

Providing cultural experiences within our immediate locality

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Our goal

In September, I was given the role of Cultural Capitalism lead within school. My first task was to define what cultural capitalism meant and how it would be implemented. This proved to be more challenging than I initially thought as there are many definitions out there: hence I enrolled on the Cultural Capitalism course, looking for both support and inspiration.

After attending the course, I had a much clearer idea in my mind what cultural capitalism meant for our school and discussed my definition with my head teacher and chair of governors before sharing with the staff.

'Cultural capitalism enables our children to find their place in the world, to form a richer sense of themselves and a sense of belonging by exploring and building on their communities, families and the world around them. We do this through providing the children with a diverse, progressive, bespoke curriculum that gives them stimulating learning experiences and opportunities that accumulate over time.'

Statement of focus

At Preston Primary, cultural capitalism already underpinned much of what we did but we felt as a staff we needed to formalise our intent to ensure that all children could access a richer variety of experiences and opportunities within their local area throughout their time at Preston.

We were already focussing on re-developing the Preston curriculum so this was an ideal time to ensure that these learning experiences and opportunities were properly co-ordinated.

Development process

Firstly, as a staff, we looked at what skills and experiences we wanted the children to have from Nursery through to Year 6. We wanted to ensure that there was progression and that the children would have the necessary basic life skills and knowledge to equip them for secondary school and beyond. We discussed as a team what we wanted, to ensure all were fully involved in the process.

As part of this exercise, we also discussed possible educational visits to local museums, theatres, places of worship and iconic landmarks that would link to our new curriculum. We wanted the children to have an appreciation and understanding of their immediate locality.

Our starting point was Preston Park Museum as it is only a short walk away from our school. It has a vast collection of artefacts that tell the story of the local area and people.



Children busy playing with toys from the past at Preston Park Museum.

Furthermore, it is situated by the River Tees amongst idyllic woodlands. Initially, I worked with the Early Years and KS1 staff to see whether Preston Park Museum and its grounds could be incorporated within their curriculum.

Early Years were comparing different houses and, as part of their topic, decided to visit the museum which had formerly been a Georgian gentleman's residence. The children were overwhelmed by its size and grandeur.

Year 1 also visited the museum where they participated in a 'Toys from the past' workshop. They played with old fashioned toys and discovered how toys worked before batteries.

Year 2 visited the grounds of the museum looking for inspiration from nature. They used IPADs to capture images of natural forms that they then used back in the classroom to produce beautiful art work in a variety of media.



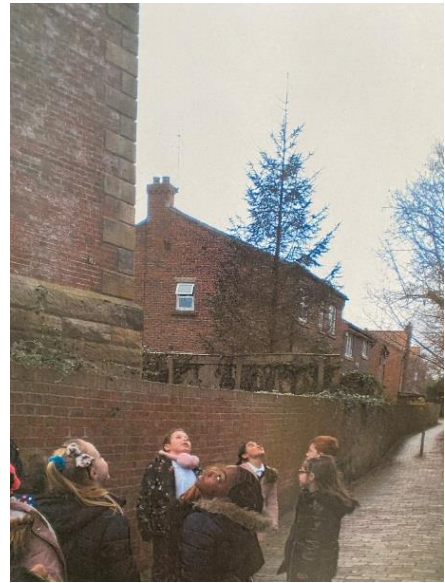
Art work inspired by Preston Park visit.

Lower KS2 travelled a little further afield, Year 3 went by train from Eaglescliffe to the Locomotion museum at Shildon to consolidate and extend their learning on the Stockton - Darlington railway. Whilst there, they saw a replica of the Locomotion No 1 that would have once steamed passed many of their homes.

Year 4 walked into Yarm to look at the construction of the viaduct as part of their D.T project. They were flabbergasted by its vastness and, whilst underneath its arches, asked many pertinent questions about how it was constructed. Many of the children had never stood underneath the arches even though they lived just a mile away from them.

Impact

These educational visits proved to be very beneficial as they gave the children an insight into life gone by, and an appreciation of the world around them and those that had influenced it. These visits brought the topics to life and promoted lots of discussion and interest. When I interviewed the children, they talked about how much they had enjoyed visiting the local area and how it had inspired them. Many talked with pride about how they had gone back with their families to share their knowledge and experiences. The teachers also talked about the engagement of the children on the visits and the quality of their work back at school. The Year 2 artwork was exceptional, and all the children talked passionately about how the local environment had provided them with inspiration. The Year 3 teachers said that the whole experience from travelling by train on the original Stockton-Darlington railway to seeing artefacts first hand had brought the subject to life and had been inspirational.



Children under Yarm Viaduct

In all, the majority of children who participated in this project were able to appreciate, respect and utilise the immediate locality and feel a sense of belonging, which was our ultimate goal.

Challenges

All teachers were keen to include a local visit but time was an issue, as staff had to organise the trip, complete new risk assessments, planning and resources. Staff meeting time was allocated to provide support and give opportunities for discussions and reflections. These meetings were of paramount importance to keep the project on track.

Reflection

Unfortunately, Upper KS2 were unable to take part in their planned local visit due to Covid19. Nevertheless, we know that the majority of our children had a much richer, more meaningful curriculum than previously with a stronger emphasis on cultural capitalism.

Having a clear goal, ensuring that staff were on board from the outset and providing regular guidance and support ensured that the project was a success. Further work is still needed but with such dedicated staff who are fully committed to improving cultural capitalism and have already seen the benefits, it's a journey I'm excited to continue with them.