

Lawn Manor Academy highlights the importance of Holocaust education with Beacon School status and Garden of Sanctuary

Pupils at Lawn Manor Academy are taking a stand against forgetting the atrocities of the Holocaust and genocide by taking part in a nationally recognised education programme, “The Holocaust, Their Families, Me and Us”.

Lawn Manor Academy has been successful in applying for Beacon School status by University College London and from September will be working with the university to revolutionise Holocaust education in the school.

Only 20 schools are accepted onto the Beacon School programme each year and ahead of their official start in September, Year 9 pupils spent the day immersed in history and testimony with a special cross-curricular workshop.

The workshop encouraged pupils to connect emotionally and intellectually with real-life stories, exploring the human impact of the Holocaust and its continuing relevance today. They heard the story of Morris Malenicky, father of Angela Cohen and grandfather of TV personality Rob Rinder, and his experience in the first ghetto of World War 2, his time in a concentration camp and finally coming to the UK as part of ‘The Boys’, a group of young survivors who had lost their entire families to the genocide.



Coinciding with the 30th anniversary of the Bosnian War and genocide, the pupils also heard from Smajo Beso, who shared his experiences of surviving war and genocide in the 1990s. As a young boy, Smajo fled to the UK as a refugee with his family after being targeted due to being a Bosnian Muslim. His personal story of the horrors of war, displacement and rebuilding life in a new country helped pupils draw powerful parallels between past and present-day atrocities.

The workshop culminated with the official opening of the school's Garden of Sanctuary and with the creation of a powerful collage inspired by the Mostar Bridge—a historic symbol of unity destroyed during the Bosnian War and to remember that bridges connect us all, no matter our backgrounds

Andy Bull, Social Sciences Teacher at Lawn Manor Academy, explained: "It is so important to hear the voices of the Holocaust and other genocides and to ensure that the stories are not lost. As we begin to lose the generation who survived the Holocaust, it is so important for the children and grandchildren to continue the dialogue.

"By connecting the past and present, especially by hearing Smajo's story, our pupils will not only understand history, but also be able to build the tools to stand up for humanity in the present. The stories they've heard, the emotions they've felt, and the connections they've made will stay with them for life."

Angela Cohen added: "It was an absolute honour to spend time in such a warm, thoughtful school community. Both the teachers and the pupils made me feel genuinely welcomed, and I left feeling hopeful - knowing that these young people are learning to carry stories of the past forward with care, understanding, and purpose. The day left a lasting impression on me, and I look forward to the opportunity to return."

