

History Enrichment: Black History Month – ‘Before Windrush’

As part of Black History Month UK 2023, our school took part in a whole-school enrichment week exploring the national theme ‘Before Windrush’. This focus enabled pupils across all key stages to develop a secure and meaningful understanding of Black British history long before 1948. Our curriculum was designed to build knowledge progressively, promote critical thinking, and broaden pupils’ cultural capital in line with our school values and the aims of the National Curriculum.

Throughout the week, pupils engaged in high-quality historical enquiry, creative arts, and reflective discussion. They learned about significant individuals whose stories deepen understanding of identity, belonging and the diverse heritage of Britain.

Early Years – Mary Seacole, Nursing, and Rosa Parks

In Early Years, children were introduced to the inspirational contributions of Mary Jane Seacole, focusing on her compassion, determination, and achievements in nursing. Through role-play, storytelling and discussions about kindness and bravery, pupils developed early foundations in empathy and fairness.

Children also encountered the story of Rosa Parks, which helped them recognise themes of equality and standing up for what is right. The activities supported early language development, personal and social understanding, and the foundations of British Values such as mutual respect.

Year 1 / 2 – Sarah Forbes Bonetta: A Victorian Life of Significance

Years 1 and 2 explored the remarkable story of Sarah Forbes Bonetta, a young West African girl who later became the goddaughter of Queen Victoria. This topic offered rich opportunities for children to understand diversity within Victorian Britain and to challenge common misconceptions about the past.

Through carefully structured reading, portrait art, and creative writing, pupils deepened their understanding of chronology, significant individuals, and the stories that shape our national heritage. Their portrait work demonstrated a strong sense of pride and attention to detail, while their writing reflected empathy and curiosity about Sarah’s life.

Year 3 / 4 – Roman Britain: The Aurelian Moors and the Ivory Bangle Lady

Years 3 and 4 undertook an ambitious study of Black presence in Roman Britain, focusing on the Aurelian Moors and the Ivory Bangle Lady, a high-status woman of North African origin discovered in York.

This topic strengthened pupils’ historical disciplinary knowledge through evidence evaluation, interpretation of archaeological findings, and comparison of life in North Africa with life in Roman Eboracum. Students demonstrated excellent engagement, producing well-structured reports and taking part in role-play activities that enhanced their understanding of diversity in the ancient world.

In Art, pupils designed their own **Roman bangles**, drawing on historical artefacts to inform their work and further embedding their learning.

Year 5 / 6 – Slavery, Abolition and Black Voices of Freedom

In Years 5 and 6, pupils approached the complex topics of **slavery**, the Transatlantic Slave Trade, and the long fight for abolition, demonstrating exceptional maturity and compassion. They studied influential figures such as:

- Olaudah Equiano, whose autobiography exposed the realities of enslavement
- Mary Prince, the first Black woman to publish her life story in Britain
- William Wilberforce, a key parliamentary abolitionist

Pupils explored issues of human rights, justice, and democracy, linking their learning to modern values and global citizenship. Their discussions showed advanced reasoning and sensitivity, reflecting our high expectations for thoughtful and respectful dialogue.

In Art, students created expressive oil pastel portraits of Martin Luther King Jr, consolidating their understanding of civil rights and the ongoing significance of equality.

Impact and Celebration of Learning

Across the school, pupils demonstrated:

- Secure historical knowledge and improved chronological understanding
- Deepened cultural capital through exposure to diverse narratives
- Stronger sense of identity, empathy and respect for others
- Improved speaking, listening and writing outcomes
- High levels of engagement, curiosity and pride in their work

Our Black History Month enrichment week made a significant contribution to pupils' personal development and supported our commitment to a curriculum that is inclusive, ambitious, and reflective of the society in which we live.

