

Abbotsford House and Burgh Primary School



SCILT's Business Language Champions programme helps schools and businesses to build exciting and sustainable partnerships that equip young people with the international communication and employability skills they need for their future careers.

Background

Burgh Primary School is a non-denominational, co-educational school which is situated in, and serves, central Galashiels in the Scottish Borders. The school roll currently stands at 248 pupils. The school has strong links with its immediate local community and with the 11 other primary schools in the area. Learning opportunities and transition experiences are promoted through links with nearby Galashiels Academy.

At Burgh Primary, pupils learn French from P1 and the school is working towards introducing Spanish from P5.

Further information about the school can be found on the [Burgh Primary School website](#).

Aims

The project with Abbotsford gives the young people in P6 a real and engaging context for their learning and provides scope for meaningful interdisciplinary work. It shows pupils how the learning of a language can be useful in their own local community.

Partners

SCILT along with the Depute Head and P6 teacher at Burgh Primary worked in partnership with the Heritage Engagement Manager at Abbotsford House on the outskirts of Galashiels.

Abbotsford House

Abbotsford House is a heritage site in the Scottish Borders, near the town of Galashiels on the south bank of the River Tweed. It is the home of the 19th century Scottish author Sir Walter Scott. The house is a five star tourist attraction run by a charitable trust. It offers educational programmes for learners of all ages, from nursery, primary and secondary levels to college and university students as well as adult learning activities.

The house attracts tourists from various countries who do not always speak English well. Forging the link between the school and the attraction showed pupils the value of languages in the tourism industry.

Project

The partners worked together to create an interdisciplinary project that would make the most of this fantastic historic building and local resource. The project provided a genuine context for learning languages across the curriculum. The pupils were involved in designing the project from the outset, which motivated and engaged learners.

The rich context offered by Abbotsford House allowed learners to explore several areas of the curriculum in addition to languages.

Pupils visited Abbotsford House for a series of three separate visits. Each visit was tailored specifically to the needs of the class. Pupils learned about the life and times of Sir Walter Scott, his journey to become a world famous bestselling novelist and the ways in which he influenced Scottish national identity and international awareness of Scottish culture around the world.



During the first literacy-focused session, pupils were encouraged to take notes describing their favourite artefacts and features. In a follow-up poetry workshop, they used these notes to create list poems about their experience of Abbotsford House.



The second visit was led by a costumed storyteller who treated the pupils to traditional stories based on objects in the house. In the follow-up workshop, they created their own bookplates based on the stories using quills, ink and stamps.



The third visit focused on the Visitor Centre at Abbotsford and an exhibition on Scott's life. Pupils explored the artefacts on show and considered the provision for international visitors including the availability of information in different languages.

The pupils responded very positively and were extremely enthusiastic about their visits to Abbotsford House and to the workshops:

"My favourite part was touring the amazing rooms at Abbotsford House and using what I saw to inspire me." (P6 pupil, Burgh Primary School)

Outcomes

Pupils used what they had discovered and learned during the visits to create a timeline of Walter Scott's life. Here they investigated the differences between life at that time and life in the present day, using a variety of primary sources.

They also created interactive games, discussed planning and budgeting for a visit to Abbotsford House, and identified French vocabulary to describe some of the artefacts in the house. At the end of the project, children in P6 were given the opportunity to share their learning with P5 pupils. They presented their work at a variety of stations in the Learning Centre at Abbotsford House and encouraged younger pupils to explore new French vocabulary based on artefacts on show within the house.

Parents and pupils were then invited to Abbotsford where they were treated to a dramatic performance in the historic rooms with pupils playing the voices of Scott's objects and bringing them to life. Four pupils were given the opportunity to lead groups and they acted as tour guides and leaders for the day.

Impact

Pupils really enjoyed the experience. They were engaged in a range of different activities and workshops and it afforded them engaging and relevant learning:

“[The project] was an amazing and life changing experience that really opened up my eyes to learning.” (P6 pupil, Burgh Primary School)

The staff also thought the project was a great opportunity for learners to see the relevance of learning French and agreed that it had been very worthwhile:

“During our sharing day with P5, Abbotsford House was open to the public. The pupils got to experience first-hand the relevance of learning an additional language. Visitors to Abbotsford House speak a wide variety of languages and pupils were able to introduce themselves and a range of objects within the house using the language skills they have developed.” (P6 teacher, Burgh Primary School)

The team at Abbotsford House was equally enthusiastic about the project and viewed it as a valuable means of developing planning skills within their own workforce. The partnership also offered staff an opportunity to inform their educational outreach programme by developing their understanding of the curriculum, in addition to creating a positive means of engaging with the local community.

“We were delighted to work in partnership with Burgh Primary School on this project. The opportunity to work closely with staff gave our team a valuable insight into the planning stages of a project and the opportunity to creatively explore curriculum links with teachers and further explore the potential of this amazing historic site for learning. We look forward to taking forward our new partnership with Burgh.” (Sandra Mackenzie, Heritage Engagement Manager at Abbotsford House).

Next steps

The staff at Burgh Primary would like to further build on this link with Abbotsford House and continue to demonstrate to pupils the relevance of language skills in the local community. As the languages curriculum at Burgh Primary develops, staff can see more and more opportunities for a fruitful and exciting partnership that would really enhance pupils' learning.