questions and to challenge misinformation, and to have their own values and opinions. NewsWise provides a suite of high-quality news literacy education resources, experiences and support for schools, including workshops, teacher training, lesson plans and online resources. All resources are mapped to the curriculum and the PSHE Association's Programme of Study, with an authentic flavour of the newsroom.



Based on a shared mission to create a generation of news literate children in response to calls for children's news literacy to be better supported in a digital age<sup>1</sup>, NewsWise was developed by the Guardian Foundation, the National Literacy Trust and the PSHE Association. Thanks to funding from Google, the programme is free for all settings teaching 9 to 11-year-olds across the UK.

## Executive summary

This report evaluates the impact of the first year of NewsWise, from April 2018 to April 2019. During this time, the NewsWise team delivered face-to-face workshops to **2,476 pupils in 42 primary schools** serving areas of disadvantage across the UK, giving children the chance to learn about news, improve their news literacy skills and prepare their own news reports. As this report shows, children who took part in the workshops developed a deeper understanding of why and how news stories are created, reported greater confidence when navigating news and showed increased critical engagement with the news. For example, between pre and post-programme pupil surveys, the percentage of children aware of the importance of fact checking increased from 52% to 70%, the percentage who find it difficult to tell if a news story is trustworthy decreased from 49% to 33%. and the percentage who believe news stories should be 'balanced' increased from 35% to 72%.

In addition, **540** teachers received face-to-face training, helping schools to support and embed news literacy across the curriculum. More than **9 in 10** (95%) teachers who took part in a NewsWise teacher training session said that they would recommend it to other schools, with **8 in 10** (78%) rating it as 'excellent'. More than **500** schools have registered an interest in taking part in NewsWise, implying a need for children's news literacy to be better supported in schools. In June 2018, NewsWise launched a website ([theguardian.com/newswise](http://theguardian.com/newswise)) and Twitter account ([@GetNewsWise](https://twitter.com/GetNewsWise)) to ensure all UK primary schools have access to the project's free online resources, which include 16 curriculum-based lesson plans ('unit of work'), posters, case studies, and tips for turning the classroom into a newsroom. To date, **3,520** resources and **703** units of work have been downloaded.

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<sup>1</sup> APPG on Literacy: [Commission on Fake News and the Teaching of Critical Literacy Skills in Schools](#)

## Introduction

The rise of digital technology over the last decade has brought unprecedented levels of change in how news is created and experienced (National Literacy Trust, 2018). While traditional, regulated sources of news, such as TV, radio and print, remain popular across all demographic groups, global studies indicate that young people in particular access news stories increasingly through digital and social media (Newman et al., 2018).



This new media landscape is inherently more collaborative and participatory, offering previously unavailable opportunities for news production, distribution and consumption. The resulting recalibration of the notion of ‘authority’ has brought both benefits and challenges to today’s news consumers. Of particular concern has been the impact of misinformation on public trust in journalism (e.g. Mitchell et al., 2018), leading to calls for children and young people’s critical, media and news literacy skills to be strengthened to help them to navigate the contemporary news environment.

Schools, families and media organisations have a shared responsibility to help children learn how to assess and evaluate the news they encounter, and each has a role to play in fostering skills and confidence that will empower them to become responsible news creators and consumers (e.g. Commons Select Committee, 2019). Central to this is an awareness and understanding of the methods and motivations behind news production – the ‘hows’ and ‘whys’ of modern journalism.

**“We need to empower and inspire children to become active participants in their communities and to tell their own stories, develop journalism and digital skills – those core skills.”**

Ben Hicks, The Guardian Foundation (APPG on Literacy, Fake News Commission, 2018)

## News literacy in the digital age

Children and young people have grown up with the online world as a constant, convenient source of information, but research shows that children may not necessarily have the knowledge and skills they need to assess the reliability of what they find there (NLT, 2018). Indeed, surveys conducted by the National Literacy Trust in 2017 as part of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Literacy’s Commission on Fake News and the Teaching of Critical Literacy Skills, found that not only did half of all children lack confidence in their ability to identify fake news<sup>2</sup> but only 2% were able to identify fake and real news stories presented as part of a quiz correctly. Gender and socioeconomic background were found to be

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<sup>2</sup> 52% of primary pupils and 48% of secondary students

associated with critical literacy skills for primary pupils, with girls and those from more advantaged backgrounds performing better than their peers<sup>3</sup>.

Similarly, questions relating to news literacy were included in the National Literacy Trust's Annual Literacy Survey in 2019 to provide greater context for NewsWise. Relevant findings from the survey of 56,905 children and young people aged 9 to 18, **published exclusively in this report**, indicate that:

- Younger children (aged 9-11) were least confident about their ability to tell whether a news story is true or not, with just 3 in 5 (60%) saying they find it 'easy' compared to almost 3 in 4 (73.6%) of their older peers (aged 16-18)
- Fewer younger children said they engage with news on a daily basis compared with their older peers (43.9% vs 59.2%)
- Fewer younger children said they know where to go to check the facts of a news story than their older peers (68.2% vs 73.3%)
- Children eligible for free school meals (FSM) were found to have lower levels of confidence<sup>4</sup> and engagement with news<sup>5</sup> than their more advantaged peers

These findings suggest that the targeted approach taken by NewsWise, in terms of age and socioeconomic background, provides valuable resources for children who will benefit the most from support in this area.

Not only that, but NewsWise is helping to raise children's confidence in their news literacy skills above the national average: 69% of NewsWise participants find it easy to tell whether a news story is true or not after taking part in the project (vs 53% before the intervention), compared with 60% of children the same age across the UK (Annual Literacy Survey).

## The NewsWise project model

Several areas of need have been identified in relation to improving children and young people's ability to engage effectively with the digital news environment (National Literacy Trust, 2018). These include:

- **Time:** the need for specialist educators and media experts to support busy teachers in educating children in how to better evaluate news<sup>6</sup>
- **Training:** the need for teachers to be given opportunities to learn about key news literacy skills, supported by tools and techniques around critical literacy to allow them to teach such skills effectively<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Primary pupils who were able to correctly identify both fake news stories in the fake news quiz: 48% of boys vs 58% of girls / 48% of FSM pupils vs 58% of non-FSM pupils

<sup>4</sup> 63.3% of FSM pupils find it easy to tell whether a news story is true or not vs 68.7% of non-FSM pupils

<sup>5</sup> Watch news on TV (49% FSM vs 57.7% non-FSM) and use news apps (38.6% FSM vs 45.4% non-FSM)

<sup>6</sup> 85% of teachers believed the media, including people with a journalistic and/or digital background, had a role to play in improving children's critical literacy skills

<sup>7</sup> Supported in the evidence review initiating the Commission and in written submissions

- **Resources:** the need for resources, including real world examples of news, to equip children with recent and relevant experience in interpreting and evaluating news sources<sup>8</sup>
- **Experience:** the need for children to be given chances to get involved in the production of news, as a practical way to empower children to take responsibility for news creation, allow them to develop an understanding of how news is produced, and consider different perspectives and concepts of truth

The NewsWise programme responds directly to each of these findings, providing expert workshops, teacher training and resources to develop children’s news literacy skills and give them new, genuine opportunities to get involved in the production of news.

<b>Time</b>	NewsWise uses expertise from specialist educators and media experts to support teachers in the delivery of news literacy lessons and activities
<b>Training</b>	NewsWise delivers teacher training to support teachers to deliver news literacy lessons in schools through examples, tips and setting out the pedagogy behind the project
<b>Resources</b>	16 lesson plans with ready-made resources and using real examples, designed to be used in English, PSHE or topic time, and mapped to the curriculum and PSHE Association’s programme of study, providing busy teachers with effective and engaging ways to teach news literacy.
<b>Experience</b>	A NewsWise workshop creates a ‘newsroom’ experience in schools, with pupils taking on editorial roles, identifying trustworthy stories and creating news reports in real time



<sup>8</sup> 55% of teachers felt the national curriculum did not equip children with the skills they needed to identify fake news, and 26% felt critical literacy skills as taught in school were not relevant to the real world

## Outputs

In the first year of the project (April 2018 – April 2019), NewsWise aimed to reach 2,400 pupils and 500 teachers through workshops and teacher training in 40 primary schools across the UK. These targets were exceeded, with the programme reaching a total of **2,476 pupils** and **540 teachers** in **42 primary schools**. The programme received more than **500** expressions of interest from primary schools across the UK. Schools were invited to take part based on their level of need and, in addition to workshops and resources; teachers received expert training and access to an online practitioner network. To ensure the project was delivered in schools with the greatest need of support, strict selection criteria were developed. To take part in a NewsWise workshop and teacher training, a school must have:

- A higher than average percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)
- Be located in an area of high literacy vulnerability (National Literacy Trust and Experian, 2017)
- Be located in an area that is typically under-represented in the mainstream media

The average percentage of pupils eligible for FSM across the 42 primary schools that participated in NewsWise was 26.6%, well above the national average of 13.7%<sup>9</sup>. **Figure 1** shows the distribution of schools visited. NewsWise was delivered in primary schools in every UK nation and achieved a diverse geographical spread.

**Figure 1: NewsWise reach in 2018-19**

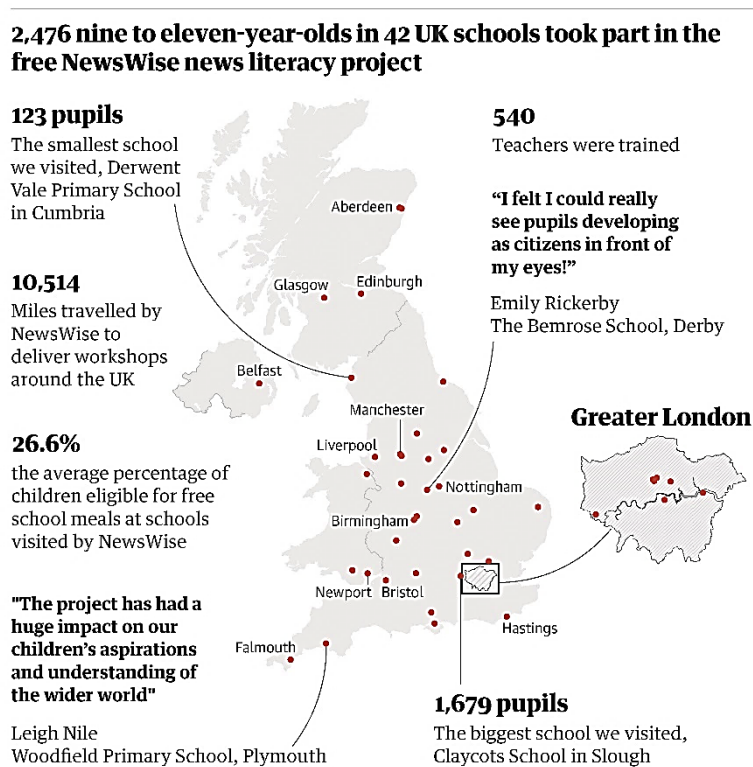


Image credit: Guardian Graphics

<sup>9</sup> Department for Education (2018) [Schools, pupils and their characteristics: January 2018](#)

Thanks to funding from Google, digital NewsWise resources are available and free to every primary school in the UK. This has enabled the project to reach many more children who may not otherwise have had an opportunity to take part in a project like NewsWise, including those from areas of socio-economic deprivation.

## Evaluation methodology

### NewsWise objectives

A number of key objectives for the NewsWise programme were established early in the programme's development. NewsWise aims to reach children from a diverse range of communities in order to:

- **Deepen their understanding of why and how news is produced.** Children will:
  - Learn about reasons for news (e.g. information sharing, income generation, other agendas)
  - Develop their awareness of different aspects of news (factual, opinion, regulated, unregulated), different news formats and media outlets, and what journalists and news producers do (fact-checking, editing, etc)
- **Enable them to navigate the news through active and critical engagement**
  - Active engagement (e.g. experience of learning about news, interest in news)
  - Critical engagement: skills and confidence (e.g. ability to think critically about news stories [i.e. to assess, analyse and evaluate] and confidence to question authority)
- **Empower them to tell their own news stories**
  - Increased ability and confidence to create and share their own news

An evaluation framework was designed to measure the programme's success in reaching its objectives, with pupil and teacher surveys created to capture the impact of the school workshops, teacher training and resources. Children and teachers were asked to complete surveys online wherever possible, due to the restricted time available for manually entering surveys completed on paper.

### Survey time points:

- Pupils were asked to complete surveys before and after they took part in a NewsWise workshop, and after taking part in the unit of work
- Teachers taking part in teacher training were requested to complete a short feedback form (standard practice for continuing professional development (CPD) sessions) and to complete longer surveys after running the unit of work, to provide their professional perspective on impact on the children (see **Figure 2**).



**Figure 2: Evaluation methodology for NewsWise**

	Time point	Purpose of survey	Number completed
Pupil	Pre-NewsWise	To establish a baseline allowing comparison with post-workshop and/or post-NewsWise pupil surveys	1,872 (out of 2,472)
	Post-workshop	To evaluate short-term changes (i.e. over the course of the workshop) in children’s news literacy	1,035
	Post-NewsWise	To evaluate longer-term changes (i.e. after delivery of the unit of work) in children’s news literacy	341
Teacher	Post-teacher training	To evaluate feedback from teacher training sessions	142 (out of 540)
	Post-NewsWise	To evaluate longer-term changes (i.e. after delivery of the unit of work) in children’s news literacy	25

### Survey notes

Some schools experienced issues with the online pupil surveys (for example, low availability of laptops and tablets or a high proportion of pupils in the early stages of learning English). Given these challenges, the response rate for pupil pre- and post-workshop surveys, and the very low rate of ‘skipped’ questions, was testament to the efforts of the NewsWise team, teachers and pupils in helping to evaluate the impact of this new programme.

### Sample

Pupil pre-NewsWise survey responses were received from **1,872 pupils**, a good response rate in relation to 2,472 overall workshop participants (76%). Pupil post-workshop responses were received from **1,035 pupils**, an attrition rate well within that expected of a programme of this nature. However, the pupil post-NewsWise survey response rate was comparatively disappointing, with only **341** surveys received.

Similarly, teacher survey response rates were relatively low, with only **142** of a possible 540 teacher training feedback forms completed (26%) and only 25 post-NewsWise teacher surveys. For this reason, the analysis will present cohort level data.

## Summary of key findings

	Findings	Key supporting statistic
<b>Key finding 1</b> Pupils have increased confidence navigating news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pupils are more confident navigating the news</li> </ul>	There was a <b>33% decrease</b> in the number of pupils who said it is difficult to tell whether a news story is trustworthy (decreasing from 49% before taking part in NewsWise, to 33% after).
<b>Key finding 2</b> Pupils have an increased understanding of news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pupils have a better understanding of why and how news is created</li> <li>Pupils have an increased critical engagement with news</li> </ul>	After taking part in the programme, pupils were 35% more likely to know that fact checking is an essential element of creating news (increasing from 52% to 70%).
<b>Key finding 3</b> Pupils have enhanced news literacy skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pupils are more likely to make a variety of checks before believing a news story</li> <li>Teachers tell us they have seen skills improvements</li> <li>Fake news quiz shows promising results</li> </ul>	Less than half of pupils (48%) would check whether the news they were reading came from an organisation they trusted before the programme, but 7 in 10 (70%) would do so after having taken part in News Wise.
<b>Key finding 4</b> NewsWise successfully engaged pupils with news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pupils are more engaged with the news as a result of the programme</li> </ul>	There was a 14% increase in the percentage of pupils interested in the news (from 58% to 66%), while the percentage disengaged with news decreased by 28%, from one-third (33%) to a quarter (25%).
<b>Key finding 5</b> Teacher training was effective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers said that NewsWise was useful to their professional development</li> <li>Teachers also said the training gave them the confidence and tools to discuss news in the classroom</li> </ul>	24 of 25 teachers told us that they now feel more confident discussing news literacy with pupils.

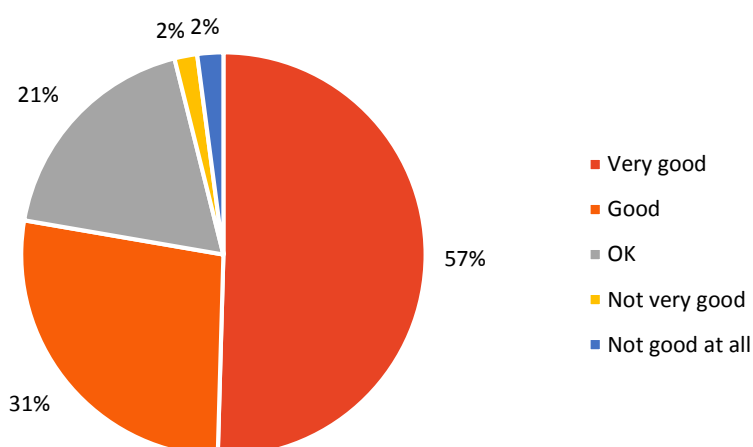
## Overview

As explained in the evaluation methodology section, pupils were surveyed at three distinct time points: before taking part in the programme, to identify the baseline; after the first NewsWise workshop; and finally, after some or all of the unit of work had been completed. The pre- and post-survey results from pupils show that, across a variety of indicators, pupils' news literacy skills improved after taking part in NewsWise. This is shown across a number of questions that explore confidence, understanding and skills.

It is interesting to note that there is a clear improvement across almost all indicators when comparing the baseline (pre-workshop) percentages to the post-workshop percentages. Furthermore, in almost all indicators, there is an additional improvement following the completion of the unit of work. This demonstrates that the workshop is an effective tool to improve news literacy, and that the unit of work successfully furthers and consolidates learning.

Almost **9 in 10** pupils (88%) reported enjoying the workshop, with 57% saying it was 'very good' and 31% saying it was 'good' (see **Figure 3**).

**Figure 3: 'What did you think of the NewsWise workshop?'**

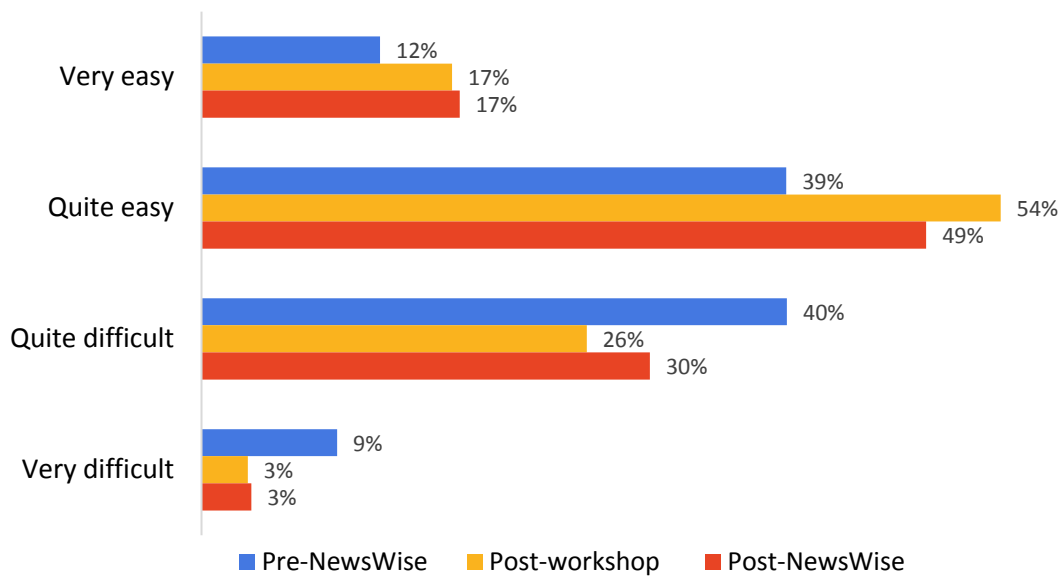


## Key finding 1: Pupils have increased confidence in navigating news

We know that confidence is an issue for pupils as, in the pre-survey, almost half (49%) of pupils said they find it 'quite difficult' or 'very difficult' to tell whether a piece of news is true (see **Figure 4**).

The workshop was very effective in boosting pupils' confidence. Indeed, after the workshop, only one-third (33%) of pupils found it 'very' or 'quite difficult' to tell whether a news story is trustworthy. This represents a 33% decrease in the number of under-confident pupils.

**Figure 4: Pupils' confidence in being able to tell if a news story is true or not**

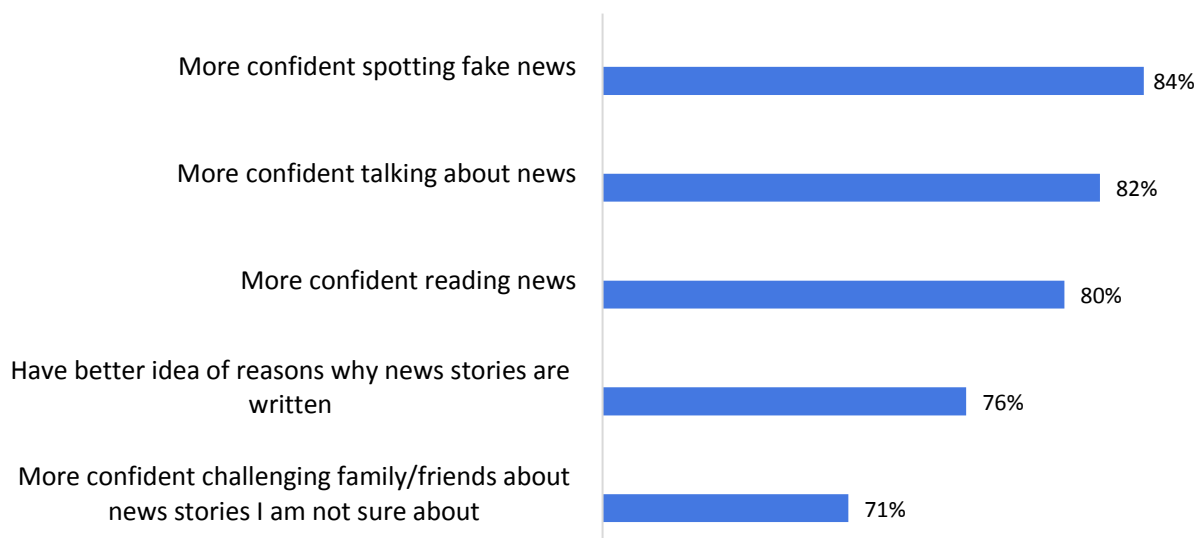


After completing the unit of work, there is a slight increase (4 percentage points) in the number of pupils claiming it is 'quite difficult' to discern whether a piece of news is trustworthy. This may suggest that, after completion of the unit of work, the participants gained a more nuanced understanding of how complex the notion of "trustworthy news" is.

In order to triangulate the data on pupil confidence, the surveys that were administered after the workshop and after the unit of work contained specific post-reflective questions. These questions offered the pupils an opportunity to reflect on various aspects of what they had learnt throughout their NewsWise journey.

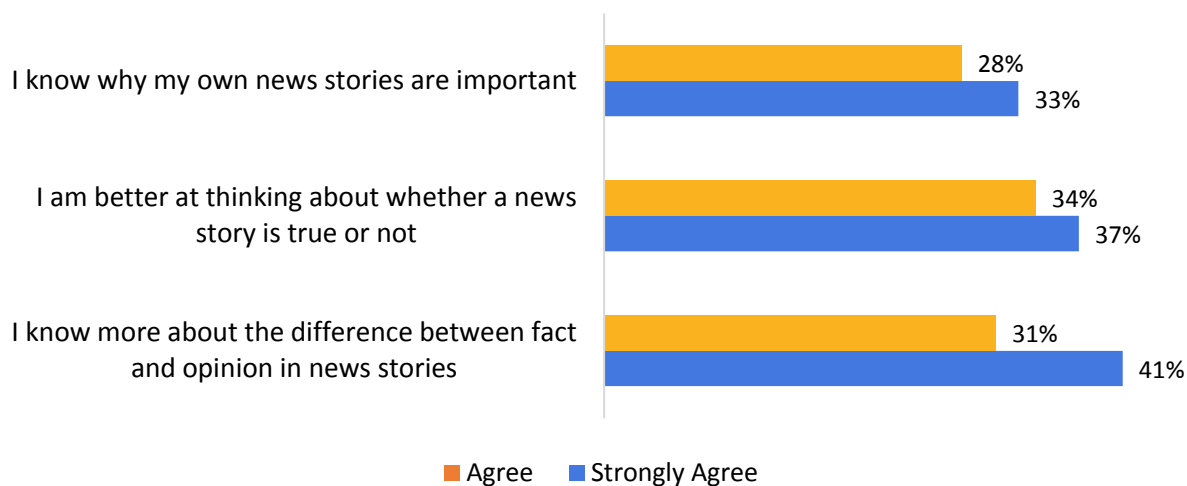
The results show that pupils self-report high levels of confidence in key news literacy skills. Looking at the data from the post-workshop survey (see **Figure 5**), we can see that 84% of participants say they feel more confident about spotting fake news, while 71% are more confident to challenge family or friends about news stories they aren't sure about.

**Figure 5: Pupils' agreement with news literacy statements**



Data from surveys administered at the end of the programme shows a similar trend (see **Figure 6**). Indeed, following the programme, 72% of pupils told us that they ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that they know more about the difference between fact and opinion.

**Figure 6: Pupils’ agreement and disagreement with news literacy statements**



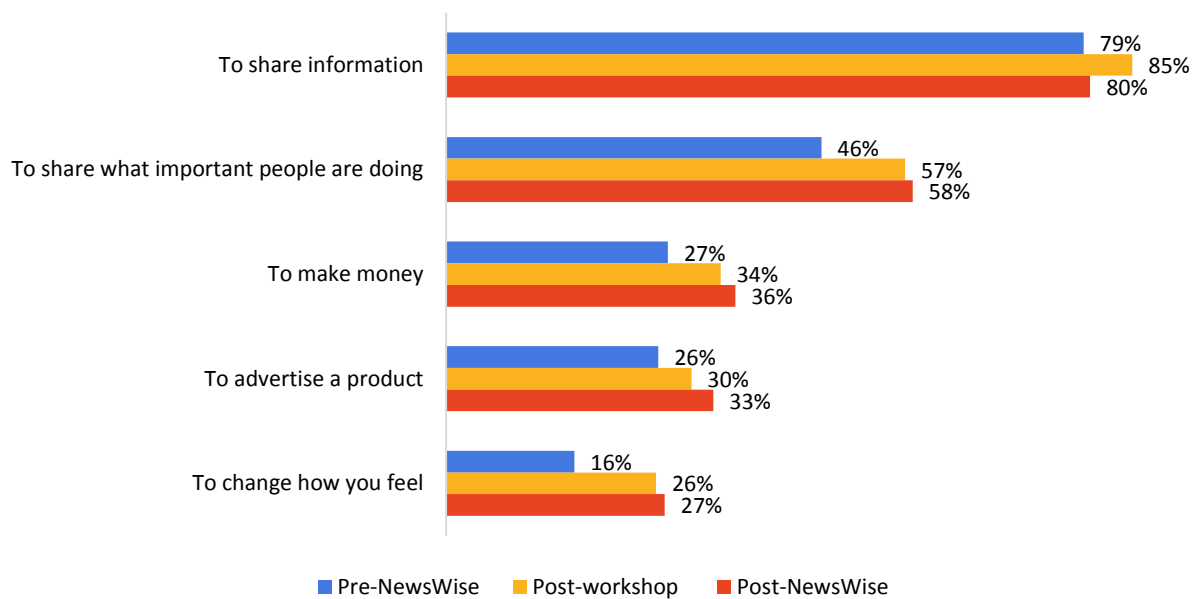
## Key finding 2: Pupils have an improved understanding of news



### Pupils have a better understanding of why news is created

Pupils told us that they had a better idea of why news stories were written after taking part in NewsWise. Children’s pre- and post-workshop surveys showed a significant difference in the percentage who thought reasons for creating news could include ‘to share what important people are doing’ (increasing from 46% to 58%, see **Figure 7**). In addition, the percentage of children thinking news might be created ‘to change how you feel’ increased by 11 percentage points (from 16% to 27%) after completing the programme, showing that pupils gained an understanding of how journalists may use language to influence emotions. Furthermore, the percentage who thought making money or advertising might be a reason for creating news increased slightly, as children learned about the links between this and fake news.

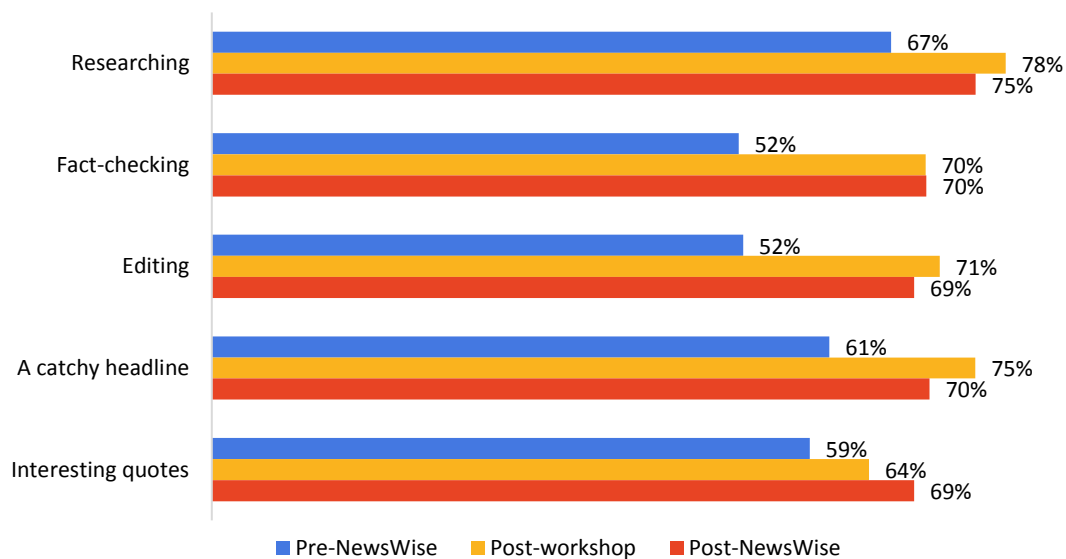
**Figure 7: Pupils' understanding of the reasons why news is produced**



**Pupils have a better understanding of how news is created**

Children’s pre- and post-workshop survey responses indicated that they had a better awareness of how news is created after taking part in NewsWise; specifically what journalists and news producers do. In particular, they were more aware of the importance of finding and checking facts and of the role of editing when creating news stories (see **Figure 8**) after the NewsWise workshop. Pupils understood that fact checking, researching and editing were all essential in order to create real news. After taking part in the programme, there was a 35% increase (from 52% to 70%) in the percentage of pupils aware that fact checking is an essential element for creating news. There were also significant increases in the percentage aware that research and editing are key elements needed to create a news story.

**Figure 8: Pupils' understanding of how news is produced**



## Pupils have increased critical engagement with news

Survey findings indicated positive changes in children’s critical engagement with news, with a notably higher percentage saying that news should present a balanced and fair picture having taken part in the NewsWise workshop or programme (see **Figure 9**).

While there were only small increases in the percentage of pupils who believed news should be ‘truthful’ and ‘interesting’, the percentage that thought news stories should be ‘balanced’ increased by 37 percentage points (from 35% to 72%) between the pre and post-programme surveys. Similarly, the percentage of children who believe news should be ‘fair’ increased significantly, growing from 41% before the programme to 72% after the programme.

**Truthful**  
Be honest. Check the facts are accurate. Don't guess. Don't assume. Don't make things up!

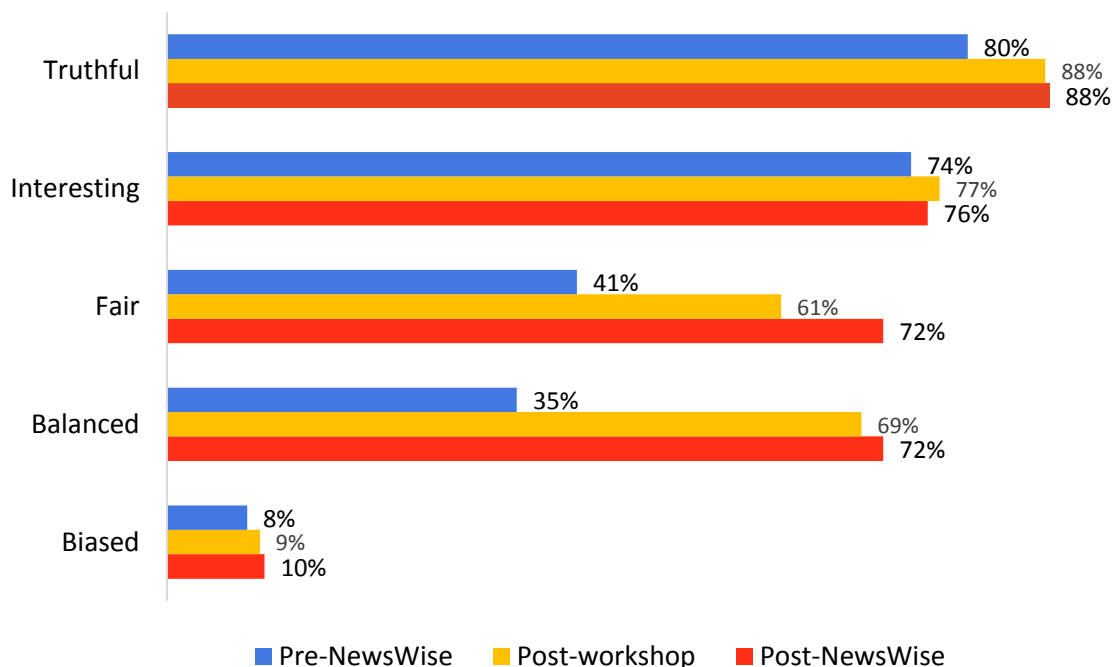
**Fair**  
Treat everyone equally and with respect. Only report what you need to tell your story. Don't bully or make fun of people. Treat people in the way you would like to be treated.

**Balanced**  
Make sure all sides of the story are represented. Include all relevant viewpoints (even if you disagree with them).

**Interesting**  
Consider why stories are important and why your audience would want to hear them. Ask lots of questions to find out new facts and details.

These increases indicate that the workshop was very effective at increasing the critical engagement of pupils, and that the unit of work furthered their understanding of what news should be. Interestingly, the percentage who felt news should be biased, while very low, appeared to increase (albeit very marginally) after both the workshop and at the end of the programme.

**Figure 9: Pupils’ understanding of what news should be**



## Key finding 3: Pupils have enhanced news literacy skills

The progression of participants' news literacy skills measured in three different ways:

1. Self-reported skills by pupils
2. Teacher-reported improvements
3. 'Real or fake' news quiz

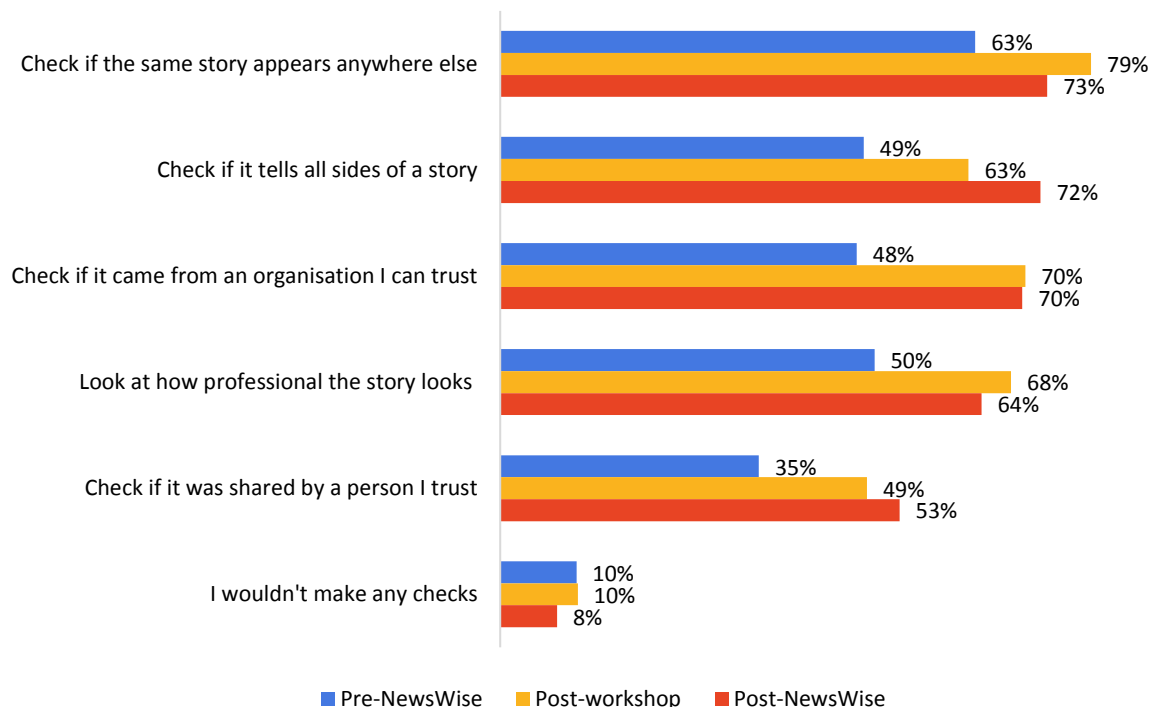
This tripartite approach found that the programme was effective in improving the news literacy skills of participating pupils.

### Pupils increase fact-checking

One important skill in news literacy is the ability to check whether a news story can be trusted. Pupils were more likely to do a range of checks to verify news having taken part in NewsWise (see **Figure 10**). For example, while less than half of pupils (48%) would check whether the news story they were reading came from an organisation they trusted before the programme, 7 in 10 (70%) would do so after taking part in NewsWise.

Interestingly, the percentage of pupils who wouldn't make any checks didn't change after the initial workshop, but decreased marginally at the end of the programme. This may suggest that a light touch intervention is effective with the majority of the cohort, but a more intensive programme would increase the news literacy skills of those pupils who need it most.

**Figure 10: What pupils would do to check if a news story is trustworthy**

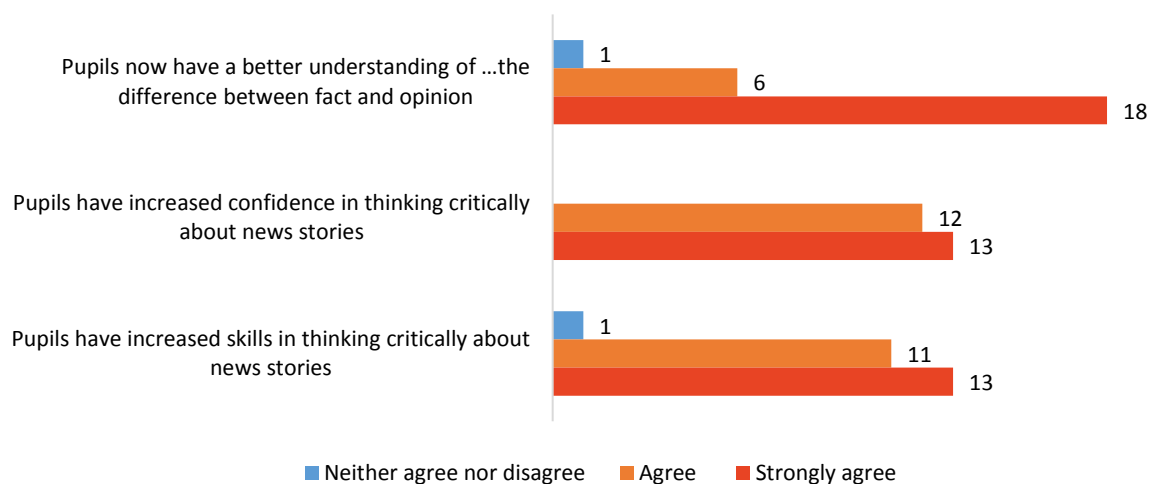




## Teachers report an increase in pupil’s news literacy skills

The teacher surveys provided more evidence that NewsWise was effective in developing the news literacy skills of pupils. For instance, all 25 teachers who completed the survey agreed or strongly agreed that pupils have increased skills in thinking critically about news stories (see **Figure 11**). 24 of the 25 teachers also agreed or strongly agreed that their pupils now have a better understanding aspects of news, such as the difference between fact and opinion, and that they were more confident in thinking critically about news stories.

**Figure 11: Number of teachers in agreement with statements about pupils’ news literacy skills post-NewsWise**



Moreover, we asked teachers for some qualitative data on whether there were any specific children who benefitted from the programme. All of the teachers were able to talk about an individual pupil whose skills had significantly improved following NewsWise. This data yielded some interesting case studies.

The majority of case studies mentioned an impact on pupils’ news literacy skills, for example, one teacher told us:

“One child really grasped the concept and now applies this to so much more. Yesterday, she commented upon something she had read online, but within her explanation, made it very clear that she wasn't sure of its validity. We then revisited how we can be sure if what we are reading is real or fake as a class and they could all recall steps to check fake and real news.”

There was also reference to how the programme has had an impact on the pupils’ general literacy and critical thinking skills. For instance:

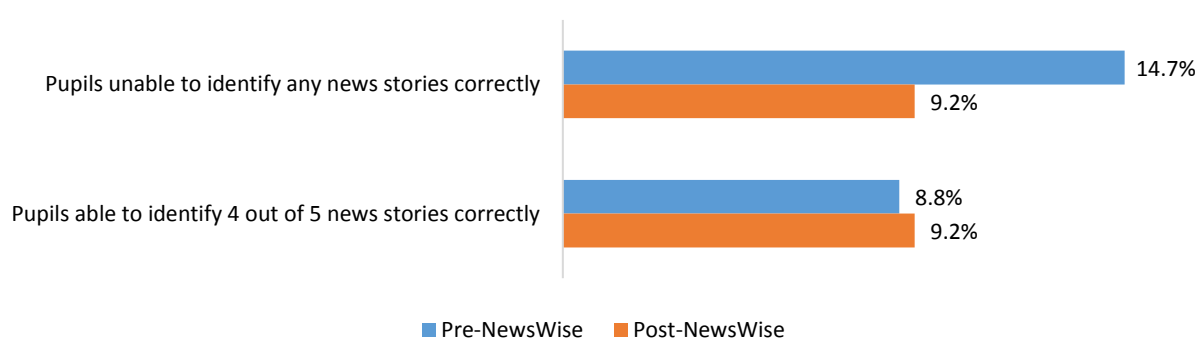
“The NewsWise project produced some of the best pieces of writing for the entire year. The children took pride in producing their pieces, thought critically and worked hard to edit and improve their work. We have not had another piece of writing in school that has caught all of the children's interest like this. ”

## Fake news quiz

After taking part in their pre-NewsWise survey and following the completion of their post-NewsWise surveys, pupils were asked to look at five news articles (a mix of real and fake news) and judge whether these were real or fake.

Before taking part in NewsWise, 14.5% of pupils weren't able to identify any of the news stories correctly (i.e. as either real or fake). This decreased by 38% to just 9.2% of pupils after they had participated in NewsWise. In addition, the percentage of pupils able to identify the majority of stories (4 of the 5 stories) correctly increased slightly before and after the programme, from 8.8% to 9.2% (see **Figure 12**).

**Figure 12: Fake news quiz results before and after participation in NewsWise**



## Revisiting the News Quiz as an evaluation tool

Although the Fake News quiz has yielded some promising findings on the skills progression of the first NewsWise cohort, the NewsWise evaluation and project teams are currently refining new ways in which skills can be measured through testing.

While the fake news quiz is an engaging resource, it is difficult to find pieces of news both accessible to the pupils and with clear indications of being true or false. The approach will therefore be refined in year two of NewsWise to include a shorter, more focused quiz containing three questions with much clearer signs of being real or fake.

Pupils will also be asked to answer comprehension questions about a longer news story, based on a validated method of measuring media literacy skills (Hobbs and Frost, 2003).

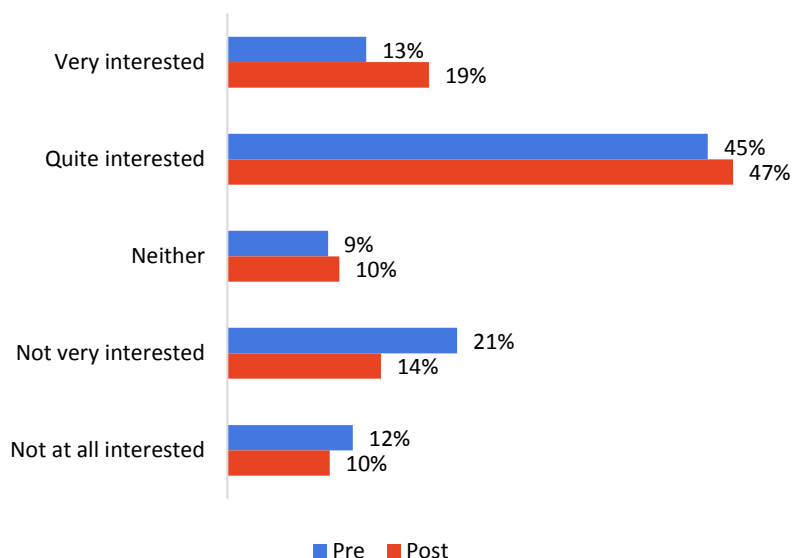
## Key finding 4: Pupils are more engaged with news

The programme's objective to create a generation of news literate pupils also contributes to having a generation of young people who are engaged in civic life. In fact, studies show that young people who are more engaged with the news are more likely to have higher levels of civic participation<sup>10</sup>. The results from the pre- and post-NewsWise surveys show that the sessions were effective in increasing pupils' engagement with news (see **Figure 13**), with a 14% increase in the number of pupils who tell us they are 'very interested' or 'quite interested' in news (from 58% to 66%).

<sup>10</sup> [www.participations.org/Volume%2011/Issue%201/8.pdf](http://www.participations.org/Volume%2011/Issue%201/8.pdf)

There was also a substantial decrease in the number of pupils who told us that they were ‘not very interested’ or ‘not interested at all’ in news. The percentage of pupils who were not engaged decreased from one-third (33%) to one quarter (25%), representing a 28% decrease in the number of disengaged pupils.

**Figure 13: Pupil responses to the question ‘How interested are you in news?’**



In the post-workshop surveys, the theme of engagement arose in one fifth of teachers’ qualitative responses when asked about the impact of the programme. For example, two teachers told us:

“It boosted lots of children’s confidence, especially with public speaking. There are a few LA [lower ability] EAL children who were completely engaged and it was lovely to see them participating alongside their peers.”

“Yes engaging for pupils who find it difficult to concentrate, good for those with speech and language difficulties.”

### Key finding 5: Teacher training was effective

The data shows that NewsWise was not only effective in developing the confidence, skills and engagement of pupils but also an insightful and worthwhile experience for the teachers taking part.

The data from teachers was collected at two different time points. The first was a survey which was administered at the end of the teacher training workshop by the NewsWise project team. The second was a voluntary self-completion online survey which teachers completed after delivering their unit of work to their pupils. The post-training survey was completed by 142 teachers while the end of programme survey was only completed by 25 teachers. Due this sample discrepancy, the analysis will look at the data from the workshop and the unit of work separately.

In any case, the both surveys show clearly two main findings:

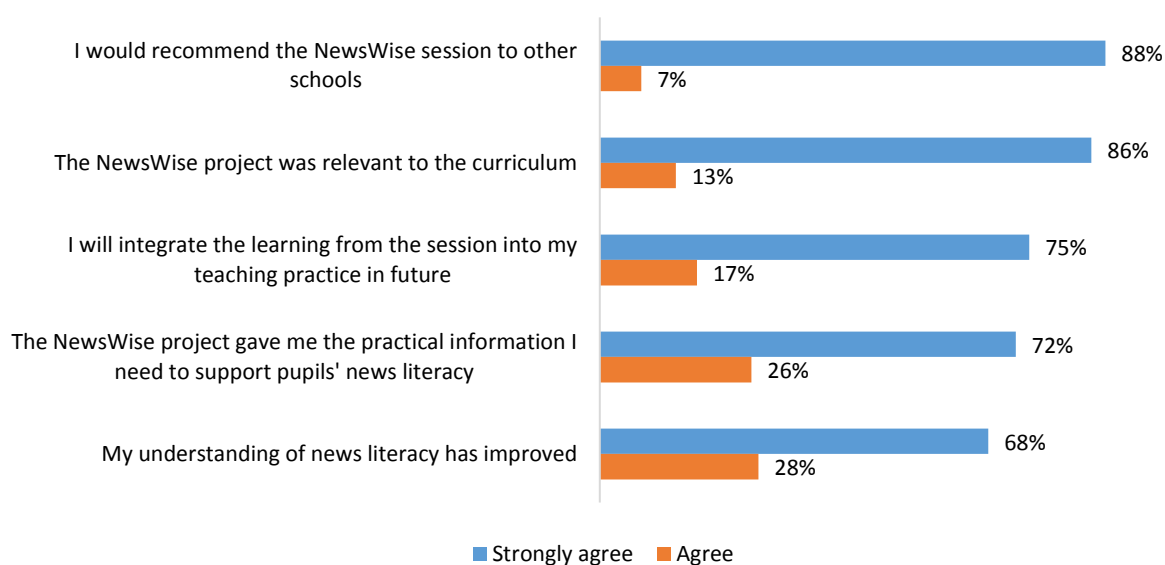
- Teachers felt NewsWise contributed substantially to their professional development
- NewsWise was effective in increasing teacher confidence to discuss news in the classroom

### The teacher training session contributed to teacher development and increased confidence

Of the teachers who completed a feedback form following the NewsWise teacher training session, 78% rated it as ‘excellent’ and 22% as ‘good’. Three in five (60%) teachers felt NewsWise has contributed to their professional development ‘very much’, while another third (35%) thought it contributed to their development ‘quite a lot’. NewsWise also boosted teacher’s confidence. Almost half (48%) of teachers now feel they are ‘very confident’ in supporting pupils’ news literacy, while 45% say they are now ‘fairly confident’.

The training clearly benefitted teachers across a range of indicators (see **Figure 14**). This triangulates the data that shows that the teachers are now much more confident and that they feel that the training workshop has contributed to their professional development.

**Figure 14: Teachers’ feedback on the NewsWise teacher training session**



### The NewsWise project effectively trained teachers and increased confidence

The post-NewsWise teacher surveys revealed that the vast majority of teachers felt that NewsWise contributed to their professional development. 21 of the 25 teachers said the programme contributed ‘very much’ or ‘quite a lot’ to their development<sup>11</sup>. 24 of the 25 also ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that they would recommend the programme to other teachers.

<sup>11</sup> 13 teachers ‘very much’ + 8 teachers ‘quite a lot’

In their comments, teachers talked about how integrating news literacy in the curriculum, in an accessible way, has been a challenge for them, and that the NewsWise resources have been essential to discuss the news. For example, one teacher said:

*“Historically, I have fallen into the trap of writing news reports about 'Dragon Sightings' etc. However, the refocus on critical literacy and writing something really pertinent to their life and community was really powerful.”*

This finding is also confirmed by the fact that teachers said NewsWise significantly enhanced their confidence in regards to supporting pupils' news literacy. 24 of the 25 teachers told us that they now feel 'much more confident' or 'more confident'<sup>12</sup>. These findings are also reflected in the teacher comments, which demonstrate that teachers are eager to implement the new practices they have learnt from NewsWise. For instance, one teacher said:

*“I am looking forward to the challenge of being a teacher champion. I am now looking at teaching news writing in a very different way.”*

Although feedback on the Unit of Work was very limited, of 19 teachers that completed a post survey that indicated they had shared some or all of the Unit of Work with their class, 15 rated it as 'excellent', 3 as 'good' and 1 as 'fairly good'.

## Reflections and recommendations on evaluation methodology

When the NewsWise project launched in early 2018, there were very few comparable initiatives aimed at supporting news literacy in younger children, and therefore few frameworks available to inform the approach to evaluating the success of the programme.

Over the course of the first year, a great deal has been learnt about capturing the impact of NewsWise effectively, without detracting from the 'fun' elements of the programme. An important learning point in year one was the difficulty of defining and measuring 'news literacy skills', in comparison to measuring improvements in attitudes, behaviours, confidence and engagement with the news.

To enhance the evaluation of NewsWise for year two, the programme will refine the definition of news literacy, focus on effective and accurate skills monitoring, and incentivise the post-NewsWise survey for teachers to increase completion rates.

**Refine the definition of children's news literacy:** The NewsWise team has been in conversation with key stakeholders to determine what constitutes a “news literate child”, using existing literature and lessons learnt to define a key set of skills that all news literate children should be able to master. This will guide the further refinement of the project content and will enable a more accurate tool to monitor skill progression to be developed.

**Focus on effective skills monitoring:** The National Literacy Trust's evaluation team are seeking to develop tools that will measure children's news literacy skills. These will

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<sup>12</sup> 16 teachers 'much more confident' + 8 teachers 'more confident'

complement an improved fake news quiz, by measuring the wider range of skills that the programme seeks to enhance. In particular, the team is exploring a tool developed and tested by Hobbs and Frost (2003) which has been proven to effectively measure both critical thinking and critical engagement with news.

Impact relating to the NewsWise objective of empowering children to tell their own news stories has not come through strongly in the first year of the programme. In year two, the NewsWise team will look to encourage and support schools through the unit of work, through to the stage where children create their own reports, and will showcase examples of pupils' work on the NewsWise website.

**Incentivise the post-NewsWise survey for teachers:** To make it easier for busy teachers to provide information about the impact of the project, the teacher survey time points were consolidated in year one into a single post-NewsWise survey and completed as part of a 'reflective' learning session at the end of the unit of work. However, due to a low completion rate, this may have to be incentivised in year two.

## Conclusion

Even at this early stage, it is clear that children taking part in NewsWise have a deeper understanding of, critical engagement with, and confidence around news creation and consumption after taking part in the project.

All teachers involved in running the project felt it was effective in engaging their children with the news and journalism and noted a positive change in pupils' skills and confidence in thinking critically about news stories having taking part in the programme.

The project also had a positive impact on teachers and schools, increasing teachers' confidence in teaching news literacy and providing them with resources to help them do so.

*"The resources provided by the NewsWise team for the delivery of the unit are outstanding."*

Teachers spoke highly of the quality of the resources, their relevance for all pupils and their popularity with children, noting both their own enthusiasm to teach the learning journey and their pupils' enjoyment of it. Children's comments reinforced this impression, with several mentioning the fun they had in workshops, the authenticity of the experience and an increased engagement with the world of news. Other comments also indicated that the programme had helped to improve some children's wellbeing. For example:

*"I felt like a proper news reporter."*

*"I think it is now really important to read the news to know what is going on around the world."*

*"Thank you for helping me realise that there is no reason too [sic] be scared of reading the news."*

## Looking forward to 2019-20

Google will continue to fund NewsWise for a second year. As such, the project will expand its target age range from 9-11 to 7-11 and extend its reach to 150 primary schools in target communities throughout the UK.

NewsWise will also provide a more accessible and accredited CPD offer and more opportunities for engagement with journalists in schools. The NewsWise resources will continue to be free for all primary schools in the UK, extending the reach of the project into communities where its impact is most needed.

## Appendix

### Case study from teacher Roz Porter Tibbey, Grafton Primary School, London

*I taught the entire sequence of the NewsWise series of lessons to my Year 5 English set over the course of a half term. We were lucky enough to be able to kick off the unit with a pupil workshop from the NewsWise team, and have a CPD training session for all teachers across the school before the project began. This inspired both children and teachers alike, and helped its messages of digital and critical literacy become a whole school focus, not just in Year 5. Not only that, we were very fortunate in being able to host a journalist from The Guardian, Niamh McIntyre, who came in to deliver a talk to the children and work with them on their writing.*

*Niamh was able to describe the journey of a story from its genesis to realisation, how the length of time you have to work on a story can vary from mere minutes or hours, to months or even years, and how many people are involved in its publication. This was fascinating to the children and really brought home the fluid nature of news and the challenges and rewards of being a journalist. As a teacher, I felt really supported and inspired by these experiences, and the resources provided by the NewsWise team for the delivery of the unit are outstanding.*

*I cannot overstate the impact the project has had on the children I teach. They are so much more engaged and questioning of the news, and they have been encouraged them to go home and teach their parents and siblings about fact checking websites, how to conduct interviews without judgement, and how to assess whether a report is biased or not. They have rightly relished the chance to be 'experts' and it has been a hugely empowering experience for them.*

*The lessons on Windrush really stood out for us. Around a third of the class have Caribbean heritage, and here at Grafton we have a hugely diverse intake; this felt so relevant, urgent and important. We were also studying it in the week that Hilde Lysiak, a 12-year-old budding news reporter, was being threatened by a police officer in the US for trying to chase down a story. This meant we could link all of this to the importance of journalists holding power to account and shining a light on injustice. I loved being able to show the children how important it was for them to make their voices heard, to look for the truth and the heart of the matter, and stand up for what they believe in.*

*While there were numerous aspects of their writing skills which improved vastly over the course of the unit (for example, their understanding of formal and informal writing tones, and how to select the most precise and objective language to write a factual report), it was watching them link what they were doing in class to wider issues outside our school community which I found the most gratifying. For me, so much of what Newswise brings up in its delivery is to do with exploring what sort of person you want these children to become: compassionate, interested, resilient, critical, brave, truthful. This was the most powerful and empowering part.*

*When it came to them writing their own stories, in the first instance, I gave the class free choice to write about anything they wanted. Ideas ranged from an air crash that had recently happened in Indonesia, to local environment concerns, to the lack of pancakes at school on pancake day. After a great deal of discussion and research, I gave the children the chance to vote for the two top stories for their final reports, and they could choose from those. I was proud to see them choose big national and global issues which mattered to them – air pollution or age restrictions on video games – and then make them relevant to themselves and their audience.*

*The ownership they had of their stories made them really enthused and engaged with the writing process, from the interviews and research they conducted as homework, to the drafting, writing, editing and publishing they did in class.*

*The thrill the children had from seeing their work published on the Newswise front page of the Guardian website was a total delight to witness. Not only had their work been shared and celebrated within school, it was also a real-life news story – what could be more rewarding than that? We championed the entire class during a special “Golden Achievement” assembly in front of the whole school, shared their work on the projector and presented them with their Newswise certificates. I already have children in the current Year 4 asking when they can take part in the project! It has been a completely inspiring, challenging and fulfilling experience for both myself and the children involved, and I am really looking forward to teaching it to a new cohort next year.*

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