
Arts Award in Hospital Schools

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Enhancing Wellbeing



In 2014/15, A New Direction supported a small number of organisations interested in piloting new ways of working with Arts Award. One of these pilots aimed to embed a universal offer of Arts Award in Hospital Schools.



AWARDS ACHIEVED

- **20 Discover and Explore**
- **18 Bronze**

Context

Chelsea Community Hospital School (CCHS) provides education for children and young people while they are in hospital and for a small number of students in the community who cannot access mainstream school due to their medical conditions. The School operates across four sites:

Chelsea and Westminster Hospital - specialises in sickle cell anaemia, orthopaedics, gastric and other acute and chronic medical conditions.

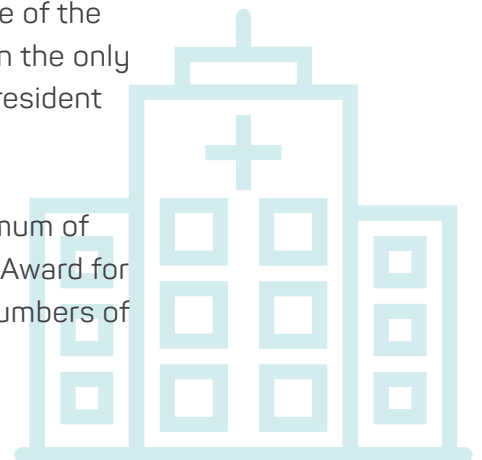
Collingham Child and Family Centre - a referral unit for children up to 13 years who have complex emotional, behavioural and mental health problems. The Centre accommodates up to 14 inpatients (with an average stay of 3-4 months) together with a small number of day patients.

Royal Brompton and Harefield Hospital - a specialist cardiac and respiratory hospital. Children may be in the hospital for a number of weeks or attend on a regular basis.

St Mary's Hospital - specialising in bone marrow transplants and infectious diseases. Pupils frequently need to be taught in isolation or via video link and require 'clean care', which means that materials and equipment needs to be straight out of a packet.

Children are taught in classrooms or if they are unable to leave the ward, by their beds. All the sites follow the National Curriculum but as one of the primary teachers said, 'When children are feeling most poorly, often the only thing they want to do is art.' The Hospital Schools have a range of resident and visiting artists whose work can contribute to the Arts Award.

The School introduced Arts Award two years ago. There are a minimum of two trained advisers at each site. Having seen the benefits of Arts Award for a small group of students, the staff were keen to engage greater numbers of children with the Award.



Embedding Arts Award

At CCHS, Arts Award is delivered in two ways: on an ongoing basis and during dedicated Arts Award weeks. Children can identify their own art form focus and receive individual support to pursue their interests or participate in themed weeks, such as 'recycling'.

'Be prepared to be very, very flexible, persistent and determined throughout the Arts Award. At St Mary's, it worked really well when the whole school took part as there were no other school trips, exams etc taking place.'

Each site arranges termly Arts Award weeks or fortnights when all children are encouraged to participate. Collingham, for example, designed an Art in Motion fortnight, with children completing either Explore or Bronze. Children created designs for a zoetrope in a workshop with the Museum of Childhood and took photographs on a trip to Chessington World of Adventure and whilst kite flying (Explore and Bronze: Part A). They created short films combining these photos with computer generated music (Explore: Part C). Children researched a range of artists whose work involved movement; one boy, for example, discovered the work of visual artist Roberto 'Pasta' Pantaleo. (Bronze: Part C)

'Enjoy the week of fun activities and give yourself the following week to put the portfolios together. Be organised! Ensure you print photos for portfolios as you go.'

These Arts Award fortnights create enthusiasm on the ward and in the classrooms and allow teachers to programme group activities and workshops for a designated period. The unpredictable nature of hospitals, however, creates challenges,

'In planning to do arts award on a particular week, I hadn't considered the possibility that there would be no suitable children on the ward (when we'd had an ideal couple of students the week before).'

Royal Brompton and Harefield

'We had originally planned some theatre trips but due to low numbers that week, we had to change the dates.'

Chelsea and Westminster

Embedding Arts Award

Teachers recognised the need, therefore, to embed Arts Award as an 'optional extra' in the timetable, identifying potential candidates throughout the year in addition to dedicated Arts Award fortnights.

'I would recommend the arts award to any children in the community as it is easier to keep this as a consistent project rather than children who are in and out of hospital and who therefore might not be able to complete it.'

A key challenge across all sites is that children can be discharged at short notice.

'We are getting used to this however and normally encourage children to finish their project as soon as we hear they may be leaving.'

'Once the students express an interest in doing the Award, get them to sign the form straight away so that the paperwork can be completed and forwarded to them once they've left.'

Benefits of Arts Award in Hospital Schools

'I was surprised at how wide-ranging the Arts Award can be...allowing students to follow their passions and interests across a broad spectrum.'

Chelsea and Westminster

In general, children and young people participating in Arts Award develop self-confidence, arts skills and knowledge, leadership and communication skills. Teachers and teaching assistants at CCHS believe that Arts Award offers additional benefits for young people in Hospital Schools that improve the patient experience and enhance wellbeing. Outcomes they observed included:

- Providing distraction from treatment, pain and boredom
- Improving mood by validating young people's ideas and achievements at a time when they may be feeling low
- Allowing children and young people to move beyond the label of 'patient' by finding a new identity as a poet, for example, or a photographer
- Boosting self-esteem by making something to be proud of and by gaining an accredited award
- Inspiring children through participating, watching and researching arts activities and arts practitioners

- Creating links with the world beyond the confines of the Hospital
- Empowering children by engaging them in activities where their opinion matters and they can take the lead (in a medical environment where choices are limited)
- Supporting re-integration into mainstream school by encouraging independence in an environment with a high staff to pupil ratio

'Working in the community with students 1:1, the arts award has provided an opportunity to motivate and engage students, especially those who are tired and frustrated with having to stay at home.'

Chelsea and Westminster

Top Tips for Advisers

- 1 Allow more time than you think you'll need.

'One boy was in isolation, very keen but often felt unwell and could only manage an hour a day. He took three weeks to complete the Award (instead of the proposed one week) and needed a lot of 1:1 support from a student intern.'
- 2 Don't plan too many visits in advance - be responsive to the children on the ward at the time.
- 3 If children can't leave the hospital, interview visiting artists and explore artworks in the building.
- 4 For some children, the Award may seem overwhelming.

'Reveal it bit by bit.'
- 5 Some young people are paper-adverse or school-phobic. Use audio recordings and video (with permission) or annotate and scribe for a child. Explore dictaphone apps that type from speech.
- 6 Apply for special dispensation for the moderation as children may not be able to attend.
- 7 If appropriate (and without compromising confidentiality), attach a covering letter to portfolios to provide a context for the project and/or evidence. E.g. to explain the absence of photos in the portfolio of a student who is body-conscious.
- 8 **'It depends on your setting. Getting stuck in and giving it a go is the best way to find out what works and what doesn't.'**