

Reflections on launch of Paul Hamlyn 'Making My Place in the World' project

Session 1 – Introductory session (Tues 4th October 2011)

The class is a Year 9 middle ability group. There are 27 pupils in the class, with 13 being boys and 14 girls.

The session began with a brief introduction before pupils got into some practical activities. The first activity was an opinion line activity where pupils had to move along a human opinion line to some simple statements. Pupils were then asked to give reasons for their position in the room using a makeshift microphone. Pupils only spoke if they wanted to volunteer answers.

Pupils seemed cautious to begin with, with some silly justifications being given, but soon relaxed into the activity with more pupils willing to justify. Perhaps some pupils gave silly answers because they were nervous or perhaps because they couldn't find the right words to articulate themselves.

The photo activity 'Bury, or not!' was interesting. Pupils had clear opinions on whether they could relate their experiences of Bury to the photo they had, but when asked to explain that found it difficult to explain. One pupil found it particularly difficult to describe the image he had, but with a little encouragement and questioning from John he began to voluntarily use more specific language with more confidence, e.g. it's a semi-detached house.

The final activity was the word circle. One word to describe Bury. The first time round gave pupils the chance to form thoughts about the town, but most words were very generic and could be applied to any town or city for example cool, busy, modern. After being given the chance to better prepare their word and being encouraged to be more specific about describing 'their town' the words pupils used had much greater relevance to Bury and pupils personal feelings about the town.

At this point it was interesting to hear a number of pupils begin to describe their feelings about Bury in greater detail. Three pupils felt that the new shopping centre was a waste of money, rather than something shiny, modern and exciting that they could be proud of. They said they felt that the money should have been spent on other more important projects in the town such as tackling the large number of homeless people or improving deprived areas of the town. The shopping centre just 'covered up' the real problems.

I think that this could be a focus for the 'Making My Place In The World' project. Pupils could begin to investigate the real side to Bury, the other Bury story or a young persons view for change. They could take these feelings and look at areas in Bury that they feel need investment or improvement, not solely as spaces for them to use but also areas where they feel it is important to improve the lives of others. This would form a great basis to incorporate community (one of the questions that came up during the session) and for the pupils to meet with town planners and the local council to discuss their points of view or findings.