

Words That Burn

Annual Report and Impact Summary 2017/18

Developed in partnership with Amnesty International



'It is important because it gives us an idea of the world's problems and how young voices can be heard all around the world. It doesn't matter what religion or race you are or what language you speak, everyone has a voice that should be heard.'

Year 8 student, Severn Vale School

Words That Burn

Words That Burn, a resource allowing students to explore human rights through poetry, was developed in partnership with Amnesty International and seeks to develop the cultural capital of young people across Gloucestershire. The aims of the project are to raise

awareness of human rights as well as providing opportunities for young people to engage with poetry. The project fits within the pillars of year-round outreach and talent development and the following strategic objectives:

- Extend and diversify our audiences
- Further enable a pathway for talent development
- Build collaborative partnerships locally, nationally and internationally

The project was piloted by Gloucestershire schools in 2016/17 and was launched at the Times and Sunday Times Cheltenham Literature Festival in 2017.

"I know first-hand the empowering nature of creativity and language, as a writer, performer and educator. Giving young people the tools to express themselves, to connect with the wider world and its challenges, to write in solidarity with those whose voices are suppressed, and to amplify those voices – and find their own – is a vital and beautiful thing."

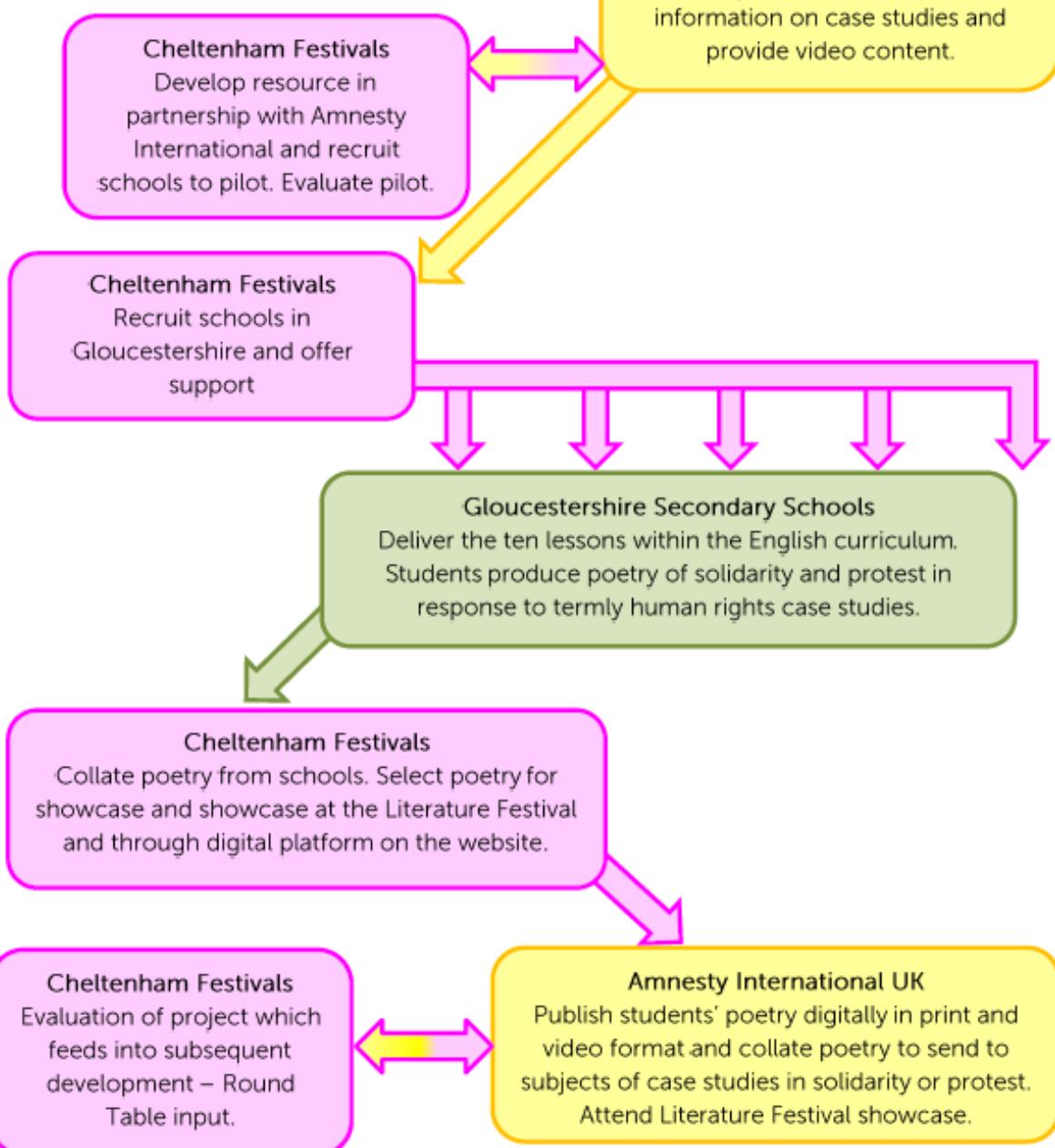
- Keith Jarrett, poet

This year, four schools took part in the project supported by Cheltenham Festivals: Severn Vale School, St Peter's Catholic High School, Rednock School and Beaufort Cooperative Academy. Each school delivered a 10 lesson base unit to students across Key Stage 3 during which they engaged with a range of poets, and poetic forms and also with a variety of human rights issues and case studies. Students were encouraged to explore the human rights issues through poetry and also to explore how poetry could be used as a vehicle for protest and bringing about change.

Following the delivery of the base unit, the schools ran extra-curricular sessions for students who wished to continue with the project. Amnesty International provided case studies linked to human rights for students to respond to. Students were encouraged to write and record their poems as part of the Make a Difference in a Minute challenge and these were submitted to Amnesty International and sent to the affected individuals around the world. Poems were written and sent to Azza Soliman, a women's rights activist in Egypt and Sakris Kupila, an LGBTI activist in Finland.

The four schools were invited to bring students to perform their poetry at the Young Writers Showcase at the Times and Sunday Times Cheltenham Literature Festival in October 2018. Two schools – Severn Vale School and Rednock School – brought 14 of their students, all of whom performed.

Words That Burn in Gloucestershire: Partnership Model



Outcomes

- Increased knowledge of national and global human rights issues
- Increased engagement with human rights and political activism
- Increased engagement with different forms of poetry
- Increased confidence and belief in young people that their voice matters

Impact Against Outcomes

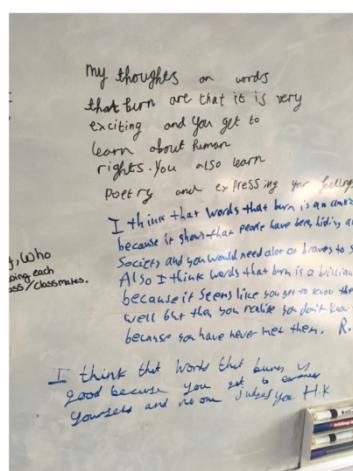
Increased knowledge of national and global human rights issues

The student surveys illustrated that students' knowledge of human rights issues had improved. The number of students who felt they discussed human rights more than once a month increased from 105 (40%) to 154 (58%). The number of students who chose strongly agree in response to the statement "I know what human rights are" rose from 119 (45%) to 166 (63%). Furthermore, the number of students who chose strongly agree in response to the statement "believe human rights are relevant to me" rose from 145 (40%) to 170 (64%).

'It has helped me to understand that the world isn't perfect and it has given me a way of allowing my imagination and creativity to process this'

Year 8 student, Severn Vale School

Throughout the project, students were given time to explore the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to apply this to a range of situations. They learnt about a number of real life cases of human rights violations both nationally and internationally.



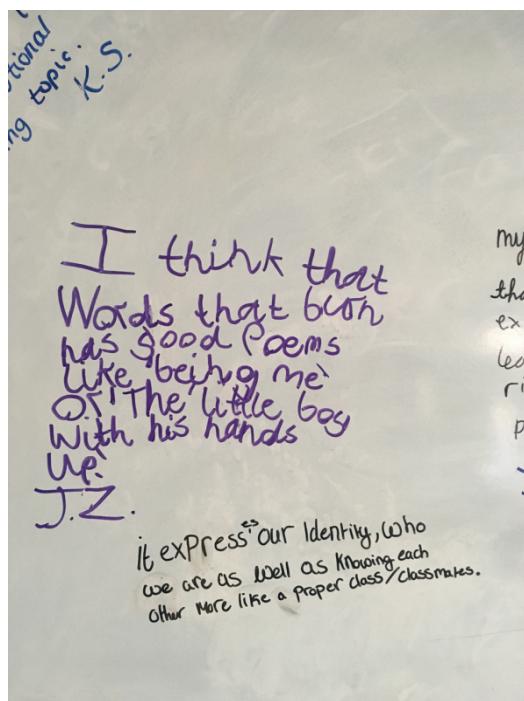
Increased engagement with human rights and political activism

Student surveys indicated that students had become more engaged with political activism: 203 students out of 265 (77%) said they enjoyed finding out about human rights; 122 (46%) said they would continue to find out about human rights and 95 (36%) students said they will take action on human rights.

Increased engagement with different forms of poetry

Students looked at, read, listened to and watched a variety of poetry from poets of different ages, ethnic backgrounds and genders. The poetry was in written form and spoken word and students were asked to engage with it on a personal and exploratory level.

Students' engagement with poetry improved over the project. The number of students who wrote poetry more than once a month increased from 27 to 119, representing a 400% increase and the number of students who chose agree or strongly agree in response to the statement "I feel confident in writing poetry" rose from 107 (40%) to 172 (65%). Furthermore, 159 students (60%) said they had enjoyed the poetry and 63 (24%) said they would continue to write poetry.



The outcomes illustrated the level of engagement with the poetic forms as students across the schools produced thoughtful poetry from each of the sessions, each of which used a different form and style of poetry. Fourteen students from two schools read poetry at the Young Writers Showcase and students from three schools submitted poetry to Amnesty International. The poetry from Severn Vale School is being compiled into an anthology.

The impact on students has been major! They are talking about world issues and also wanting to write poetry! It has helped them understand that poetry is about expression and not necessarily rhyme.

Teacher, Beaufort Cooperative Academy

Increased confidence and belief in young people that their voice matters

Students were given opportunities throughout the unit to express their opinions and to voice their ideas about human rights, including through poetry. The number of students who chose agree or strongly agree in response to the statement “I believe poetry can be used to make human rights change” rose from 123 (46%) to 207 (78%) and the number of students who chose agree or strongly agree in response to the statement “I believe my voice is important and can make a difference” rose from 126 (48%) to 173 (65%).

These sessions enabled students to learn more about the world they live in and to understand how their lives differ from others' both in their own country and abroad. But most importantly, it helped them to realise that they had a voice which they could use to bring about change. They felt empowered by the young poets they saw and listened to and were inspired, as all young people should be, to make a difference.

Teacher, Severn Vale School