



**IPO AT KENTON COLLEGE, KENYA:
ASKING THE BIG QUESTIONS**

“One of the things I really like about the iPQ is that children who don’t enjoy writing exam papers but are great musicians or are interested in arts can use their talents in a different way – linking up the intellectual rigour and research with their particular interest and talent.”

Stephanie Donaldson, Deputy Head Academic

WHAT IS THE iPQ?

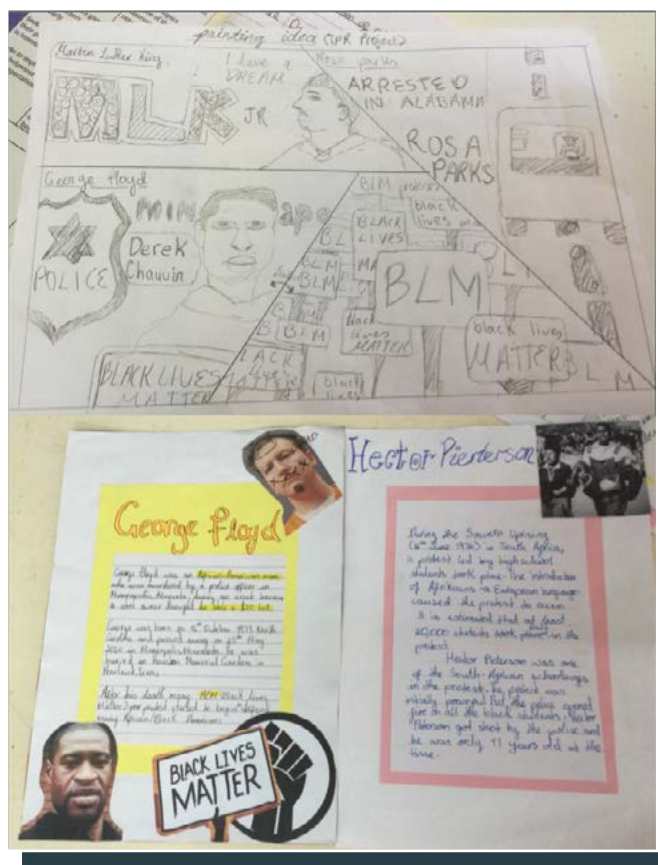
The iPQ is a research-based project qualification that is carefully constructed to teach and assess essential independent learning skills for Years 5-8. It is divided into five sections: **Define, Research and Review, Discuss and Develop, Reflect and Present.**

**HOW IS THE iPQ USED
AT KENTON COLLEGE?**

Kenton College launched the iPQ in Autumn 2021 for Year 8 pupils. The first cohort of pupils worked on their projects in Theology, Philosophy and Religion (TPR) for one hour per week throughout the Autumn and Spring terms, culminating in a final project presentation. Projects were generally finished in lesson time with minimal extra work needed – this avoided additional demands on Year 8 students, who were focused on preparing for Common Entrance.

Deputy Head Stephanie Donaldson decided to replace the TPR Common Entrance exam with the iPQ, giving students the welcome opportunity for a different assessment style. Stephanie observed that the iPQ allows pupils to develop new skills, which will be invaluable as they transfer to senior school. She introduced the iPQ in TPR, saying “it seemed to be the perfect subject for individual research as there are so many fascinating questions within it.”

The process began by encouraging pupils to reflect on the topics they had covered in TPR since Year 5. Kenton College follows the ISEB syllabus, which covers a wide range of topics ranging from ethics to influential individuals such as Martin Luther King, thereby providing endless opportunities for investigation. The pupils were asked to consider which aspects of the course they had found engaging or thought-provoking.



How has racism changed through history?

They were also allowed to extend this to current affairs that aligned with TPR, leading to topical questions such as ‘Can humans reverse the effects of climate change?’ ‘Can humans trust artificial intelligence?’ and ‘Is it ever right for leaders to inflict hardship on their people?’

Pupils spent a significant period refining their questions, many of which addressed profound imponderables such as “Is there a life after death?” Stephanie has no doubts about the benefits of thinking about these big questions at such a young age. She believes it impels the pupils to explore varied sources and analyse viewpoints they may never have otherwise considered.





Is it ever right for leaders to inflict hardship on their people?

This was especially important with opinion-based questions such as “Is it right to keep animals in captivity?” Stephanie explains that pupils often had strong ideas and views before starting research but were undoubtedly more empathetic in respect of differing perspectives by the end of the project.



Can humans reverse the effects of climate change?

Their questions offered an excellent opportunity for deep thought and led to “a wide range of individual learning experiences, which is what we wanted.” Stephanie is aware that since the pandemic, pupils have found it more difficult to work independently, so the iPQ provided the ideal vehicle to move away from group work and towards individual pupil-led projects. She points out that for many pupils, their understanding of research equated to ten minutes on an iPad rather than two terms of persistently investigating one idea. “It was interesting to see how pupils managed the task of researching in depth, which proved to be a challenge for some and a natural development of existing skills for others. “The iPQ undoubtedly gave our Year 8 pupils an idea of what it is like to work with greater independence and to direct their own learning,” comments Stephanie.

The presentation is a vital part of the iPQ, and at Kenton College, the pupils were encouraged to use diverse formats to communicate their outcomes. This resulted in websites, podcasts, films, and slick slideshows. One pupil who investigated ‘Can humans reverse the effects of climate change?’ produced a piece of artwork as part of her finished project. This sets the iPQ apart from other research projects in that children can play to their strengths and create a finished product in various formats. This year, the pupils hope to put on plays or musical performances, allowing parents and the rest of the school to be involved. Next year, Year 8 pupils will be given an extra criterium for their iPQ—to create something that future pupils can use as a lasting legacy after the creator has left.



The introduction of the iPQ at Kenton College had a transformative impact on the students, as summed up by James Moss-Gibbons, iPQ Lead 2021-22:

“The iPQ allowed our pupils to develop a range of skills, such as independent thinking, researching and referencing, and time management that will undoubtedly serve them well as they move on to their senior schools and face a range of new challenges. The opportunity to explore different ways of presenting allowed pupils of all abilities to access the work in ways the more traditional project would not have allowed.”

For information on how to get started, visit: www.iseb.co.uk/iPQ

For the Kenton College website, visit: www.kentonschoolnairobi.com

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