Investigating your school’s past

More Activities for pupils

Investigating a school’s history can include a multitude of activities, depending on age and abilities of the pupils. We include a few ideas below:

Exploring the school’s past

1. **The building** – features- materials, shapes, features and decorations, aspects of the school’s grounds — boundaries, walls, gates, toilets, temporary classrooms, gates, plaques. Use of old photos of the school/area. Your local records office will have a variety of reports relating to building works over the years.
2. **Trees** – Investigating tree rings will tell pupils how long the trees have been there and possibly information about the dates of the school site.
3. **The school site** on maps — using a copy of the oldest local map. What is still there? Where is the school? Why was it located there?
4. **Classrooms** – how were children seated, how were they heated, what were children doing in the classrooms?
5. **Equipment** – what did children write with, what did teachers use?
6. **Games** – what sports did they play/ exercise did they take? What kit did they wear? *Traditional playground songs and games* e.g. marbles, ball games, cat’s cradle, chanting games, skipping games (find more on the National Archives website).
7. What and how many **books** did they use? What forms of **media** were available to them?
8. **Songs** – was there a school song? Can you find the words of it?
9. **School dinners** – where and what did they eat?
10. **School newspapers or brochures** – did the school have its own newspaper? Or did the pupils write a school newspaper? Can you get hold of old school brochures?
11. **School events** – in newspaper records at local reference library or records office may cover past school events. Compare with recent newspaper school story — write own newspaper report.
12. There are lots of **narrative events** that can be used. All adults will have their **real life stories** about school; current pupils will have their reminiscences of their earlier school experiences, long-serving teachers can also reminisce. This could be backed up with fiction — especially extracts from Dickens, or *Tom Brown’s School Days*.
13. **Visit local museum** – e.g. Museum of London, Museum of Childhood, the Ragged School Museum.
14. Construct school **time-line** of key events.
15. Compare **aspects of your school** with another local or totally different school, using material from their website.
16. **Debate** – was it worse or better a hundred/fifty (etc) years ago?
17. Set up a **school museum** with artefacts — including the names of objects, material, size, age, decoration, what they were used for, who might have used/made them, etc.
18. Create some pages about the school’s past on the school’s **website**.