

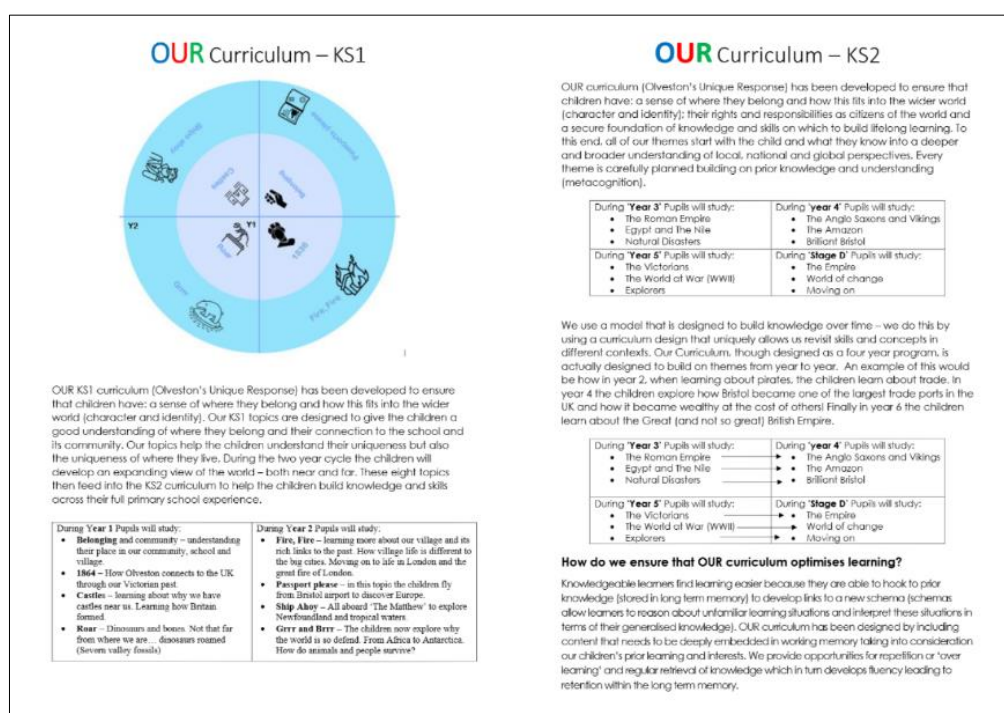
## Case Study: Olveston C of E VC Primary School, South Gloucestershire

### Heritage Schools dovetails with the school's broader approach to the curriculum

#### Background

Olveston Primary School is a small school with 200 pupils on roll. It sits at the heart of the South Gloucestershire countryside, in the quintessentially English village of Olveston. The school is surrounded by rolling green fields and farmland but is only 8 miles from the Severn Bridge crossing and 12 miles from Bristol.

The school's OUR curriculum (Olveston's Unique Response) has been developed to ensure pupils have a sense of where they belong and how this fits into the wider world. Across all subjects they use a model that is designed to build knowledge over time, starting with the child and what they know, developing into a deeper and broader understanding of local, national, and global perspectives, whilst also allowing pupils to revisit skills and build on concepts learnt in different contexts.



#### OUR Curriculum (Olveston's Unique Response)

For example in history, pupils in Year 2 go aboard *The Mathew* with John Cabot on his journey in 1497 from Bristol to Newfoundland to explore trade and pirates from a local Bristol perspective, then in Year 4 they explore Bristol, how it became one of the largest trade ports in the UK and how it became wealthy at the expense of others, and then in Year 6 they learn about the Great (and not so great) British Empire; so going from the local to more national and then international perspectives.

## Involvement with Heritage Schools

The school has been involved with Heritage Schools for the last three years.

Prior to involvement with Heritage Schools, history teaching in the school was highly fact-based, focusing on substantive knowledge (dates, events, key figures) with less of an emphasis on inquiry or interpretation. The school's curriculum was designed to start local and develop into national history. The school felt further work on the local aspects of history would enhance their curriculum further. It was also felt that staff needed CPD around the use of primary sources.

*"When we started digging into our school curriculum in not just history, but a number of areas, it was very, very knowledge based ... pupils were recalling facts but potentially didn't have that thinking like a historian, so we did some internal work and started redesigning, restructuring, thinking about our content, thinking about inquiry skills" – Headteacher*

Historic England's Local Heritage Education Manager (LHEM) delivered whole school CPD twilight training sessions to staff on historical inquiry and use of primary sources.

*"He [LHEM] came in and did a whole evening with us on inquiry. He told us all of these activities that we could do with the children. I trialled them in my class, some other teachers trialled them as well. And from our monitoring we saw that there was a huge improvement in the children's understanding" – History Lead*

After this the school undertook a curriculum review with INSET day time allocated to identifying gaps and opportunities to integrate local history into their curriculum.

*"We were looking at our curriculum, so we asked Michael [LHEM] to come back in and look through our curriculum with us and to give us some more ideas about how we can get more local history in. He spent a whole morning with us looking through the whole curriculum. He then went away and researched for us, sent us lots of primary sources, websites, found us stories to go with our local area, which was brilliant. There was a lady princess that he discovered who came from Almonsbury, who wasn't actually a princess<sup>1</sup>. And one of our teachers has since dressed up as the princess and the children absolutely loved it. He also discovered that there was a whale that in the early 1800s washed up on shore. So we've got that in our curriculum now as well. So it's really making the children see how the local area has history. And he's shown us how to teach that all through inquiry skills. So it is about making history come alive" – History Lead*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://thehistorypress.co.uk/article/the-mysterious-princess-caraboo/>

Teachers have been given, by the LHEM, ideas and skills on how to use resources, both in and outside the classroom. For example the school now uses the local cenotaph, and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website to research local soldiers, to understand the impacts of WW1 and practice research skills, all through a local lens. This came from a suggestion from the LHEM.

*"Some of the pupils were shocked because they've got brothers and sisters that are 18 or 19, [they see this and say] that's how old my brother is" – History Lead*

Being aware of a website, and being trained on how to use it fully, are very different. Having the LHEM do the latter has enabled teachers to use such resources.

In addition, the LHEM has undertaken local history walks with teachers as part of CPD training, showing them interesting things they could use in their teaching, which teachers had not previously known about or thought about utilising.

*"He came in initially because with the curriculum we designed, the idea was that we wanted to be local and get children to understand what's around them, then branching into national and international. He did a staff walk on what's around us to help give a local grounding. Just outside the school is the signpost which staff and children have passed every day and not realized that the Aust [Ferry] crossing doesn't exist anymore but that we've got a sign directly outside school that references it. He explained what the Aust crossing was prior to the Severn bridges. And we then walked past the local pub, which has half the windows bricked up and talked about the window tax. He took us down to the old water pump in the centre of the village and essentially just did a really thorough and expert tour of our local area for staff to give them that sense of place" – Headteacher*



*Historical evidence on the doorstep – including the Aust Ferry (crossed out) signpost literally outside the school's front gate – just needing the LHEM to point these out and give teachers ideas how these can be used as a teaching resource*

The LHEM has also come into school to lead history walks with different classes.

*"He's done a local World War Memorial talk. Pupils walked to the Cenotaph and talked through all of the soldiers and what the Cenotaph meant. He showed us a website where you can research specific soldiers. He's taken our Year 6's into Bristol and done a historical walk around Bristol as well" – History Lead*

From these experiences, being shown ideas and resources, teachers have gained knowledge and confidence to be able to do similar activities themselves.

*"It's about the modelling for teachers so that they can do it independently. So how do you use historic maps to teach your children about population growth, about the way that villages have evolved or Bristol has changed over the years, and then taking the Year 6 teacher and his children into Bristol to do a historic walk, or taking the Year 2 teacher to do an historic walk around the village; it's all about how do you take history and explain it to children" – Head teacher*

The LHEM continues to give the school ongoing, responsive support via email and in-person visits, providing resources, lesson ideas, and local stories as they continue to develop the topics that they teach.

### **Impact of Heritage Schools**

The involvement with Heritage Schools has led to significant changes to how history is taught in the school.

The school's curriculum has been redesigned to balance substantive knowledge with inquiry skills, now featuring both elements in every topic. Pupils now demonstrate a deeper understanding as they make connections and explain historical significance rather than just recall facts.

The training and ongoing support from Heritage Schools has upskilled teachers, providing the confidence and reassurance change their curriculum and adopt a bespoke local focus.

*"It takes a little bit more work but the learning experience is far more rich. I cannot praise Historic England enough. The expertise they brought into school and the enrichment they brought into the school and how we have adapted our whole approach to history teaching cannot be understated" – Headteacher*

The curriculum is more interconnected, with history linked to geography, art, computing, and other subjects in a broadly topic-based approach to learning.

Teachers have been equipped with a range of resources, including primary sources, local stories, historic maps, census data, and recommended websites.

*"We're not a time rich profession. So having the direction from an expert to say use this website, access this resource, saves staff workload massively" – Headteacher*

The CPD training and ongoing support has increased the confidence, knowledge, understanding and skills of staff to deliver inquiry based lessons and more effectively use primary historical resources, including the local built environment, to support this.

The training from Heritage Schools has empowered teachers to deliver more engaging, evidence-based lessons. The change in approach has helped foster skills amongst pupils in evidenced based inquiry, critical thinking, and reasoning.

*"It's reframed the entire approach to teaching history. The children's experience of history has changed dramatically in the last 3 years. Now I go into a classroom and I will see spread across the tables, census documents, historic maps, first person accounts, all used to build a story. Their way of learning has shifted quite considerably. It's more about them forming their own opinions" – Headteacher*

Local history is now embedded throughout, with topics tailored to the surrounding area (e.g., stories of a local "princess," a whale washed up nearby, local war memorials).

Local history stories and fieldwork have made history more relatable and concrete, with pupils visiting local sites and making personal connections (e.g., finding family names on war memorials).

*"Using their local knowledge and actually being able to relate to what they can see or know, it's really important to give some cognitive connection. I think it gives them a grounding. I think it gives them a base to build constructs on" – Headteacher*

## **Summary**

The LHEM has provided support and guidance as an external specialist subject advisor. The training and support from Historic England over all this time is seen as professional, responsive, and tailored to the school's needs.

The collaboration with Historic England has helped facilitate curriculum change.

*"Without him [LHEM], our curriculum would look very different" – History Lead*

Using local history and heritage has made topics more real, understandable, relevant, and engaging for pupils, whilst also developing inquiry-based skills and the use of evidence. This approach has been shared with other schools, with the school recommending Historic England's support to others.