

Case Study: Gloucestershire Archives & Voices, Gloucester

Background

The project has been a collaboration between Voices Gloucester (who receive funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic England to work with schools and communities to deliver a project called Gloucester Views) and Gloucestershire Archives. They have developed and delivered various projects including a local heritage conference for sixth form students, but the focus of the case study is their Gates Project, which was also supported by Gloucester Civic Trust.

"Having community led projects that are developed with the community, that use artists and other people to help people tell their stories and bring history to life and bring heritage to life" – Voices Gloucester

Gloucester was originally a Roman fort defended by a perimeter with north, east, south and west gates. These original gates and streets still exist and are used to enter the historic heart of the city. They have been used as the foundation for this multi-school heritage project.

Six primary schools have been involved in the Gates Project: a child's eye view of Gloucester. The schools visited and undertook a study day looking at the local, built heritage of one of the 'gates' – the four main streets of the city, Southgate, Northgate, Eastgate and Westgate, so collectively covering all four.

All the pupils involved were from Key Stage 2, with schools themselves deciding whether to involve their Year 4, 5 or 6 classes in the project.

The project used art and design as a vehicle to learn more about local history and develop a greater sense of belonging and pride in their city.

"[Gloucester doesn't] shout about itself but it really is an incredible city. It's got all these hidden gems everywhere and it's got some amazing history" – Voices Gloucester

"Primarily it's a local history project but obviously art is a massive part of it and English to a certain extent as well, I guess it makes it quite cross curricular but first and foremost, I think it is a local history project" – Gloucestershire Archives

The results of their collective outputs have then been combined to create an information leaflet and a public exhibition of their work.

Study day - morning

The first half of the study day involved a site visit to look at the built heritage. Each school was assigned one of the four gateways to Gloucester to study.

Volunteer tour guides from Gloucester Civic Trust provided a 90-minute tour and told the pupils about the history of the gateway and street that they have been selected to study, and then took them on a walking tour of the city centre to highlight other buildings and features. Pupils asked the guides lots of questions throughout.



Pupils took down notes and ideas during their walking tour



Pupils looking and learning about what remains of the Roman East Gate – they also had special access to the ruins below ground level

They were also accompanied by an artist, Catherine Hawkrige, who got the pupils to stop at various points to undertake some observational drawings. These sketches and notes were then used in the afternoon session.



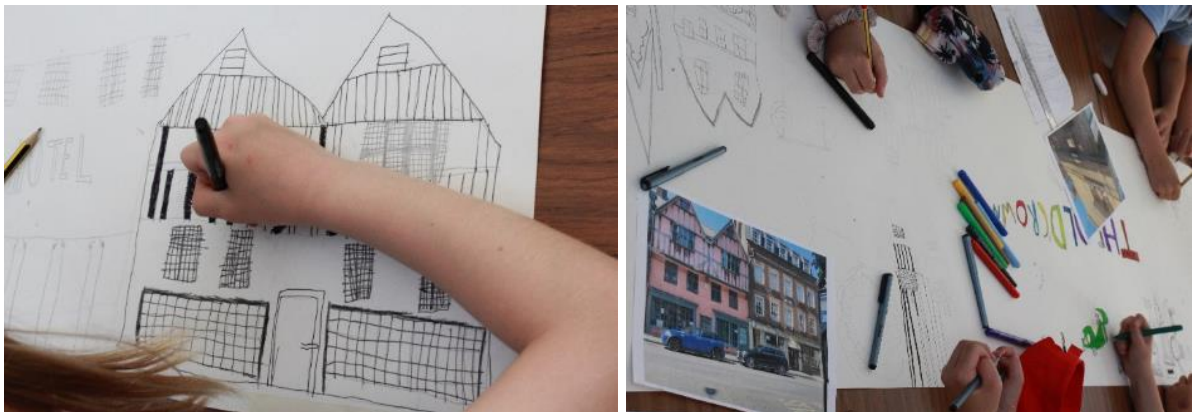
The historical evidence was captured from various sources

Study day - afternoon

Back at school for the afternoon, each class then undertook an art workshop with Catherine to produce artwork and text to go into a leaflet. The leaflet is intended to present a child's eye view of Gloucester, made up of work chosen from the six primary schools taking part in the project.

The afternoon session began with a brief recap to re-energise and refocus the pupils. Pupils were asked about 'wow' words from their morning visit to help them reflect on what they had seen and learnt. Each pupil was encouraged to think of a 'Did you see?' or 'Did you know?' that they would like to share with others on a visit. They then shared these with their partners or groups and discuss different ways to record these ideas such as drawings of places, comic strips, diagrams etc and what they might include.

After a creative warm up they started 'long drawings'. This is a way of drawing together to create an overall composition, giving opportunities for individual, paired or small group work as suits each pupil. It provided a way to think about information and ideas without the pressure of size, scale or progress that separate sheets of paper can create.



Pupils turning what they had seen into visual information

Pupils were tasked with being critical thinkers – in coming up with ideas and selecting the information that should go into an information leaflet and what to miss out – and how best to present this.

There were lots of opportunities for discussion facilitated by the artist and class teacher, including a lot of class shoutouts ... 'who remembers.... who knows when did xxx happen' etc to fact check, develop ideas and keep everyone working together.

Final outputs

Along with the final leaflet, there has been an exhibition in September of all the pupils' work at The Folk. The exhibition has been open to families and the general public.

The Folk is a Tudor building in Gloucester, operated by the Civic Trust, which as a venue aims to keep the history of Gloucester city alive by bringing the local community together to learn about their past through the telling of stories.

The exhibition provided an opportunity to expose families to the Folk, which many had never been inside before, and to see it as a welcoming and friendly community space.

The aim is for the leaflet to be available for visitors to Gloucester.





The final leaflet highlighting the history and heritage of Gloucester

The impact of Heritage Schools

The kernel for developing a project came from a CPD training session that the Historic England Local Heritage Education Manager organised. This was hosted at the Gloucestershire Heritage Hub (home to Gloucestershire Archives and heritage partners) and jointly organised by Gloucestershire Archives and Gloucester Voices, bringing together teachers from local Primary and Secondary Schools. The training looked at how to use historic maps, showed the resources available to teachers and led to discussions about what schools would want from these external partners.

“Michael [LHEM] was absolutely brilliant in that session, to show schools how they could use their local history was really, really important. And I think that got them all thinking, the projects originated from that training. But it definitely needed Michael’s input at the beginning in order to create that path for the teachers to follow. It got them thinking of things that they thought would fit in with their schools” – Gloucestershire Archives

Heritage Schools provided the funding which enabled the project to take place. Being able to employ a local artist to work with the schools and pupils and facilitate the day helped schools be able to take part (without adding extra workload onto the teachers) and has meant suitable inputs have been captured to create a highly professional output.

Gloucestershire Archives have been able to co-ordinate various organisations including the Civic Trust, and commissioning an artist to work with the schools who also professionally designed the final leaflet and organised the exhibition, so the overall project has been able to be much larger than if just a single school tried to do something similar themselves.

“So this could be done without the level of funding that we've had but you wouldn't get the same quality of outcome. The fact that we've got an artist who's delivering the creative elements, who will design the leaflet in the exhibition, you're not going to have teachers that have got the capacity to put that extra time in the planning and working with the Civic Trust, the outcomes of the leaflet and the exhibition won't necessarily happen ... [it would all be] less ambitious” – Gloucester Voices

It has brought together different organisations, all wanting to engage children with local heritage, to provide a project that would otherwise not have been as engaging or as rich.

“It allows us to work with younger people and schools. It also allows us to work with different groups. It allows us to build new relationships with these schools which is really important” – Gloucestershire Archives

The impact on pupils

The project got pupils to act as historians, asking questions, recording information and stories, selecting evidence and presenting this back in an interesting and informative way. They are tasked with looking, listening and thinking. The information and evidence comes from what they saw themselves on their site visit and what they were told by the Civic Trust guides.

The project has engaged pupils in and with their local heritage, studying places that they previously knew very little about or would just walk past without noticing. It has given them a greater understanding and appreciation of the history and heritage of Gloucester and therefore the opportunity to be proud about the wealth of history and heritage in the city that they live in.

“We want the children and the teachers to go away and feel proud of where they live. And I really think that this project does make you proud to be from Gloucester or Gloucestershire, I think that's a big part of it” – Gloucestershire Archives

“The city doesn't have the reputation it deserves, it isn't celebrated in the way it deserves. It's actually incredibly rich in history but there's quite a disconnect, particularly between young people and that history. I think that part of what

Voices does collectively, but especially through the schools programme is help people feel proud of their city and value it and see that it does have all this wealth of history, and that actually there is something to be proud of” – Gloucester Voices



The city centre and axis of the four gates where a market cross use to stand – many pupils had never noticed this before until told stories by the Civic Trust tour guides; history and heritage is often hidden in plain sight until pointed out by someone else

As it is an exciting programme of activity, it has helped create more time and space to think about local history than would otherwise be the case, which in itself promotes greater impacts.

“Having an entire day dedicated to local history gives them [the pupils] the time and space to really understand it a lot more. And because there is the leaflet and the exhibition at the end, they have really tangible goals as well, which I think is really important for the schools” – Gloucestershire Archives

Looking at the changes and developments in the buildings and hearing about the lives of people who lived in Gloucester in the past, helps give a sense of change but also continuity, along with belonging and being part of the city.

“You are part of the city and [everyone] can make a difference to the history of the city” – Civic Trust tour guide

The process has given teachers ideas on how they can use a more freeform creative activity element across other subjects to enable pupils to have more in depth conversations and reflection time, helping to embed their learning.

Summary

The project has provided an interesting and engaging way for pupils to find out much more than they previously knew about the history of Gloucester and to recognise that it has a wealth of history and heritage – all that is needed is to look and be inquisitive.

It has exposed pupils (and their parents) to their local heritage and got them thinking more about the place where they live.

Having the project co-ordinated by partners outside of each school has made it considerably easier for schools to take part.

“One of the big pluses for the schools has been that we've been able to lift quite a lot of work away from them” – Gloucestershire Archives

The impacts have exceeded the expectations of those who set it up, both in the quality of the final outputs but also in how engaged pupils have been throughout.

It has also enabled Gloucestershire Archives to work in partnership with a broad community, building deeper connections with the Civic Trust, along with pupils at six Primary schools in the city and their parents.