

Lesson Rationale

The main objective of the lessons is for pupils to find out what kinds of people lived in council housing in Wolverhampton in the 1950s. People who live in council housing are often stereotyped and looked down upon in the twenty first century. It is hoped that these lessons will challenge pupils' prejudices of the types of people that live in council housing. Before examining the sorts of people that lived in council housing, pupils will study the historical context of council housing. They will find out why council housing was built across Britain and will also look at the local context and discover why council housing was built in Wolverhampton in the 1950s. Additionally, pupils will start to develop the skills needed for GCSE by judging the accuracy of a cartoon for showing the types of people that lived in council housing.

Lesson 1

In order to challenge the stereotypical views about people who live in council housing, it is important to try and find out how council house tenants are viewed in the twenty first century. This is why pupils are asked in the first lesson to write and/or draw the stereotypical characteristics of council house tenants, which are then discussed as a class. Pupils will go back to their initial ideas, after they have carried out their enquiry work on the types of people who lived in council houses in Wolverhampton in the 1950s.

Pupils are then given some statements about why council houses were built from 1900 to 1960. Pupils have to decide which statements are false and which statements are true. This is getting the pupils to develop their thinking skills and will start to challenge the stereotypical views of council house tenants as they might be surprised by some of the reasons why council housing was built.

The final activity in the first lesson gets the pupils to focus on local history as they are given sources about council housing in Wolverhampton. They have to try and work out, from reading the sources, why council housing was built in Wolverhampton in the 1950s. This is to give the second lesson historical context and to develop the pupils' ability to extract information from sources.

Lesson 2

This lesson will really help the pupils understand what kinds of people lived in council houses in the 1950s. They are initially asked to predict on concept lines the types of people that lived in council housing. This is again to see if their views about people who live in council houses changes after using the sources and clearly demonstrates progress in the lessons. Pupils look at sources in groups to develop not only their enquiry skills but also their interdependent learning skills. Pupils will collect evidence from the sources to help them decide where they would put council housing tenants on the concept lines. They will have to justify their placement of council housing tenants on the concept lines through written evidence on their worksheet but also through class discussion work. They should also be asked in the plenary if their position on the concept lines has changed from where they placed council housing tenants at the start of the lesson.

Lesson 3

This lesson will get the pupils to apply the knowledge of the types of people who lived in council housing, that they developed in lesson two, and will also develop their skills in evaluating sources in preparation for GCSE History. Initially pupils are given a cartoon, which shows a stereotypical image of council house tenants from 1958. They are asked to decide what the message of the cartoon is, question which is often found on GCSE papers. Pupils are then asked to use their knowledge and understanding of council house tenants that they gained in lesson two to judge the accuracy of the cartoon. You could get the pupils to do this in the form of a letter to the cartoonist and get them to point out what is inaccurate about the cartoon that was produced for the Daily Mirror in 1958.

The plenary of the final lesson also requires the pupils to revisit the initial ideas that they had about council housing tenants. Have they still got the same views about people who live in council housing? Have their views been challenged by this sequence of lessons? Is there a typical council housing tenant?

This sequence of lessons could be further developed by making links with the Citizenship and PSHE curriculum. How can stereotypes of council housing tenants be challenged? Pupils could also examine when views about council housing tenants started to change. A documentary produced by the BBC called the Rise and Fall of the Council Estate could be used here and can be found on You Tube. You may also like to make comparisons with other areas of the country in the 1950s.