

Case Study

Iffley Academy Last Supper in Pompeii

ASHMOLEAN

MUSEUM OF ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

The project: background and aims

Since 2016, Oxford University's Gardens, Libraries and Museums (GLAM), which includes the Ashmolean Museum, have been developing an in-depth partnership with the Iffley Academy, a community special academy for children and young people up to the age of 18 with complex special educational needs and disabilities. All students have Education, Health and Care Plans with a range of needs, but primarily the school works with students who have moderate cognition and learning difficulties, Autistic Spectrum Condition and/or social, emotional and mental health difficulties. The aim of the partnership is to enable all pupils to visit GLAM venues and to participate in project work with each learning team and a range of artists. We aim to raise students' cultural and social capital by introducing them to new places and enabling them to make new relationships with trusted adults through this in-depth and person-centred project. This engenders a sense of "ownership" of the GLAM venues for staff and students, allowing all areas of the curriculum to be taught through access to the diverse collections.

Aims:

- Make two visits to the Ashmolean Museum.
- Visit and respond to the Last Supper in Pompeii exhibition.
- Meet museum staff from the learning team and Daniel Bone, Head of Conservation.
- Work with mosaic artist Clare Goodall in school to create Pompeii-inspired mosaics a new art form for students and staff.
- Work with teaching staff to curate and host their own school exhibition about the project.
- Achieve Discover Arts Award.
- Build confidence, develop new skills and share a new experience with teachers and support staff.

What we did

The work took place over the autumn term 2019 during a series of visits to the museum and to school. First, we visited the school to introduce students to key objects in the museum and the museum building. We took handling objects and students considered what they were, their age and original use. This first session allowed students to meet museum staff in their own safe space at school. It also allowed us to explain what the next steps of the project were so students could feel secure.



Next, the group visited the museum, and as part of their Arts Award, explored different materials and a range of objects and artworks. Students met Head of Conservation, Daniel Bone, and found out about the job of a conservator. This first visit allowed students to orientate themselves within the museum space and feel comfortable.

At the next visit to the school, we introduced students to some of the key objects from the exhibition, explained their background explored the story of Pompeii. We worked with jigsaws of objects in the exhibition, looking at materials, design and use and discussed their part in the life of the town.

When the students visited the Last Supper in Pompeii exhibition, they were excited to see these objects on display for themselves. We planned the visit at the start of the day when the exhibition was quiet, giving the students space and time to explore at their own pace. We also visited the Rome gallery to see similar objects. We pointed out a number of mosaics on display from the very fine and detailed to mosaics that conveyed peoples' trade and status.

A highlight of the project was a day at school working with mosaic artist Clare Goodall who demonstrated how to make mosaics. She taught the students how to use tile cutting tools safely and gave us all the opportunity to design our own mosaics. We all enjoyed copying designs and creating our own patterns.

Finally, the class hosted an exhibition of their work for the wider school community to visit. Exhibits included Lego interpretations of Pompeii and Mount Vesuvius, our mosaic artworks, Roman style food and drink for visitors to share, drawings and artworks, folders of work and a visiting archaeological dig activity from Oxford University's TORCH public engagement team.

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The student engagement is what I aspire to in my current teaching. I enjoyed the holistic approach to the topic, the many different ways in which the students were engaged, the way in which the topic was taught in a diverse range of styles which appealed and complemented the students' learning styles. I particularly enjoyed seeing my students having a 'hands on approach', this was most engaging, students were thoroughly motivated to touch and see artefacts dating back to the Romans! Class Teacher



Project outcomes:

For Students:

- A new and unique learning experience
- An opportunity to engage in the work of the project, an experience they would not have received within the art curriculum offer at The Iffley Academy,
- Working with a range of different adults with different expertise.
- They benefitted from being introduced to the art exhibition, visits to the museum and extending their knowledge about Pompeii.
- The project gave them a range of opportunities to ask questions and learn new and exciting information about the past.
- Successful visits to a new place and the opportunity to work with new adults

For Museum staff:

- Increased expertise in working with students with a wide range of SEND.
- Added to the developing partnership between Iffley Academy and GLAM.
- Furthered the Ashmolean's strategic plan to make the Museum more accessible and relevant for a wider range of audiences.

The project was made fully accessible to the students, they were fully engaged, confident to ask questions about the work. I am very impressed with their ability to engage with the work, ask deep and meaningful questions that really fed their minds. Class Teacher

Top tips:

- meet the group in their 'safe space' at school before they visit the museum
- use the in-depth knowledge of teaching and support staff in order to plan for all learners and allow for a 'person-centred' approach
- keep tasks short and focussed
- plan visits to the museum when it is at its quietest e.g. first thing in the morning
- ensure the project work has clear criteria for success that all students can access
- adopt a co-curational approach where teachers and museums staff plan together and support each other
- be prepared to learn a lot about your museum from the young people.



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<https://www.ashmolean.org/learn>