
Case Study: Christ Church Primary School, Chadderton, Oldham

A Primary School which has recently achieved the Heritage Schools Award

Background to Christ Church Primary School

Christ Church Primary School is in Chadderton, a former cotton mill town in Oldham, Greater Manchester. The school has 270 pupils, of whom 29.5% are eligible for free school meals. 12.6% of the pupils have English as an additional language.

Some of the pupils' parents had attended the school themselves as children, and the new housing being built in the area is attracting new families. The school has recently celebrated its 50th anniversary. For this case study, in-person interviews were carried out with the History Lead and two Year 4 pupils.

Christ Church Primary's involvement with Heritage Schools

Christ Church Primary achieved the Heritage Schools Award in 2023, having successfully demonstrated how local heritage is included across the school's History curriculum. In 2021, one of the teachers attended an online CPD session, run by the Heritage Schools Local Heritage Education Manager (LHEM) for schools in Oldham, to find out methods of using local heritage in the curriculum.

Since then, the LHEM has delivered a further online CPD session for all the teachers at Christ Church, and some of the teachers have attended additional sessions focusing on different topics such as World War 2 and the Suffrage movement.

Christ Church has received a set of historic maps and aerial photographs, centred on the school, from Historic England. The maps are also used in Geography (land use patterns), Maths (scale) and to locate local green areas to support the school's work as an Eco School. As a result of this training, each year group, including Reception, studies at least one local heritage topic each year.

Local heritage across the History Curriculum



During the summer term 2024, Christ Church Primary held a Local History Exhibition in school, where each year group had a stall with a display about the local heritage topic which they had studied. Parents and families were invited to attend. This provided an opportunity for the pupils on each stall to talk about what they had learned about their local heritage to the visitors, and to the other pupils in the school. One of the visitors to the exhibition said:

“What a lovely way to showcase the children’s learning across the school. Lots of lovely examples and the children all spoke really well explaining each part” - Exhibition visitor

All the pupils attended the exhibition, and the History Lead commented that many of them reminisced about the topics they had studied in previous years, were excited about what they would learn in future years, and could see how the topics fitted together. For example, Year 5 study World War 1 and they build on that knowledge by studying World War 2 in Year 6. The History Lead explained that they start topics, such as the World Wars, by looking at the international scene and then focusing in on how the wars impacted Oldham.

Years 4 and 5 find out about local people who had a national impact, such as Annie Kenney who was a working class Suffragette and a leading member of the Women’s Social and Political Union. The LHEM had provided information about Annie Kenney as part of the CPD sessions she delivers for teachers. Annie Kenney had been a “half timer” as a child, working in a cotton mill for half the day and going to school for the other half-day; the pupils could compare children’s lives in the late 19th century with their own. The pupils visited her statue outside the Old Town Hall in Oldham. Although some of the pupils had seen the statue before, most of them did not know of her importance before they began this topic. The pupils manning the stall at the Exhibition

found that most of the visitors did not know about Annie Kenney either, and they were keen to find out about her achievements.

Years 3 and 4 use census documents to study ordinary people, such as mill workers, who lived in Chadderton around 100 years ago. They found out that families often had more children than nowadays, and that many of the women worked as midwives or maids as well as in the mills. Some men worked repairing motor cars, which were becoming more common. The pupils learned about "half timers" – children who worked half time in the mills and went to school for the other half of the day.

Years 1 and 2 learn about the Industrial Revolution and the development of the five cotton mills which operated in Chadderton. Reception find out about how the school has changed in the past 50 years, and meet people who have attended the school in the past.

Since joining Heritage Schools, Chadderton Primary has worked with local heritage providers for visits and resources to give a local focus wherever possible so that the pupils can relate to what they are studying more easily. Gallery Oldham provides historic photographs of the area, and Christ Church borrows loan boxes on various topics from Touchstones, Portland Basin and Gallery Oldham. Pupils visit Castleshaw Roman Fort to study the Bronze Age and the Romans with the Friends of Castleshaw volunteers. Pupils also visit the local studies exhibition at Gallery Oldham whilst learning about the Industrial Revolution.



Being Roman, with the Castleshaw volunteers

In a previous year, pupils in Year 5 worked with a local artist to make ceramic tiles to recreate a painting of the Peterloo Massacre, in which two men from Chadderton were killed. The tiles are now displayed at the Crossley community centre in Chadderton where a plaque has been mounted to honour the bravery of members of the local community. Pupils from Christ Church were invited to the unveiling of the plaque and

the History Ambassadors (pupils who have a passion for the subject and promote this throughout school) performed a poem about the massacre.



Tiles created by pupils, based on an 18th century illustration of the Peterloo Massacre

In 2023, Christ Church Primary took part in the Heritage Schools exhibition held at Gallery Oldham. All the Heritage Schools in Oldham produced panels about aspects of local heritage which they had been learning about, and three pupils from each school talked about it. One of Christ Church Primary's panels was about Annie Kenney, and the pupils were excited to find that other schools had been learning about her too.

Impacts on pupils of learning about local heritage

"It's given the pupils a sense of place and an understanding of where they live, their locality, and how their community has been shaped by events which have taken place and by significant individuals. It gives them a real purpose for their learning. The children are starting to make links and talk about what they have learned about – "My street used to be Ramsey Mill, it was destroyed and houses were built. This person used to live at number ... on Denton Lane and they used to work in the mills as well!" -History Lead

The History Lead commented that the pupils' local heritage studies had helped them understand the significance and importance of Oldham as a textile-producing town and of the former mill buildings in Chadderton; in the 1870s, Oldham was the most productive cotton spinning town in the world.

Working with historic maps and photographs, census documents and so on has increased pupils' skills in working with primary sources.

At the Local Heritage Exhibition, the pupils were very confident and enthusiastic to tell the visitors about their local heritage topics, and the History Ambassadors were

confident to perform their poem about the Peterloo Massacre at the Crossley Centre. The History Lead considered that the pupils' pride in their local area has increased as a result of greater knowledge about it, and the Year 4 pupils who were interviewed said that they are proud of where they live.

The History Lead said that learning about Annie Kenney has had a particular impact, especially on some of the girls:

"They are very passionate about her as a Suffragette, what she stood up for and how she was such a significant figure in our local area" - History Lead

"Annie Kenney was born in Oldham and she basically changed the world" - Year 4 pupil

The two Year 4 pupils who were interviewed for the case study talked enthusiastically and knowledgeably about Annie Kenney and her achievements. They had told their families about what they had learned about her – *"they didn't know about Annie Kenney before, but they do now"* – and explained how she had inspired them:

"She has encouraged me to never stop believing in things which people want" - Year 4 pupil

"She has encouraged me that whatever gets in the way won't discourage me from trying to change something" - Year 4 pupil

Impacts on teachers and the school as a whole

All the teachers attended the whole-school CPD session which the LHEM delivered. In addition, the History Lead has shared with the teachers the learning and resources from the other Heritage Schools CPD sessions which she has attended. She emphasised the high quality of the resources, advice and information which the LHEM provides. The teachers are now confident to use the historic maps and photographs provided by Historic England, and to use websites to research, for example, censuses and Commonwealth War Graves records. The teachers were not familiar with these sources of information before the Heritage Schools training, and even though the History Lead lives in a nearby town, she did not know about Annie Kenney's role as a Suffragette or about a mill in Chadderton being used to make aircraft during World War 2.

With support and advice from the LHEM, the History Lead re-designed the History curriculum alongside the Head Teacher and Teaching & Learning Lead. They ensured every Year Group carries out a local study at least once per year, and local heritage is included in other History topics wherever possible. The History Lead created medium-

term plans and knowledge organisers⁵ for each topic, working with local heritage providers to gather key information, such as with Gallery Oldham for the topic about Annie Kenney.

The History Lead gave a presentation at one of the LHEM's recent CPD sessions for the Heritage Schools local network, to describe Christ Church Primary's journey to achieving the Heritage Schools Award and to encourage other schools to embark on the same.



The History Lead presenting Christ Church Primary's Heritage Schools work to teachers from other schools

The teachers at Christ Church Primary will continue to be involved in the Heritage Schools network, attending CPD sessions on different topics and sharing experiences with other schools.

Impacts on families and the local community

Following the success of this year's Local Heritage Exhibition, Christ Church Primary plans to hold another exhibition next year and involve the wider local community, for example to invite people who do not have a current connection with the school but have lived in the area for many years. The pupils can share with them what they have learned about Chadderton's past.

⁵ Key facts and a glossary of important words

The History Lead commented that many of the pupils talk to their families about what they have discovered about local landmarks and significant people who have lived nearby in the past.

Years 1 and 2 have a two-year curriculum cycle, and last year they learned about the invention of radio. To make a local heritage link, they had a tour of Oldham Community Radio's studio, and the presenters of the History radio show came into Christ Church Primary to broadcast a programme about the Coronation. Now, Oldham Community Radio comes into school to cover topics in other subjects as well, such as English, PSHE, Wellbeing and Sport.

Summary



Christ Church Primary achieves the Heritage Schools Award, March 2023

In the three years since Christ Church Primary started with Heritage Schools, they have achieved the Heritage Schools Award and made local heritage a focus across the History curriculum. All the teachers are confident in using the training, resources and advice provided by the LHEM. The curriculum plan is designed so that from year to year, the pupils build up their knowledge and understanding of Chadderton and Oldham's local heritage, and they develop skills in using primary sources such as historic maps and census documents. The school has good links with local heritage organisations, which provide visits and resources.

Using local heritage has strengthened links with the local community, through the Local Heritage Exhibition, work with the Crossley Centre and Oldham Community Radio.

The pupils gain a good understanding of how Chadderton and Oldham have developed since the Bronze Age, and the significance of the former mill buildings as

the town expanded during the Industrial Revolution. Comments from visitors to the Local Heritage Exhibition, and from teachers, show that pupils in all year groups are enthused by learning about their local heritage.

The teachers will continue to focus and deliver the teaching of local heritage because they understand its value:

"I don't want it just to be the case of "we've got the [Heritage Schools] Award – we want to continue the journey and make sure that we give the children the best education that we can" - History Lead