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# Raising the game

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Expanding the Arts Award offer  
at existing Centres



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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 develop the capacity of schools that deliver Arts Award with large groups of young people, to expand their activity to higher levels of the Award.



## **AWARDS ACHIEVED**

- **Central Foundation**  
24 Silver
- **Queen Elizabeth's**  
15 Silver
- **Oak Lodge**  
6 Discover  
20 Explore  
5 Bronze

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# Context

Three schools took part in the pilot:

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**Central Foundation Girls' School** is a large comprehensive in Tower Hamlets. Under the leadership of the Head of Art, Design and Technology, the school piloted Bronze Arts Award in 2013 (with 12, Y9 students). In 2014, Bronze was embedded in the curriculum for Y7 with 188 of the cohort of 240 students achieving the Award.

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**Oak Lodge** is a special school in Barnet for students aged 11-19 with a range of learning difficulties. The Creative Arts Coordinator introduced Arts Award in the 6th form in 2014, with 14 students gaining Discover and 11 gaining Explore.

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**Queen Elizabeth's Girls' School (QEGS)** is a comprehensive school in Barnet. The Media Arts Manager has run Bronze Arts Award with the whole of Year 9 (approximately 180 students) for a number of years. Bronze is offered within curriculum time as a cross-curricular programme with different departments leading on each aspect of the Award.

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# Expanding the Arts Award offer

Central Foundation and Queen Elizabeth's offered Silver Arts Award for the first time whilst Oak Lodge introduced Bronze.

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**Central Foundation** offered Silver Arts Award as an Art and Design after-school and holiday activity to Y9 students. To support Unit 1: Arts Practice, young people attended exhibitions, workshops and talks at local galleries including the Whitechapel, Tate and Bow Arts. For Unit 2: Arts Leadership, young people designed, promoted and delivered workshops in a wide range of visual arts including print-making, ceramics and sculpture, to other students at school.

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**Queen Elizabeth's** recruited a group of 30, Y10 students to take part in a Silver Shakespeare Challenge.<sup>1</sup> Weekly after-school sessions offered support, the group also went to see *The Merchant of Venice* at the Almeida and participated in a costume workshop at The Globe. For Unit 2: Arts Leadership, the students worked in small groups and ran workshops for younger students. In English, for example, Y7 students were studying *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Y10 students ran a workshop with them, designing logos for their favourite characters. Another group gave a presentation about graffiti in Shakespeare's time and made graffiti walls with younger students.

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**Oak Lodge** provides a three-year 6th form. Twice a year, students take part in 'options', many of which can contribute to Arts Award, such as music, textiles and animation. Across the three years, the aim is for all 52 students in the 6th form to complete Arts Award at one or more levels. Bronze introduced a number of new requirements for students: they attended and reviewed a 'sing-a-long' screening of *Frozen* at the Phoenix Cinema (Part B), for example, and planned and taught lessons to other students in a wide range of art forms including photography and model-making (Part D).

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<sup>1</sup>. Inspired by a partnership between Trinity College London and the Royal Shakespeare Company: [www.artsaward.org.uk/site/?id=1918](http://www.artsaward.org.uk/site/?id=1918)

# Benefits of an expanded offer

**'I've been surprised by the Bronze level students' enthusiasm for taking on leadership roles and responsibilities.'**

Oak Lodge

The benefits of Arts Award for children and young people are well documented<sup>2</sup> and include increased confidence, arts skills and knowledge, leadership and communication skills. Teachers identified additional benefits they observed from having introduced Arts Award at higher levels and offering the Award at a range of levels.

- Provides progression for young people in the arts and arts leadership within a single setting.
- Bronze and Silver promote student voice and independent learning.

**'The girls have made huge progress in self-directed learning.'**

QEGS

- Multiple levels allows teachers to match the Award level to the capabilities of the students. For example, researching an artist is quite an abstract task and some of the students at Oak Lodge found this challenging. The school's adviser was therefore able to enter these students for Explore rather than Bronze.
- Provides evidence and support for Artsmark.

- Maintains breadth in young people's education at a point when many feel under pressure to drop arts subjects.
- Provides validation and accreditation for young people's interest in the arts even if they are no longer studying arts subjects at school.

**'When they leave in Y14, all students will have at least one Arts Award certificate and for those that can progress, they may have two or more.'**

Oak Lodge

- Higher levels provide challenge and inspiration for those young people with a commitment to developing their arts and leadership skills.
- Higher levels support applications for jobs and higher education.

**'We'll definitely continue with Silver. I'd be interested in offering Gold in the 6th form, the UCAS points are particularly valuable.'**

Central Foundation

- Students working on their Arts Leadership unit for Silver can support younger students working on Bronze by arranging a skill-sharing event (fulfilling Silver: Unit 2 and Bronze: Part D). This takes the pressure off teachers and encourages peer support.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, findings from the Arts Award Impact Study: [www.artsaward.org.uk/site/?id=2544](http://www.artsaward.org.uk/site/?id=2544)

# Learning

All teachers identified ways they would modify and improve their Arts Award offer in future. A number of common areas of learning emerged.

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**Curricular or extra-curricular provision** - Central Foundation and QEGS both embed Bronze within the curriculum for a whole year group. They found that the additional requirements of the Silver Award (the leadership unit and researching careers in the arts) however, make it more suited to young people who are interested in the arts. Both schools therefore offered Silver Arts Award as an after-school option for a group of 25-30 students.

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**Evidencing** - The majority of young people find it challenging to evidence their work and achievements on an ongoing basis. The demands increase in line with the Arts Award levels and teachers found that those students who had achieved Bronze, for example, were more 'in tune with what was required' when working on the Silver Award.

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**Creative documentation and evidencing** - Oak Lodge made customised A3 portfolios for their students having found the A4 portfolios too small the previous year. The coordinator adapted an Arts Award log book to create a school template, simplifying language and augmenting with SymWriter<sup>3</sup>. To overcome difficulties with writing, several students dictated their work to staff. Although effective, this was very labour-intensive and the coordinator stressed the importance of looking at alternative forms of documentation such as audio and video.<sup>4</sup>

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**Advisers** - All the lead teachers stressed the importance of training as many staff as possible. Having trained advisers in different departments also enables schools to offer Arts Award to whole year groups as a cross-curricular project and allows students to pursue their passions in any art form.

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**Timeframe** - Key learning from all schools was to allow sufficient time for students to complete the award and to plan around other commitments at school. GCSE and A Level exams, for example, can limit older students' availability but can also impact on teachers' workload and their ability to support after-school activities. At Oak Lodge School, the coordinator struggled to complete the Awards by AND's March deadline but will stick to this deadline in future as 'the summer term is crazy with events and activities' and 'having the portfolios completed by Easter was such a relief!'

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<sup>3</sup>. Software designed to support people who struggle with literacy - symbols appear above words.

<sup>4</sup>. Cape UK, the bridge organisation for Yorkshire and the Humber, has produced a video on creative evidencing: <http://www.capeuk.org/arts-award-creative-evidencing>

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# Top Tips for Advisers

- 1 Make sure that the ability and interests of your cohort suit the hours and support you have available.
- 2 Set individual and manageable deadlines for each unit.
- 3 Hold regular portfolio meetings with students to monitor and support documentation, reflection and evidence collection (don't let them leave it all to the end!)
- 4 Use Arts Award log books or devise your own templates (scrapbook, portfolio, online blog etc) to guide students through the process and help structure their documentation.
- 5 Plan your timeframe around exams and other commitments.
- 6 Have more than one teacher trained as an Arts Award Adviser in your school and collaborate on programmes, support and paperwork.
- 7 Try out Arts Award with a small group of students first. Then, once you are feeling confident with the Award, roll out the programme to a larger cohort of students and increase the number of levels you offer.
- 8 Ensure senior leaders understand the value of Arts Award for students as you will need their support to facilitate trips out or sanction drop-down days and holiday workshops.

**Above all, the message from these pilot schools was 'Give it a go!'**