

Blue Coat School on strike



St Georges Day at Blue Coat 1843 © Bluecoat

Curriculum links

History

Knowledge and understanding of events, people and changes in the past

Local history study

Citizenship

Developing confidence and responsibility and making the most of their abilities

English

Planning their writing by:

Discussing writing similar to that which they are planning to write, in order to understand and learn from its structure, vocabulary and grammar

Discussing and recording ideas

Noting and developing initial ideas, drawing on reading and research where necessary

Art

To improve their mastery of art and design techniques, including drawing, painting and sculpture with a range of materials

Summary

Pupils will look at an event that took place at Blue Coat School in 1800 when over a hundred pupils ran away. They will consider the role of young people in strikes and protests in Liverpool's history and consider how they can be empowered to make their opinions and voices heard.

Duration

Core activity: 1 x 1 hour session
Extension activity: 2 x 1 hour sessions

Aims and Outcomes

- Pupils will have learned about the history of Liverpool and events that took place in the past
- Pupils will have learned about the Human Rights Act

Background

St George's Day (23rd April) was always cause for celebration at the Blue Coat School. Every year pupils would parade through the city, carrying a banner, accompanied by the school's brass band. In 1800 however, there was great disruption to the celebrations when over a hundred pupils ran away and effectively went on strike. Many did not return for several days, and there were even incidents of vandalism, with an account entered in the school's records that one boy smashed the window of a local shop. You would imagine, given the high expectations of good behaviour at this time that pupils expected severe punishment for their adventure but this was not the case. Instead, it was decided by the governors of the school to give them longer break times and that some of the money which had been raised by donations should be used to buy more toys for the pupils.

If these hundred pupils ran away from the school in protest at the treatment they were receiving we might consider them extremely successful. Not only did they receive

no punishment, they were also rewarded with more leisure time and toys. This event took place over two hundred years ago but there are more recent examples of children going on strike and protesting in Liverpool to make changes and get their voices heard.

In 1985, 30,000 young people went on strike, many with the support of their teachers, to protest against the government's Youth Training Scheme. The Youth Training Scheme involved on-the-job training courses for school leavers aged 16 and 17. The government thought the scheme was a good way to get unemployed young people into work but the young people who protested felt it forced them to do work they didn't want to do for very little money. They met outside St George's Hall and marched through the city, ending at the Pier Head. When the government eventually changed some aspects of the scheme the strikers felt that their voices had been heard and that the protest had had some effect.

Activity

Starter question

These questions will assess the pupils' prior knowledge and also alert you to any possible difficulties or sensitive topics.

What is a strike?

Do you know who goes on strike?

Core activity

Our research tells us there were many rules that the School had to follow. Using these rules and looking at the Human Rights Act, pupils should write their own class charter.

Extension activity

1. Protesting is about making your voice and opinions heard. You have to be able to persuade people to listen to you and appreciate your point of view. The pupils will choose a piece of artwork that has been exhibited at Bluecoat and write a persuasive piece about it.
2. Placards, signs and banners are often used to signify the identity of a group and in protests to show people what the protest is about and what the important issues are. Pupils will make their own placard, sign or banner inspired by the work of photographer, David Sinclair, who documented the 1985 School Students' strike.

End questions

These questions will ask pupils to reflect on what they have learnt and ask them to apply this knowledge to the world today.

What is a protest?

What does it mean when people talk about their 'rights'?

What does it mean when people talk about their 'responsibilities'?

Think About

- Do you know anyone who might remember the strike in 1985?
- Can you imagine how the pupils who were part of the 1985 strike might have felt?

Talk About

- Has there been an occasion where you have felt very strongly about something and wanted to do something to change it?
- Do you think it's important for young people to talk about their thoughts and feelings?

If you enjoyed this resource you might want to look at *Indentures*, *Child Labour* or *Art and Society*