

Case Study: Beckfoot Thornton High School, Bradford

Background

Beckfoot Thornton is a larger than average secondary school with 1,414 pupils on roll. It is part of the Beckfoot Trust, a multi-academy trust.

The school is a secondary comprehensive with Year Groups 7-11 and a sixth form.

The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and receive support from the pupil premium is above the national average, with the proportion of pupils with SEND being broadly average¹.

The Head of History at the school has been involved with Heritage Schools in a variety of ways over the last few years. These have included, attending and contributing to Heritage Schools CPD sessions; joint planning local history topics; embedding Historic England resources in the classroom such as Stories in Stone, a resource which uses buildings in Bradford to tell the story of migration and social change in the city <https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/education/teaching-activities/knowning-bradford/> ; trialling newly created resources such as the Bradford trail; working on various local heritage projects such as one which involved co-creating a pupil film about Saltaire, the UNESCO World Heritage site in Bradford.

This case study focusses on the most recent activity facilitated with the help of Historic England and their regional LHEM.

Legacy Leaders of Bradford

Historic England developed a pilot project working in partnership with Beckfoot Thornton School and The Green Wing Youth Leadership Coaching. The project was devised to support and develop young people's leadership qualities using as inspiration, the lives of notable Bradford individuals, both significant historical figures as well as notable living Bradfordians.

Six Year 9 pupils were selected for leadership coaching based on their instinctive, and currently unrecognised leadership potential but who were seen as 'intelligent disruptors'. These pupils were bright but often troublesome and disruptive in the classroom.

"The idea is that these people lead in their action in the classroom, not always positively, but can we funnel that towards better usage of those leadership skills. We don't know where it'll be, it might be in the classroom, if their behaviour

¹ Information taken from the latest Ofsted report (2019)

improves, it might be outside of school if they get involved in other things” - Teacher

Having completed a coaching phase from The Green Wing Project, the leadership cohort practised their conceptual and reflective learning in a live leadership context. They each then led a group of six Year 7 historians to research a chosen individual and organise a showcase event to celebrate their person’s positive leadership legacies within Bradford and their influence from a local, regional, and national perspective.

The purpose was to enable pupils to understand what is meant by leadership, by looking at the different leadership qualities which had contributed to the success of some of Bradford’s significant individuals. In doing so pupils were asked to reflect and recognise their own leadership strengths. In so doing they were encouraged to find their own ‘authentic voice’ to lead and positively influence others.

Four members of teaching staff observed the workshops which took place over the three days, with various aspects of the three days being facilitated by the leadership coaches, the LHEM from Historic England and the Head of History at the school.

The first day involved leadership coaching delivered by outside coaches from The Green Wing project (<https://thegreenwingproject.com>). Here the Year 9s involved identified what a good leader was and the sort of leader they were.



Receiving professional leadership training from the Greenwing Programme

“What was really positive, was that it was not just your stereotypical, chest beating, war style leader or football captain, they had great examples to show people of the quiet but when they speak, people listen type leaders and the group we picked [for the project] were a real mix” - Teacher

The pupils then spent a day working with their Year 7 group. The leadership coaches mentored them throughout, including taking them aside to discuss, evaluate and reflect on what they were doing and the impact on those in their group. This included thinking about alternative strategies and ways to achieve their desired goals.



Year 9 leading groups of Year 7 pupils, observed by their trainers

The last day involved the Legacy Leaders supporting and leading their groups to present back to a class of Year 7s and various teachers including the Head. They each gave presentations about the significant individual which they had researched, talking about their impact on Bradford, their legacy and what they had learnt about leadership from studying this person.

Significant local leaders included in the presentations were, Titus Salt (industrialist and philanthropist), David Hockney (artist), Emily Bronte (writer) and Zayn Malik (singer).

"The key thing I love as a history teacher is that it is touching on significance. Why do these people matter, growing up in Bradford we see statues of Titus Salt but why does he matter? There were loads of mill owners so why don't we know the names of any others? And that is a really good historical skill to have" - Teacher

Using local rather than nationally significant people who have left a legacy has grounded the project in a tangible reality.

"The legacy leaders have given a grounding point for it all to be around. They've not come away going I want to be like David Hockney, but their overall aspiration and confidence has increased, which is what we want. It's actually knowing or thinking that someone who came and walked in the same areas that I do did well for themselves, made lots of money and [therefore] I can do it" - Teacher

Funding from Heritage Schools enabled the Head of History to be taken off timetable for some of the time during the three days of the in-school leadership training, so he could be directly involved and observe. It also helped fund the outside coaches.

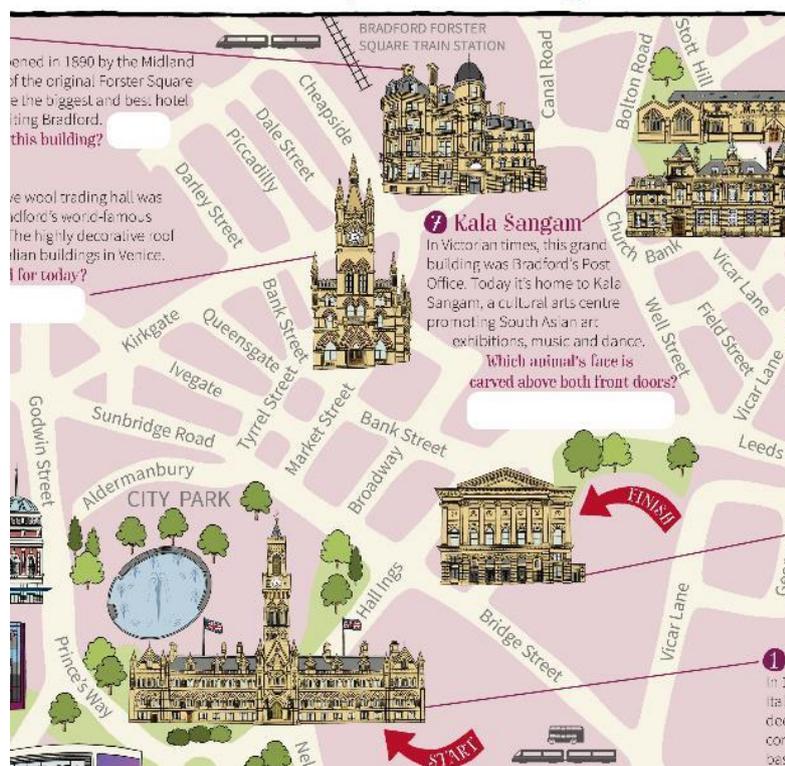
Heritage Schools also provided the additional follow-up elements discussed below for the Legacy Leaders to be involved in, which meant the project has felt like an ongoing continuation rather than a one-off intervention.

There were several follow up opportunities for the Legacy Leaders to use some of their newly acquired skills in a meaningful community and heritage context. For example, they were taken on a visit to Salts Mill and Saltaire to learn more about Titus Salt, one of Bradford's most significant local individuals. Whilst there, they learned about Saltaire Stories who were working with the National Lottery Heritage Fund to find out what people think about Saltaire, and how they can make it more welcoming for visitors. The Legacy Leaders acting as Historic England 'Heritage Ambassadors' were asked to contribute their own views to the Saltaire Heritage Audience Research Project.

"That group have since then gone to Salts Mill, into a board room to have another leadership session to reflect on how that project went ..., give them a bit of responsibility, and they just revel in it" – Teacher

The Legacy Leaders were also asked to act as Historic England 'Heritage Ambassadors' to test run a newly created Bradford City Heritage Trail, designed by Historic England for young people. This involved completing the trail to find out what worked and providing a pupil voice feedback.

Bradford City Heritage Trail



Undertaking the very first tour using the Bradford City Heritage Trail map

Impacts of the Heritage Schools project on the pupils involved

- Those selected as Legacy Leaders were given the opportunity to learn about leadership, take on a project where they have had to lead and motivate a team, and have presented back to a class of younger pupils (Year 7s) on what they have learnt.
- Year 7s, through the presentations, learnt about a wide range of different legacy leaders from Bradford.
- Pupils enjoyed working with outside organisations which increased its value to them and the fact that their work had a 'real life' local context increased their enthusiasm, enjoyment, and real sense of pride in their locality.
- Through the project the leaders have developed skills such as communication, delegation, teamwork, time management and collective responsibility. For most it has changed their thinking and behaviours, in a more positive way.



Four of the pupils involved in the leadership training

- Pupils have been given lots of opportunities throughout their involvement in the project to reflect on their own leadership skills and ambitions in the light of what they then learned about the qualities and achievements of their chosen significant people of Bradford.
- It has provided personal development and transferable leadership skills through the vehicle of studying the lives and legacies of local historical and contemporary people who as significant individuals have made a difference in Bradford and beyond.

"I thought they would be good candidates, but the leadership coaching brought out elements of their personalities and leadership skills which I had not spotted in teaching them" - Teacher

- Identifying and studying local significant individuals as a role model for admired leadership qualities has helped ground the project in a realistic context; if them, why not me?
- All pupils have gained a greater sense of pride in the local heritage of Bradford and how it relates to the national story.
- Those involved have become more ambitious about their own aspirations, as well as the difference they can make to the community they live in. The real legacy of the project is unlikely to be seen until these pupils have left school, become adults and hopefully are actively and positively contributing to their community. However, the expectation is that involvement in the project will have changed their outlooks.

"I think out of six there's definitely three or four who have changed their view of where they would be in their future careers. Now I think they think I could have a team [that I lead] or my own company, or I could be the owner of my own business and manage others. That's the aspect that the leadership element has opened up to them. I almost feel like we're equipping them for the future. It's the idea that they're going to make a difference, and probably in Bradford, probably most of them won't move, but they'll make a difference" - Teacher

Summary

The project has provided a model to develop leadership skills through looking at local significant individuals, many of whom the pupils knew little about beforehand. The school intends not just to continue working with those involved in Year 9 as they go up the school, giving them other leadership opportunities, but to repeat the project with the next cohort of Year 9 students.

Pupils' knowledge of Bradford's people of significance-which was initially low-has grown as a result of the project; amongst both those who took part from Year 9 and Year 7.

Local history and finding out about significant people who have lived in Bradford has provided relatable subject matter and a vehicle to learn about and develop leadership skills.