

## A programme for a diverse age: Creative Approaches to Hidden Narratives



© image of pupils from Porter Croft Primary school

Day-to-day we live and work in communities with hidden, multi-cultural pasts that we can fail to know or honour as we should. Across autumn 2020 – spring 2021, IVE launched its ground-breaking ‘Creative Approaches to Hidden Narratives’ Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme. Partnering with subject expert Heritage Corner, it united ten teachers from Yorkshire and Humber schools to explore themes of identity and diversity. Across six sessions, participants learned how arts and culture can bring diverse heritages to life. Learn more below.

### Key success factors

- Provided a supportive, empowering forum to discuss the themes of race, heritage and diversity.
- Unlocked new resources to enhance teaching and learning and curriculum change.
- Offered an informative and practical response to OFSTED’s calls for a ‘Broad and Balanced’ curriculum.

### A creative solution for a racially divided age

In summer 2020 as colonial statues were toppled and global Black Lives Matter protests surged - COVID-19 wasn’t the only thing on teachers minds. The UK education community was facing the challenge of ‘how’ to unpack the subjects of race and colonialism alongside meaningful diversity learning.

In response to this IVE were primed to help schools find a creative, lasting solution. Their decades of experience, including their [Diversity and Inclusion Lab programme](#) and [Arts Award](#) and [Artsmark](#) leadership made them a perfect cross-curricular initiator.

They chose the award-winning [Heritage Corner](#) as a lead designer and deliverer of the ‘Creative Approaches to Hidden Narratives’ CPD course. Founded in 2009, Heritage Corner’s unique creative approach exposes hidden narratives and engages people in understanding racism and ways to be anti-racist.

As part of a four year Heritage Lottery funded programme, [Ignite Yorkshire](#), IVE had already worked in partnership with Heritage Corner on research exploring the connections between the Yorkshire’s industrial and African diaspora history which led to a pilot project co-produced with young people at Leeds Industrial Museum called [Represent](#).

With ongoing COVID-19 restrictions it was agreed that remote learning would be the main vehicle for the course. Programme partners were focused on delivering an experience that would ‘reignite a love of teaching,’ reveal hidden heritage and meet [OFSTED's 'Broad and Balanced' curriculum](#) requirements.

## Online creative learning to spark thinking and school change



© image by Heritage Corner

The online ‘Creative Approaches to Hidden Narratives’ CPD programme launched in autumn 2020. It drew applicants off the back of its promise to inspire new thinking, practice and curriculum change. This first cohort included ten teachers from a range of Yorkshire and Humber primary and secondary settings. Each colleague brought different and shared experiences to the table.

The programme culminated with a socially-distanced ‘Leeds Black History Walk’ led by Heritage Corner. This city tour was like no other, opening teacher’s eyes to hidden African and Asian heritages.

Subsequent sessions facilitated learning about approaching racial and multicultural differences, using the arts to animate hidden histories and embedding diversity within the curriculum.

The programme was structured to adapt to the unique needs of learning settings and staff. Despite the challenging nature of some topics the online CPD space was safe and supported – enabling participants to find their voice.

Read below to discover how one Sheffield school has embraced whole school cultural change as a result of this CPD experience.

## Porter Croft Primary: journeying towards a diverse curriculum



© image by Porter Croft Primary school

Porter Croft Primary in Sheffield was part of the first 'Creative Approaches to Hidden Narratives' cohort. Catching up with Deputy Head Sarah Holman, we learn how this CPD has influenced her teaching approach and inspired the wider school to embrace curriculum development and diversity. Please see below.

### Unlocking new ways to achieve OFSTED's 'Broad and Balanced' curriculum

It is clear to see that this enriching CPD experience has opened up new thinking and curriculum approaches at Porter Croft.

*"This was a fantastic project and made me examine our curriculum and how we teach History. There are areas of the curriculum (non-statutory) which are suggested in the National Curriculum, such as, Golden Age of Baghdad and Benin, which had been previously over-looked because it was subject knowledge which (we) teachers did not have in comparison to more well-known topics, such as, the Vikings and Tudors. From the knowledge gained, we have the confidence in looking again at these topic areas and how to teach them more thoroughly with diversity at its core."*

### Uncovering the subjects of heritage, race and discrimination

Dealing with a multitude of daily challenges the staff at Porter Croft were eager to learn how to approach matters of race, diversity and inclusion.

*“I think the course really supported our school’s response to global Black Lives Matter (BLM) and decolonising the curriculum. From the course literature recommendations, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) has read around the subject of black heritage, white supremacy and racism. We have attended a course looking at systemic racism within schools and had staff meetings about racism in our own school - looking at language, policy and curriculum. From this we have analysed how we can make our school practice and systems more diverse.”*

### **Working with a creative partner to animate teaching and learning**

Porter Croft relished the chance to learn from a creative partner like Heritage Corner; a light was shone on how to tackle different themes in creative ways.

*“Vanessa was a fountain of knowledge; she used videos clips, books, drama, website and art to show how we could bring diversity into the curriculum in a sensitive way. The information she provided didn’t skim over difficult content such as colonisation, slavery and persecution. It has given me support material and a starting place to introduce topics, people and cultures who would not have been taught.”*

### **Navigating the subject of race in a supportive and illuminating way**

However open-minded we believe ourselves to be - talking about race and identity can be hard. Through this CPD, Porter Croft were able to navigate tricky topics with ease.

*“Initially I felt aware of my naivety, lack of knowledge and felt self-conscious about how to talk around the topic of racism and the curriculum. However, the way in which the course presented lots of relevant information in a supportive way meant that my initial uncomfortableness disappeared.”*

### **Curriculum re-design that reflects school diversity**

Porter Croft are living proof of how the ‘Creative Approaches to Hidden Narratives’ CPD can influence whole school curriculum redesign and change.

*“We have redesigned our curriculum it is now more relevant and representative of the diverse community we live in. The children can feel proud of their cultural heritage and know about the innovations and contribution of other cultures. Black history month is not a one-off event but taught throughout the year through the books we read in English to history lessons we teach.”*

### **Taking the CPD further: the ‘Passport to Porter Croft’ project**



© image by Porter Croft Primary school

Inspired by the 'Hidden Narratives' programme year 4 teachers worked with their classes to devise a unique cultural heritage project. Pupils explored how their family histories are similar yet diverse – encouraging a spirit of discovery and celebration of difference.

Over four weeks, pupils produced class display boards which told the story of their varied cultures and heritages. At home, children made their own family passports to add to their class museums. Families visited the school to join in the diversity celebrations.

Building on this success, in Autumn 2021, Porter Croft are expanding this project to include the whole school. The project theme shall focus on 'identity and diversity' – a key value strand from the United Nation's 17 sustainable development goals.

## Heritage Corner: illuminating diverse histories





Heritage Corner's Senior Associate, Vanessa Mudd was the ideal choice as lead creative partner, designer and facilitator of the 'Creative Approaches to Hidden Narratives.' In conversation with her below we discover her process and approach to maximise impact and change.

### **A programme centred on creative learning and curriculum change**

As a former teacher, Vanessa was focused on ensuring that the CPD added real-world value to the teachers and their schools. She designed the course to unlock diversity learning and curriculum development.

*"Being project lead on this CPD was exciting and slightly nerve wracking as we were delivering an untested formula. The focus on blending history and teaching ideas with a creative interpretation, all within 6 sessions, meant delivery needed to be lean and focused. As a former teacher I know that giving up an hour on a work night evening is a big deal. I was conscious of ensuring the participants received high quality and useful ideas."*

### **A supportive space that offers new perspective on race and identity**

The 'Hidden Narratives' programme is designed to empower schools to embrace the topics of race and diversity through the conduit of art and multi-cultural history. Heritage Corner's expertise empowered participants to question, discuss and learn in a supported space.

*"The course supported participants in their knowledge and understanding about Black and Asian history and its links to Britain. We made space for participants to ask questions around language use and discussing issues in schools. This helps teachers design more balanced curriculum as they grow their awareness of and learn how to elevate hidden histories."*

The course's online delivery model did not hamper the breadth of discussion and learning; teachers were enabled to share and bond from the safety of their own homes.

*"The initial challenge was to judge how comfortable people felt hearing about new historical information and whether they felt confident to weave some aspects into their curriculum. Although we were online we managed to have discussions, use the chat box and become a proper cohort."*

Participant feedback below shows that the balance of content and discussion hit the right mark; this was a learning experience that inspired and uplifted.

*"I am writing to thank you for the fantastic course you provided on 'Hidden Narratives.' It was interesting, informative and most importantly has provided me and our school with the impetus to rethink and redesign our curriculum."*

*"I just wanted to say thank you for the informative and insightful sessions. As a school both myself and another Senior Leader, have appointed two staff as Cultural Ambassadors to embark on developing further cultural diversity across the school."*



*“The pace was excellent. Vanessa's approach made me feel safe to ask any questions and her subject knowledge was phenomenal.”*

### Next steps for ‘Creative Approaches to Hidden Narratives’ 2021

IVE and Heritage Corner are currently recruiting a second teacher cohort for Autumn 2021. Whether faced with COVID-19 restrictions or not the learning content shall be 100% adaptable for both online and face to face delivery.

*“We have altered the course design to encompass the creative element far more, this includes ideas around the creative response which we can use regardless of the COVID situation. The supportive and practical elements of the course will remain at the heart of delivery.”* **Vanessa Mudd, Heritage Corner**

The programme is being updated to build on the success of the first course whilst going a step further. IVE are excited about its potential to help new schools embark on the path towards curriculum change.

*“Schools are increasingly focused on providing a bespoke curriculum that reflects their students and community. Our ‘Creative Approaches to Hidden Narrative’ CPD helps teachers to make local links to global history across the curriculum in inspiring ways that will build students’ knowledge, understanding and empathy.”* **Sarah Beckett, Senior Cultural Education Manager, IVE**

Given the volatile times that we live in and the urgent need to understand and respect each other’s differences ‘Creative Approaches to Hidden Narratives’ will continue to be a vital learning programme for years to come.

**Are you interested in exploring how creativity can play a part in helping you to achieve a more diverse and inclusive curriculum? Until 30 July 2021 we are taking expressions of interest to join our Autumn 2021 cohort - starting in September. Find out more on our website [www.weareive.org](http://www.weareive.org) or contact Mary Owoo, Cultural Education Manager [mary@weareive.org](mailto:mary@weareive.org).**