

Discovering our Community of Queen's Hill An extended schools programme between Queen's Hill Primary School and Norwich Museum & Art Gallery

Queens Hill is a new town on the outskirts of Norwich. The primary school is the only non-residential building on the estate, which has a mix of owner-occupiers and social housing. Head teacher Penny Sheppard was appointed early in 2008, before the school opened in September.

At the start of the project there were 350 houses, the total planned being 1400.



Pupil taking part in a museum/school programme, designing a village sign for Queens Hill.

The Head teacher is taking an active role in developing the community and wants the school to be a centre for a whole range of community activities.

The school's immediate aims are to build a sense of identity and community. At the time the museum/school partnership began in June 2008 planning was underway for the opening of the school and there was a need to plan for whole school experiences. The children would not know each other but had all had shared experience of moving into a new place.

In August 2008 (the school was planned to open in September 2008) the local newspaper ran a front page story calling Queen's Hill a "Ghost Town"... a place that was soulless, devoid of energy and activity.

This was the baseline, and outlined the challenge for the new community.

The head teacher and museum learning manager met in June 2008 (3 months before the school opened) to plan a programme that would help build a sustainable community.

This would involve a museum visit and an extended school programme to explore the local history of Queens Hill as a whole school group.

What was the history of Queens Hill? Who had settled here in the past (and had similar experiences as the children)? Why was the area called Queens Hill? What made the area special, to make it the site of a new town today? These were all things the museum could help with.

In the past Romans had settled near to a site that is now Queens Hill. Their society was diverse, immigrant and often struggled to become established in areas which were already populated, not unlike these young members of Norfolk's newest community.

The first week the school opened, the whole school including staff and parents visited Norwich Castle, the local museum.

This was an opportunity for a shared experience and to get excited about their new community and its fabulous history. The group looked at the archaeology of Norfolk and with museum staff considered why people had chosen to settle in Norfolk in the past. They also looked at the teapot collection as inspiration for art work back at school.



After the museum visit, all children had an outreach session on Monday afternoons with a museum educator as part of a six week extended schools programme.

The children studied photos from the museum collection of the local Costessey brickworks, which was situated near the school site and made specialized bricks. The children all made their own fancy brick from clay.



This meant that during the first half term of the school opening the children had seven museum sessions

The school made one of the classrooms into their "Museum Room" to display and celebrate their partnership work.



The museum room was opposite the reception desk so that parents, visitors and community groups could see the work and share in the sense of community and identity that was being built.

This school / museum learning programme has attracted lots of interest as an example of how museums can support community development and help foster a sense of identity within a community. It is an example of how parents can be engaged successfully in their children's learning. It also demonstrates how people new to an area can be made aware of the important part museums can play in developing sustainable communities.