

## **Case Study: Newfield Park Primary Academy, Halesowen, West Midlands**

***History teaching has evolved significantly over the last few years, culminating in achieving a Heritage Schools Award***

### **Background**

The school is a large, two-form entry primary school, with 463 pupils on roll. It has a 'good' Ofsted rating, is oversubscribed, and considered successful locally.

Prior to Heritage Schools involvement, local history was still taught but not as explicitly nor as systematically integrated across the curriculum.

To acknowledge the school's work in helping pupils develop an understanding of their local heritage and its place within the wider national context, by weaving the local even more into the history taught over the last few years, Newfield Park Primary Academy received Historic England's Heritage Schools Award in November 2023.

### **Involvement with Heritage Schools**

The school has worked closely with the Local Heritage Education Manager [LHEM] from Historic England, who has provided CPD training, tangible resources, and ongoing support.

The teachers describe the relationship between the school and the LHEM as collaborative, with the school feeling supported rather than directed.

Initial training included a whole-staff twilight CPD session on using historical maps (provided by Historic England) with pupils when doing local area studies. This was followed by a day's planning with the History Leads, which helped shape some of the thinking about subsequent development of the heritage curriculum. A subsequent planning meeting in early 2024 helped the History Lead to evolve these idea further.

The school has a history unit for each year group in each term. Local history is now embedded throughout the school from Reception (focusing on living memory and chronology) through to Year 6, with each year group (except Year 5, due to curriculum constraints) having one of the three history units they do across the year with a strong focus on local history.

Year 1 look at significant places and homes in the local area to understand changes within living memory; Year 2 study significant local historical heroes; Year 3 study the Industrial Revolution through the lens of local coalmining and nail-making and a visit to the local Black Country Living Museum; Year 4 visit the West Midlands Police

Museum as part of a social history module on crime & punishment; with Year 6 studying Birmingham with a focus on local suffrage and local historical heroes. Pupils historical knowledge of their locality is built on and grows as they progress through the school.

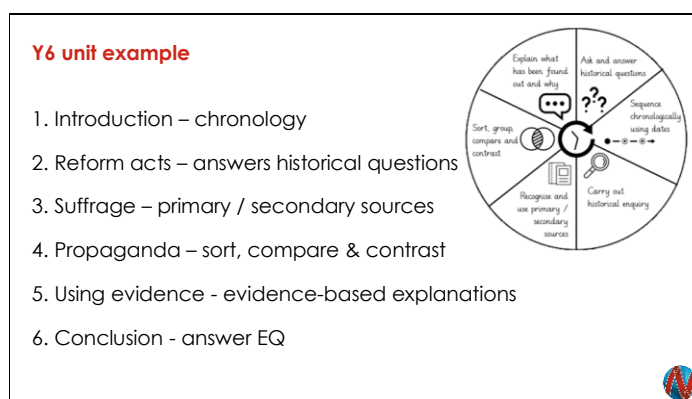
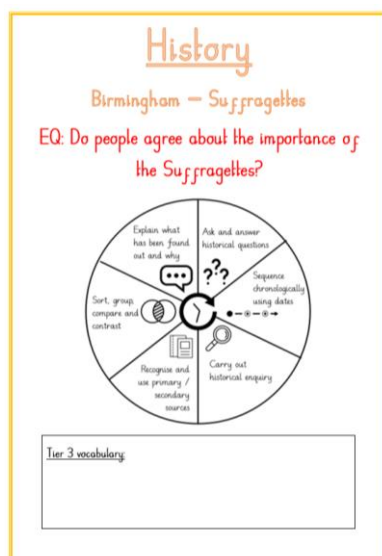
Heritage Schools has provided a collaborative network of schools in the local area, with meetings facilitated by the LHEM, where history co-ordinators can share resources, ideas, and best practice.

The History Lead has attended the local history symposium that the LHEM organises, providing a place to hear and share ideas and resources with other local schools.

The school has begun to lead history training for other local schools, sharing their approaches to teaching history, further cascading knowledge, skills, resources, and ideas acquired in part through their involvement with the Heritage Schools programme. This included a session, delivered by the History Leads at Newfield Park, at a Network meeting with those from other Dudley schools. Specifically, they gave presentations on how they teach chronology to KS1 pupils and how they make use of their substantive & disciplinary skills checklist. Some of these ideas have now been adopted by other schools.

## Impact of Heritage Schools

The CPD training from Historic England led to a revamp of their history schemes of work with a shift from the rote learning of facts to a focus on pupils developing much more substantive and disciplinary knowledge. The revised schemes of work now focus on enquiry-based learning, with each history unit driven by an overarching question. All lessons build towards answering these key enquiry questions.

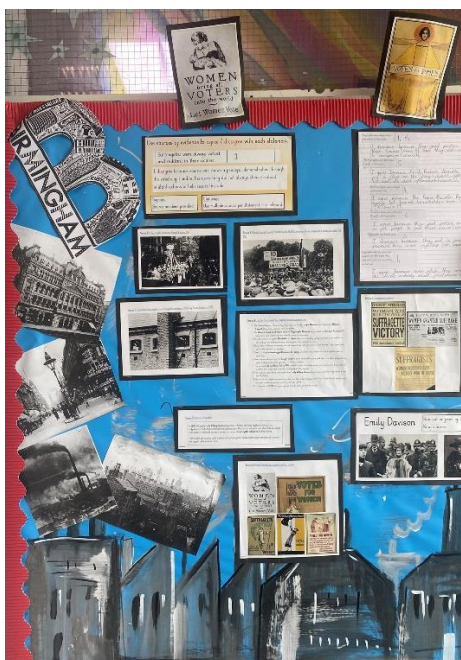


*Year 6 – substantive & disciplinary knowledge checklist for pupils and how skills are covered in the lessons*

The CPD training provided tangible and practical ideas for using historic maps in local history enquiries, using physical models (e.g., bar models, timelines with toilet rolls) to communicate chronology, the creation of knowledge organisers to help pupils visualise the historical skills they were acquiring, and going outside the classroom on local heritage walks and local museum visits (Black Country Living Museum, West Midlands Police Museum: Lock-Up) to further understand and appreciate their local history and how this reflects the national story.

*"We've got the Black Country Living Museum on our doorstep but through Heritage Schools we now go to other places like the West Midlands Police Lock-Up, we discovered that through Martin [LHEM]" – History Lead*

The ongoing provision of quality and trusted resources from the LHEM saves teachers significant time, so instead of trying to source local primary evidence to use with their pupils, teachers have been provided with a raft of written and visual evidence, which has freed them up to think about how they could use these in their teaching, rather than spending time trying to find these themselves. Teachers feel this very local historical evidence has improved pupil engagement as it is relevant and meaningful to the pupils.



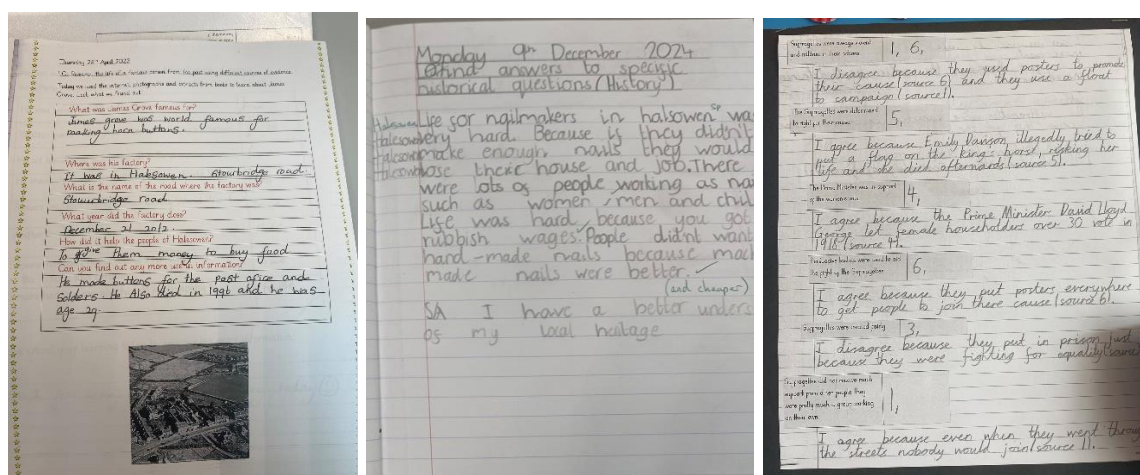
*Primary resources with a local focus provided by the LHEM*

The shift to a strongly focused enquiry-based approach has encouraged pupils to use a range of evidence including many primary sources to form and justify their own opinions, fostering critical thinking and discussion skills.

Visiting local places has further added to this evidence base, with the physical, photographic, and written resources and maps focussed on areas the pupils know making the subject tangible and relevant rather than abstract.

*"If you can bring things to life for children with concrete experiences there's the hope that pupils will go back and revisit if they can. They can only be passionate about something that's important to them" – History Lead*

*"It makes history more purposeful. It [using local evidence] allows them [the pupils] to further understand that [the topic]" – History Lead*



*Year 2, 3 & 6 written work – all using local primary evidence to support their historical enquiries*

Local history acts as a driver for meaningful writing and cross-curricular lessons such as geography, English, and PSHE/citizenship.

Pupils have high levels of enthusiasm for history, particularly enjoying learning about their local area, using local maps relevant to them, and going on local visits. Pupils enjoy history, particularly when it involves local stories, practical activities, and real-world connections.

*"I think you do get more authentic engagement from it [local heritage work] definitely because it's more pertinent to them" – History Lead*

When interviewed pupils clearly articulated the value of learning local history, citing increased pride, curiosity, and a sense of belonging.

Even the school's house system has been renamed after four local historical figures, which the pupils now study as part of their history lessons.

*"Our houses used to be called after birds which was a bit meaningless but now they are named after significant people from the local area, which they study in Year 2 and Year 6, so we've got that tie in with local history" – History Lead*

## **Summary**

The Heritage Schools programme has had a transformative impact on the way the school now teaches history and on their pupils' engagement.

The school's history teaching has and continues to evolve and develop, incorporating local history and providing meaningful examples and understandable evidence that pupils can understand.

Being involved in the Heritage Schools programme, receiving training and guidance from the LHEM, and deciding to go for the Heritage Award have all provided catalysts for a comprehensive revamp to schemes of work, which the school feels has helped engage their pupils in history considerably more than was previously the case.