

Mathew Britten is the Museum Learning Officer at The Langley Academy. He works with teachers to deliver projects that inspire students while meeting their attainment and pastoral needs. Mathew leads the Museum Club for years 7 and 8 students and as the co-ordinator for the Museum Student Council is the key conduit for youth voice within the museum learning programme. He previously worked at the Wordsworth Trust and the Museum of Cambridge. Leaving us after two years, Mathew reflects on his time at Langley.



Why did I come to Langley? I had been working in the museum sector for a couple of years, but the majority of my experience had been with primary aged children. I found it difficult to get secondary schools into the museum in my first role at the Museum of Cambridge, so I was looking for opportunity to get a better understanding of secondary schools.

Before coming to Langley, I had been an Education Trainee with the Wordsworth Trust. During this time, I delivered a number of secondary workshops on Romanticism. The team that had developed them had a thorough understanding of the curriculum, and the session was a really purposeful activity for students. This was the sort of sessions I wanted to develop, and Langley felt like the ideal place to test these ideas and develop meaningful sessions with the support of teachers.

When I saw the advert, I had a browse of the website and twitter feed (@museumlearning), and my first thought was - this looks like a really exciting place! I came for a tour of the school and was amazed by the space, the students and the range of activities going on. I felt that this was a role I could really thrive in.

The Langley Academy is the only Museum School in the UK. There are schools with their own museums, and schools with museum partnerships, but at Langley, museum skills and resources are embedded right across the school structure. As the Museum Learning Officer the possibilities are endless, I have had opportunity to develop projects that stem from my own interests, such as archaeology, and to work with teachers to develop stimulating activities that target student needs and their interests creatively. The role is also great for networking with some of the country's top museums, working with around 35 museum partners each year.

A real delight of this role is to work so closely with teachers and senior leaders in the Trust schools. As a museum educator, I do not think you are fully able to understand how schools work, or how challenging the curriculum is, until you have conversations with teachers and until you see how they are battling and overcoming these challenges day in day out.

Schools have a more structured approach to Continuing Professional Development than the museum sector. My time at Langley has opened doors to skills development usually reserved for the formal education sector. My line manager is engaged in my CPD, and encourages my input on strategy, evaluation and other management tasks.

I have learnt many techniques to engage children in learning, and transferable classroom skills, such as flipped learning and differentiation that have strengthened my approach to delivery and planning sessions. Ultimately, incorporating these strategies into my practice as a museum educator has boosted my confidence, particularly with the 11-18 audience, and given me a greater understanding

of managing a group of young people and ensuring their learning outcomes are on track and achievable.

Working with teachers, I have been challenged to think outside of the box and develop museum sessions for subjects not traditionally catered for in the museum sector, including Business, PE and Modern Foreign Languages. I have enjoyed working creatively around the curriculum, and pleased to see faculties embedding these sessions into their schemes of work.

One of my favourite experiences at Langley was working with primary teachers to develop a project on the topic of Isambard Kingdom Brunel, and bridges. Pupils explored the life of Brunel in lessons before meeting the man himself – me in a Brunel costume. The pupils loved interviewing Brunel, and exploring the objects used for architectural drawings before applying what they had learnt to their own model bridges.

Schools also have a wide variety of internal roles that provide additional responsibility and skill development. Over the last year, I have been a Head of House, responsible for student's pastoral support and specialism focus, and I have coordinated the school's Duke of Edinburgh Award programme. These additional roles gave me an insight into other aspects of young people's education and how the museum experience supports their development.

As with every job, the role of Museum Learning Officer is not without its challenges. One of the major challenges is time management and thinking realistically. It has been important to balance a number of ongoing projects, while also scoping out future projects. As I said above, the possibilities are endless, but that does not mean you should undertake them all. That being said, this role has a fantastic support network and everyone wants the best for Museum Learning.

I have had so many amazing opportunities with the Langley Academy Trust, and it has been a pleasure to share them with students who are growing and developing throughout these experiences. I have shared emotional journeys with students visiting Auschwitz, and the First World War graves of Ypres, celebrated amazing achievements with students winning awards, or passing their exams and helped parents engage in learning with their children at school.

I leave Langley to undertake my first management position. I believe my time at Langley has been instrumental in building the skills for a position at this level. It has been an unforgettable two years and I leave this position a more skilled and experienced museum educator.

To apply for the position of Museum Learning Officer, please visit:

<https://langleyacademy.careers.eteach.com/o/museum-learning-officer>

Closing date: 9.00am 5 October 2018, Interview date: 18 October 2018