

Making my Place in the World

Newall Green High School Evaluation

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Introduction- why Newall Green High School became involved

Newall Green High School became part of the Making my Place in the World Project (the project) in September last year. Through communication from Sue Bermingham, who was my University Tutor while I was completing my PGCE at Manchester Metropolitan University, I learnt the focus of the project and the possible benefits. Newall Green High School (NGHS) is currently involved heavily with the Communication Trust as we become a communication rich school. I felt this project would work well alongside the whole school focus and help to improve some of the communication skills of our pupils.

The project appealed to me as an education practitioner as it offered pupils an alternative style of learning using a topic they were already aware of. Literacy is becoming more prominent in GCSE exams and I felt the project may help in raising literacy levels of the pupils involved through speaking and listening.

The School

Newall Green High School is a 11-19 Trust school which is part of the South Manchester Inclusive Learning Enterprise Trust which consists of two primary schools, Baguley Hall and Benchill and ourselves. Our trust partners are Parkway Green Housing Trust, Barnardos, Manchester Airport PLC and the University Hospital of South Manchester. The school is located in Wythenshawe which is part of the Manchester City Council borough of Greater Manchester. The school offers a wide and varied curriculum with many academic and vocational opportunities available to our pupils.

The school has a total of 954 pupils on roll. 29 pupils at KS3-4 have SEN statements and 12 pupils at KS5 are statemented. 38.86% are entitled to free school meals which is higher than the national average. Last summer 83% of pupils achieved 5A*-C grades at GCSE. This includes vocational qualifications.

Selection of pupil cohort

Last academic year we changed from having a 3 year KS3 to a 2 year which resulted in the current year 9 cohort selecting their GCSE options at the end of year 8. The pupils were divided into 2 streams- the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) and the Applied Learning. The decision as to which stream pupils were put into was based on their KS2 results in Maths, English and Science and their predicted target grades for GCSE. The EBacc stream was named as such due to the new government measure in league tables of how many pupils achieve 5 A*-C GCSEs including a language and a humanity.

The year 9 Ebacc stream students had to opt to either study history or geography for GCSE. 22 choose geography which created a class of an acceptable size but was disappointing as there were 3 larger history classes created. As a result I had to make a decision on whether to start the GCSE syllabus at the start of year 9 or to wait until later in the year. The opportunity to become involved with the project gave me a focus for the first term of curriculum with the class using it as a skill building work opportunity.

I chose the year 9 class as I am a year 9 form tutor so know a lot of the children and it also offered an opportunity to build their geographical skills before they started to learn the GCSE level work which would require a higher level of understanding.

Below is a table of the levels the pupils were at when we began the project:

| Pupil Number | Sex | End of year target | October half term assessment |
|--------------|-----|--------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 | F | D | E |
| 2 | F | D | E |
| 3 | F | D | D |
| 4 | F | D | D |
| 5 | M | D | D |
| 6 | M | D | E |
| 7 | M | D | E |
| 8 | F | D | D |
| 9 | M | D | E |
| 10 | F | E | E |
| 11 | M | E | E |
| 12 | M | D | E |
| 13 | F | E | F |
| 14 | M | D | G |
| 15 | M | D | D |
| 16 | F | D | D |
| 17 | M | D | D |
| 18 | M | E | D |
| 19 | F | C | D |
| 20 | F | D | E |
| 21 | F | D | E |
| 22 | F | E | F |

The colour represents whether the pupil was on target for their first assessment of the year. Green means they were on or above their target, yellow means they were one grade below and red is more than 2 grades below.

Initial hopes and concerns

The main focus for the project for me was to raise achievement. I wanted to see an increase in the pupils' geographical knowledge and wanted this to be reflected in the levels they achieved in their work. I also wanted an improvement in their geographical language both in written and oral work. Raising levels of verbal communication was also an aim of the project from my perspective in order to "link up" with the whole school initiative we are undergoing.

The experience of working with specialist "community geographers" was also an opportunity for the pupils. Pupils often respond better to outside practitioners who do something different than their everyday teachers. I was aware that the community geographers were likely to offer a different type of learning to the traditional classroom style the pupils experience every day.

My concerns for the project included the amount of time it would entail. I was also concerned about what I should be delivering as a teacher to the class especially topics, activities and assessment to meet the aims of the project. Pupil engagement with the project was also a concern especially in terms of staying 'interested' in geography despite only focusing on one topic for an entire term of work. Apathy towards the project is something I wanted to avoid as I knew the benefits would outweigh the negatives.

Organisational Issues

Year 9 are timetabled to have 3 hours of geography a week so I was not concerned about not being able to deliver the project in the classroom. The Headteacher was extremely flexible in allowing me to organise fieldwork in the local area and also a later trip to Castleton in Derbyshire.

The periodic visits from the community geographers did not pose a problem to me but the lack of regularity caused some confusion as to what they should be doing week to week. A more structured programme would have enhanced this and made the visits more meaningful.

Planning and curriculum making

Delivering a full term of lessons focused on Wythenshawe was an exciting prospect. I wanted the pupils to teach me about their local area as well as me informing them. I focused my lessons around a simple concept of who, what, where, when, why and how all about Wythenshawe. We also looked at perceptions of Wythenshawe from people outside of the area and also the media's representation of the area. I wanted to encourage the pupils to be proud of where they lived rather than focusing on the negatives initially. The series of lessons were as followed:

Introduction to the project

Fieldwork

Questioning lesson (preparing to interview a local expert)

GIS lessons planning route for our fieldwork trip

Impact of CCTV on Wythenshawe

No Pens day lesson- Whole school day where no writing was to be completed
Developments in Wythenshawe
Is the Media portrayal of Wythenshawe realistic?
Communicating our findings about Wythenshawe
Interviewing a local expert

I planned for 2 fieldwork trips around the local area but wanted the pupils to decide the route. After we had completed lessons on Wythenshawe as a place, who lives there and perceptions of the area, the pupils worked on planning routes we could travel around the area with GIS websites. The pupils then used these routes to guide myself and the community geographers around their area. The ownership they had made the fieldwork more valuable as there were acting as local "tour guides" and were excited about pointing things of interest out.

Once fieldwork was conducted by the pupils in Wythenshawe I was able to focus the class much more on one issue they had discovered. It turned out to be the use of CCTV was a major issue for the pupils and also for local people. This stemmed from one of the community geographers being told he was not allowed to take photographs in the Civic shopping area. The pupils were horrified that they were being filmed but could not do the same. As part of this issue the community geographers organised for the manager of the Civic shopping centre to come in and talk to the class about the issue.

The overriding theme that came out of the curriculum making for the project was the pupils' perception of crime. None of the pupils' views changed on crime within their local area and it still seemed to be the major issue they feel they are facing on a day to day basis. All are very aware of the gun crime which exists in Wythenshawe and they all feel people from outside the area see Wythenshawe as a poor place to live due to the crime rates.

During the project I had two PGCE students placed with me for their Block A placement. As part of the teaching practice I asked them to deliver several lessons on Wythenshawe. I believe this aided their understanding of the environment they were teaching in and it also helped their communication with the class as they became more aware of places and issues the pupils knew about. It gave them an opportunity to add to their subject knowledge and give them a specific insight into one area of Manchester. One activity the students attempted was a role play. However the pupils did not engage well with this and the activity fell flat. For the PGCE students this was extremely disheartening but I assured them they needed to try activities like this to learn from the delivery.

In February 2012 I organised for the class to visit Castleton in Derbyshire as a comparison study to Wythenshawe. I felt it was important for the pupils to visit a completely different area which would also give them the opportunity to use different geographical language. I used £1000 of the total funding made available through the project and £350 of my own budget to subsidise the trip which I hoped would encourage pupils to attend. I worked closely with the YHA Castleton to develop two days of activities focusing around geographical skills but also a bit of outdoor education and team building. Eleven of the pupils (50%) of the class chose to attend which was extremely frustrating as I had wanted all the class to come and experience what I had organised. The pupils gained a lot from the trip and this was evident from the feedback they gave me and others in their year group. I have had numerous non-geography studying pupils approach me and ask when we are going to Castleton again and can they come.

The response to the Castleton trip signified to me the importance of pupils spending time outside their local area and maybe, if this project is to be run again, the focus should not necessarily be their immediate local area. The benefit to pupils visiting places they have never encountered generates an immediate interest which studying their own area doesn't necessarily provide. From this experience I feel a comparison between two areas would maybe be a better focus if the project was to continue.

Results and Impacts

As a part of the school exam timetable the pupils sat an internal exam in December 2011. As part of this I incorporated several questions on the work they had done in the project. Below is a copy of the pupils' results:

| Pupil Number | Sex | End of year target | December 2011 exam mark | Mark for the Wythenshawe focused exam questions (out of 18) |
|--------------|-----|--------------------|-------------------------|---|
| 1 | F | D | B | 17 |
| 2 | F | D | D | 10 |
| 3 | F | D | C | 15 |
| 4 | F | D | B | 18 |
| 5 | M | D | C | 14 |
| 6 | M | D | D | 14 |
| 7 | M | D | E | 12 |
| 8 | F | D | E | 10 |
| 9 | M | D | B | 17 |
| 10 | F | E | E | 13 |
| 11 | M | E | D | 13 |
| 12 | M | D | D | 11 |

| | | | | |
|----|---|---|-----|-----|
| 13 | F | E | D | 12 |
| 14 | M | D | E | 16 |
| 15 | M | D | B | 17 |
| 16 | F | D | E | 11 |
| 17 | M | D | D | 11 |
| 18 | M | E | D | 12 |
| 19 | F | C | E | 11 |
| 20 | F | D | D | 12 |
| 21 | F | D | ABS | abs |
| 22 | F | E | G | 7 |

The same colour coding apply as previously discussed in this report. Only one pupil failed to obtain 50% correct on the Wythenshawe focused questions and 8 pupils (44% of the cohort) obtained over 75% correct on the Wythenshawe focused questions. Two of the three Wythenshawe questions had a specific CCTV focus and I do not believe the pupils would have been as successful in their answers had they not had the intervention of the project. However it remains unclear if this is due to what was covered in class, the fieldwork they took part in or the specific activities the community geographers conducted with the pupils.

Pupil progress in the use of geographical language has been assessed by the community geographers in the final session they had with the pupils. I believe the pupils are more aware of certain words and will be able to understand exam language.

An increase in progress, from the start of the year to the end of the specific lessons, occurred in 59% of the group. 18% of the class stayed at the same level and 23% of the group did not make any progress at all. This was all based on summative assessment data however. In terms of teacher judgement I believe 18 of the 22 pupils in the class benefitted in terms of their progress. Many acquired new geographical language and also became more aware of issues in their local area, especially regarding CCTV which was a specific focus for the project.

Conclusion

The project has achieved what I feel both I and the school wanted from it. It allowed pupils to have an insight into their local area and improved their communication skills as a result of the activities. It also gave some pupils the opportunity to visit an area extremely different to their own and investigate localities different to their own. This is an area which is not really studied as part of the GCSE specification so added a different dimension to their learning.

The improvement in attainment is enough for me to validate the project running and taking place in Newall Green High School. It was a different approach to what we

would normally take as a department and showed what a difference learning outside the classroom can have on the pupils. Their enthusiasm for speaking about their local area was enhanced when they were able to point particular things out and explain why they were like that. For example "no go" areas allowed the community Geographers and myself to gain an understanding of the social context of the pupils lives and what they do (or do not in this case) in their free time. Areas of parks were pointed out as areas of crime or places where undesirable activities went on. Without pupils pointing these areas out it is unlikely we would have been aware of them. They also revealed areas they were both proud of and disappointed with in their local area. The pupils became more engaged when positive things about their area were discussed or pointed out. I think they are often fed such negative information about their local area, they do not have any positive feelings towards the area they call home. The project allowed them to see the potential of their local area and how it could possibly grow to become an area of wealth.

The role of the Community Geographers was extremely important in ensuring the project had "kudos" with the pupils and it wasn't just seen as another unit of work. Despite some of the activities not being that well received the pupils generally worked well with the Community Geographers and enjoyed sessions with them. If I was to be part of the project again I would want their role to become much bigger and more involved in the day to day teaching of the class. It gives the pupils a chance to engage with other adults and also gives the project a unique edge compared to other initiatives.

Language and vocabulary were key aspects of the project and Newall Green High is currently heavily involved with the Communication Trust in developing these areas. The project therefore fitted well within the school's current focus. The work the Community Geographers did with the pupils reinforced common geographical terms while almost introducing new, higher level key words. The pupils engaged well with it and I am hoping the language they explored will be beneficial when they complete their GCSE exams in two years time.

Evaluation

The organisation of the project was overall excellent. Detailed communication occurred by email and letter prior to the start and during the project. Both the Community Geographers acted in a professional manner and had the pupils' wellbeing as a priority at all times. The delivery of sessions with the class were of an appropriate level and generated interest. Some of the activities were innovative and new which helped engage the class.

An area I feel the project could improve on is the academic outcomes. It was difficult to measure whether the pupils benefitted to the most they possibly could from the project. While I believe they found the topic interesting, I am not sure it would be deemed as "exciting" by the pupils as it focused on places they visit every day and to children living in an area such as Wythenshawe I am not sure it was as an inspiring as it could have been. I do not believe if you asked the pupils now that they would remember they were part of a wider project. They saw the Community Geographers more as visitors who were coming to teach them as an alternative to a normal lesson.

As a teacher involved in the project I felt there was a lot of onus put on to me to teach about the local area which was not what I thought the project would be. I had to develop a new scheme of work and resources to ensure pupils were geographically skilled enough to understand what the project was trying to achieve. It is unlikely I will repeat the same scheme of work in its current context as I do not think it created a "buzz" about geography as a subject which is what I strive to achieve as a teacher. However I may use it to develop a comparative study with another locality in another part of the world.

The funding provided by the project was of major benefit to the school. It allowed me to take the class who had taken part in the project to study Castleton as a rural comparative to Manchester. The pupils really enjoyed the trip with many asking when we could return. This part of the project generated more excitement from the pupils who attended than in the classroom due to it being somewhere different to their normal day to day lives which again reinforces the point of not necessarily focusing the project on the local area in future.

Final Thoughts

The project enabled me, as a Geography Practitioner, to see the combination of academic thinking and practical delivery. Having the input and ideas of people outside of the school environment has enabled me to think about using different teaching methods which can help develop pupils' sense of the "real world" rather than diagrams/powerpoints within the classroom. The overarching benefit for the pupils was the opportunity to go away for the overnight trip to Castleton and to investigate an area outside their home. The trip is still talked about by the class and they have requested we go again. Excitement of places outside a locality but within easily travelling distance should maybe become the focus of such initiatives.