



**Students at Royal Wootton  
Bassett Academy interview  
Headteacher George Croxford.**



@CroxfordGeorge

1. We are approaching Holocaust Memorial Day (Jan 27th) and many schools will be marking the occasion with special assemblies, events, survivor visits and such like. **Why** is it important to you as headteacher that RWBA marks this day?

*Answer) It is essential that we never forget the atrocities of the Holocaust and potential of man's inhumanity to man. But whilst remembrance is important, we must provide an educational element. In this way, we work in line with UCL Centre for Holocaust Education principles as a Beacon School: we aim to inform, engage and inspire and use a range of approaches and materials to help everyone think through and access these difficult and challenging issues in an accessible and responsible way. For me personally, as headteacher, it is important I set an example, set the tone, and role model respectful remembrance that reaffirms our values as a global school in a local community. It also means we model active, local, national and global citizenship, independent and critical thinking as well as empathy. HMD day is a vital part of our ensuring we make education relevant and responsive and a truly holistic experience.*



2. The marking of HMD2017 combines both commemoration and memorialising with an educational imperative. **How** do you view this balance? Is it a school's job to memorialise or educate, or both?

A) *I believe a school's job is to do both. We could just educate but I have always felt our students benefit greatly from memorialising. From active remembering and engagement. The power of a whole school silence is unbelievable – and is on par with our response to Remembrance Day. It speaks to our values as a school and a community and brings us all together for reflection and questioning.*

3. If HMD2017 is about memorialising and commemorating, **what** do you want the students and staff at RWBA to remember?

A) *I want the staff and students at RWBA to think about the individuals, families and specific stories not just the frighteningly large numbers of people who were killed. We often start with Leon Greenman; a case study that runs through many of the UCL materials we use. This allows us to personalise the history and makes this extreme and horrific past something we can relate to, as six million is just incomprehensible – beyond me at any rate. Barney's toy makes the history accessible and personal and everyone can relate to it and understand it – yet it leads students to ask such brilliant and insightful questions.*

4. If HMD2017 is an educational opportunity, then **what** is it you want learner to know, understand or experience?

A) *I want the learner to understand the appalling facts of the Holocaust and never ever forget them. At the same time I want them to hear the amazing stories of hope and the incredible will to live which helped some people through. My final wish is that we empower every individual with the desire to fight for what is right and challenge every wrong. At its best Holocaust education and its*



*stories can change the way we think, feel and act – not with a clear cut ‘Lessons from’ pre-packaged way but that our students and staff wrestle with the many complexities, the difficult questions and through that process come to their own sense of lessons and relevance – and our students do then gain knowledge and transferable understanding. They will also experience something meaningful for their personal development, with survivor-related experiences that will remain with them always. I will always remember hearing Zigi and Freddie, Eva and others who have come here to share their stories – such incredible testimonies, people and such a poignant and lasting educational experience. That’s what I want for my students, and you have to understand how lucky you are to have this opportunity because your own children will not have that first hand encounter with a survivor. It’s a huge privilege to lead a school so dedicated and committed to quality Holocaust education. This simply isn’t happening everywhere – you need to make the most of the HGP opportunities in school whilst you are here!*

5. **How** has RWBA prepared to mark HMD2017 and **why**?

*A) RWBA prepares for this day every year by running a special programme. This year we will use the HMD theme of ‘How Can Life Go On?’ and this will explore case studies of the Holocaust. For KS4 and 5 students, examples from post 1945 survivors will be used. The assemblies across the week will reflect this theme and in our iLearn and tutor times each year group is completing work that will come together on Friday, 27<sup>th</sup> Jan, in a whole school marking of the day in iLearn and the completion of a school display which everyone will have contributed to. The work across the week will feature via our active **@RWBAHolocaust** twitter account and Miss Wetherall will be representing us at a number of national events across the week.*

6. **How** do you ensure quality provision for Holocaust and genocide education in a busy school, with so many pressures of time, funding,



curriculum change? (how are you overcoming challenges or obstacles?)

*A) It is an essential part of our Personal Development programme. We believe that we have a duty to send out a responsible young citizens in to society and this is a fundamental part of that process.*

7. **What** opportunities or benefits has Holocaust and genocide education provided and what will the theme 'How Can Life Go On' contribute?

*A) As the previous answer states it deals with all sorts of fundamental moral and human rights. The 'How can life go on?' theme enables us to reflect and explore some of the most inspiring stories, the best and worst of human nature, which actually show and remind you that regardless of how hard life has been or indeed is, one should never give up and must take every possible chance given.*

8. **What** would you say to a Headteacher at a school currently not marking HMD or providing Holocaust education? What should they do and **why**?

*A) Simple reason – Lest we forget. This is the essential ingredient in our PD programme and the hardest hitting, most character building programme we do in our school. Students have to realise what has gone on and still does go on. It is also the most inspiring subject that transforms how students think and makes them realise that they can make a difference. Never has this work been more needed. Never have the issues been more pressing relevant and we really need all teachers to be trained and supported so as to provide quality and relevant provision. UCL offers such a great programme that has changed our T&L, not just about the Holocaust, but informs so much of our work now. So more teachers need to access this, more senior leaders need to facilitate it and government needs to support and promote it. We need all learners to have such and RWBA experience*

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*of Holocaust education, as I genuinely believe is our job as educators  
to try to 'Empower Young People to Change the World!'*