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## Report

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# Evaluation of the Start Programme

## Case-study report

National Foundation for Educational  
Research (NFER)

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# Evaluation of the Start Programme: Case-study report

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# Executive summary

## 1.1 Introduction

The Prince's Foundation for Children & the Arts is a national educational charity established specifically to provide disadvantaged young people with opportunities to access high-quality arts activities. In 2006 it set up the Start programme to enable arts venues<sup>1</sup> and schools to work together to offer disadvantaged young people opportunities to engage in creative activities that inspire them and enhance their experience of the arts. Annually, Start has supported eight to ten UK arts venues to establish long-term partnerships (over three years) with their local schools. These Start partnerships offer participating children and young people at least two visits to a local arts venue to see and participate in arts performances and activities, as well as opportunities to create their own artwork, dance or theatrical performance.

This research focused on five case studies of partnerships between arts venues and schools as part of the Start programme funded by Children & the Arts. It set out to illustrate how the Start programme had been implemented in schools, identify the key success factors in its effectiveness and explore its impact on young people's attitudes towards the arts and cultural engagement. The research also aimed to capture the learning for longer-term impact and sustainability after the Start programme ends.

This research has been made possible by a generous donation from Oak Foundation.

## 1.2 Key messages

### 1.2.1 Impact of Start on children and young people's attitudes towards the arts and cultural engagement

As a result of their involvement over three years, these case-study schools experienced a wide range of positive changes in attitudes towards arts and culture, skills and personal development. These reflect the findings for the programme as a whole (see Sandle, 2012).

- Children and young people's enthusiasm and interest in arts and cultural activities have increased through their involvement in new creative experiences provided through Start. The initial sense of excitement and inspiration from attending arts and cultural venues was reinforced by children and young people's positive experiences throughout the programme.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Arts venues' is used to denote a range of arts and cultural venues, such as theatres, arts centres, museums, galleries and music venues.

- Start has increased children and young people’s familiarity with, and awareness of, local arts and cultural venues. They now know more about what happens in the cultural venues they have visited, are comfortable in those spaces and feel a sense of belonging.
- Children and young people involved in Start now have a deeper understanding of the creative process due to their sustained involvement in the wide range of activities required to produce arts and cultural events including dance and theatrical performances, artwork and exhibitions. As a result children and young people developed an enquiring approach, and strong sense of agency, in producing their own work.
- Children and young people have developed their skills in critically appraising and appreciating arts and cultural activities. All Start activities in these case studies were designed to encourage children and young people to feed back on the creative work they experienced, as well as review their own artwork and that of their peers.
- Start has provided children and young people with opportunities to publicly exhibit or perform their work, in the same way as professional artists. This has elevated children and young people’s perceptions of the value and importance of their creative work. It has inspired them to do well and given them pride in their achievements.
- Children and young people learned a variety of new creative skills. Through Start, they have had the opportunity to develop new skills and use them to pursue arts qualifications, such as Arts Awards. Children and young people have also learned transferable skills as a result of Start (such as a wider vocabulary and stronger writing skills) and applied these to other curriculum subjects such as English and History.
- Involvement in Start has raised children and young people’s awareness of the careers available to them in the creative industries. It has increased their appreciation of how the arts and design skills they are currently learning (at school or elsewhere) can offer them routes into creative careers in future.
- Start has enabled children and young people to improve their interpersonal skills which can be transferred to areas of learning other than arts and creative subjects. Interviewees say that children and young people’s communication, team-working, problem-solving and critical thinking skills have all improved as a result of their participation in the programme.

### **1.2.2 Key factors in the effectiveness of Start**

The study identified the following critical success factors.

- Schools and arts partners were committed to work together constructively to offer children and young people opportunities to engage in arts and cultural activities. Committed staff in arts venues and schools enabled the projects to overcome logistical and communication barriers to pupils’ engagement.

- Schools and arts partners were in regular communication. This supported a cycle of feedback about the Start activities, enabling schools and arts partners to continuously adapt and improve their activities.
- School leaders were clear about the benefits of their pupils' engagement in Start and conveyed this to other staff throughout the school. This demonstrated the school's commitment to engaging with Start and helped create a welcoming environment for visiting artists.
- Pupils were actively involved in authentic creative activities. Pupils appreciated the experience of working with professional artists who treated them as fellow artists and gave them the opportunity to learn from their expertise.
- Arts partners provided teachers with Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to demonstrate how to use arts and drama skills and techniques in their teaching. This inspired teachers and increased their confidence to apply a range of creative skills in the classroom.

### **1.2.3 Learning for longer-term impact and sustainability**

All five case-study schools involved in the Children & the Arts' Start programme intended to continue working together once the Start programme has ended. Several schools had already met their arts partners to plan how to engage their pupils in arts and cultural activities in future.

Learning for longer-term impact of Start is as follows.

- Schools' sustained involvement with arts partners for all three years of the Start programme changed the nature of their engagement in arts and cultural activities. As their confidence and motivation increased, these schools expanded their arts and cultural 'offer' to their pupils. Some schools have established partnerships with other arts organisations and at least one school has achieved the Artsmark quality standard as a result.
- Teacher CPD sessions have equipped and motivated teachers to use their creative skills in the classroom in the longer-term. This professional development has increased schools' capacity, and willingness, to seek further ways of embedding creative work within the curriculum and engaging in arts and cultural activities outside of school. In this way the Start programme's legacy will increase the range of opportunities for all pupils to engage in cultural education and ensure pupils not involved in Start activities will benefit from the initial investment in the programme.
- Arts partners have used the learning from their involvement with Start to help them improve their capacity to work with schools. Arts partners now have an enhanced understanding of how to effectively engage schools and how to design activities that are relevant and appropriate to different age groups.
- A key future challenge is supporting schools to make some financial or in-kind contribution to their involvement in arts and cultural activities. Some schools face high transport costs to reach arts venues. Start programme funding covers a

proportion of such costs and gives arts partner organisations time to help schools raise the funds for their continued involvement in cultural visits. Similar approaches could be usefully employed by arts organisations to support other schools' future engagement in arts and cultural activities, if they are able to access appropriate funding streams.

- Schools and arts partners were aware of the need to communicate with parents. Some had taken this further by involving parents in their activities and inviting them to view their children's work. However, several were aware that there was more that they could do in future to engage parents and that this had potential to encourage further participation for them and their children.

## **1.3 Conclusion**

These case studies illustrate how the Children & the Arts' Start programme can lead to real, positive impacts for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds through their involvement in arts activities. The effectiveness of Children & the Arts' Start programme in these exemplary partnerships has depended on a strong mutual understanding of, and commitment to, ensuring children and young people were engaged in arts and cultural activities. Partnerships had a clear, shared understanding of how Start would be beneficial for its children and young people and Start activities were designed to offer them authentic creative experiences. Overall, Start has acted as a catalyst for growing and sustaining creative activities in the case-study schools and created a lasting legacy of arts engagement between schools and UK arts venues

## 2 Introduction

### 2.1 About the Start programme

The Prince's Foundation for Children & the Arts is a national educational charity established specifically to provide disadvantaged children and young people with opportunities to access high-quality arts activities.

Disadvantaged children and young people are particularly at risk of not being aware of, or being able to access, the arts. Children and young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds have less access to the arts than children and young people from wealthier backgrounds. For example, children of parents with no qualifications are less likely to have taken part in cultural activities in the previous year than children of parents with A-levels or a degree (Jones et al., 2011). The critical role of schools in introducing disadvantaged young people to the arts, and encouraging them to engage in cultural activities, has been highlighted in Darren Henley's review of cultural education in England (Henley, 2012).

Children & the Arts' Start programme was set up in 2006 as a formal, structured programme to offset the barriers which disadvantaged children and young people face in engaging in the arts. Each year it supports eight to ten UK arts venues over three years to establish long-term partnerships with their local schools. From 2010, the expectation was that arts organisations would apply for £20-£30 per child up to a maximum of £15,000 per project. Third year grants were reduced by 30%<sup>2</sup>.

The focus of Start is to<sup>3</sup>:

- introduce young people to the arts
- inspire young people to learn more about the arts
- enhance young people's experiences of arts through critical analysis and participation and
- encourage young people to create their own art.

Arts organisations involved in Start are expected to engage schools with a low profile of cultural involvement and offer disadvantaged children and young people a series of tailored, creative experiences outside of school. Children and young people involved in Start have at least two visits to a local arts venue to see and participate in arts performances and activities. They also have opportunities to create their own artwork, dance or theatrical performance, typically involving one or more visits by the arts partner to the school.

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<sup>2</sup> See Sandle (2012). <http://alt.childrenandarts.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/2011-12-Evaluation-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.childrenandarts.org.uk/our-projects/start/>

## 2.2 About this research

This research aimed to:

- give an illustrative view of how Start programmes are implemented in a variety of schools
- identify where and how Start is used effectively
- explore the experiences of young people involved in the Start programme and the effect these experiences have had on their attitudes towards the arts and cultural engagement
- consider the learning for longer-term impact and sustainability after arts partners leave the Start programme.

### 2.2.1 Research methods

This research consisted of five case studies of partnership working between arts organisations and primary or secondary schools involved in the Start programme. The five organisations were identified by Children & the Arts and selected for inclusion in the research based on the development of their strong relationships with schools over a period of three or more years. They were therefore intended to illustrate what it was possible for arts and cultural organisations to achieve through Start. The cultural partners are based in different parts of England and Wales and represent a range of art forms, including theatre, dance, visual arts and crafts.

NFER liaised with each of the five arts partners to identify partner schools and arrange fieldwork. Each of the case studies involved a visit to one school, consultations with arts partners, lead teachers for Start, the head teacher or senior leader and children and young people involved in the programme. Overall, the case studies involved five arts/cultural organisations, one infant school, three primary schools and one secondary school.

The team sent the draft case study reports to the arts partners and lead teachers to check for factual accuracy. They gave their consent for their organisations to be identified and for the final versions to be included in this report.

### 3 Start case studies

The following sections describe each of the five Start case studies in turn. They follow a similar structure, including information on: the Start activities delivered by the arts partner; their impacts; the challenges they encountered; the key ingredients of effective Start partnerships and plans for the future. The case studies were conducted in two phases, to capture the full three years of involvement in Start, as the arts partners had joined the programme at different times:

- Phase 1 (May-July 2013) – Burnley Youth Theatre, Ruthin Craft Centre and Warwick Arts Centre
- Phase 2 (May-July 2014) – Arcola Theatre and the Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art.

Figure 1 below identifies the location of each Start arts partner involved in this case-study research. It provides details of the number of schools engaged by each arts partner and the Key Stage of pupils targeted for inclusion in Start activities.

Figure 1: Case-study participation in Start



## 3.1 Burnley Youth Theatre

### 3.1.1 Introduction

Established in 1973, Burnley Youth Theatre is a highly regarded arts organisation. The staff and young people create shows, tours and performances of new and existing work. Young people from the age of five to 25 years are involved with a range of creative activities. These include drama workshops, dance workshops, productions, and involvement with front of house or technical duties. The theatre also helps young people to work towards gaining an Arts Award.

The team at the theatre includes youth arts workers and drama workers. According to their website, their aim is to: *'enable young people to take their next steps creatively'* (Burnley Youth Theatre website, accessed October 2013).

### 3.1.2 Start activities at Burnley Youth Theatre

Burnley Youth Theatre has run the Start programme with pupils in five local schools since 2010. Two high schools and three primary schools have been involved with the programme, focusing on young people in Key Stages 2 and 3 (aged seven to 14).

Each year has a similar structure, based around two performances that the pupils see at the theatre. After an introductory workshop, pupils watch the performance at the theatre by a professional theatre company, and then attend a workshop with the cast. The workshops explore themes from the play and use a range of techniques, such as physical theatre, puppetry, freeze frames<sup>4</sup> and hot seating<sup>5</sup>. As part of the project, the Education Coordinator from the theatre delivers Continued Professional Development (CPD) sessions with teachers, which help to develop links between the work the pupils do with the youth theatre and other parts of the curriculum. These sessions also create ownership of the project so that teachers work with the youth theatre to make improvements to the programme based on their experiences.

### 3.1.3 School case study

Casterton Primary School is a large community primary school located just over one mile from the theatre. It has been involved with Start for three years. The school has a relatively high proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals (over 40 per cent). A larger than average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and are supported through school action or school action plus, although no pupils have a statement for their special educational need. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average, as is the number of pupils who speak English as an additional language.

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<sup>4</sup> A dramatic technique in which the action in a play or scene is frozen, as in a photograph or video frame.

<sup>5</sup> A dramatic technique in which a character in the play is questioned by the group about his or her background, behaviour and motivation.

School staff interviewed as part of the case study said that the school was in one of the most deprived wards in England<sup>6</sup>, and pupils had little opportunity to experience theatre outside of school.

Researchers conducted interviews with the headteacher and members of staff involved with Start. Two group interviews were carried out with pupils; one with a group of four Year 6 pupils and the second with one pupil in Year 5 and three pupils in Year 4.

### **3.1.4 Working with schools**

#### **Successes**

Feedback on the Start programme was overwhelmingly positive from all interviewees. The teachers and the headteacher felt that the project had real impact on the pupils involved – as the headteacher said: *‘they won’t remember a literacy lesson, but they will remember this!’*

#### **Pupil engagement and excitement**

The pupils were enthusiastic about the programme, when they went to see a performance, they felt *‘excited’* and *‘want to find out what happens’*. They said that most of their classmates felt the same way.

The Year 6 pupils all said their favourite thing about the programme was acting. They had enjoyed the recent theme of *‘transition’* and clearly saw the relevance to themselves as they approached transition to their teenage years and the move to secondary school. They were particularly enthusiastic about *‘Macbeth’* because it made them feel scared although they also found some of it funny, and the younger pupils had also clearly identified with the characters.

The teachers commented that the pupils had built up an excellent relationship with the Education Coordinator who delivered all the workshops. The Education Coordinator commented on the change in pupil behaviour at the theatre. During the very first performance they stood at the door and were nervous when the lights went down at the start of the play, but they became *‘comfortable at the theatre’* and now *‘know what to expect’*. She also noticed a big improvement in the quality and insight of pupils’ questions following the performances, when they had an opportunity to talk to the cast about the play.

#### **Inspiring pupils**

Both the Education Coordinator and the teachers were amazed at how much detail the pupils retained about the plays they had seen. This also came through in the interviews with the children, where pupils were able to talk in detail about plays they had seen three years before.

The staff said that the pupils were engaged from the beginning; *‘The first play was really unusual – physical theatre, something they had never seen, they were really fascinated by it’*. This was supported by comments from the Year 6 pupils. One pupil

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/corporate/web/?siteid=6233&pageid=36388&e=e>

described how when he first heard about the project he was *'Excited... wanted to find out about different plays, learn about props'*. The Year 4 pupils said they were excited and some were scared because they did not know what it would be like at the theatre.

Following participation in the programme, some of the pupils have continued their involvement with theatre, either at Burnley or elsewhere. School staff saw their school's proximity to the arts partner as an important factor in the success of the programme: *'It's not too far, and so the pupils can get themselves there once they are older'*.

When asked whether they would like to do similar activities in the future, all the pupils said they would, and they were keen for their school to arrange for them to see more plays. They were less sure whether this was something they would pursue in their own time: *'No. Yes! I thought at first it would be a waste of time, but I actually think yes!'*. Some would prefer to do other things with their friends, such as play football, or said they would be nervous to go to the youth theatre on their own, one saying she would *'like to watch with friends, in a group'*.

Some of the Year 4 pupils said they would like to be involved with Burnley Youth Theatre outside of school, for instance evening workshops and in the summer holidays. They felt more nervous about going to another theatre in the future, *'because we're used to Burnley Youth Theatre'*, although others thought going to another theatre might provide new opportunities for them: *'Yes, new people, new friends'*.

### **Staff development**

The teachers reported that they did not do much drama in school before taking part in Start. The staff valued the CPD sessions they attended at the theatre; *'It's been fantastic. It's very forward thinking, never quite know what you are going to see, and therefore magical.'* The teachers were very positive about the skills that they learned in the sessions and their application to other lessons.

The headteacher felt that the staff had learned a lot from the programme, as it provided them with both skills and motivation to use drama techniques themselves. She commented that *'all the staff have really taken it on board and used it in other parts of their teaching'*. Staff were able *'to provide 'wow' opportunities for delivery of the curriculum and a stimulus for writing'*.

Following participation in the programme, two of the teachers had served as members of the board of the youth theatre.

### **Parental involvement**

Parents had been informed, for instance by newsletters and photos on the website, and had been very supportive, but they were not involved in the programme itself. This was something the staff at the school would like to address in the future.

The school has expanded its drama programme since its involvement in Start and has invited parents to class performances. All pupils participated and there was good attendance by parents, who proved to be an engaged audience. As one teacher

explained: *'they were interested – the audience was really paying attention, not on their phones'*.

### **Pride and ownership**

The teachers and arts partner were very proud to be involved with Start and determined to ensure it worked well. They had worked together to develop the project and made changes since the early stages to ensure that the pupils got the most out of participating. They were able to tailor the programme so that it covered issues that the schools found particularly relevant. For instance, there was a workshop on transition which they were able to aim particularly at Year 6 pupils. Teachers negotiated with theatre staff to make sure that it was relevant to their pupils and the changes that they were going through.

The children had plenty of ideas about things they would like to do in the workshops. They thought it would be good for Burnley Youth Theatre to ask them what sort of plays young people liked; if asked they would have said that they wanted to do more comedy.

### **Universal appeal and impact**

All pupils were engaged, even those with special educational needs. The headteacher felt that it had helped pupils by providing *'widened opportunities and improved aspirations and their ideas of what is available'*.

The headteacher strongly believed that working with the theatre was part of raising aspirations, which was particularly important in a deprived area: *'The opportunity for the children to see professional theatre, to have the opportunity to develop their ideas with the people that they work with at the theatre, it's also about ambition – see these productions and people locally doing them and it makes them think, "Do you know, I could do that". Locally this is something they need to work really hard on – an area of deprivation, area of unemployment... children need to see the value of coming to school, working at school, getting qualifications, being skilled up'*. She thought it was particularly important that many of the people they will continue to work with at the theatre are young and so the pupils can identify with them.

The school staff and the Education Coordinator noticed an increase in the pupils' confidence when performing to one another in workshops which had a positive effect on their confidence in speaking in front of class.

The headteacher said that although changes in achievement were very hard to attribute to particular programmes, school achievement had improved and she felt that this programme had contributed, particularly to improvements in pupils' writing.

The Education Coordinator felt that the workshops offered all pupils a chance to channel their energies and engage – those that wanted to run around and struggled to control their energy had a chance to *'be the big characters'* in performances.

### **Transferable skills**

The Education Coordinator and teachers not only commented on the pupils' increased confidence, but also how pupils had developed their skills with creative work, thinking and speaking. The Education Coordinator felt that encouraging pupils

to feel that there was never a wrong answer had been instrumental in increasing their confidence in asking questions of the cast. The teachers also commented on this, *'the quality of questioning in the Q&A sessions is really good, they have always answered everything, therefore the pupils don't feel daft asking things and the quality has improved'*.

The pupils said that they had learned about *'working together'*, *'team building'*, and *'confidence'*. They said they had opportunities to learn these in other activities, but that the work with the arts partner was one place where these skills were particularly important.

The teachers commented on how they used Start in other parts of the curriculum, for instance as a stimulus for writing; the opportunity to use drama to solve problems; using 'freeze frames' in history to build empathy. They used the experience to explore key themes, for instance they worked on citizenship, moral compass and motives while studying *'Macbeth'*. They also adopted new ways of recording, such as taking photos to build up storyboards.

### **3.1.5 Challenges**

The biggest challenge for the arts partner was running the workshops for the high schools. As the age range was so large, it was difficult to develop a programme appropriately to engage both the youngest and oldest pupils. In addition, the nature of a high school means that there are difficulties with finding an appropriate time to run workshops in schools and this affects attendance. The arts partner said that in future, she would run separate workshops for primary and secondary pupils.

Getting the content right was a challenge even within the primary school age range. The pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 had different ideas of which games were fun and which were childish.

The teachers were very happy with the project and felt that there were no challenges. They had built up an excellent relationship with the school contact from the arts partner. They found the programme *'very well run, very flexible and the organisation fantastic'*. The headteacher pointed out that the main challenge was to get large groups of pupils to the theatre, but because there was *'commitment from school and same commitment from staff at the theatre, it was never going to do anything but succeed'*.

### **3.1.6 Key ingredients for success**

- Having enthusiastic teachers who participate in the workshops, so that pupils respond well
- Efficient organisation so that practical issues do not affect the success of the project
- Learning from successes and challenges, and being flexible to ensure that the programme meets the needs of pupils and schools
- Exploring themes that are particularly relevant to pupils and schools

- Making sure that the same contact person in the arts organisation is available to build trust with teachers and pupils over time
- Ensuring that workshops are age appropriate
- Ensuring that the activities include both those that pupils enjoy, and those that build transferable skills
- Working with an arts partner that is located relatively close to the school, which means the children have the option to go in their own time
- CPD so that teachers can build on their skills and apply learning in their teaching.

### 3.1.7 What next?

The pupils have learned so much from the project that the school is exploring ways of maintaining a programme with the theatre. The theatre has started a new ‘theatre in education’ company, and is exploring ways that they can work with schools on a budget that schools can afford.

The theatre has decided to concentrate on primary schools because this was where they achieved the greatest success. Because the school found that children were particularly excited by classic material, such as *‘Macbeth’* and *‘The Secret Garden’*, they are determined to build more classic material into the work they do with the arts partner. The school is planning to involve children more in decision-making. Next year they will get children to choose texts they would like performed and the following year the children could plan the programme themselves.

The school staff were particularly concerned that any programme should be firmly embedded into the school curriculum. The headteacher was also keen to develop other creative areas, such as dance and music. In order to do this and for development of these areas to become embedded in the school, she believes she needs to work at getting parents involved.

## 3.2 Ruthin Craft Centre

### 3.2.1 Introduction

Ruthin Craft Centre is an established applied arts venue serving audiences in the town of Ruthin, its rural hinterland, and both nationally and internationally. The centre was rebuilt in 2008 and now comprises six artist studios which are occupied by a variety of artists and craftspeople specialising in the applied arts (in areas such as glass, ceramics, and furniture restorers). The centre also contains three galleries and an education space. It hosts an annual programme of exhibitions alongside learning activities including workshops and talks by visiting speakers.

The centre is committed to an ambitious educational outreach programme. This work draws on contributions from artists, craftspeople and professional writers and poets. The Project Officer described the ethos of this work as being about developing a sense of ownership of the centre in which children and young people are encouraged

to have the confidence to *'be proactive in using the facilities which is essential to the sustained development of craft both in the local area and further afield'*. This reflects an ethos in which the centre *'treats the young people's ideas and creative output with the same respect as that of the artists with whom they work, to encourage creative talent, irrespective of age'*.

The centre hosts a range of educational activities and works in partnership with local learning providers as part of its general provision. This work includes:

- activities aimed at learners aged 14-16 in local schools, including provision (the 'Portfolio Programme') for Year 10 and Year 11 pupils who work with professional artists
- 'Raising the Bar' for Year 12-13, which is an extension programme of workshops and visits in conjunction with Manchester Metropolitan University
- links through 'engage Cymru' to promote gallery education<sup>7</sup>
- work in collaboration with creative art courses at local further education colleges as well as with higher education institutions further afield
- the 'Cryw Celf' programme which works with younger pupils at Denbighshire primary schools.<sup>8</sup>

### **3.2.2 Start activities at Ruthin Craft Centre**

Ruthin joined Start in 2010, running a programme involving ten primary schools. The participating schools are located on the outskirts of the town, in rural areas, where access to arts and cultural activities are limited because of the rural nature of many of the communities.

As part of the Start programme the centre designed an offer with children at Key Stage 2 in mind. This encompassed work that was delivered by artists in the schools, comprising:

- clay work sessions linked to story writing
- exploring Japanese design, architecture and textile activities
- junk modelling linked to automata and stories

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<sup>7</sup> engage Cymru is the 'leading membership organisation for gallery education in Wales and has over 70 members, including gallery and museum educators, teachers, local authority officers and artists. engage Cymru promotes gallery education through advocacy, regular area group meetings, networking and professional development training events, and through its research projects' (engage Cymru website <http://www.engage.org/engage-cymru> accessed 11 November 2013).

<sup>8</sup> The Cryw Celf scheme is 'a series of masterclasses that gives an opportunity for those children who have shown talent and/or a special interest in art to develop their skills and experience' (Cyngor Gwynedd Council website [http://www.gwynedd.gov.uk/gwy\\_doc.asp?cat=5544&doc=20126&Language=1&p=1&c=1](http://www.gwynedd.gov.uk/gwy_doc.asp?cat=5544&doc=20126&Language=1&p=1&c=1) accessed August 2014).

- weaving
- jewellery making
- costume making.

Without the Start programme funding it would not have been possible to have had artists working with the children in the schools and gallery. The materials that they worked with were provided free of charge to them.

In addition to the activities delivered in schools, pupils were able to make two annual visits to the centre where they participated in workshops led by professional artists. There they took part in clay modelling, work around Japanese textiles, and created three-dimensional models under the guidance of an artist.

The Start programme was launched at the centre during an in-service training event held after school. It looked at the potential of art and craft work as part of the curriculum, what the centre could offer, and how schools could access the facilities. Teachers were given guided tours around the galleries and took part in hands-on workshops. The centre staff discussed issues such as how to give pupils hands-on experiences, and how art can help with literacy. The centre's education officer believes that this approach is distinctive as it is *'focused on motivating and inspiring individual learners, to develop their confidence to try new things'* as a way of releasing their creativity. School staff were therefore required *'to take a step back and not to influence the focus and content of the work'*. The teachers were given follow up activities and encouraged to experiment with them, prior to attending the workshops with the children.

Following the introduction the school then looked at the specific service the centre could provide through the Start programme, how it would relate to the school's work and the practical arrangements needed to enable the artists to work with the schools.

The purpose of the workshop was to help teachers to introduce the children to the type of activities they would be doing at the centre before the visits took place and to understand what follow-up work was needed. The centre also agreed to produce bilingual on-line education packs as part of their offer. As a result of these discussions the centre and schools developed opportunities for pupils to have hands-on experiences of practical work both at the centre itself and in follow-up work in school.

### **3.2.3 School case study**

We visited Ysgol Bro Famau; a primary school which was involved with the Start programme from September 2010. The school is located in a rural area designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Curriculum provision is organised across two sites, approximately three and a half miles apart. Children up to Year 5 are taught in both locations, and there is one Year 6 class which is based on a single site. Most of the pupils move to a secondary school that is located in Ruthin (where the craft centre is located). The secondary school is involved in work with the centre itself, outside of the Start programme.

The primary school's catchment area was described as being neither highly advantaged nor disadvantaged but the rural nature of the locality means that pupils' access to culture and the arts could be limited. Approximately 15 per cent of its pupils were recognised as having some form of Additional Learning Need although only a very small number (one per cent) had a statement of Special Educational Need. Only a small percentage of pupils received Free School Meals.

Both teachers and the centre staff believed that the isolated nature of the communities meant that few children would have access to art and cultural activities. This was confirmed by the pupils, some of whom said that they had never been to a gallery before taking part in the Start programme.

Pupils in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6, have visited the craft centre as part of the Start programme since September 2010. In addition to the work delivered in the school, the Year 5 pupils had been to the centre three times, those in Year 4 had been twice, and those in Year 3, once. During these visits artists and authors worked with groups in workshops involving activities such as clay modelling, sculpture using found objects, and papier-mâché based on Rodney Peppé's work, for example, '*The mice who lived in a shoe*' and '*The battleship pirates*'. They were also introduced to work by Japanese artists. In each case the activities at the centre were linked to work at the school delivered during follow-up sessions. The outcomes of this work were evident in displays around the school.

### **3.2.4 Working with schools**

#### **Successes**

All interviewees felt that the Start programme had worked well. The six pupils who were interviewed (two from Year 3, two from Year 4 and two from Year 5) were enthusiastic about the experiences they had at the centre especially '*being able to make things*'. They referred to the way that the experiences had enabled them to develop their craft skills and had nurtured teamwork and communication.

#### **Pupil engagement and excitement**

Some of the pupils had taken part in the work at the centre in each of the three years. They had enjoyed every visit and had talked enthusiastically to younger children about the kind of things they would be doing.

The pupils described their sense of excitement when they visited the gallery which they described as '*stunning*'. It contained things which they had never seen before such as models made of wire and art from other countries. They had enjoyed the hands-on experiences most, in particular making models such as dogs out of clay, and making models of mice and pigs. Several children commented that the experience had made them feel good about themselves, as one said: '*This has given me the confidence to do those things again*'. The ethos of creativity that underpinned the work had impacted on the children, as was summarised by one who said '*art is what you want it to look like*'.

The positive messages coming from the pupils were confirmed by the teachers who felt that the programme had helped the pupils, not least some of the boys, to become

more confident learners. Teachers noted that children's communication skills developed and felt it had broadened their technical understanding and vocabulary. They believe that the involvement of the crafts centre staff has given the pupils access to more varied experiences including things they would not normally have done in school. The positive messages about the impact on children were summarised by one teacher who commented '*The fascination was evident on their faces*'.

Centre staff referred to the rich ideas which the pupils had contributed during the programme. For example, one had been impressed by the request from a group of pupils to forego the dinner period in order to carry on working.

### **Inspiring pupils**

The pupils interviewed referred to the variety of experiences they had encountered in the centre. They valued the opportunity to work with real-life artists and to learn new techniques. All referred to the '*buzz*' they had from having hands-on experiences with the artists which had given them an opportunity to try things they had not done before.

Teachers at the school said that it was clear from the pupils' reactions that they had enjoyed the activities. They had noticed how the children had become more confident about going there.

Some pupils have returned to the centre outside of school time. Two said they went there regularly (and had enrolled on the craft centre's children's club) and another two said that they had taken their parents there to see the type of work they had done. They had also visited an exhibition of dog models at the centre (called '*Reggie's Roller Palace*' by Olivia Brown).

### **Staff development**

The teacher leading the programme in the school said that working with the artists had opened her eyes to what could be done. She was more '*confident about the possibility of using materials in different ways, for example making more use of clay techniques*'. At the same time the school used feedback from the artists at the craft centre to inform their planning and are incorporating ideas they had through working with the centre in their schemes of work.

These positive messages were echoed by the headteacher who said that the programme had given teachers new ideas about how the creative side of things could be promoted. They had developed skills such as modelling and sketching which they are now using in school. At the same time, she felt staff were now much more aware of what is happening at the craft centre and how it might link in with their work in school.

### **Parental involvement**

The centre has held events which have targeted families, and several of the pupils who were interviewed had attended and enjoyed these opportunities. They linked with the kind of activities which the school programme had included, such as those based on Rodney Peppé's work.

## **Whole school cohesion**

In terms of whole-school cohesion, both the headteacher and the teacher who led the programme felt it offered a rare opportunity for teachers to work with children across the whole school. They felt that the work at the craft centre had been valuable because it enabled whole year groups to come together. This, they believed, was another way in which the programme had benefited them as a school and had enriched pupils' learning experiences.

## **Access to new activities**

In terms of overall impact the school believed that Start's greatest contribution has been the way it has given the pupils access to a wide range of new activities. The activities have contributed to pupils' development of problem-solving skills because they had been required to work things through, individually and as groups, therefore helping to develop their thinking skills. They were also perceived to be more confident in working with artists and talking to them. Teachers noted that this was true of many of the quieter pupils.

At the same time they felt that the programme had helped them to address some cross-cutting themes such as European and Global Citizenship, by introducing pupils to people from a range of different backgrounds and to new cultural influences such as Japanese art. Similarly the school had used the craft work to link to other aspects of the curriculum, for example using models of mythical beasts to link with the Taliesin stories.

### **3.2.5 Challenges**

Neither the school nor the centre staff identified any major difficulties when delivering the programme. The centre had found the initial set-up work somewhat time-consuming and the logistics of transporting the children the six miles from the school to the centre (a twelve mile round trip) had involved more planning than they had expected. They took those lessons on board when arranging events in the second and third years. However, the underlying message was that the Start programme had operated without any significant challenges.

### **3.2.6 Key ingredients for success**

Staff at the centre and at the school identified the following as the main ingredients of success:

- have clear aims and objectives that are linked to the work of the centre and the school
- ensure that the schools are clear about the commitment they need to make
- ensure that schools have clarity about what they will get out of participating in the programme so that they know how the pupils will benefit
- harness the expertise of artists and craft specialists to bring the activities to life for the children

- all of those involved (centre and school-based staff) need to be prepared to devote time for the preparatory work.

In addition, the fact that free transport was provided through the Start programme was of immense value to the school given the heavy costs they faced when taking children on visits because of the distances involved.

### **3.2.7 What next?**

The headteacher said that the school would continue to liaise with the crafts centre about its programmes and how they might help the school. School staff were committed to retaining aspects of the activities which had been delivered as part of their curriculum. For example, they were considering introducing a Japanese art project. They had also identified the potential to use the type of work that had been developed by the centre with younger children in the Foundation Phase and to focus on the potential of art and crafts with gifted and talented children. These activities would be developed alongside other work such as drop-in activities, family days and other extra-curricular work which they were intending to develop.

## **3.3 Warwick Arts Centre**

### **3.3.1 Introduction**

Established in 1974, Warwick Arts Centre (WAC) is a multi-art form venue, set in the main campus at the University of Warwick. WAC welcomes over 250,000 attendees at various performances each year. The performances range from contemporary and classical music, theatre, drama, dance, comedy, films and visual arts.

Working with children and young people is a key element of the work of WAC, and is an important part of the organisations' mission and vision. They have an experienced education team who have been working with children and young people for many years. Their aim is to: *'Stimulate young peoples' creativity, spark their imaginations and broaden their horizons. And for them to have a good time while they're doing it!'*<sup>9</sup>.

### **3.3.2 Start activities at Warwick Arts Centre**

WAC joined Start in 2009, and devised three versions of the Start programme, with a different focus each year. These all followed the same structure of each child visiting WAC twice, followed by protracted work back in schools with professional artists to create new works of art that the children would share. All three versions involved Continued Professional Development (CPD) for teachers.

Seven schools were involved – five primary schools and two infant schools, although not all took part in every strand.

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<sup>9</sup> WAC website, <http://www.warwickartscentre.co.uk/education/> accessed August 2014

The three versions of the programme were:

**1. Start with Art (2009/2010)** –school visits to WAC involved pupils experiencing a sculpture trail and colour trail with both three-dimensional and two-dimensional works of art. A trained leader guided pupils and teachers around the trails, and encouraged them to interact with the artworks. Professional visual artists then worked with schools to create and build pieces of art, inspired by the sculpture and colour trails. These were designed as permanent additions to the school.

**2. Start with Theatre (2010/2011)** – school visits to WAC involved pupils seeing two theatre performances on campus. Professional theatre writers then worked with pupils over a number of weeks, to create a piece of theatre that they performed to parents in school.

**3. Start with Dance (2011/2012)** –this was a three-part project. It started with school visits to the WAC sculpture and colour trails. This was followed by work in school with a professional dance artist, a photographer and film-maker. Professional dance artists visited the school to create new pieces of dance with pupils, based on the sculptures. The process also involved workshop sessions with photography, lighting and t-shirt design. This culminated in a final performance for parents.

In recruiting schools for the Start programme, the Education Director explained that WAC *‘deliberately chose schools that were in communities and neighbourhoods where access to the arts is a bit rare’*. The team used the multiple indices of deprivation (a measure used to identify the most deprived areas in England) to identify particular geographical areas to target. They then matched these to the WAC box office and education databases, to identify schools they had not worked with in the last ten years.

### 3.3.3 School case study

Race Leys Infant School is one of the schools selected to be involved with Start. It is an average sized infant school in the West Midlands, located in a small town about 12 miles from WAC. This school took part in the project from 2009 to 2012.

The headteacher provided useful contextual figures about the school; nearly two-thirds of pupils (61%) are from families in the top 20 per cent most deprived category. Just over a fifth of pupils (22%) are eligible for free school meals, which is slightly higher than the national average<sup>10</sup>. The teacher and headteacher both described the catchment area of the school as *‘mixed’*; with pupils from a variety of backgrounds in terms of affluence. Pupils have varying levels of experience in accessing cultural activities and venues, such as WAC.

The school took part in all three strands of the Start programme. However, the interviews with the headteacher and the class teacher focussed on *Start with Dance* and *Start with Theatre*, as neither of these respondents had been involved in *Start*

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<sup>10</sup> In 2013, 18.3 per cent of pupils in England were known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals. This refers to those in maintained nursery, state-funded primary, state-funded secondary, special schools and pupil referral units (DfE, 2013).

*with Art*. The six pupils interviewed were in Year 2 at the time of interview. They had taken part in *Start with Dance* when they were in Year 1, so the pupil interviews focussed on this aspect of the programme.

### **3.3.4 Working with schools**

#### **Successes**

Feedback on the Start programme was overwhelmingly positive from all interviewees; they were excited to be talking about the Start programme, and all responded positively and with enthusiasm.

#### **Pupil engagement and excitement**

The pupils all spoke positively about their involvement in the project, explaining that they felt *'happy'*, *'creative'* and that *'it felt new'*.

They were able to recall many details about the project, even though they had taken part over a year ago. The visit to the sculpture trail really stood out for the pupils, and they all reported enjoying this aspect of the project. When remembering a maze they had seen in the art gallery, one Year 2 pupil explained: *'It looks like you were going straight into it, it was like it was pulling you in... pulling you in to do new stuff'*.

Their excitement at being involved in creating and performing the final dance really came through in their responses: *'I felt like a real dancer, like on X-Factor maybe'* and, *'It was like you're making it yourself and you're on a TV show... and you're nervous but excited and everything'*.

The class teacher reported that the pupils were *'very enthusiastic'* and were *'quickly on board'*. She also commented on the improvement in their concentration skills during the *Start with Dance* work. The arts partner also highlighted the pupils' interest and attention: *'They were really attentive, really focussed'*.

As some schools were involved in the Start programme over several years, some pupils were involved for more than one year. The arts partner found that pupils were excited to return to WAC in their second year: *'There was lots of smiling when they got off the bus. There was no reluctance to be with us and to be on campus. They were very excited about what we had to offer'*.

#### **Inspiring pupils**

The idea that this was a new experience for pupils came through very strongly. One Year 2 pupil remarked: *'I felt really excited... and a bit worried because it was a bit new'*. Children who had taken part in *Start with Dance* said they had learned new dance moves, art skills in decorating their t-shirts, what sculptures were, and how to work together.

The teacher and headteacher both gave examples of pupils who are now involved in theatre groups outside of school, although they could not attribute this solely to the influence of the Start programme.

At a recent leavers' assembly, pupils were asked for their favourite memory from their time at the school. A Year 2 pupil said that the visit to the sculpture trail was her

favourite memory from school. She said she would like to be a sculptor when she grows up.

### **Staff development**

Staff felt that the CPD was very successful in helping them to develop new skills. The headteacher felt that staff had been *'upskilled'* because they had been given an *'opportunity to work with the professionals – they were able to build on skills, and develop their own skills'*.

The class teacher explained how this had given teachers the confidence and skills to support the work in class: *'We felt a lot more confident going away and being able to plan something for PE or dance'*. Similarly, the arts partner commented: *'We saw the confidence of teachers grow in terms of working more creatively...and through the arts'*.

### **Parental involvement**

Engagement and involvement with parents and carers was seen as a key success of the project by all interviewees. One comment from the class teacher captures this idea: *'They [the children] were going home and telling parents what they were doing, but not telling them too much because it was going to be such a great surprise. It really brought parents on board'*.

The final performances were a particular highlight for parents. The headteacher described the theatre performance as follows: *'It was amazing. It was one of those things that made the hairs on the back of your neck stand up, lump in the throat moments'*.

Both the arts partner and school staff felt that parents being invited to the final performance helped add to the status and importance of the project. The arts partner explained: *'It was properly presented to parents and families and friends and the rest of the school as something that was a true achievement for the school and for the children'*. This motivated pupils to achieve: *'They could feel the importance of what they were doing, in the sense that it was going to be shown to or performed in front of parents and families – they wanted to do the best for them'*.

### **Pride and ownership**

A clear theme to emerge was the pride that pupils took in their work, and the sense of importance in what they were doing. Feedback from the arts partner and school staff highlighted that this positive outcome was largely due to the pupils' involvement in creating the work.

One of the *Start with Dance* activities involved designing and decorating T-shirts for the final performance. Children treasured their T-shirts and were still wearing them a year later.

### **Whole school cohesion**

The project was successful in bringing together the whole school community. As the class teacher explained: *'It was positive for the children, it was positive for the*

teachers, and it was positive for the parents. So actually it gave some cohesion across the whole school’.

The headteacher shared positive feedback on Start received from parents of the pupils involved; which was overwhelmingly positive and demonstrated how much they valued the project.

The arts partner also explained that two of the schools involved in the project were in the process of merging, and that the project had helped children from the two schools to get to know each other.

### **Universal appeal and impact**

The project enabled all pupils to participate and succeed, regardless of academic ability or behaviour at school. As the class teacher explained: *‘Even our least confident children... for a child that is not necessarily academically performing to actually succeed, and know that they had succeeded – that sums it up’*.

### **Transferable skills**

When talking about *Start with Theatre*, the headteacher explained how working with the theatre professionals to develop scripts encouraged transferability of pupils’ skills: *‘It was so powerful that they (pupils) were transferring that into their own story-writing’*. The class teacher also identified self-assessment as an additional positive outcome: *‘They were all constantly showing each other what they had done. There was a lot of peer and self-assessment going on, without them even necessarily realising it’*.

### **3.3.5 Challenges**

None of the interviewees within this case study reported experiencing any major challenges with this project. As the arts partner commented: *‘Over three years, I don’t think we’ve found anything difficult’*. This was due to the fact that WAC has good processes in place, built on their experience of working on big projects with large groups of children. The only thing that WAC staff said they would do differently in future would be to work with more schools.

The main challenges for school staff were fitting everything in, and making sure the project was incorporated into their planning. The class teacher explained that at first the project felt *‘outside of our comfort zone’* - but that staff soon felt at ease once the project got underway.

None of the children interviewed had any challenges with their *Start with Dance* project, and there were no aspects that they thought should be changed.

### **3.3.6 Key ingredients for success**

- Having funding in place from Children & the Arts to cover basic costs (such as transport and activity costs) – this was a key element of success, and made it possible for the school to take part.

- Having experienced arts professionals providing work of a high artistic standard who are also skilled in working with children.
- Ensuring that school staff are fully 'on board' with the project, and encouraging staff to be open and receptive to new ideas.
- Ensuring clear and regular communication between the arts partner and the school.
- Creating a close working relationship between arts partners and schools, and supporting teachers to maintain the project work between visits.
- Incorporating the project work into curriculum plans in schools, and allowing time to plan ahead for this in schools.
- Giving the project real 'status' in the school, by conveying the importance of the work to pupils, and effectively engaging with staff and parents.
- Involving parents and carers in the project work, particularly creating a final performance or art work to be shared with them.

### **3.3.7 What next?**

Although funding for the work ended in 2012, the headteacher would like to do more creative projects in future: *'I think it's been brilliant, and I'm desperate to do more'*. Pupils were also keen to be involved in similar work. When asked whether they would like to return to WAC, they all responded positively: *'I would love to go back there... it was like a high school'*, and *'We could have more of a big look at the sculptures'*. They all said that they would be keen to visit other arts and cultural venues too.

At the time of interview, WAC was about to contact the school to discuss possibilities for further work and identify fundraising opportunities for a group project.

## **3.4 Arcola Theatre**

### **3.4.1 Introduction**

Arcola Theatre was set up as a community-based arts organisation in 2000 and is located in Hackney, the second most deprived local authority in England. In addition to its two studio spaces with a combined audience capacity of 275, Arcola Theatre has a suite of creative and rehearsal spaces and a big-top tent which offers a pop-up performance space for an audience of 200. It became an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation in 2011. Arcola's engagement department was set up in 2009 and has identified engagement with both primary and secondary schools as one of its four core strands activity, the others are young people, community and talent development.

### **3.4.2 Start activities at Arcola Theatre**

Start activities represent Arcola's first formal programme of engagement with schools. Since 2011, Arcola has worked with eight to ten primary schools, involving children in Key Stage 2. Arcola's Start programme includes three main elements: a day of arts-based teacher CPD followed by young people attending a theatre production at Arcola and then a classroom-based workshop for young people linked to the production. This process is repeated twice every academic year to provide students two separate opportunities to engage with the theatre. The young people involved in Start activities are from a very wide range of backgrounds, reflecting the culturally diverse nature of Hackney. The majority of these young people's families do not attend theatres and a substantial proportion of the young people have English as a Second Language (ESL).

### **3.4.3 School case study**

One of Arcola's school partners in Start is Colvestone Primary School, which is located five minutes' walk from the theatre. The school has a very mixed catchment area and families' engagement in cultural and arts activities ranges from very frequent to not at all. The school has almost double the national average of pupils whose first language is not English and a substantially higher than average proportion of young people are eligible for Free School Meals (FSM).

In this school, pupils from Key Stage 2 (in Years 3 to 6) were involved in Start activities during the first two years of the school's involvement with Arcola. In the third year, Arcola introduced a theatre production appropriate for a younger age group, which has enabled pupils from Key Stage 1 (Year 2) take part, in addition to the regular KS2 groups.

### **3.4.4 Evolution of cultural engagement**

The Start partnership between this primary school and Arcola has substantially changed the nature of the school's engagement in arts and cultural activities. At the beginning of its involvement in Start, the school could be described as an 'intrigued engager'<sup>11</sup> in cultural activities. In three years of engagement in Start the school has evolved to become a 'cultural commissioner' that is actively seeking to involve arts and cultural organisations in the work of the school, offering a range of cultural opportunities to its pupils and working to achieve Artsmark<sup>12</sup> Gold. There are a number of successful elements which contribute to this overall evolution.

#### **Mutually beneficial partnership working**

Arcola and the school have worked constructively together as Start partners and have a mutually beneficial relationship. For example, Arcola has donated props and equipment to the school. Staff and children from all year groups are actively involved

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<sup>11</sup> One of four types of cultural engagement in schools identified by research into London schools (Lord et al., 2012a).

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.artsmark.org.uk/>

in the school's thriving culture of cultural participation. The school has a diverse range of cultural partnerships and a whole-school commitment to the value of arts and culture.

Arcola has encouraged staff and children to provide feedback on Start activities. In response to specific requests from the school, the theatre has offered activities for younger age groups and has trained members of theatre productions to lead workshops with children.

Colvestone's coordinator for creative subjects said she really appreciated Arcola's training sessions for teachers. *'They've done some really good sessions on drama skills, such as developing script writing or writing characters. They are all really brilliant, you end up with loads of practical things to take away.... They emphasised how teaching is a performance - which is so true - you need to use acting skills in your teaching, create an atmosphere, sell a lesson like an actor would sell a performance. It took a bit of convincing some colleagues at the beginning of the project, but they saw the benefits of the shows and heard about the skills we learned and now teachers are desperate for it to be their turn.'*

Arcola has benefited from a sustained relationship with a highly engaged school. Arcola has used the school to test out new ideas for workshops with children before offering them more widely. As Arcola's Creative Engagement Manager explained: *'It is really useful for us when developing a new offer for schools... so we're not developing projects for schools and doing that blind but they're actually involved in that process'*.

### **A sense of belonging and ownership among pupils**

The first time the children visited the theatre, Arcola staff gave them free rein to explore the building. As the teacher explained *'They closed all the doors and just let the children explore. It was really great [the pupils] really felt it was theirs, they felt at home and as if it belonged to them'*. Arcola's Creative Engagement Manager remarked: *'That's been the nice change, from the theatre being something foreign and only for adults and a space which is not for them, to a space they're entitled to be in'*. Children's confidence and understanding of the way theatres work has also increased as they have become familiar with the different spaces, including the studios and auditorium.

Children were enthusiastic about the shows they had seen in Arcola theatre, saying: *'it was really cool'*, *'we were very near to the actors'* and *'the stories were interesting'*. Arcola has been responsive to individual children's needs and taken steps to ensure all pupils feel welcome in the theatre, particularly those whose first language is not English. Arcola staff ask schools to identify if any teachers or children are able to support those with less English and emphasises to schools and families the importance of physical, as well as verbal, communication in their productions.

## Increased pupils' understanding of the creative process and their critical appreciation skills

Start activities have increased children's understanding of the different stages involved in the creative process related to a theatre production. Workshops in schools have involved children in:

- creating props similar to the ones used in Arcola's theatre productions (e.g. making shadow puppets and hot-air balloons)
- developing stories into play scripts, using improvisation and performing their work.

The combined impact of the shows and workshop activities is reflected in children's enthusiasm and curiosity about the different elements of the creative process.

Children have become more vocal in their feedback on all Start activities and some have begun to critique theatre productions on their own initiative. Children wanted more active involvement and representation. For example, one Year 5 child suggested that Arcola '*could do more theatre workshops for children to make a play and do it themselves*' and another asked '*when they were showing children in the play they used adults or puppets – couldn't they get children?*'. This increase in children's critical appreciation skills demonstrates a higher level of understanding as well as their desire for an authentic creative experience. One change requested by children was to have members of the cast, instead of theatre staff, to deliver school workshops. Children felt they could find out more about the creative process by asking people directly involved in the production and Arcola is planning to involve cast members in this way in future. Arcola is also planning to introduce a new activity called 'Young Theatre Critic', whereby they will ask children to review their upcoming productions and display them alongside press reviews in the main theatre foyer.

### 3.4.5 Challenges

Arcola Theatre and the school experienced very few challenges in their partnership working during the three years of Start. Turnover in staff, both at Arcola and the school, posed the only challenge. Their relationship has strengthened over time, to the point where the teacher was able to describe communication as '*brilliant*'. The headteacher has been very supportive and their close partnership has been strengthened by Arcola's willingness to seek and act on feedback from staff and pupils.

Communication with other schools in the Start programme has been more of a challenge for Arcola, particularly following changes in senior leadership and subsequent turnover in Arcola's main teacher contact. As Arcola's Creative Engagement Manager explained: '*It's difficult to get schools to understand what the project is about ... it's not the traditional "see a show, do a workshop" type of programme; they will be coming back to the theatre – there's a kind of relationship with the theatre*'.

Arcola has changed its approach to communicate more directly with headteachers prior to each production and ensure it is aware of any changes in key school contacts in sufficient time to take steps to sustain the schools' engagement year on year.

Families' involvement in the Start programme is currently under-developed. This is likely to improve when Arcola expands the scheduled run of Start productions and opens them up to families and the public at evenings and weekends.

### 3.4.6 Key ingredients for success

- Establishing mutually beneficial partnership working arrangements with schools.
- Incorporating arts-based CPD for teachers which improve their knowledge and confidence to incorporate creative skills and techniques into their teaching practice.
- Creating opportunities for schools to feed back on creative engagement activities and contribute to a cycle of improvement and/or adaptation.
- Demonstrating a willingness to respond quickly and tangibly to that feedback from both schools and pupils.
- Working with enthusiastic teachers and senior leaders who have vision and understand the benefits of cultural and creative activities for their children.
- Treating children as fellow artists with valid responses to arts and culture and acting on their feedback.
- Start funding gave the theatre the opportunity to develop a sustainable model for funding cultural engagement activities for schools i.e. by identifying the nature of demand from families and the public for longer runs of theatre shows which could increase earned income to support continued engagement with schools.

### 3.4.7 What next?

Arcola and the primary school will continue to work in partnership beyond the end of the Start programme. As the teacher explained: *'The partnership has got a lot stronger because it's addressed both our needs... it's something that strengthens the academic content of our work in school and extends it'*. Arcola plans to continue trialling its workshops for younger audiences with Colvestone and hopes to include teachers from the school in its plans to develop 'champions' for the theatre's expanding children, young people and families programme of creative and cultural activities.

Colvestone Primary School has an ambition to achieve Artsmark Gold and plans to offer the Arts Award<sup>13</sup> in school in the near future, with an area in the school already developed into a studio space to support lunchtime drama sessions for young people. Partnerships with other, local schools and a local arts organisation have also been established.

Arcola aims to double the number of young people it engages in creative and cultural activities each year. It plans to schedule larger, longer runs of its shows for primary

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<sup>13</sup> Artsmark is Arts Council England's flagship programme to enable schools and other organisations to evaluate, strengthen and celebrate their arts and cultural provision. [www.artsaward.org.uk](http://www.artsaward.org.uk)

school-aged young people to open them up to families and members of the public and generate earned income to support an expansion of its 'children, young people and families' engagement work.

## **3.5 Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art (CFCCA)**

### **3.5.1 Introduction**

In 1986, a group of British Chinese artists based in Manchester set up the Chinese Arts Centre in the city's Chinatown district to address the lack of opportunities to show their work. Just over ten years later, it became the Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art (CFCCA) to reflect an increased interest in Chinese contemporary art and visual culture.

CFCCA's arts programme focuses on the exchange of Chinese contemporary art expertise and techniques including gallery exhibitions, an international residency programme for artists from China and other Asian countries, festivals, symposia and events. Its public engagement work is supported by artists in residence and a group of local artists trained in Contemporary Chinese Art practice to deliver workshops based on CFCCA's arts programme.

CFCCA's engagement of young people has been a core focus of its work for over 14 years and includes delivering classroom-based workshops paid for by schools. CFCCA has a deeper engagement with young people through its 'socially engaged practice' which offers an opportunity to create work in collaboration with professional artists. This involves working across the Education, Community, Youth Service and Health Care settings to create opportunities for exposure to, engagement with and responding to Chinese Contemporary Art.

### **3.5.2 Start activities at the CFCCA**

Since 2011 CFCCA has worked with six schools as part of its Start programme, two of which have been involved for the full three years. Start activities have been delivered in three primary schools, two secondary schools and one special school and have involved pupils from Key Stages 1, 3 and 4. Two of the original schools were replaced in Year 2 by primary schools which had taken part in the Catalyst teacher training programme, also designed and managed by The Prince's Foundation for Children & the Arts.

CFCCA designed a Start programme with three core elements based on arts techniques used in its current exhibitions and residencies. In an initial visit to the CFCCA young people learn about Chinese contemporary arts practice by meeting gallery staff and artists and taking part in a practical session based on the artwork they have seen in the gallery. This is followed by school-based workshops which enable young people to work with a local artist to create their own artwork using techniques such as collage, montage, book making, screen printing, sculpture, photography and digital animation. In a final session at the CFCCA, young people

curate their artwork for public exhibition at the centre. An element of each workshop session is dedicated to group feedback and discussion about the project and pupils work so far, encouraging confidence and communication skills for those involved.

Young people involved in the Start activities run by CFCCA have come from a wide range of backgrounds. Several schools involved in Start are located on the outskirts of Manchester, which means their students have few opportunities to access arts and cultural activities. The majority rarely attended arts and cultural activities with their families before engaging with the CFCCA.

### **3.5.3 School case-study**

Alder Community High School is a medium-sized community school with 742 pupils aged from 11 to 16 years old. The school is located approximately nine miles from the CFCCA in Tameside, Greater Manchester. The percentage of young people eligible for free school meals is similar to the national average for England while the proportion of pupils with a statement of special education needs is above average. The majority of Tameside's population is White British and the area has a smaller than average number of Chinese residents.

The school had not previously worked with the CFCCA and first learned about Start through an email invitation it received from the Centre in 2011. Interviews for this case study were conducted with the school's Head of Creative and Expressive Arts, its Headteacher and twelve young people from Year 8 who participated in Start activities. The few local opportunities for young people to engage in creative and cultural activities are typically offered through schools, according to the school's Head of Creative and Expressive Arts. The Headteacher added that a significant proportion of students are not even aware that there are venues they can visit to experience arts and cultural activities

#### **Shared commitment to offering young people opportunities to engage in creative and cultural activities**

The CFCCA and teachers leading Start activities have developed a strong relationship based on a shared commitment to offer young people opportunities to engage in creative and cultural activities.

CFCCA has purposefully set out to deepen its relationships with schools by offering a free programme to engage children and young people in more collaborative practice and build their sense of ownership of the gallery. The Programme and Engagement Coordinator explained *'young people are the next generation of people who will engage with the CFCCA who could be the next artists or future collaborators'*.

The school is determined to enable its pupils to take part in enrichment activities outside of school. As the Head of Creative and Expressive Arts said: *'As an educator it's our responsibility to get students to see what's out there'*. The Headteacher believes *'creative and cultural activities play a valuable role in raising pupils' aspirations, helping them look beyond the school gates, and appreciate and understand the arts'*.

This shared commitment has created the context for a successful partnership. The CFCCA's and school's mutual flexibility in scheduling dates for activities is a hallmark of this success. The teachers' high level of engagement in Start strengthened the partnership and supported the CFCCA in its wider engagement activities. For example the Head of Creative and Expressive Arts attended the CFCCA's Learning Advisory Group which was set up to enable experts in learning and engagement to learn about CFCCA's engagement work. The teacher contributed to the Group's discussions and this '*gave a real perspective on the practicalities of working with schools and the need to be flexible with them on arts and engagement*', according to the Programme and Engagement Coordinator.

### **Helping young people understand how creative skills can contribute to employability**

The Start activities increased pupils' appreciation of how arts and design skills can improve their employability and offer routes into different creative careers. The Head of Creative and Expressive Arts explained how Start had helped students: '*It isn't just about the physicality of drawing or painting... and it may get some students to think of different career pathways, of how they might use their art and design skills creatively*'.

All the young people said that one of their favourite parts of the Start activities had been working with artists in person, hearing about what they did as an artist and learning about the value of their art. Three pupils mentioned they would like to repeat the activities, to exhibit their work in a different art gallery, and one boy explained that the Start activities had helped him decide what kind of designer he wants to be.

### **Ongoing opportunities for young people to improve, and apply, their arts skills**

All the young people we spoke to enjoyed the opportunity to improve their art skills. The Head of Creative and Expressive Arts noted that this was reflected in the increased numbers of young people spending their own time during lunch breaks on their artwork, or attending the school's Art Club.

The Year 8s were excited, felt '*special*' and '*lucky*' to be involved in the Start activities with CFCCA and expressed eagerness to take part in the activities again. Young people in Year 10 built on the creative production skills they first learned through an animation-based project for Start when they were in Year 8. They used digital recording equipment to document the artwork exhibition of the current Year 8 group, including videoing an interview with the artist. The Programme and Engagement Coordinator observed how this built on their previous engagement in an animation project and '*increased their confidence in handling filming equipment, being in front of and behind the camera*'.

Young people have learned new arts skills and techniques that they have applied back in class. The Head of Creative and Expressive Arts noticed that discussing each other's artwork had improved students' critical appraisal and appreciation skills. Young people gave feedback to each other on how to display each other's artwork when planning the exhibition of their work. All the Year 8s continue to apply their arts

skills by working towards the Bronze Level Arts Award. As part of this, they will be sharing their skills with younger children currently in Year 7.

Year 10s now have a wider range of artistic techniques to choose from as the basis for their GCSE project work. The Year 10s have also developed their entrepreneurial skills by raising funds to support the Year 8s' exhibition. They produced artwork to offer as 'rewards' for financial contributions to the exhibition expenses, using the 'Kickstarter' online fund-raising portal. The Year 10s approached the artist who donated one of his prints. He also gave permission for pupils to use sections of his work to create badges to offer as rewards for donations. As a result, the pupils raised a sum of £580 to support the exhibition. This innovative fund-raising approach offers the school a viable way of supporting its future participation in arts and creative activities, following the end of their involvement in Start.

### **Young people felt engaged and fully involved**

Young people felt they were in control of the creative process throughout the Start activities, enabling them to develop a sense of agency. In this respect, they were particularly enthusiastic about being able to exercise their judgement during the final, curatorial session at CFCCA which provided an opportunity to learn about, and manage, their exhibition. The young people decided how to display their artwork, designed the flyer to help market the event and provided hospitality by baking cakes to offer to visitors. They also set up a 'market' to engage members of the public with the exhibition by inviting them to create their own banknote in exchange for a piece of the young people's art.

The public exhibition of the young people's work, and being given the same importance as that of a professional artist, made them feel '*proud*' and '*more professional*'. Young people's confidence in their creative skills and artwork was increased by the opportunity to '*express themselves*' in their artwork, and curatorial decisions, without being judged.

The curatorial project gave young people a voice in the creative process irrespective of their age range or ability as it could be adapted to their individual needs, according to the Programme and Engagement Coordinator at the CFCCA. One young boy from a special school, also taking part in CFCCA's Start programme, surprised his teacher when he took ownership of designing the flyer for his peers' art exhibition. The Coordinator explained '*his teacher said he would never have done this previously.*'

### **3.5.4 Challenges**

The school and the CFCCA have experienced very few challenges since the beginning of their Start partnership. The majority of students have been fully engaged and the teacher was very positive about artists' willingness to adapt workshop activities to suit the needs of students.

The CFCCA realised that the requirement to make a financial contribution to the Start programme was a challenge for some schools. At the end of the first year of Start the

CFCCA advised schools to begin fund-raising activities to fund their continued participation in the programme as the amount of subsidy would be less in the second and third years. Unfortunately, this was too late to offset the high cost of private transport for one school which meant its involvement in Start had to end after only one year. The school was located 15 miles from the CFCCA and school policy prohibited its use of public transport for school trips.

### 3.5.5 Key ingredients

- Designing arts activities that treat young people as fellow artists and give them opportunities to engage in, and take ownership of, the creative process.
- Working with enthusiastic and engaged arts teachers who have a strong base of support from colleagues and senior leaders in school.
- Being flexible about scheduling visits and adapting programme activities ensured that both schools and arts organisations can work together successfully.
- The sustained engagement between the art centre and schools over three years strengthened the partnership and enabled arts organisations to more clearly demonstrate the potential benefits of a school's investment in arts activities.
- The arts centre was able to identify additional school partners through teacher training initiatives such as the Catalyst programme.

### 3.5.6 What next?

The Programme and Engagement Coordinator and teacher at the school have already discussed a future programme of activities following the end of Start funding. The course leader explained: *'We're hoping we'll still have the connection and partnership with the CFCCA, the plan is that it's not just going to end; that we're going to continue to have this partnership link'*.

The school has plans for Year 8s and younger pupils currently in Year 7 to work together. This would simultaneously introduce the younger age groups to new arts techniques and contribute to Year 8s' achievement of their Bronze Arts Award. The Centre has established links with Tameside College which will enable it to facilitate joint working between the college and the case-study school. In future the school plans to enable young people in the school to collaborate with A-level students at the local FE college, based on the CFCCA's existing relationship with the college.

The CFCCA will continue working with all four Start partner schools in future and aims to involve them in collaborative art work with other groups in their communities. For example it has worked with a South Asian women's group located in the same area as one of its Start primary schools and some of the adults in this group have grandchildren which attend the school. The CFCCA intends to enable the school and the women's group to jointly participate in intergenerational arts and cultural activities in future.

## 4 Discussion and conclusion

The Start programme, funded by The Prince's Foundation for Children & the Arts, has successfully engaged a substantial number of disadvantaged children and young people from across the UK in high-quality creative experiences of the arts and culture.

Arts venues have been supported to work in partnership with schools in some of the most economically deprived areas in the UK including rural areas, where children and young people have very limited opportunities to access arts and cultural venues. Each group of children and young people involved in these Start case studies has visited an arts and cultural venue at least twice to see arts exhibitions and performances. They have met and worked with a range of creative professionals including artists, dancers, actors, writers, directors, producers, photographers, exhibition staff and theatre technicians.

These case studies echo the findings of the Start programme evaluation (Sandle, 2012), illustrating how Start enabled arts venues to engage schools in a sustained and tailored way, which has achieved a number of positive impacts for children and young people.

### 4.1 Overall achievements of Start

As a result of Start, children and young people's enthusiasm for, and confidence to participate in arts activities has increased. These children and young people have developed a strong understanding of the creative process of producing works of art and now feel much more at home in their local arts and cultural venues.

Through Start, children and young people have learned, and experimented with, a variety of new creative skills including their ability to critically appraise and appreciate arts activities. In her assessment of performance against the Start programme's objectives, Sandle (2012) reports a similar impact stating that 63 per cent of teachers felt that children and young people had gained reasoning skills. However she also notes that '*it remains difficult to evaluate any increase in children's critical analysis skills*'. The specific examples provided by this case-study research address this evidence gap and demonstrate how children and young people have developed these skills through Start activities by reviewing the performances and exhibitions they have experienced in arts venues, through discussion with peers, teachers and artists and by producing their own artwork.

Opportunities to publicly exhibit or perform their work have reinforced these positive impacts and increased children and young people's views of the value and importance of their creative work, giving them a sense of pride in their creative abilities. In turn the public exhibition of children and young people's work led to one school successfully piloting an innovative fund-raising approach by using the 'Kickstarter' online portal to raise funds to support an exhibition of pupils' work. This

offered their school a viable way of supporting its future participation in arts and creative activities.

#### **4.1.1 Challenges and limitations**

These schools and arts partner organisations experienced very few challenges in their involvement in Start. The most common difficulties encountered were scheduling Start activities to fit with schools' timetables and making arrangements to transport pupils to arts venues. In some schools it was a challenge to ensure that activities were appropriately tailored for the specific age group of children and young people engaged in Start. Arts partners learned that there is a need to differentiate activities for different age groups within Key Stages, and phases, of education. Some schools found it difficult to make a financial contribution towards their engagement in arts and cultural activities. However schools involved in Start benefited from the three years of the programme, which meant that they had time to plan in some fund-raising activities to support their future engagement in arts activities. Changes in key contacts at both arts venues and schools could affect their communication about the school's continued engagement in Start and upcoming, planned activities. Although not a primary aim of Start, several arts partners reported that parents' and families' involvement was limited. They were aware of the potential to increase their participation in future.

#### **4.2 Key success factors**

The effectiveness of Children & the Arts' Start programme in these exemplary partnerships has depended on a number of factors which are common to all, or most of them. These factors reflect the seven Quality Principles of arts and cultural activity with, by and for, young people, identified in recent research (Lord *et al.*, 2012b) and explained in more detail below.

Case-study schools and arts venues shared a deep commitment to ensuring children and young people were engaged in arts and cultural activities. On both sides of the partnership this meant being flexible about scheduling activities in schools and visits to arts venues, as well as having enthusiastic and efficient staff that were determined not to let logistical barriers affect the success of the project. This is similar to Quality Principle 1 which identified 'Striving for excellence' as a hallmark of high quality arts activity.

In each case-study, arts organisations designed Start activities to offer children and young people real-life creative experiences. Reflecting Quality Principle 2, 'Being authentic' (Lord *et al.*, 2012b), children and young people took part in meaningful opportunities to engage in arts activities in which they were treated as fellow artists and where they could learn from the expertise of professional artists. This also reflects Quality Principle 5: 'Actively involving children and young people'.

In all case studies, the effectiveness of Start was supported by a clear, shared understanding of how a school's engagement in Start would be beneficial for its

children and young people. Initial communications between schools and arts partners clarified what activities would be delivered and the benefits these would offer children and young people. In schools, senior leaders and teachers involved in Start effectively engaged other staff to help create a school environment in which visiting artists were welcome and young people were enthusiastic about getting involved in Start (reflecting Quality Principle 3: 'Being exciting, inspiring and engaging' and Quality Principle 7: 'Developing belonging and ownership'). There were several examples of Start partners and schools adapting their activities to be inclusive for all pupils, including those with special needs (Quality Principle 4: 'Ensuring a positive and inclusive experience') and the three-year programme gave time for arts partners and schools to plan progression routes (Quality Principle 6: 'Enabling personal progression').

There are also some key success factors relating to effective partnership working. Regular communication between case-study schools and arts venues strengthened partners' mutual understanding and created opportunities for schools to feed back on the Start activities being delivered. This more meaningful level of communication led to a willingness, amongst arts organisations, to adapt and improve activities over the three years of the Start programme.

The circumstances of all these schools meant that they were in a position to effectively engage in Start. A few schools were located near to the arts venue which made it easier to take children and young people to visit the venue and meant that children and young people could potentially visit the venue outside of school with their families. Schools' senior leaders and teachers had the strategic vision to engage in Start and continued to prioritise the school's involvement over the three years of the programme. These factors reduced the risk of competing strategic priorities displacing the school's ability to engage in Start.

### **4.3 Learning for longer-term impact and sustainability**

Overall, Start has acted as a catalyst for sustaining creative activities in case-study schools in the longer-term. These schools have experienced a transformation in their engagement in arts and cultural activities over the three-year funding period. All case-study schools intend to maintain longer-term relationships with their arts partners to deliver further arts and cultural activities after the Start programme ends. In addition to repeating Start activities for new cohorts of children and young people, one partnership plans to work with their Start partner to develop new arts activities for children and young people to work with elderly people from local community groups, and another has plans to continue jointly piloting new arts engagement workshops for children. In some cases schools have also developed new partnerships with other arts and cultural venues as a result of their engagement with Start. Involving parents and families more fully in arts and cultural activities could provide another means of increasing the longer-term impact of Start in future.

## 4.4 Conclusion

These case studies illustrate how Children & the Arts' Start programme can lead to real, positive impacts for children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds through their involvement in arts activities. They exemplify how Start has led to a transformation in schools' engagement in arts and cultural activities and help to identify the key features of the work and the partnership between arts organisations and schools that effectively create a lasting legacy of arts engagement between schools and UK arts venues.

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## Appendix A – Research methodology

This case-study research is based on five case studies of effective partnership working between arts organisations and primary or secondary schools involved in the Start programme. The case studies were conducted in two phases as follows:

- Phase 1 (May-July 2013) – three case studies
- Phase 2 (May-July 2014) – two case studies.

The five case studies were identified by Children & the Arts and selected for inclusion in the research based on the development of arts partners' strong relationships with schools over a period of three or more years. NFER liaised with each of the five arts partners to make arrangements for conducting the case studies. Each of the case studies involved:

- A telephone interview with the arts partner
- A series of face-to-face consultations in each school with
  - the lead teacher for Start (or the teacher with the most involvement in the programme)
  - the headteacher or a senior teacher
  - with young people taking part in the Start programme (in pairs or small groups).

Consent to participate in this research was requested from all interviewees and interviews were only recorded with the consent of interviewees. All NFER researchers conducting interviews had an up-to-date check issued by the Disclosure and Barring Service. Draft case studies were sent to both arts partners and lead teachers for their approval. All arts partners and lead teachers have provided their written consent to include the final versions of the case studies in this report.

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