

Non-violent Action: A Force for Change



Development Education Centre South Yorkshire
Education for a just and sustainable world



Illustration: Brogan Nichol, from Kenyan Green Belt lessons

An evaluation report by

P. Guidi & F. Hassan, Liverpool World Centre



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Executive Summary

This report is on the Non-Violent Action: A Force for Change project, delivered by DECSY during 2018-2022, and funded by Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. It is an evaluation of how the project interrelated with pupil and teacher knowledge, skills and attitudes. It was a small scale evaluation conducted by a team of evaluators at Liverpool World Centre. The data collected for the evaluation was from pupil base and endline surveys, teacher survey and interviews, and project partner trainer reports.

This evaluation sets out the context of the project and the approach that the evaluator took, before moving on to present the data. The analysis of this data then enabled the evaluator to make some key findings. These can be summarised as follows:

- The project had **significant impact on pupil knowledge** and **profound long-lasting impact on teachers**.
- Pupils were able to increase their vocabulary of non-violence, leading to **positive changes in attitudes, peer interactions and behaviours**.
- The use of the dialogic learning method, Philosophy for Children, provided a critical learning framework through which to explore the topics, resulted in **improved discussion and thinking skills and had a positive impact on behaviour**.
- The project had a substantial impact on teachers – whether they were involved for 2 years, or just attended a training event. It **increased awareness of non-violent action for change amongst teachers** either through new case studies, or looking at existing topics through a new lens – such as WWII events.
- Some schools have been able to **embed project teaching and materials in their school curricula year on year**.
- There is some evidence to suggest that the project **improved behaviours across the whole school**.

Introduction: Context and Role of Evaluator

About the project

Non-Violent Action for Change project ran from 2018-2022, and broadly aimed to build support for alternative approaches to defence and security by enabling and inspiring pupils to think critically about violence and take action for non-violent change. It sought to do this by developing a series of new lesson plans for pupils aged 8 - 13 which would:

- “Provide inspiring case studies of groups of people locally and from around the world involved in non-violent social change at a variety of levels including national actions that have resulted in regime and occupation change as well as more localised human rights and environmental campaigns so that pupils know that non-violent social change is not only effective but more desirable than violent methods
- Offer pupils ways to think critically about gender issues and enable them to understand that there are non-violent ways to express masculinity
- Engage pupils with local and global issues so that they feel motivated to be involved in change
- Help pupils to decide on actions which might have an impact locally or globally and give them the tools to carry them out.”

The project focused the educational methodology of Philosophy for Children (P4C)¹ to allow for “structured dialogue which leads to pupils being able to make reasonable judgements about what they think about the issues and whether and how they wish to take action” (DECSY 2018, p1)

Role of evaluator

Liverpool World Centre (LWC)² were invited to evaluate this project in 2021, as it entered its final year. LWC have conducted evaluations for educational organisations since 2011, drawing on its own practice in global learning, and its research and work with universities in the UK and internationally³. The evaluator was engaged from July 2021 until July 2022 and contracted for 6 days of work, setting up an evaluation framework, reviewing documents and data, conducting interviews and writing a report.

Scope of the evaluation

The evaluator was asked to review the evidence and project activities (further detailed in Evaluation Framework and Method):

- Pupil knowledge, attitudes and skills
- Teacher knowledge, skills and attitudes, as well as their professional and personal development
- Pupil and teacher evaluation of the materials
- Impact on organisations/ trainers involved in dissemination activities 2021-2022

¹ See: <https://www.sapere.org.uk/>

² <https://liverpoolworldcentre.org/>

³ See <http://teesnet.liverpoolworldcentre.org/home/>

Evaluation Framework and Method

Evaluation Framework

The evaluator worked with Helen Griffin (Project Coordinator at DECSY) to draw up an overview of the project aims, objectives and activities, as well as the ways in which the project monitored and collected evaluation data.

Objective	Activity	Outcome	Output	Indicator—how do we know progress is being made towards outcome?	Evidence available to be collected?
Obj 1 (Development phase, Jan–July/Aug 2020)	Engage teachers, do project writing group		Schools engaged	Schools engaged	Pupil surveys
	Co-draft case studies and lesson plans for 8–12 pupils with project writing group		Teachers engaged	Teachers engaged	Teacher surveys
	Meetings		Pupils engaged	Pupils engaged	Pupil/Teacher lesson evaluation
	Draft case studies/lesson plans	Teachers have increased knowledge/attitudes/skills to...	Case studies and lesson plans (google folder)	Case studies and lesson plans (google folder)	Evaluation notes
Obj 2 (Pilot phase, Sep 2019–July 2020, Aug 2020–June 2021)	Introductory training day				Evaluation activities in lesson plans
	Deliver training/support for teachers from 8–12 pilot schools to deliver lessons	Pupils have increased knowledge/attitudes/skills to...			Case studies/lesson plans with teachers
	Evaluation/modification of lessons				Interviews/Focus groups with teachers
					Interviews, teacher evaluation of...

Screenshot of LWC evaluation framework

As a result of this exercise the evaluator was able to identify the data that needed analysing and further evidence that needed collecting. This formed the three key areas of investigation and evaluation:

Pupil responses in baseline and endline survey

The pupil responses were in the form of baseline and endline surveys conducted at the beginning and end of project delivery in schools. The answers were collected in a variety of ways, including: narrative free form; yes/no options; and Likert scale (e.g. strongly agree – disagree).

Teacher surveys and sample interviews

Teachers involved in the project were invited to complete a post project survey, and eight teachers did so. This was done by survey with mostly open form responses, and some multi-choice selections. A further four teachers were approached by the evaluator for interviews after the project had finished, and two interviews took place. The interviews were held on 23rd May and 10th June 2022, using a semi structured interview process. The interviews were recorded, but due to limited funding not transcribed.

Wider educational organisation responses

Educational organisations had been invited by DECSY to deliver the NVAFC training to teachers. At the time of writing this evaluation their reports were not yet available. However, the evaluator was able to interview one of the trainers to get some insight into the impact of the project.

Evaluator’s note

The evaluator was appointed in the project’s final year. As such the evaluator was not involved in the design and collection of either the pupil or teacher surveys. While the data collected was detailed and rich in content, there were some issues that had to be considered in analysing the pupil and teacher surveys. These are explained in more detail in the next section, but in particular:

- Some of the questions in the pupil surveys were set out in a way that could confuse the children, and had the potential to be interpreted in different ways. For example, “It is

sometimes right to use violence to change things” next to a similar question “It is always wrong to use violence to change things” and “It is possible to change things without using violence”, could confuse children, or make them state unintended double negatives, when the response options were “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”.

- Not all the schools completed both the baseline and endline – some doing only the baseline, some just the endline. The evaluator then only used those with schools that completed both, providing a lower data set, but a better comparison.
- The online teacher surveys only collected initial data. This was then useful in itself, but helped the evaluator identify themes to follow up in the two sample interviews.

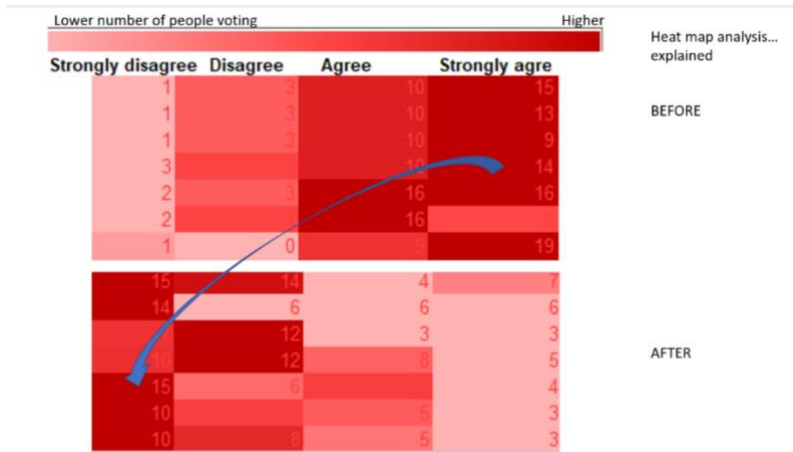
Data Analysis - Pupils

Data was collected from surveys with 19 class groups, using the questions found in Appendix I. These were conducted at the beginning of the project (baseline) and after the classroom interventions (endline). The data analysed was taken from seven class groups, in order to get the most consistent data for comparison with the baseline and endline surveys. These consisted of Year 4 (two groups), Year 6 (four groups) and Year 7 (one group). The analysis that follows is of each set of questions:

Questions 3-5

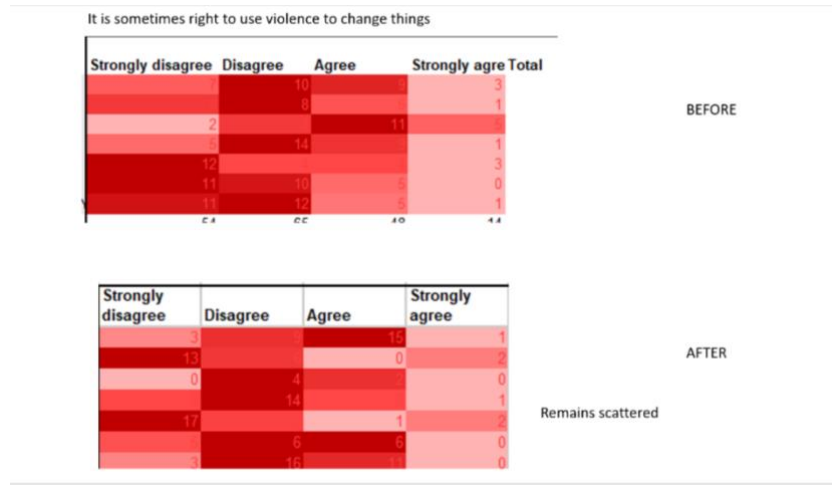
These used a Likert scale ranging from Strongly disagree to Strongly agree. The evaluator then took the number of responses and, for the purposes of this report, created a heatmap to show the direction of travel.

So for example in the illustration you can see a movement to strongly disagree AFTER the intervention (red/darker – indicating higher numbers moving from right to left)



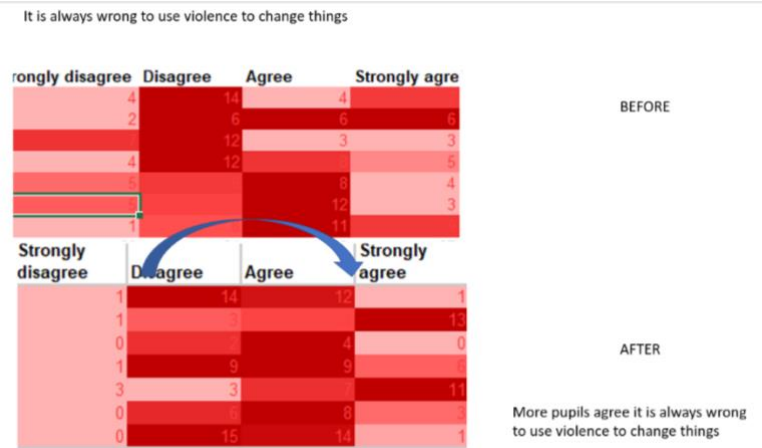
Question 3: It is sometimes right to use violence to change things

This is the first question and the response seems scattered with no definite shift in pattern. The possible explanation for this is that either it was the first question, and pupils were getting used to the response system, or it showed the complexity and nuance of the subject area.



Question 4: It is always wrong to use violence to change things

This shows more pupils “agree” it is always wrong to use violence to change things after the interventions (a move to the right). These perhaps balance out the response to question 3 (which is very similar), or indicates a question that is more direct, definitive, and easier to answer.



Question 5: It is possible to change things without using violence

This shows pupils maintaining a strong agreement that it is possible to change things without using violence, but also a move of other pupils away from disagreeing with the statement after the interventions (from 13% to only 6% “strongly disagreeing/disagreeing”)



Questions 6-8

These questions asked for a yes/no/maybe response.

Q6: I know how to help make changes in my school:

This produced very little shift in opinion from the base and endline (slightly more drifting into “maybe”), and as such became a key question for the teacher interviews.

Yes	No	Maybe	Total	Yes	No	Maybe	Total
12	4	13	29	11	1	16	28
17	0	3	20	21	0	0	21
11	5	9	25	1	0	5	6
18	1	10	29	16	1	8	25
5	4	14	23	3	7	14	24
11	6	9	26	5	4	8	17
9	4	16	29	10	7	13	30
83	24	74	181	67	20	64	151
45.85635359	13.25966851	40.8839779		44.37086093	13.24503311	42.38410596	

Before

After

Questions 7 and 8: I know how to help make changes in my local community and I know how to help make changes in the world

These both resulted in similar positive shifts. The data suggests pupils became more confident after the interventions, moving away from “maybe” to “yes”.

Yes	No	Maybe	Total		Yes	No	Maybe	Total
10	9	10	29		11	2	15	28
12	3	5	20		21	0	0	21
7	4	14	25		1	1	4	6
11	7	11	29		13	2	10	25
5	4	14	23		4	6	14	24
4	6	16	26		0	9	8	17
8	7	14	29		12	11	7	30
57	40	84	181		62	31	58	151
31.49171271	22.09944751	46.40883978			41.05960265	20.52980132	38.41059603	

Yes	No	Maybe	Total		Yes	No	Maybe	Total
9	7	13	29		10	3	15	28
8	3	9	20		14	1	6	21
7	9	9	25		2	2	2	6
12	8	9	29		12	7	6	25
3	10	10	23		10	10	4	24
14	5	7	26		1	7	9	17
13	5	11	29		15	9	6	30
66	47	68	181		64	39	48	151
36.4640884	25.96685083	37.56906077			42.38410596	25.82781457	31.78807947	

Questions 9-10

These questions invited students to identify words they knew the meaning of.

- There was a rise in understanding in key words like: **power; violence; non-violence** and; **peace**. Significantly around 90% of the pupils said they could define these words after the interventions. This might be expected due to the subject matter contained in teaching
- Pupils also increased their understanding of other words significantly, such as: **democracy** and; **rights**
- There was no real change in the ability to define **racism** – which stayed at 50% of the pupils able to do this both before and after

Questions 11-13

These open ended responses were not analysed in a quantitative way, but rather provided key themes to pick up with the teachers in interviews. The key themes were:

- Change in behaviours: Pupils commented more that they would be more respectful, and more inclined to listen and use persuasion rather than “bully[ing]” approaches.
- Use civil means of action: Pupils said they could use new forms of action to bring about change such as “protesting” or “going to court”.

Data Analysis - Teacher Surveys

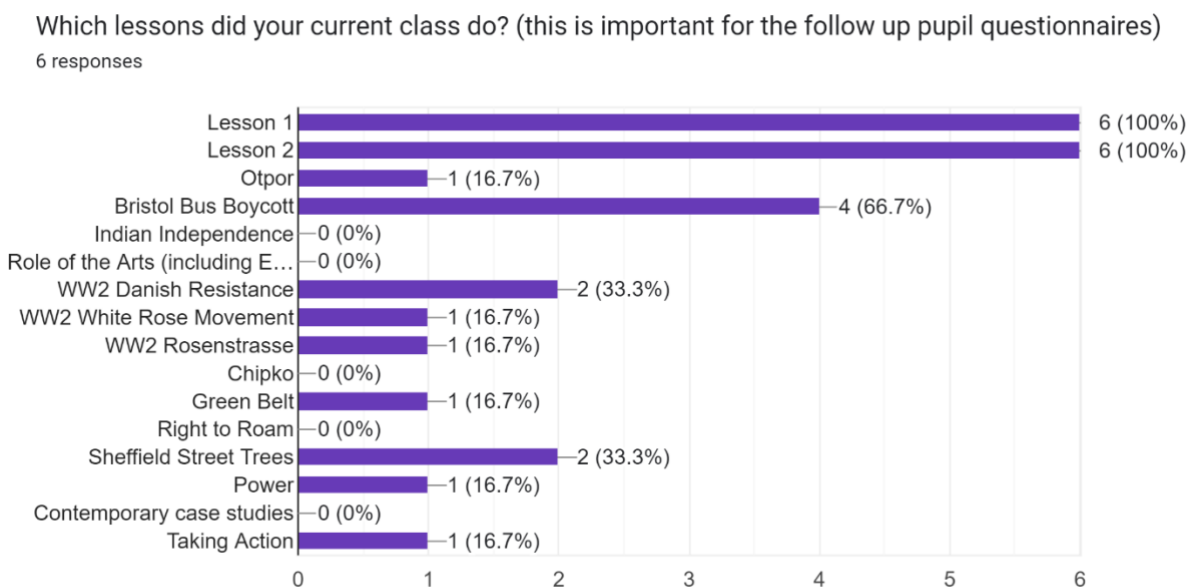
The teacher survey was completed by eight teachers at the end of the project. It identified the lesson plans used, and also allowed teachers to volunteer the impact of the lessons on pupils. This information then helped inform the follow up teacher interviews.

The key findings can be divided into three areas:

1. Lessons used from those provided by the project
2. Change in knowledge - both in terms of knowledge for pupils and teachers, and in terms of pupil actions
3. Change in skills of pupils

1: Lessons used from those provided by the project

The graphic below shows the frequency of lessons used. Aside from lessons 1 and 2 which all responding teachers used, the Bristol Boycott was used by 66% of teachers. Teachers said that this and other UK examples were a key strength of the project, helping to make it relevant to pupils. Similarly, WWII examples helped link in with the curriculum.



2: Change in knowledge – pupils and teachers

Teachers reported that pupils

- increased their knowledge of examples of successful non-violent action, and the language and vocabulary of non-violence.
- Increased their knowledge of the world around them (both locally and globally)

- Increased their understanding of how to link past and geographically diverse issues, to present day issues, such as “SARS protests in Nigeria”⁴ and linking the NVAFC work with other project work such as a visit to a National Holocaust Centre.

Teachers also saw their knowledge increase. For example, one teacher reporting “I feel much better equipped to teach [lessons on non-violent action and protest]”.

- both in terms of knowledge for pupils and teachers, and in terms of pupil actions

3: Change in skills of pupils

Some teachers commented how the project had enabled them to develop new styles of dialogue in the classroom (e.g. using Philosophy for Children method). The project gave teachers the experience of how to run dialogue differently and allowed the pupils to enhance “debating and discussion” skills. What was not clear from the survey was how many teachers had experience of P4C and which schools were already using P4C as a teaching methodology.

Other insights

- Covid impacted on all of the projects – some to a larger degree than others
- Staffing changes sometimes caused the project to falter
- Teachers commented that parents were new to this subject, and could not necessarily support the pupils as in other subjects
- The project was used to improve writing skills in some schools
- Challenges for teachers were both how to incorporate into the curriculum, but also how to manage the large amounts of information for each topic area of the project.

⁴ Protests calling for the disbanding of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a notorious unit of the Nigerian Police with a long record of abuse on Nigerian citizens

Data Analysis - Teacher Interviews

The teacher interviews were conducted with two teachers who had both been very active in the project. The interviews took place after the project had finished in summer 2022.

Background information about the schools

Both schools were large primaries, ethnically diverse, and with pupils from areas of high economic disadvantage. Some background information is as follows

School A is:

- A larger than average primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The proportion of pupils with an education and health care plan is also above the national average.

School B is:

- A larger than an average sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is almost double the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is average. Just over half of pupils are of White British heritage. Approximately a fifth of pupils are of Black or Black British African heritage. A further 11 ethnic groups are represented in the school
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above average

Data from Teacher interviews

The interviews were semi structured, and as such the data analysis takes the form of grouping significant information (either identified by the teacher as significant, or by the evaluator either from due to the fact that it was recurring/ common in both interviews). The quotes that follow relate to either teachers at school (A) or (B).

Theme 1: Importance of UK base examples – Teachers highlighted the Bristol Boycott and the English Disco Lovers, as case studies that were significant, because they were UK based (rather than USA for example).

“UK based school study makes a big difference” (A)

Significantly, the project made education relevant to black pupils, which was important for the two schools which both have high ethnic diversity.

“[The pupils were] inspired by racism topics... [and felt the] issues are being taken seriously” (B)

Theme 2: Project content and school curriculum - Both teachers reported the challenges of the current curriculum which limits cross curricular projects. However, project topics from WWII could be linked to curriculum, or to wider school life such as including the White Rose example in assemblies/collective worship. The significance of both these examples were that they “provided stories that motivated children to make a change...and make links between past and present without being prompted” (A).

Theme 3: Skills developed by Pupils – The recurring references to skills developed were:

- **Critical thinking and discussion:** Through discussion, pupils explored concepts and terms such as power, dictator and non-violence. They developed a more critical and nuanced understanding of these terms. The discussions also allowed pupils to link themes to wider chronological events. The P4C methodology was noted as critical to the success of the project, and helped the school “develop and take [P4C] further” (B).
- **Peer leadership:** The project gave pupils the knowledge, understanding and confidence to talk about the issues beyond their classroom. Pupils from school A put on an end of year performance about what they had learnt from the “protest” topics, and gave talks to other classes.
- **Conflict resolution:** The evaluator asked interviewees about the recurring theme of knowledge acquisition that came through on the pupil and teacher surveys. In response the teachers interviewed said that

“Pupils used newly learnt vocabulary and language skills to de-escalate situations...they were able to pin point where they went wrong” (A)

Theme 4: Impact on pupils, teachers and beyond the school – Interviewees were asked to talk about the effect of the project beyond the delivery of the topics.

- **Improved behaviour:** The P4C method of listening and discussion, helped improve behaviour (B). This combined with the content of non-violent action also gave pupils alternative ways to manage conflict (A). There was some evidence of improved behaviour in the playground and the classroom – however, teachers could not solely attribute this to the project.
- **Profound impact on teachers:** Teachers interviewed recorded a profound impact on their personal and professional lives. Up to date examples of protest, such as the English Disco Lovers, made a lasting impression on teachers (A). Teachers also noted the impact on pupil empathy, behaviour and ability to make links with historic and present situations (B).
- **Wider impact beyond schools involved:** Teachers reported the significance of having a project coordinator (i.e. Helen Griffin at DECSY), not only in maintaining project momentum, but also in her depth of subject knowledge and P4C skills. The project meeting with other schools involved also lead to a sense of wider engagement. This then inspired teachers to share with other teaching colleagues in SCITT partnerships, reaching 50 trainee teachers (A).

Impact on Educational Organisations (E.g. DECs)

As part of the project, DECSY subcontracted eight organisations to deliver information/training events for teachers. The purpose was to disseminate the teaching resources of the project more widely. The evaluator spoke with one organisation, raising the following themes:

- **The project held significant and original value for teachers:** The project content had significant impact on those teachers who attended training, both in terms of the subject, and the method of delivery.
- **New resources:** Teachers were excited by the new and engaging content that the project offered, and importantly that it drew on local, national and international examples
- **Examples relevant to the UK:** As with the project teachers interviewed, teachers were encouraged to see UK examples, rather than only drawing on US civil rights information
- **Relevance with Black Lives Matters 2020-present:** Teachers commented on how the teaching materials would be very useful to start conversations as a result of the death of George Floyd in 2020
- **Application across school phases:** Both secondary and primary school teachers could see application, however the challenges were to incorporate them in inflexible and tight curriculums
- **Secondary schools could use the materials without P4C:** Teachers from secondary schools felt confident to use the resources without needed the supporting P4C dialogic framework.

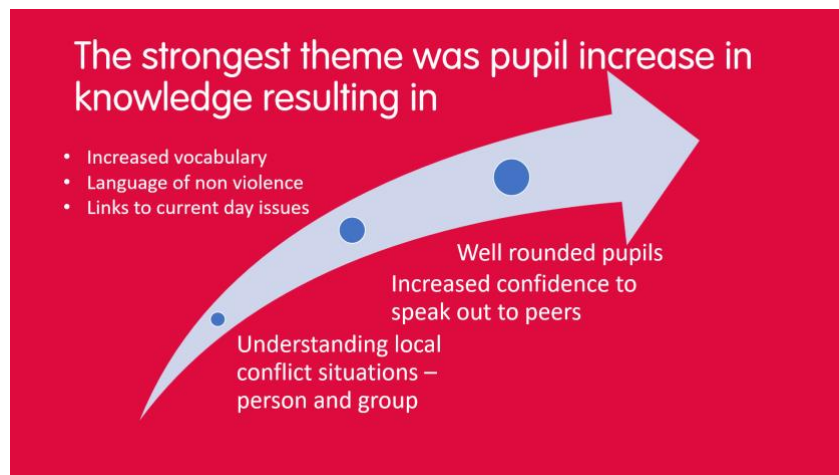
Key Findings

Introduction

This section sets out some of the key findings from the data analysis. These relate to the key themes that arise when all data sources are triangulated. As a reminder, the key area that the evaluator was tasked to look at were:

- Pupil knowledge, attitudes and skills
- Teacher knowledge, skills and attitudes, as well as their professional and personal development
- Pupil and teacher evaluation of the materials
- Impact on organisations/ trainers involved in dissemination activities 2021-2022

Overall the findings can be summarised in the graphic below



Project has lasting impact for pupils

- **The project significantly increased pupil knowledge of subject:** Increased knowledge about the topics and the concepts was recurring theme. It was stated that knowledge was essential for pupils to successfully explore the issues through the method of P4C – or in other words, without the knowledge the P4C discussion could not have taken place with such richness, even on concepts such as power, dictatorship etc.
- **The UK examples were crucial in making the project accessible to pupils:** Both the historic and current UK examples helped pupils relate the issues – and bridge the learning gap around non-violence. In particular, the case studies helped black pupils feel that issues of racism and protest were being taken up by the school.
- **Increased vocabulary of non-violence, leading to changes in attitudes, peer interactions and behaviours:** As pupils explored examples of non-violent action, they also began to develop the vocabulary of non-violence.

- **Improved discussion and critical thinking skills impacting on behaviour:** This was supported by P4C which provided a dialogue technique. Both of these things then supported children to think about their behaviours and adjust their actions and verbal responses to others – especially at times of conflict.
- **Further actions beyond the project not strongly evidenced:** The evaluator could not find significant longer term actions taken by the schools as a result of the project. This may have been due to the sample size, or the heavy disruption that Covid pandemic caused the project. This is an area to further assess in future projects.

Project has profound impact for teachers

- **Increasing awareness non-violent action for change amongst teachers:** For most of the teachers involved the emphasis on non-violence in teaching subjects was new. Looking at case studies through the lens of non-violent action and resistance refreshed familiar topics such as WWII, and provided new and exciting areas of learnings, such as the Bristol Bus Boycott and English Disco Lovers. It was also significant that even those teachers who only attended dissemination events, were impacted by the unique perspective that the project offered.
- **Embedding of materials in school curriculum year on year:** For some schools, they were able to use the non-violent resources and ethos to underpin whole school learning from year to year. The project provided a depth and richness to underpin some school values on that non-violence. This is something that could be further explored in terms of how schools map their curriculum and overall mission.
- **Some evidence of improved behaviours across the whole school** – The project has the potential to transform behaviour across the whole school, as a result of the changes noted in pupils and the whole school approach taken by teachers. However, it was noted that this was most likely in schools that had a strong leadership commitment to projects like this, methods like P4C and emphasis on student voice and participation in school.

Conclusion

The Non-Violent Action: A Force for Change project has had significant impact on pupil knowledge and skills, and a profound impact on teachers as professionals. In some cases, the project has had a transformational effect in terms of behaviour in schools – both in terms of attitudes towards their peers and engagement in learning. Teachers have particularly highlighted the use of Philosophy for Children as a dialogic technique as a critical component of the project. This technique enabled pupils to explore new and complex issues of non-violence and make links to their own lives. The project has also generated interest beyond those teachers and schools directly involved. The findings from this evaluation point to the need for further work to be done, reaching more pupils, and charting the longer-term impact on learning, but also the changes taking place beyond the school, in terms of pupil engagement in community action.

Acknowledgements

The Liverpool World Centre evaluation team would like to thank: Helen Griffin, and DECSY team; Carey O'Donoghue, Emmaus Primary; Rebecca Conway, St Catherine's Primary; Libby Bull; and all the teachers and pupils involved in the project.

References

DECSY. (2018) "Narrative Proposal", available from DECSY office.

Appendix I: Pupil Survey

First name and first letter of surname *

Your answer

School *

Your answer

It is sometimes right to use violence to change things. *

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

It is always wrong to use violence to change things. *

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

It is possible to change things without using violence. *

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

I know how to help make changes in my school. *

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

I know how to help make changes in my local community. *

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

I know how to help make changes in the world. *

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Tick the words that you know the meaning of

- power
- influence
- democracy
- violence
- non-violence
- peace
- rights
- racism
- change
- citizenship
- resistance

Define or give an example of each of the words you circled

Your answer

List some ways that people can change things non-violently

Your answer

Give some examples of when people have changed things for the better

Your answer

One thing I would like to change is

Your answer

One thing I could do to help to change this is

Your answer

Submit

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Google Forms

Appendix II: Teacher Survey (Online)

What is your name?

Your answer

What school were you working at during the project?

Your answer

When were you involved in the project?

Your answer

Which lessons did your current class do? (this is important for the follow up pupil questionnaires)

- Lesson 1
- Lesson 2
- Bristol Bus Boycott
- Indian Independence
- Role of the Arts (including English Disco Lovers)
- WW2 Danish Resistance
- WW2 White Rose Movement
- WW2 Rosenstrasse
- Chipko
- Green Belt
- Right to Roam
- Sheffield Street Trees
- Contemporary case studies

If you were unable to complete any of the lessons in a given section please explain here

Your answer

Taking Action: What would you say has been the impact (if any) of your participation in the project on a) you b) your students c) your school

Do you intend to use any of the lessons in the future? If so which ones and how?

Your answer

What was the most enjoyable aspect of your participation in the project?

Your answer

Are there any improvements to how the project was run that you could suggest?

Your answer

Would you recommend participation in this project or others like I to other teachers?

Yes

No

If you answered 'no' please can you explain why?

Your answer

Would you recommend the teaching materials that you used to other teachers?
(please give a reason for your answer). Your answer