

Blog Post: Quality Mark Beacon School Experience

Jaya Carrier

UCL Beacon School Lead Teacher, Bishop Challoner School



We wanted to gain the Quality Mark Beacon School status because we had found the beacon school year so valuable, both in terms of Holocaust pedagogy, but also in terms of wider teaching and learning improvements seen throughout the year. One of the critical points for this was when the Centre provided whole-school CPD on 'Being Human'. Whilst the majority of the staff partaking were non-specialists, their feedback was so positive – particularly with regards to the Centre's approach to independent enquiry – that we were delighted to be offered an opportunity to extend our partnership with the UCL Centre, using our beacon school year as a foundation for building further on our practice.

In order to prepare for the Quality Mark appraisal day, I was asked by Nic to facilitate a series of meetings and tasks that enabled her to get a really widespread and thorough sense of our school's values, ethos and the impact the beacon school year had. Whilst this was slightly logistically complicated, my SLT link was always on hand to support and ensure that students and staff could partake in the day where required. Most memorably from the day was how Nic was able to tangibly see that some students on the interview panel perceived as 'more difficult' or 'less able' had really been able to engage with the complex issues surrounding the Holocaust through the innovative pedagogy endorsed by the Centre. This spark ignited in them, which enabled us to clearly demonstrate our school's core commitment to provide accessible but rigorous education for all, really showed just how much impact the beacon school year had had, and we were delighted to show this to Nic.

Across the next three years, we are hoping to extend our work in a number of ways. Firstly, we hope to extend the number of cross-curricular opportunities we can create, and we are currently working with the Art department to consider how Yad Vashem commemorative postcards could be used and created by students. Secondly, we are hoping to refine our own Year 9 scheme of work, with a greater emphasis on unraveling the misconceptions and myths surrounding the Holocaust. We hope to build a very solid qualitative understanding of pupil prior knowledge before teaching it, so that we can build bespoke lessons that address the varying misunderstandings. Thirdly, we hope to take our students to Auschwitz again, and revisit the site pedagogy strategies to enhance pupil understandings.

We have truly been delighted to extend our partnership, and we very much hope that we can continue to see huge benefits and enrichment it offers our pupils and staff alike.