

# Teacher Guide

## The Mystery of the Pirate who wasn't

### Part 1 – Our approach

Citizenship is not just another lesson to fit into an already busy timetable. It is a way of helping children understand the people, places and problems that surround them every day. Because of that, Cherry Court has been designed so that citizenship can become part of English, geography, history, science, design technology, computing and many other subjects whenever the opportunity naturally arises.

Our philosophy is summed up in one simple sentence that runs throughout Cherry Court:

#### **Looking after our corner of the world.**

We believe that citizenship begins close to home. Children first learn how families, neighbours, schools and communities work together. From there they begin to understand wider ideas such as democracy, responsibility, financial decision-making, sustainability and caring for the environment.

This local approach also links naturally with local studies. As children begin to notice the people and places around them, they become more observant, more curious and more interested in how their own community works. They begin to ask questions, spot problems and think about solutions.

Cherry Court has therefore been created as a believable town with believable people facing believable problems. The stories are calm, thoughtful and discussion-based rather than fast-moving or game-like. We believe this gives children time to observe carefully, think deeply and contribute their own ideas.

Each story is introduced by Toby, who is only a little older than the intended audience. Rather than acting as an expert, Toby acts as a friendly guide. He notices interesting things, asks sensible questions, sometimes gets things wrong and learns alongside the children. This makes him someone pupils can easily relate to.

Every Cherry Court story begins with a mystery. The mystery encourages children to ask questions, gather information and think carefully before reaching conclusions. The stories always end positively because we want children to leave each lesson believing that ordinary people really can improve their own communities.

Our quizzes simply check understanding and recall. They are not intended as tests of ability. The real learning comes through discussion, reflection and shared problem-solving.

You will also notice that many stories naturally combine several curriculum subjects. A citizenship story may also develop geographical understanding, historical thinking, scientific knowledge, literacy or financial awareness. This means the resources can often support learning in several lessons, helping you make the best use of valuable curriculum time.

## **Part 2 – Using the resources on this card**

### **1. The video**

Each card begins with a Toby story, usually lasting between five and nine minutes. This gives enough time for children to become interested in the characters, understand the problem and follow the thinking that leads towards a solution.

The stories are normally divided into four short sections.

**Day 1** introduces the mystery and explores what is really happening.

**Days 2, 3 and 4** gradually investigate possible solutions until the problem is resolved.

This structure encourages children to see that worthwhile solutions usually develop through observation, discussion, planning and perseverance rather than instant answers.

### **2. The book**

The accompanying book follows the story closely and acts as both a reading resource and a reference.

It allows teachers to revisit important points, support literacy, encourage discussion, examine vocabulary and use extracts for guided or independent reading.

Because the book mirrors the video, children can move comfortably between visual and written learning.

### **3. The quiz**

The quiz provides a simple opportunity to check understanding of the story.

Questions concentrate on recall and comprehension rather than assessment. They are intended to reinforce learning and encourage discussion rather than judge children's performance.

### **4. This Teacher Guide**

Each Teacher Guide explains both the educational thinking behind Cherry Court and the specific learning opportunities provided by the individual story.

### **5. History and religion**

This story also shows the development of a Christian church through time, and so can be used in any time period of history you might be teaching, or in religion lessons to show how a

church has changed through time and with changing ideas.

### **Part 3 – What children learn from this story**

At first, this appears to be a story about an old church and a mysterious pirate's grave. Like Toby and his friends, many children initially think old buildings are simply old, quiet and perhaps a little frightening. The mystery encourages them to look more closely and discover that every part of the church has something to tell us about the people who built it.

The pirate's grave provides an excellent introduction to historical enquiry. Children discover that first impressions are not always correct. A skull and crossbones does not necessarily belong to a pirate. Instead, they learn that symbols often had different meanings in the past and that historians rely on evidence rather than guesses. Throughout *Cherry Court*, children are encouraged to ask questions before reaching conclusions.

As the story develops, the church becomes a timeline that children can walk through. Rather than learning about Saxons, Normans, Medieval merchants, Tudors and Victorians as separate topics, they see how each generation altered the same building to meet its own needs. The church therefore becomes a visible record of changing ideas, changing technology and changing society.

Children also discover that buildings change because people change. The tiny Saxon church reflected a small farming community with limited money and building skills. The Norman church reflected new rulers with greater wealth and ambition. The great Medieval church reflected the prosperity created by the local wool trade. Later changes reflected changing religious beliefs, especially during the Reformation and Puritan period, while Victorian improvements made churches more comfortable for growing congregations.

An important idea running throughout the story is that history is often hidden in plain sight. Features that people walk past every day, such as arches, windows, gravestones, carvings or worn stonework, can all provide clues about the past. Children begin to understand that they do not always need museums to discover history. Their own town may already contain remarkable evidence if they learn how to observe carefully.

The story also introduces an important idea about heritage. Historic buildings do not simply preserve themselves. They require constant care, skilled repairs and considerable expense. Children begin to appreciate that every generation inherits responsibility for looking after important buildings so that future generations can enjoy them too.

Finally, the story introduces the idea of adaptation. Modern churches are often used for concerts, exhibitions, community events and other activities alongside worship. Rather than changing the building's importance, these new uses help provide the income needed to maintain historic buildings. Children therefore discover that imagination and enterprise can help preserve local heritage while allowing historic buildings to remain active parts of community life.

# Part 4 – Opportunities across the curriculum

Although this is presented as a history mystery, it naturally supports learning across many areas of the primary curriculum.

## English

Children develop speaking and listening skills by discussing evidence, asking questions and explaining their ideas. The accompanying book supports guided reading, comprehension, vocabulary development and descriptive writing. The mystery format also encourages prediction, inference and reasoning.

## History

This is primarily a local history resource. Children learn how one building changed over a thousand years and how those changes reflect wider events such as the Saxon conversion to Christianity, the Norman Conquest, the growth of the wool trade, the Reformation, the Civil War and Victorian restoration. Rather than studying these periods separately, children see how each generation added another chapter to the same building.

## Religious Education

The story explains how churches developed from simple places of worship into larger community buildings. It explores why churches were built, how Christian worship has changed over time and how changing religious beliefs affected the appearance of churches. It also provides opportunities to discuss symbolism, worship and the continuing role of churches within modern communities.

## Geography

Children investigate why churches were often built in the centre of settlements and how villages and towns grew around them. They also consider how local resources, wealth and trade influenced the size and appearance of buildings. The story encourages careful observation of features within their own locality.

## Art and Design

Children study carved stonework, stained glass, medieval wall paintings, architectural decoration and symbolism. They may design stained-glass windows, create illuminated lettering, sketch architectural details or investigate Anglo-Saxon carvings and gravestones.

## Design and Technology

Children explore how building techniques improved over time. They discover why Norman churches had thick walls and small windows, how Gothic builders created taller buildings

with larger windows and how engineering advances allowed churches to become lighter and brighter.

## **Citizenship**

The story encourages children to value local heritage and understand that historic buildings belong to the whole community. They consider how communities decide what is worth preserving and how imagination, fundraising and new community uses can help protect important buildings for future generations.

## **Financial Literacy**

Children discover that historic buildings are expensive to maintain. They explore where money for repairs comes from, why fundraising is necessary and how concerts, exhibitions and community events can help preserve local heritage. This introduces the simple idea that important community buildings, like businesses, need careful financial planning if they are to survive.

## **Local Studies**

Perhaps more than anything, this story encourages children to look differently at familiar places. Many communities have churches, chapels, cemeteries or historic buildings that children pass every day without noticing. After watching the story, pupils often begin asking questions about the buildings in their own town and recognising that local history can be discovered simply by observing carefully.

## **Curriculum-focussed**

**Cherry Court is not discovery learning without guidance.** Curiosity alone is not enough. Children need expert knowledge if they are to build an accurate understanding of history, geography or citizenship. Each story therefore begins with a mystery that encourages observation and questions, but the investigation is always guided by someone with genuine expertise. Their role is not to give children answers before they are interested, but to provide the knowledge and framework that allow curiosity to develop into real understanding. In this way, curiosity and curriculum work together rather than competing with one another.