

Bridging the Gap Case Study

Brampton Manor School

October 2007



“It was quite practical, because instead of reading, you can look at the map and see how everything links up. Everything is together and has to work in harmony with all of the other sides. I was surprised because there were all of these places I didn’t know, loads of other parks, now I can go there. It made it easier to understand the area because it was all broken down, and you can work out what is close to home.” Pupil

Background

Brampton Manor School was the final call for the Bridging the Gap team before the pilot programme came to an end. And with an enthusiastic teacher and school on board the team really pushed the boat out. A group of 17 pupils from across Year 7 came together for a two day Bridging the Gap roadshow. Not content with simply repeating the winning roadshow format that has evolved over the course of the year long pilot, the team devised a new activity to exploit a unique opportunity to study and redesign a well know Newham eyesore situated right by the school – the Greenway.

The team were delighted when they secured the support of Kath Markey from the Olympic Delivery Authority who agreed to meet with the pupils and present to them the plans for the Greenway and the architect brief for its redesign. The presence of such an important visitor had a great impact on the tone of the day. The team also brought in added inspiration in the form of Simon Rudd an ambassador from the Royal Geographical Society whose knowledge and enthusiasm rubbed off on the children.

What the children did

Day 1

Giant jigsaw map

Pupils modelled onto a giant jigsaw map of the borough to create a quick and rough vision of the area including all the major services, such as transport links and intersections as well as major landmarks. Whereas younger children have spent a great deal of time over this exercise, these pupils were encouraged to work quickly, help one another and not be afraid to just ‘get on with it and have a go’.

Greenway field trip

Later that day, the pupils set off to examine the Greenway for themselves. They were equipped with specially produced kits for examining the site, collecting specimens, take photographic evidence and recording data on maps. They also carried mini recorders in order to interview pedestrians and cyclists on the Greenway.

Holden Point visit

The busy day culminated with a visit to Holden Point (the official viewing gallery of the Olympic site) for a birds eye view of the progress of development.

Day 2

Micro map of the Greenway

The group began the day by creating their own giant map of the Greenway onto which they pasted, copied and charted the evidence they had collected the previous day.

Briefed by the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA)

The ODA have recently commissioned architects to redesign the Greenway, and the Bridging the Gap team invited Kath Markey, ODA Project Sponsor, along to tell the pupils about their plans for the area. After explaining what the ODA are doing, Kath set the pupils a series of design challenges rather like the architects' brief for the Greenway and the children learnt that their next task was to come up with their own design proposal.

3D scale model of the Greenway

The pupils learnt modelling techniques in order to build their own 3D model of their proposal creating a giant 6 metre long scale version of the entire Greenway. They were split into teams with each team taking a segment of the Greenway to work on.

Celebration

The roadshow ended up with a great sense of achievement and pride within the group. The pupils then had the chance to show their work including the scale model to other teachers and to the school's Head.

What the pupils said

The information below was collected by an independent researcher as part of a programme of action research that has been ongoing throughout the pilot. At Brampton School, six pupils and the lead teacher were interviewed individually and all 17 participating pupils filled out a written questionnaire. The researcher also observed the roadshow.

Feedback from pupils and teachers in all nine schools that have taken part in Bridging the Gap has been consistently positive with all concerned reporting an enjoyable, inspiring and valuable experience. Over the past year we have also found that participation in the roadshow generates a sense of great pride in the creative results and leads many pupils (7 out of 17 Brampton pupils) to feel better about the place where they live.

This case study focuses on what the pupils and their teacher think they have learned from taking part in the roadshow, highlight learning to use a new software package, Sketch Up which they had never encountered before.

Making sense of 2012

All but one of the 17 pupils felt that they had learnt about their borough, about the planned building work associated with 2012 and about what effect these works might have on them and their neighbourhoods. And, although the children were also studying the Olympics within their class work, several children said that only after mapping the borough with Bridging the Gap did they fully understand what it meant to say that Newham would be 'host borough' for the 2012 Games. Until then the idea had been quite abstract.

'I learnt that some of it was near my house, I didn't know it was. I thought it was going to be in central London.'

Making sense of the impact of 2012 and regeneration

Pupils developed their knowledge and understanding of the potential impact of regeneration including the 2012 related regeneration on their area and on their lives. Through participation in the roadshow they were able to discuss impact on individuals, on the community as a whole, on the built environment and on the local ecology.

Specifically, pupils learned about the relationship between the built environment, infrastructure and how this can encourage or discourage healthy habits such as walking and cycling. Much of this learning took place through the lens of the Greenway and the prospect for its improvement.

The children learned that building development has an environmental impact. They discussed the use of 'green' materials. But they also began to understand how planners and architects need to think about the impact of building on local ecology. One child explained to the researcher that the planners needed to think carefully about lighting the Greenway because cyclists would like strong lighting at night to make them feel safe, but this is not good for bats which need the darkness.

'The Greenway's helping, when you drive, there is pollution, and when you walk it is better. It was built to help people get healthy, and to cover the sewage pipe because of the smell. It's polluted because of rubbish. There are lots of plants. It's safe, sort of, there are only cyclists and a few people, you don't see bad people there. It's going to change because the pathways are thin. For the Olympics there are lots of people coming, so they will widen them. They'll clean it up, get the graffiti off, put seats and benches, and shops, and flowers and make it peaceful.'

Learning and practising intellectual skills

The roadshow activities require the pupils to think critically about the tasks and designs, to solve problems (such as the lighting dilemma above) and to plan meticulously. The pupils were especially struck by the importance of planning and talked about how they would use what they had learned in their other school work in the future.

The pupils developed a deeper appreciation of the complexity involved in planning and developing the new stadiums and other buildings. Three quarters of the pupils said they had learnt new things about how plans are made for public places.

After learning about the processes involved and discussing the many issues that architects and planners have to take into account, the pupils turned architect themselves and were able to put into practice the design processes they had learned about.

The children were very struck by the importance of planning and having to take into account many different issues including practical design questions as well as the needs of different groups of people.

By implementing this learning in their own design teams, the children learned to plan, to cooperate through listening and discussing, to think critically about different ideas. Along with their teachers, many pupils thought that they would use this way of working in the future.

'They (architects) think about what they're building, how it will affect the area, maybe they will build something and it is not used that much, it might affect other people's houses, and be a waste of time.'

Communication skills

The children were also aware that they had been given an opportunity to work in groups and practice team work skills. As has been the case in other Bridging the Gap schools, this was not easy for the children who were bring asked to tackle demanding and unfamiliar tasks. Nearly all the pupils (15 out of 17) felt that they had learned something new about working in a team and all had practise these skills.

The children reported learning:

- How to help each other
- How to take turns to work on a task
- How to pool their ideas and create a plan together

'I learnt to talk instead of shouting and demanding, discussing. I can talk better, before I would shout and say lets do this, if you talk it's better because others understand. It's hard to understand.'

"I wasn't interested in architects before. But now I know they have to detail everything, have to think about safety, making it look good, have to plan it like perfect...also budget...set everything out so they can plan and make it easy to work... They have to learn to co operate even if they don't get on."

'I am quite a confident person, I have learnt leadership, co operation and getting everyone involved.'

More information

Bridging the Gap is devised and delivered by Fundamental Architectural Inclusion, a specialist architecture and built environment education organisation based in Newham, that seeks ways for communities to genuinely participate in the planning and development process of regeneration in their neighbourhoods. Bridging the Gap is the first 2012 Games architecture and built environment education programme, and is funded by Newham council.

Fundamental
Architectural Inclusion

For more information contact:

Jane Leighton, Programme Manager

t: 020 8471 7929

e: jane@fundamental.uk.net

or visit www.fundamental.uk.net/bridgingthegap