

## What Headteachers Say – July 2014 London

### Interviewees:

Vijita Patel, Associate Principal, Swiss Cottage School (London Borough of Camden)

Jemima Reilly, Head teacher, Morpeth School (London Borough of Tower Hamlets)

Diana Osagie, Head teacher, Islington Arts and Media School (London Borough of Islington)

Kathryn Pugh, Head teacher, The St Marylebone CE School (London Borough of Westminster)

### Arts and Culture: areas of value, in their own words

*'... arts and media provides something that no other part of the curriculum does, it provides that opportunity for expression, of talent, which doesn't come out of other subjects. It takes away barriers of language, of ability to read or to write or to express yourself in formal English, which are there, present, every time the children walk into an English classroom or maths classroom or whatever it is, they're asked to read and write in this formal way.'* **Islington Arts and Media School**

*'... it can [...] actually allow learners who are non-verbal, who have quite complex cognitive needs and tend to have quite static experiences outside of the school environment, have a way of expressing themselves, for us that's a catalyst to their voice and a catalyst to essentially their communication and it can be quite a powerful medium for them to be able to express themselves.'* **Swiss Cottage School**

*'... practitioners in the performing arts understand the value of process and when you've got leading practitioners and educators that sing about that message, ... can spread that message, then your other staff invest in process and then your students invest in process, and so the school can never become an examination machine, the school becomes something about the development and nurturing of people.'* **St Marylebone CE School**

### Interviewees' comments on the role of arts and culture in closing the attainment gap between pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers

*'I don't have a gap, all my children do well, and it's not in relation to their free school meals status, it's not in relation to their poor background ... So there's something I'm doing, yes? What is it I'm doing that most schools don't do? I have arts and media at the heart of my curriculum. Can you make a link? Anecdotally, of course you can. Can I say for sure? No, I've not done the control experiment.'* **Islington Arts and Media School**

*'I think we've got to really question what the point of school is and I think a huge part of the point of school is being part of something and discovering your identity as an individual and as part of a cohesive collective whole, and some young people need good reasons to go to school, and just saying because maths GCSE is important isn't enough... there are a lot of young people who schools need to work hard at giving them reasons to come to school, and quite often [these reasons are] what are called the creative subjects, the arts.'* **St Marylebone CE School**

*'There is a percentage of our pupils who come to us with quite limited social and cultural experiences through no fault of their own or their families. We see broadening that experience as absolutely vital in 'closing the gap' in terms of achievement, but also in making them fully rounded and confident people, who can be successful in any chosen pathway. The Arts are absolutely crucial in terms of those experiences; our commitment to them has always been core to the school. Our free school meals pupils achieve much higher than the national average for that group, and also achieve on a par with the national average for non-free school meals. I think it's due to all the extra-curricular things we do but also in large part to the enrichment offered by arts and culture.'* **Morpeth School**