

Thomas Deacon Academy



Mr Heppell uses an article on the Nobel Peace Prize to start an ethical discussion in his Religious Studies class.

What sort of school is this?

Built on the grounds of its historic predecessor Deacon's School, Thomas Deacon Academy is the 'impressively and thoughtfully designed' £50 million home to over two thousand secondary school students. The result of the amalgamation of pupils from three previous local institutes meant that when it first opened in 2007, the Academy was the largest of its kind in Europe. Principal Dr Alan McMurdo leads by a clear ethos which is to 'reach world-class performance by 2016' and with 92% of students achieving at least 5 GCSEs at A*-C, the 'super-school' is well on its way to academic success.

Who am I?

My name is Ross Copping and having been at the Thomas Deacon Academy since its opening, I am currently in my final year of study. In March 2012 *The Day* arrived with their aim of 'Explaining Matters', and in that time I have used the service both in class and for my own independent reading outside of my lessons.

How does my school use 'The Day'?

As you walk into the remarkable building, television screens greet you with one of *The Day's* 'Short Epics' and with such a huge amount of lessons occurring each week in the Academy, *The Day* has the opportunity to enrich and engage a vast number of students. It therefore has been prevalent across form time, assemblies and curriculum teaching within my school

since it subscribed to the service early this year, after research by staff into the SMSC (Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural) development of the students.

Science teacher Kevan Fryett regularly runs class debates via stories published on *The Day*. Most recently he focused on the article 'American cougars return from the brink'; after reading the site the children were asked the question 'is one human life worth more than 100 cougars?' This resulted in the class being split across a line of 'pro-human' and 'pro-cougar' supporters, shy thirteen-year-old Mohammed spoke up to argue that 'cougars should be seen in the wild, not as a rug in someone's

**“CLEARLY
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house' and the debate came alive, leaving the students informed and emboldened by what they had just read.

Thomas Deacon Academy also adopts a method of vertical tutoring where pupils are grouped in a form with other students from ages 11 to 18, and *The Day* frequently features in sessions led by tutor Jaime Harrison. She led a session on the article 'War captive who forgave Japanese tormentors dies' using a short BBC video provided in the 'Become an Expert' links. The pupils were engaged by this, scru-

tinising its content before discussing in small groups whether they would forgive Takashi Nagase before reflecting on their own forgiveness within daily life.

What do they say about 'The Day' and how else is it used?

Since the service was introduced to the Academy, it has gained a lot of support amongst staff at Thomas Deacon. One advocate is Senior Leadership Team member Joe Heppell, who said: 'It is a fantastic resource for teachers to use, it's brilliant to use quickly as resources and activities are ready at hand, meaning no planning'.

The Day is finding a home outside the classroom too, with more and more of the students revealing that they spend some of their free time reading articles as they simply 'don't have time to watch the news'. At the Thomas Deacon Academy pupils are being motivated by the site to take an interest in the wider world and current affairs as well as having a renewed or new-found confidence in discussion. It is evident that the Academy has found something that it could rely on; 'At last an educational website that we can put full faith and trust into' Joe Heppell summarised.

Author

Ross is an A-Level student who previously joined *The Day* for work experience. He studies English Literature, History and Religious Studies and is the creator of the first student case study.