

## **Case Study: Ringstead Church of England Primary School, Northamptonshire**

**The school building and village are used as primary sources to teach and bring history to life for the pupils**

### **Background**

Ringstead CE Primary School is a small village school. There are 129 pupils from Reception up to Year 6, with some classes taught in mixed Year Groups due to pupil numbers.

The school opened in 1867, and although the building has been extended considerably since then, it still retains its Victorian look and feel.

### **Involvement with Heritage Schools**

Ringstead CE Primary School has been involved with Heritage Schools for three years, with staff having received CPD training and from then onwards continued ongoing support from their Historic England Local Heritage Education Manager (LHEM).

Various Heritage Schools CPD training sessions have introduced the History Lead to new knowledge, ideas, and skills, such as reading buildings for historical clues and using local archives and census data. Ideas and resources have then been cascaded down to other teachers in the school.

*"I was shown resources that I never even knew about [like georeferenced maps, Heritage Schools teaching resources, and Ancestry website]" - teacher*

Being involved with Heritage Schools has encouraged the school to further develop its curriculum with a focus on integrating local history wherever possible.

The school, across different Year Groups, has looked in detail at the history of their village, including the history of their own school. This has included walking tours of the village, led by the members of the local heritage group, and follow-up written work in the classroom. This is something suggested by the LHEM which the school had not previously done.

The historical maps, centred on the school and showing how the village has changed over time, provided by Historic England, have proved to be really useful in engaging pupils and conveying changes over time.

The LHEM has also provided other high-quality, bespoke resources, including aerial photographs and digital materials tailored to the local area.

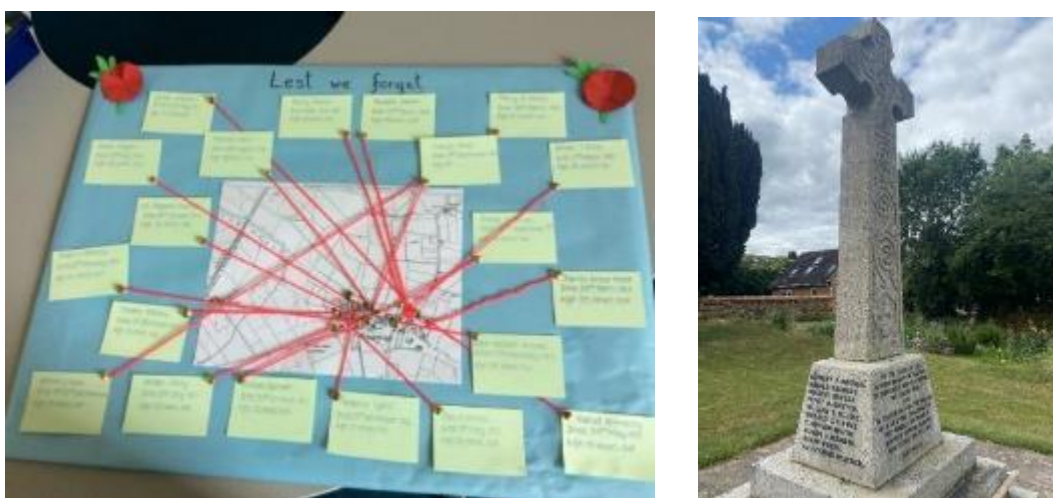


*Pupils have gone on local heritage walks to learn more about their village, led by volunteers from the local heritage group*

The History Lead has used online teaching resources including timelines produced by Historic England and available via their website. They found out about these through the LHEM and the CPD training sessions they attended.

Original school log books, going back to 1865 before the school even opened, are used as a teaching resource. They are also being digitized so they can be shared with the local heritage group.

For Remembrance Day, pupils in Year 6, from a suggestion by the LHEM at a Heritage Schools cluster meeting, investigated the names on the local war memorial, finding out who they were and where they lived in the village. They did this using a historic map provided by Historic England and the Ancestry and Commonwealth War Graves Commission websites, shown to them by the LHEM. The information they found is now on display in the local church, next to the school for all the village to see. This project helped make the war memorial a more meaningful and poignant object in the village, and helped get across the human impact of World War One and how it affected everywhere, even small rural villages in the country.



*Pupils used the Commonwealth Graves Commission and Ancestry websites to find out about soldiers on the war memorial*

Throughout the year the school enhances its history curriculum by going on external site visits, as well as having guests visit the school. Heritage Schools gave a focus to think about how to bring local heritage to life, which led the History Lead to seek out visitors they could invite to come into school and local places they could go and visit connected with what they are studying.



*Re-enactors from the nearby Naseby Battlefield Trust, Sealed Knot have visited and delivered hands-on immersive experiences*

The Year 3 & 4 school trip to Chester House, where pupils get involved hands-on with the archaeological dig of the Roman town there, was inspired by the History Lead attending Heritage Schools CPD training there and being introduced to the team.

*"[Physically going out] makes it more interesting; if it's in the classroom, it has no relevance to them [pupils] even if you're telling them it happened 20 miles up the road, they're not physically seeing it. Actually seeing these things under the ground at their feet brings it to life for them" - teacher*



Encouraged to think differently about using what is on the doorstep, pupils across different Year Groups have taken part in archaeological digs on the school grounds, using professional techniques to unearth, catalogue, and present their findings. Although the History Lead has an archaeological background, this hands-on activity is unlikely to have happened without the encouragement and support from the LHEM (including reassurances on the legalities of doing this).

*"Last year we got a few bits of pottery and a bit of animal bone out, which would link with the animal pound that we know was in the area. This time we've got a lot of pins and screws and nails and springs and an entire wrench was the first thing that came out this year. They [the pupils] love it, we've got trowels, got metal detectors, they'll trowel through it and then anything they think is interesting they'll give to me, I'll look at and it either goes in the finds tray or on the spoil heap. They were so excited, especially getting a metal detector out as it is very exciting" - teacher*

*"One of the boys I had last year, he actually then went home and dug up his back garden, much to his parents delight" – teacher*



*Pupils undertaking and cataloguing the finds from their archaeological dig*

## **Impact of Heritage Schools**

The CPD training and ongoing support has increased the confidence of teachers to create and deliver more engaging, locally relevant history lessons. The provision of useful resources, along with how to use maps, census records, aerial photographs, and local buildings has helped facilitate their use with pupils. Sourcing such information can be extremely time-consuming, so having the LHEM do this has enabled teachers to concentrate on how to best use such information in their teaching.

Because of their involvement with Heritage Schools they now have a stronger local history component, with teaching units adapted to focus more on this where relevant.

The cachet of being a Historic England Heritage School has given the History Lead the confidence and impetus to invite in more visitors as it helps provide reassurance that the school has a strong focus on local history.

Without being part of Heritage Schools, attending CPD training and having access to the support from the LHEM many of the things the school has done in their history lessons over the last few years are unlikely to have happened.

*"Some of it would still be there, trying to bring some of the local stories in would definitely have been there, but I don't think I would have had as much confidence in delivering it, I don't think it would be anything like as good as it is now. We've got people who want to work with us and we've had the training. I know if I need something, I can email Ismail [LHEM] and say I don't suppose you've got anybody who can help me out in this area and he'd almost certainly have somebody he could suggest, which is brilliant because it means that makes my life much easier"*  
- teacher

History lessons are also used as a vehicle for cross-curricular learning, particularly in English (e.g. writing from perspectives of evacuees or historical figures, writing reports using local primary evidence) and Geography (e.g. studying local maps and changes).

Pupils are highly engaged, particularly with hands-on and relevant local activities such as their archaeological digs, heritage walks, and visits from external speakers. Pupils often share with their families what they have learnt at school about the local area, with parents visiting the local history exhibitions pupils have put on at the Ringstead Heritage Centre.

*"They love it, actually ... when you get them coming in and saying this is great, I looked at the road name I live on and it means this. When they come in, really enthused, you know, you've got them"* – teacher

*"It sticks with them [pupils]"* - teacher

The connections developed with local history groups, museums, and heritage sites, because of their focus on local heritage, has led to more engaging and memorable activities for the pupils.

The school continues to amend its history curriculum to involve more local examples to help bring history to life, using resources provided by Historic England.

*"I'm rewriting our Romans and our prehistoric units because they aren't local enough. The LHEM shared the Must Farm [Bronze Age site in nearby Cambridgeshire] resources with me that they've got on their website, which I'm going to be using a lot ... for us it's much more relevant than learning about Skara Brae, which is up in Orkney"* - teacher

From CPD training received on using timelines and examples from other schools, the school had a large wall display created, which includes local references to events and aspects they study (e.g. Bronze & Iron Age Stanwick Lakes, the Romans at Chester House, Northamptonshire's boots and shoes industry), as well as national events.



*Timeline display in the main corridor highlighting both local and national events*

The school has been awarded the Heritage Schools Award in recognition of its commitment to incorporating local heritage into its history lessons, across all Year Groups.

## **Summary**

Involvement in the Heritage Schools initiative has been transformative, providing resources, training, and confidence to deliver a rich, locally relevant history curriculum. This has been enjoyable for both teachers and pupils.

Having a strong focus on local history engages pupils, supports cross-curricular learning, and has strengthened community ties.

There is a strong desire for the relationship with Heritage Schools to continue.