



The Leeds cultural curriculum

Building a city-wide arts and heritage curriculum to improve life chances



(UK)

LEEDS



799,000



Governance and financing: new roles for local and regional authorities



Challenge

The challenge is to raise the educational achievement of children through heritage and the arts. There are 55,000 children in Leeds aged 5-11; only 56% children aged 8-11 achieve the standard of education required by central government, below the national average of 61%.



Solution

In England, central Government guides the National Curriculum. Within this, schools can choose topics and how they teach. Teachers in Leeds wanted a more relevant curriculum for their pupils, and content that supported wellbeing, mental health and a sense of belonging.

The Leeds Curriculum provides the local relevance and can be tailored to pupils in any area of the city. It 'gives pupils roots to give them wings' (First Nations proverb).



How ?

1

Leeds started by asking, 'what stories do we want our children to know about Leeds?' Consultation with teachers, universities and teacher trainers showed teachers wanted flexible, curriculum-linked classroom resources. Driven by the narrative of the city, these new resources are called 'stories.'

2

Leeds piloted one story in early 2017, then held city-wide story gathering workshops in autumn 2017, including more pupils and whole schools' staff.

3

Throughout 2018, we worked closely with teachers and pupils to sift the stories through the lens of the National Curriculum objectives. Each story contains a 'hook', something interesting and curious about the city. Many are based on objects within the Leeds Museums and Galleries' collections. The stories cover diverse situations, times and places, but each highlights a contemporary issue.

4

Stories are co-produced with communities. They contain images, films, oral histories, archives, museum objects and resources from arts and cultural providers across Leeds.

5

Leeds launched the curriculum and new MyLearning.org website in June 2018. This is an evolving, developing, everchanging resource for teachers; new things are being added every month.

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Budget/Financing

- There were many hours of 'un-costed' staff time in building relationships and gathering resources.
- The freelance Project Developer (€24,000 over two years) and launch event (€2,500) were funded by Arts Council England.
- The new version of MyLearning.org cost €108,000 (also from Arts Council England), plus €57,000 annually. Annually, the site's Digital Learning Officer costs €45,000, and website hosting and maintenance cost €12,000.



Management

- Leeds Museums and Galleries (LMG), part of Leeds City Council, led a city-wide consortium of over 50 arts, cultural and community organisations and over 30 primary schools to co-create the Leeds Curriculum. Organisations and individuals working in visual and community arts, heritage, libraries, archives, dance, drama and theatre contributed over 300 stories, along with their time and resources to develop them.
- We filtered the stories with teachers and pupils from 30 schools to ensure they met curriculum objectives.
- LMG employed a Project Developer to give a consistent voice to the stories.
- The Leeds Curriculum is accessible on MyLearning.org, a website hosting free national teaching resources, managed by LMG.



Links

Website: mylearning.org/collections/leeds-curriculum
 Leeds Museums & Galleries win Learning Outreach of the Year Award: [Team wins top award. Museums & Heritage Learning Outreach Award](#)

The legacy of over 200 daily, subtitled #MuseumFromHome, Makaton and craft films, using accessioned museum objects to support home learners on social media, with follow-up activities on MyLearning.org <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLm0WvS2XqHfGjFQU-pBnBhlhUs14d7yiv>



Pupils at Leeds Discovery Centre finding out, and writing, their histories.



Transferability

- Set up partnerships agreements amongst partner organisations to clarify roles, contributions, finance, intellectual property and standards.
- Get strategic buy-in from school leaders and key education partners at the start.
- Have an advocacy and marketing plan, identify long-term staff time to manage and co-ordinate.
- Inspiration came from a European [study visit on cultural education to Espoo and Helsinki](#).
- The Leeds Curriculum has sparked at least four others (Bristol, Sheffield, Nottingham, Bradford) and a regional discussion.



Impact

The Leeds Curriculum has built stronger partnerships within the arts and cultural sector.

The curriculum is used by half of the primary schools in Leeds (around 100), reaching around 10,000 children. Usage rose during the pandemic.

The time people spend on MyLearning.org curriculum resources increased by 44%.

Project partners have all seen rises in engagement for story strands from the Leeds Curriculum, and traffic back to their websites.

The curriculum won the UK-wide 2019 Museums and Heritage Award Learning Programme of the Year.



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