



Evidence to support the case for news literacy education to tackle misinformation

Executive summary

- The **spread of misinformation** and the rising influence of conspiracy theories on social media **pose significant threats to democratic engagement and social cohesion** in the UK and globally.
- Misinformation was widely believed to **contribute to the riots in Britain in July and August 24.**
- The Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT) evaluation of the [Newswise programme](#) provides evidence about **what works in news literacy education (i.e., a form media literacy education focusing on students' critical engagement with the news)** and how it can be evaluated.
- **The new research shows 9-11-year-olds can be taught to spot 'fake news'.**
- The research demonstrates how news literacy can **be effectively integrated into the school curriculum.**

Policy recommendations

1. Make news literacy (and media literacy, more broadly) a mandatory component of the school curriculum. This means embedding news literacy lessons within existing compulsory subjects such as English, PSHE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic education), Computing and Citizenship.
2. Teacher training should be enhanced to ensure educators are well-equipped to

deliver news literacy lessons effectively, with a focus on both the practical and critical skills and knowledge required to identify, and understand the nature and implications of, misinformation.

3. To ensure consistent implementation, schools should receive additional resources, including access to the [NewsWise programme](#) or similar initiatives.
4. Address the issue of curricular overload with the development of condensed versions of news literacy programmes, tailored to different school contexts and student needs.
5. Commission ongoing research to monitor the impact of news literacy education on students' critical thinking skills and civic engagement. This data will be crucial for refining the school curriculum and ensuring that educational interventions remain relevant in a rapidly changing digital landscape.

About the research

The UK government plans to enhance the curriculum to develop students' abilities to identify fake news and resist extremist content. This initiative reflects a broader societal need to prepare young citizens to navigate an increasingly complex information landscape. Embedding critical thinking skills across various subjects, from English to Computer Science, is central to this approach. To inform this educational policy development the Nuffield Foundation funded the evaluation of the Newswise programme and

demonstrated what works in news literacy education as well as how media literacy interventions can be evaluated.

New evidence about how to teach news

literacy: The NewsWise programme, a cross-curricular initiative designed by The Guardian Foundation, has demonstrated significant positive outcomes in improving the ability to spot fake news among 9-11-year-olds. The programme was evaluated through a 40-school study conducted by researchers at the University of Birmingham and the University of Liverpool in collaboration with The Guardian Foundation, The National Literacy Trust, and the PSHE Association. Students who participated in NewsWise were better able to identify fake news and showed sustained improvement in their critical evaluation skills.

The programme also established a strong association between children's news literacy and their civic engagement (including community involvement and positive attitudes towards political participation). Children with higher news literacy skills were more likely to engage in civic activities, highlighting potential wider societal benefits of such educational interventions if implemented at scale.

The children and teachers both reported enjoying taking part in the NewsWise programme. However, they also reported that competing curricular demands posed a challenge.

Challenges with implementing news

literacy: While NewsWise was effective, its impact varied across schools, indicating that the success of such programmes depends on consistent and high-quality implementation. Schools with higher engagement and better resource allocation saw more significant improvements in their students' news literacy.

The findings also suggest that integrating news literacy into the curriculum can be challenging due to competing curricular demands and varying levels of interest among pupils. Therefore, it is crucial that news literacy is allocated dedicated curriculum

space and supported by professional development opportunities for teachers.

Conclusion

As the UK navigates the challenges of the digital age, equipping young people with the skills to critically evaluate information is not just an educational imperative but a societal one. The proposed curriculum reforms, bolstered by evidence from the NewsWise programme, represent a crucial step towards safeguarding the integrity of public discourse and fostering a generation of informed, engaged citizens. Policymakers must act decisively to implement these changes, ensuring that every child in the UK has the tools to discern truth from falsehood in an increasingly complex media environment.

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