

## KEEPING THE GOLD IN THE GOLD ARTSMARK AWARD

### THE CAVENDISH SCHOOL LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

#### ABOUT OUR SCHOOL

The Cavendish School is an independent preparatory day school for girls from the age of 2 years and 9 months to 11 years, and sibling boys up to 7 in Camden. Currently, the school has 230 pupils and is non-selective at entry. The pupils gain places at a range of excellent senior schools. Now as an independent charitable trust, any profits are invested back into the school.

The Cavendish is a “family” in the widest sense of the word and has especially warm relationships with pupils, their parents, carers and families, both past and present. It is an inclusive community with strong yet informal links between school, home and community. The school prides itself on a high level of pastoral care. Founded in 1875 by a Catholic Society it has close relationships with its founding society and the local church, and still has a strong Christian ethos while welcoming pupils of all faiths and none.

The school holds Artsmark Gold and has done for 10 years. It has a broad and balanced curriculum providing personalised learning and engagement in arts and culture. The school’s vision today relates strongly to that of its original founder, Cornelia Connelly, a nun born 200 years ago. Mrs Connelly and the teachers she trained established schools along similar lines in Ireland, France, North America and Africa, and these have become a network of The Society of the Holy Child Schools. As a mother of five children, her approach was different to that of other nuns of the time. She was passionate about teaching through art and educating the whole individual.



#### OUR APPROACH TO ARTS AND CULTURE

There is a school-wide strategy for innovative and creative approaches to learning using the arts. Practically, this can be seen in the whole-school projects around the building, such as our felt display of the seasons, the tree of life mosaic and stained glass window. We have an ongoing partnership with a glass artist who worked on the tree of life that features in our entrance hall and on the front of our current prospectus. She has also worked across the school creating art that both engages the creativity of the pupils and enhances the school vision.

We have had a very strong commitment to the arts over a long period. At our school, teaching and learning involves lots of drama and role play in each subject. It is cross-curricular and every child contributes to a termly school assembly with drama and music and often involving another subject area, such as history, science or geography. The pupils’ parents are invited to these assemblies.

The Cavendish School has maintained Artsmark Gold status for the last 10 years. Artsmark focuses on four aspects of expertise and different initiatives that relate to the areas of art, craft and design, music, dance and drama. Nevertheless, we're not moulded by the Artsmark criteria. We usually go beyond what the requirements demand. However, it does demonstrate how all the children are involved.

Artsmark promotes the belief that everyone should have a chance to participate in the arts. This concords with the school's ethos and a number of initiatives have been created to give every pupil the opportunity to take part. For example, we have a school-wide house music festival, concerts, drama productions and dance. We believe that pupils gain valuable poise and confidence through performing and producing art, and that every child can contribute to this aspect of school life. There is a lot of parental involvement, including professional musicians, such as the leader of the London Philharmonic who has come in to talk about instruments; parents also run fundraising events for charity and the school.



Feedback on our Artsmark application is very complimentary about the amount of dance we do in the school. We have a partnership with the Education Foundation and they offer days of dance. We also have dance days with Cecil Sharp House, which is the local English traditional folk dance centre. We plan for another dance teacher to extend provision and we have ballet, funky dance and street dance as after school clubs.

The school values educational partnerships with Higher Education Institutions and other schools. They are enjoyable and constructive and also provide further opportunities for education and cultural engagement for our pupils. We have annually about ten student teachers from our partnership with the Institute of Education.

We are also part of the St Marylebone Teaching Schools Alliance. St Marylebone is a performing arts Academy, that several of our pupils move on to each year. We have reciprocal arrangements whereby we exchange our specialist teaching guidance and support with subject workshops for our pupils to attend at St Marylebone Academy.

## FEATURED PROJECT

### ***Engaging Pupils and Enhancing the School Environment***

The Cavendish School's commitment to providing its pupils access to a wide range of arts and cultural opportunities includes a long term partnership with a visual artist. Projects include working with the children across the school to each design representations of living things which were then assembled to make the glass border to the school's Tree of Life stained glass window. She has also worked with the school on other glass related projects which have often been extended by class teachers. For a Millennium project, each child and teacher drew a portrait of themselves which were made into ceramic tiles.

Through this and similar partnerships, artists and the children contribute to the vision for the school and the school environment.

## IMPACT

The impact of The Cavendish School's approach to cultural engagement and school-wide strategy for the arts are clearly observed in the pupils: they gain poise and confidence through a variety of performance opportunities; they help contribute to the school environment through the production of physical artworks around the school; and through visual art, dance, drama and music they actively participate in the school's vision for learning through art. The impact is seen in the teachers as well, for example through the school's approach to teaching and learning via drama and role play, non-specialist teachers grow in confidence and feel encouraged to experiment in these areas.

## WHAT WE HAVE LEARNT

The Cavendish School has developed a number of ways to recognise and celebrate the school and its pupils' progress. Artsmark is a brilliant audit for us and very useful in highlighting how much we have achieved over each three year period. Our house music festival and choirs have proved very successful in engaging everyone within the school community. We have realised it doesn't need many musicians so our non specialist music teachers support the specialist and all of our teachers grow in confidence as a result. The choirs are open to all, we don't have auditions and children are not excluded in any way. We believe every child can sing. We have also asked the parents to join the choir – all are welcome.

We have replaced the annual 'Prize giving' with 'Shine' celebrations for each year group. These take the form of a summary of the year illustrated with slides and video clips capturing some events as well as live performances and pupils' descriptions of others. Each pupil receives a certificate praising a selection of areas in which they have made particular progress or achievement.

[www.cavendishschool.co.uk](http://www.cavendishschool.co.uk)

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Images courtesy of The Cavendish School