



ISEB
Independent Schools
Examinations Board

CASE STUDY

iPQ AT HALL GROVE SCHOOL: PROMOTING LATERAL THINKING AND PROVIDING NEW CHALLENGES

"In the modern world, it is becoming increasingly important to promote independent thinking and creative problemsolving, which is why the iPQ is the best preparation pupils can have".

Mrs Elizabeth Locke, Librarian and iPQ Lead, Hall Grove School

WHAT IS THE iPQ?

The iPQ is a research-based project qualification that is carefully constructed to teach and assess essential independent learning skills for Years 5-8. It is divided into five sections: **Define, Research and Review, Discuss and Develop, Reflect and Present.**

HOW IS THE iPQ USED AT HALL GROVE?

Across the 2021/22 academic year, the iPQ has become an integral and exciting part of school life at Hall Grove. Mr Luke McLeod, Head of Years 7 and 8, encouraged pupils to explore questions based on their passions. As a school, Hall Grove recognises the importance of spending time outdoors, so many pupils chose to focus on nature or sports-based projects. Furthermore, the school's diverse curriculum undoubtedly promoted expansive thinking, resulting in projects ranging from "Can I do the coding to create a Harry Potter-themed escape room?" to "Is Communism an effective way to rule?"

Supported by Headmaster Mr Neil Tomlin, Mr McLeod chose the 8-week model in which pupils dedicate 1.5 hours of class time to their projects per week. Mrs Locke, Librarian and iPQ Lead at Hall Grove, commented that pupils became so absorbed in their projects they also chose to use time out of lessons to further their investigations, giving up their time freely. In eight weeks, Year 7 pupils completed a preliminary project that followed the iPQ framework and provided valuable, constructive feedback without the pressure of formal moderation. This allowed them to develop



skills in project management, academic research and communication that put them in good stead for their certificated iPQ in Year 8.

The projects culminated in the school's first iPQ event. This was an excellent opportunity to bring parents into the school and enable pupils to practice their public speaking skills. The occasion commenced with a presentation on the value of the iPQ, followed by time to view the projects. Finally, pupils had an opportunity to have their hard work recognised and celebrated publicly with an awards presentation.



WHY THE iPQ?

Promoting Lateral Thinking

“One of the primary aims of a prep school is to prepare children for secondary school, university and their future lives”, Mrs Locke observed.

Hall Grove chose the iPQ because it perfectly supports their ambitions for their pupils. It allows young people to build their preparatory research skills, like research and referencing, which are essential for students at higher levels of study and in myriad careers. However, Hall Grove also recognised the larger life lessons offered by the iPQ: a critical and potentially daunting aspect of life is to question and, more significantly, not to feel afraid to do so.

Each iPQ project begins with a research question with no right or wrong answer. Many projects start with “Can I create...?” or “Can I learn...?” encouraging children to develop their interrogative abilities early on. Mr McLeod, Mrs Locke and the Hall Grove leadership were impressed by the emotional growth the iPQ delivered when pupils discovered the outcome was not always what they had envisaged. For many in the Year 7 cohort, their most valuable lesson was how they achieved the result and overcame the difficulties they faced along the way.



The nature of the iPQ means that aspects of a project that initially seem simple inevitably spawn challenges. Two pupils who chose to create a sports podcast realised that talking for a significant amount of time was surprisingly tricky, and they needed to find a solution. They called upon peer feedback and studied the practical aspects of existing sports podcasts they enjoyed to find a way forward. Mrs Locke observed: “During the iPQ, the most important learning was achieved through finding solutions to obstacles”. As time went on, pupils focused less on their final grade and more on the process involved in answering their research question.

Developing A New Skillset

Success in the iPQ leads to young people developing a range of transferable skills. The projects require careful planning: it is difficult even as an adult to look at a

project across eight weeks and break it down into what can be achieved each week”, said Mrs Locke. Pupils at Hall Grove learned to work backwards from their end date, regularly referring to their project diary and weekly goals. Timetabling the project ensured a positive trajectory and prevented pupils from becoming sidetracked, teaching valuable lessons on the way. One child, who asked, “Can I recondition an old Freecycle bike into a mountain bike for my brother?” spent 14 hours trying to create a specific paint effect and learnt that compromise is necessary when you have a time limit.

Lessons come in many different forms. One pair who worked together asked, “Can I make a LEGO stop-action film?” They quickly discovered artistic differences and returned to the drawing board to find a way forward. Showing great maturity, they agreed to split their roles into director and producer. The final project received a significant award, demonstrating to students the importance of finding the middle ground and taking on new perspectives.

Mrs Locke noticed that the iPQ offered new and edifying challenges for children of all attainment levels. For some confident learners, the iPQ put them in uncharted territory as they were tasked with asking their own questions and establishing the parameters instead of responding to set questions. The iPQ encouraged these students to modify their approach when faced with new situations: an invaluable life skill

The iPQ can also challenge children to problem-solve and use tools at their disposal creatively: for example, the girl who decided to redesign her boarding house. She did not know how to use Computer-Assisted Design (CAD), so instead applied her knowledge of computer games to create digital furniture and accurately plot the dimensions of each room.

Prepared for the future

Hall Grove pupils emerged with new leadership and transferable skills to boost their academic endeavours. Equally importantly, the iPQ enabled them to pursue an interest they were passionate about, took ownership of, and were proud to share with others

For information on how to get started, visit:

www.iseb.co.uk/iPQ

For the Hallgrove website, visit:

www.hallgrove.co.uk

To read about the success of the iPQ at The Banda School, Kenya visit: [iPQ Banda](#)