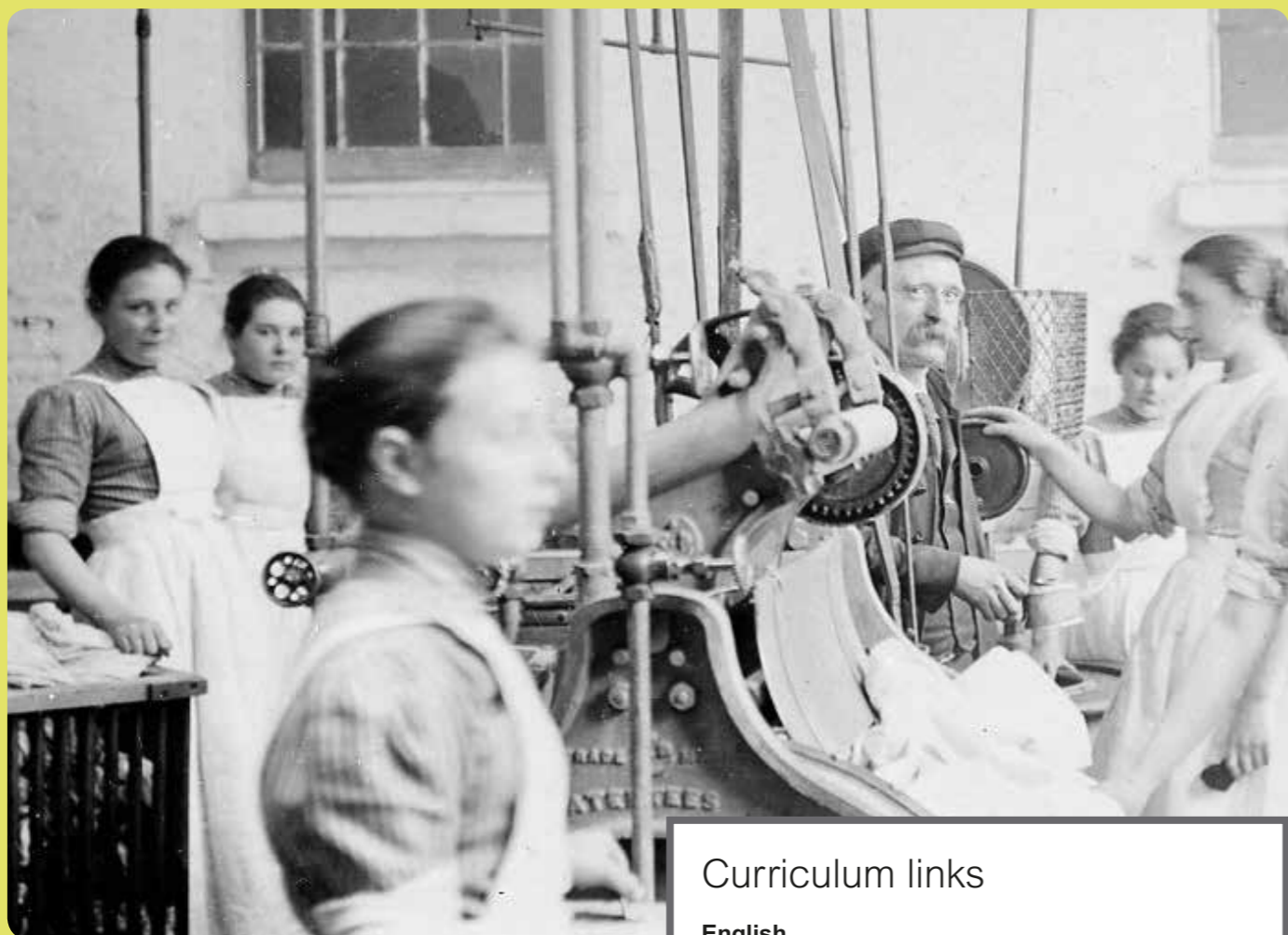


# Child labour debate



Girls in the Blue Coat School Laundry © Bluecoat

## Curriculum links

### English

Planning their writing by:

Planning or saying out loud what they are going to write about

Writing down ideas and/or key words, including new vocabulary

Reading aloud what they have written with appropriate intonation to make the meaning clear

Explaining and discussing their understanding, including through formal presentations and debates, maintaining a focus on the topic and using notes where necessary

Providing reasoned justifications for their views

### History

A study of an aspect of history or a site dating from a period beyond 1066 that is significant in the locality

Changes in an aspect of social history

### Art

To improve their mastery of art and design techniques, including drawing, painting and sculpture with a range of materials

## Summary

Pupils will learn about the lives of children in the past and the difficulties they faced growing up in poverty. It uses the example of children having to engage in manual labour at Blue Coat School to explore the issue of child labour.

### Duration

Core activity: 2 x 1 hour sessions

Extension activity: 3 x 1 hour sessions

### Aims and Outcomes

- Pupils will have learned about the lives of people from the past
- Pupils will understand more about the issue of child labour and why it is still a worldwide problem today

Powerpoints and resources available at [www.mybluecoat.org.uk](http://www.mybluecoat.org.uk)

## Background

When children began attending Blue Coat School in the 18th century, the world was very different to what you know today. Children were not entitled to an education and many lived in terrible poverty, beginning work at a very young age in dangerous jobs.

Children spent two thirds of the day at Blue Coat School working and the money they made went back into the school. They did a number of jobs: weaving stockings, spinning cotton, making pins, picking oakum and even their urine was sold. Although the school was set up as a charity to help children they were also made to work in jobs that were bad for their health and stopped them learning.

In 1783 the school governors decided that such work was bad for the children's health and against the principles that the school was founded on and after that no child was made to work. Instead of manual labour the children could focus on their lessons.

*"Nothing is more likely to promote the practice of Christianity and virtue, than an early and pious education in youth."*

Although children at Blue Coat School stopped being forced to do manual labour in 1783 (50 years before the first law against child labour was passed in the UK) there are still children all around the world who have to work to survive. Today, it is estimated that 168 million children between the ages of 5 and 17 are child labourers. All children have the right to an education but around the world one in ten children of primary school age do not attend school. These children do a lot of different jobs, working on farms, in factories and mines, working as servants, fighting in armies and working for criminal gangs. Some of these children are given a wage but many work in exchange for food and somewhere to sleep.

## Activities

### Starter question

This question will assess the pupils' prior knowledge and also alert you to any possible difficulties or sensitive subjects within the group.

*What jobs did children do in the past?*

### Core activity

The children will take part in a debate about the use of child labour in the early years Blue Coat School.

Using the material that is on our website and independent research they should be able to structure their arguments either **for** or **against** the motion below:

**A charity school is very expensive to run. As we have helped the children so much and given them a better life they should contribute to the running of the school. Besides, many children are working at this time.**

### End question

This question will ask the pupils to reflect on what they have learnt and ask them to apply this knowledge to the world today.

*What jobs do children do around the world today? Is it right that these children are working? What rights are being taken away from these children when they are made to work?*

### Extension activity

On our website there are also a number of artworks that have been exhibited at Bluecoat which consider what life would have been like for pupils who attended the School. Each artwork is accompanied by an activity.

### Think About

- How is your experience of school different to those of the Blue Coat pupils?

### Talk About

- Was every child entitled to an education three hundred years ago? What do you think about this?
- What is charity? How does the idea of charity compare to the fact that children at the School had to work?
- We know the children were made to work but the School provided them with opportunities that would not otherwise have been available to them. How do you feel about this? Do you think this seems fair?

### Find Out About

- What were attitudes to child labour like at this time? How have they changed over the last three hundred years?

If you enjoyed this resource you might want to look at *Indentures and Apprenticeships* or *Bluecoat and Slavery*