

Can you see the world from your window?

Year 7

Purpose

The students will take part in a “faith trail” around the Brick Lane area of Tower Hamlets. They will gain a historical understanding of the diversity of religions. They will consider how the religions support their members in the community. They consider how the religions influence the lives of the community both structurally (the buildings themselves) and culturally (food, fashion, music and support)

Main assessment focus

For this assessment, the focus is to develop students’ knowledge and understanding of the following key concepts:

- 1.2 Practices and ways of life
- 1.4 Identity, diversity and belonging

The pupils will create a board game showing their understanding of religion in Tower Hamlets. They will peer assess each other’s board games and reflect on their own achievement.

Main ‘Learning Outside the Classroom’ Focus

The project would focus on the creation of a faith trail around the Brick Lane area of Tower Hamlets. This trail would include visiting 7 different buildings of religious significance, from four different world religions.

School profile

Total number of learners	1200
Age range	11-16 (soon to be 11-18)
Specialist status	Performing Arts
Level 5 and above in key stage 3 tests (2007)	64%
Five A*-C at GCSE (2007)	75%
Special educational needs	9.7%

Our school is a successful comprehensive school with an ethnic diversity that reflects the local area accurately. The majority of students come from a Muslim; Bengali background but there is a significant minority of students from a Christian background. All students complete a full GCSE in Religious Studies, although timetable pressures mean that there are fewer lessons a week than other full GCSEs; the subject is enjoying a positive status amongst staff, students and parents. At key stage three there is much emphasis placed on the community of different religions in Tower Hamlets as there is an abundance of religious buildings, religious communities and sites of particular historical significance for four of the major world religions.

Question 1: What are we trying to achieve?

The first aim was to make learners within the school community more aware of the religious diversity of their local area. The plan was for the students of Morpeth School to investigate how the four world religions are represented in their local area, to discover the variety of practice between and within the world religions and how these religions support their members through the challenges of modern life.

Secondly, the aim was to produce a guide to the locality and a trail so that students of other schools from other areas could learn about four of the principal religions represented in Tower Hamlets. These students will then also be able to use the trail to learn outside the classroom about an area of great religious diversity.

Thirdly, the school does a lot of work on the five Rs (Resourceful, Responsible, Reflective, Resilient, Reasoning) in “learning to learn” lessons, and the visit also aimed to enhance the work they have been doing on this. For example, the trip involved a high level of challenge, creating space for the students to be resilient. In making the games they were highly resourceful. The peer assessment encourages students to be reflective of their own and each others work.

What were our learners like at the start?

The learners had already completed a scheme of work with basic information about each of the world religions. Within this scheme there was a heavy emphasis placed on the presence of these religions in Tower Hamlets. They have completed their own independent assignments on “Religions in Tower Hamlets”.

Whilst the learners have displayed a great interest in the religions of their local area it was felt that many students focus too narrowly on the religion that they themselves, or their families belong to and this narrow focus to not challenge them sufficiently in

order to produce independent work of a high standard. Many students require a high teacher input in order to complete their work and many teachers express concerns about the degree to which students resist efforts to encourage them to work independently. A further issue is that students often submit work as a personal assignment that has been plagiarised from other sources with little or no input or understanding from the student.

It is hoped that through an out of classroom experience, and an interactive and individual assessment method, the learners will develop their understanding of religions other than their own, and their skills as independent learners.

What differences did we want to see in our learners?

The main priorities for our curriculum development were for students to:

- 1) acquire knowledge and understanding of their local area, and of how the four of the principal world religions that have an impact on it.
- 2) understand the different waves of immigration that have shaped and affected the east end of London.
- 3) understand more of the history of their local area.
- 4) develop the skills of enquiry, and independent analysis of what they saw around them. The learning outside the classroom focus provides an opportunity for more differentiation, as a teacher is able to have extended conversations with students and stimulate their findings and understanding.
- 5) make their own cross curricular links between history and RE from their work on the trip.
- 6) be more inquisitive, and active in learning about their environment.

Question 2: How will we organise learning to achieve our aims?

How did we set about making a change?

Impact of the first trip:

We looked at current scheme of work, and sought a trip that would enhance an existing topic. This decision was made because we wanted the students to have a clear understanding of the diversity in their area; in religions, within religions, in the support given by the religions to their communities; and of the impact the religions have had on the local area.

It was agreed that a trip outside the classroom would be a very good way to demonstrate this diversity. Viewing the different properties in a walk means that they are seeing for themselves the differences and diversity. They are seeing how close together the different religions are built. By physically walking around the East London Mosque for example, they are seeing the size of that building compared to that of the Great Synagogue behind it. This shows them the increase in Muslim population and the decrease in Jewish population in the area. They could smell the food, see the shops, and hear the languages spoken. This would enhance their learning a great deal - physically seeing the buildings is very different to looking at a photograph.

Through teaching the unit in this way, it was intended that students would have a compelling learning experience and this would enable them to achieve much higher levels of attainment. Having a more intense, multi sensory learning activity such as the trip, will enable students to be more motivated, interested and be able to retain more knowledge and understanding after the visit.

Legacy of the trip:

The first run through of this visit has meant that next year we will be able to implement this series of lessons for the entire year group. The learning from this visit will also feed into schemes of work for the rest of Key Stage 3. There have also been many resources created, which can be modified and used by future visit organisers. (See **What evidence did we produce?** section at the end of this case study)

Organisation of the trip:

We worked with the student for a two hour period instead of the usual 45 minute lesson. This was dependant on support from our own department, the senior management team and other departments in the school. Thankfully Morpeth is very supportive of such initiatives.

The trip was staffed by the Religious Education teacher of the class, the Teaching Assistant who normally supports the class and a history teacher. This was a good balance, we felt, because it made it easier to make the cross curricular links. The trip and assessment lends itself to cross curricular work, for example ICT, design, geography and history. It has been a great opportunity for developing these links further.

Planning for the trip and assessment activities gave me the opportunity to understand more the nature of assessment, and enabled me to create an interesting,

individualised assessment task that will allow the students to work more independently.

The use of ICT has been significant, with video cameras, digital still cameras being utilised during the visit itself and then the students completing the task in an ICT suite. This has been dependant on the facilities of the school, and in some cases the goodwill of other departments.

Question 3: How well have we achieved our aims?

What differences are evident? What impact have we made on our learners?

The main aim of the project was to improve the learners' understanding of their local area. We aimed to encourage students to work independently and to broaden their knowledge and understanding of the religious diversity of their locality. We feel that the project has indeed met these aims. The examples of the on-trail worksheets show that the students worked independently; furthermore, they noticed things of their own, were motivated by their own interest and therefore learnt more about the variety and diversity in the area, far more than they had from completing the scheme of work in the class based activities.

The kinds of games they produced showed that their knowledge and understanding has increased substantially, especially in respect of the diversity within and between religions. Students, who had previously been resistant to making an effort to learn about religions other than their own, made significant steps forward in their learning. Most importantly, students have been able to work independently and creatively through the assessment task.

What evidence did we produce?

1. Peer assessment for the games
2. The trail route instructions
3. Photographs of students' games
4. On the trail mind map
5. History of Brick Lane support sheet
6. History of Brick Lane information booklet
7. The trail annotated map
8. Assessment Instructions for making the game
9. Photographs of students on trail and making games