

# Arts & Cultural Provision for Special Educational Needs Learners in London.

A research report for A New Direction by Paula Manning, assisted by Chris Blois-Brooke.

*“It allows you to express yourself and show the true you.”*

Pupil, Phoenix School.

*“The Arts are part of what make us human. To have an education system without the Arts is not to have an education system. [...] They should not be an optional extra for any person let alone for any school.”*

Kevin McDonnell, Head Teacher, Stormont House School.

*“I’m starting to get a bit bored that all of this great work [in SEN Arts & Cultural Provision] is happening in the shadows, in the dark corners, because there is a lot of exciting work going on.”*

Daryl Beeton, London Regional Programme Manager, Drake Music.

*“Rather than complaining about things not progressing [...] we need to be celebrating the small victories, the examples of good work going on for SEN, is the only way to push forward.”*

Anne Ogazi, SEND Programme Coordinator, V&A Museum of Childhood.

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## **Preface**

In Autumn 2015, A New Direction founded the Special Schools Arts & Culture Network. This new network brings together senior teachers and leaders from special schools in London with an interest in Arts & Cultural education to facilitate networking and sharing, and to produce a series of outputs (e.g. case studies, resources, etc.) that can be used by other schools to support development of their own practice and provision.

As part of this initiative, this research involved eight of these schools represented in this network. These schools were asked to nominate Organisations who have in the past assisted with, or delivered, Arts & Cultural Activities of a high standard to their SEN pupils. An equal range of Dance, Museum, Music, Theatre and Visual Art Organisations were approached, and fourteen of these responded wanting to take part in this exercise and adding their voices on SEN Arts & Cultural Provision to those of the schools.

With this relatively small sample, we are under no pretence that this research offers any sort of definitive summary or round-up of the field. It cannot profess to offer a cross-section that would demonstrate the true richness of the field and has, inevitably, neglected many examples of excellent practice.

Rather, it seeks to capture a 'snapshot' of examples of good practice, as well as an overview of the many hours of conversations with SEN Schools and Arts & Cultural Organisations where representatives were asked to discuss the broad issues at play in delivering good practice, balanced alongside the practicalities of creating good practice. These we present under eight discrete, though obviously interconnected, main themes; Access, Capital, Investing, Framing, Partnerships, Networking, Visibility and Moving Forwards.

As such, the snapshot that we present here highlights examples of excellent work going on in the field as well as the tremendous opportunities and threats the field faces in the future and the report represents, what we hope to be, the beginning of greater dialogue between SEN Schools and Arts & Cultural Organisations.

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### **Paula Manning**

Paula is Artistic Director and founder of M-SET, an interactive theatre company which delivers immersive theatre projects and multi-sensory, cross-arts installations across London and specialises in working with young people of all ages with special educational needs and disabilities in both SEND and mainstream settings.

Having also been Expressive Arts Director for Phoenix special school in Tower Hamlets for seven years and previously Associate Director at the Half Moon Young People's Theatre, she has extensive experience in using experiential drama and the expressive arts as a tool for helping both SEND and mainstream schools meet curriculum goals and broader learning objectives. She now also works as a consultant for the London East Teacher Training Alliance and Phoenix school.

As a trained counsellor she has lectured on a wide range of psychodynamic counselling and experiential courses at the University of London and with a background of counselling in industry, commerce and education she has developed

particular experience in developing programmes and projects for behaviour management and personal development.

Her work also includes teacher training and consultancy on SEN practice for organisations including The National Autistic Society, A New Direction, Local Education Authorities, and the BBC.

**Chris Blois-Brooke** is a freelance Applied Theatre Practitioner with experience in Drama Education, Community Theatre and Theatre for Development in both UK and international contexts. He is currently completing a MA in Applied Theatre at The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama.

## **Executive Summary**

This research seeks to capture a 'snapshot' of examples of good practice in the provision of Arts & Cultural Activities for SEN Learners in London and offers an overview of conversations with representatives from 14 Arts & Cultural Organisations, 8 SEN Schools and a select group of parents and pupils that formed the research sample. Illustrating our learning so far about the tremendous opportunities and threats to provision in the future, it represents what we hope is just the start of a meaningful and ongoing dialogue between SEN Schools and Arts & Cultural Organisations.

### **Access**

*Justifying Arts & Culture as Access to Learning.* Arts & Cultural Activities are often a creative route in for SEN learners to access both their broader learning objectives and curricular aims. They offer a way for learners to express themselves and develop a sense of identity whilst increasing their awareness and engagement with the world outside their daily classroom routine. SEN Schools value activities that offer learners the opportunity to generalise their learning, interact with new people and to develop their own cultural taste. Whilst SEN teachers like activities that provide a hook for other curriculum opportunities, there is widespread agreement that Arts & Cultural provision should be more open-ended rather than directly dictated by specific curriculum goals.

*Shaping Activities to Provide Access to Learning.* The disadvantage faced by SEN learners in accessing Arts & Culture is sometimes overlooked. There are various barriers to access that need to be considered when planning and implementing Arts & Cultural Activities for SEN Learners. These include both Physical barriers to access, as well as Cognitive & Emotional barriers, and should be considered the joint responsibility of Arts & Cultural Organisations and SEN Schools. The limitations of inaccessible travel and transportation arrangements can frequently be a deal breaker, with a lack of facilities such as wheelchair ramps and lifts also presenting challenges. Whilst SEN Schools strive to offer their learners activities both in and outside of the school environment, some find the physical barriers are so great that an off-site visit may simply be unfeasible. In terms of overcoming the cognitive and emotional barriers to access, interviewees identified six main 'tools of access' to develop inclusive practice, namely; creating a safe space, pre-project familiarisation, using sensory resources and visual aids, allowing a suitable timeframe for activities, focus on the holistic experience and flexibility & adaptability. Nonetheless, it must be stressed that meaningful inclusion for one learner may look very different from meaningful inclusion for another, and these 'tools' need continual adaptation to the different needs of different learners.

### **Capital**

*Exploiting Schools' Internal and External Resources.* 'In-House Cultural Capital' describes the cultural resources and expertise that schools already have within their own communities. Indeed, schools are increasingly using teachers', parents' and learners' own creativity to create their own in-house Arts & Cultural programmes. 'External Social Capital' describes the network of external contacts that schools have at their disposal to assist them with their Arts & Cultural Provision, such as links with external networks, advisory groups, school governors and nearby neighbours.

## Investing

*Resourcing Arts & Cultural Activities.* Arts & Cultural Activities for SEN learners are more dependent on financial, staff and time resources than such provision for mainstream. It is widely felt that provision does not necessarily have to be expensive to have a significant and lasting impact. Nonetheless, schools particularly value, and invest significantly in, Organisations that can provide something that schools can't offer of their own accord, and projects that leave a legacy of professional development with their staff. Most often the costs of an Arts & Cultural activity are met by Organisations' core or project-specific funding, together with a contribution from SEN Schools. In addition to pupil premium, schools are increasingly applying to external trusts, foundations or other organisations to meet this need on top of more traditional fundraising initiatives. Alarming, many interviewees reported that footfall is an issue when working with external funders, who prefer, and prioritise, the larger mainstream class sizes to smaller SEN groups. More work is needed to defend the case for working on high-impact projects with smaller class sizes in SEN Arts & Cultural provision. Schools also need to carefully consider how they invest in staffing their Arts & Cultural programme, with some taking staff with creative responsibilities off-timetable, sometimes for several days a week. Very much valued by Arts & Cultural Organisations many schools also invest in Teaching Assistants with creative backgrounds for more one-to-one interaction during activities.

## Framing

*Marketing Arts & Cultural Activities in a SEN context.* Arts & Cultural Organisations have very different approaches to marketing their provision for SEN learners. Some market their work specifically under the 'SEN' label, highlighting the bespoke consideration of SEN learners' needs. Oppositely, others regard their Schools' programme as being suitably adaptive to all learners' needs and so reject the 'SEN' label. Whilst neither approach is at all better than the other, so as not to miss out on any valuable opportunities, SEN Schools should be aware that Organisations market their programmes in these different ways.

*Packaging Arts & Cultural Activities for learners, parents, funders, accreditation and Ofsted.*

It is important to frame Arts & Cultural Activities for learners, with pre- and post- project lessons and evaluations providing them with suitable context, and celebrations of their work in order to recognise their achievements. Whilst there is no question that activities should always be designed primarily about learners' needs, it is fruitful for schools to retrospectively 'frame' activities to the priorities of Parents, Funders, Accreditation Boards and Ofsted. Engaging families in the Arts & Cultural Activity through regular communication, submitting photographic evidence to funders, demonstrating criterion required for Artsmark accreditation, and linking Arts & Cultural provision to SMSC (Spiritual, Moral, Social, Cultural) Ofsted requirements are all incredibly useful endeavours.

## Partnerships

*Fostering Good Partnership Practice.* A tremendous variety of different partnerships between Arts & Cultural Organisations and SEN Schools exist. These are often born out of teachers' own experiences and interests, as well as through word-of-mouth recommendations and online research. Successful partnership practice is forged through Organisations' awareness of inclusive practice, the adaptability and flexibility

of both parties, pre-project co-planning and good communication. Having built-in points for formal communication is fundamental to the process, as is having clearly defined roles and responsibilities that recognise each other's areas of expertise. Schools and Organisations have a shared responsibility to challenge each other's, and the learners', expectations of what the project can achieve. Nevertheless, in working on collaborative projects it is especially important to acknowledge the constraints under which the other party is operating, such as limited finance and staff time.

### **Networking**

*Developing Collaboration.* Greater collaboration between Arts & Cultural Organisations and SEN Schools would be mutually beneficial. There is an increasing awareness of the need to include the voices of SEN learners in this process. There was a call for networks such as A New Direction to take a leadership role in continuing the dialogue around the Arts & Cultural Provision for SEN learners, as well as brokering and advocating for partnerships between Organisations and Schools. Networking events that allow for face-to-face collaboration would be useful, in addition to better publicity about the full range of available Arts & Cultural opportunities. It is widely felt that it is only by bringing together Arts & Cultural Professionals and SEN teachers that threats to future provision can be adequately addressed. Key threats identified, include; funding, changing educational structures that are devaluing the role of the Arts in schools, SEN learners in mainstream schools who are falling through the gaps, the lack of training for practitioners and the lack of Arts & Cultural programming after learners leave school.

### **Visibility**

*Raising SEN Awareness through Arts & Culture.* There is widespread agreement that Arts & Cultural Provision for SEN learners should be made more visible and celebrated more widely, both within the sector and in the public eye. As many of the recommendations for good practice are universal, equally relevant to SEN and mainstream, there could be more opportunities for mainstream colleagues to learn from SEN practice. It is, for instance, becoming increasingly common to use Arts & Cultural Activities for integration projects between mainstream and SEN learners. Many also called for greater visibility and representation of role models and mentors who themselves have SEN. Others highlighted how Arts & Cultural activities sometimes lead to SEN learners themselves finding greater visibility and integration into their local communities through interaction with members of the public on trips and celebration of their work in art exhibitions, for instance.

### **Moving Forwards**

The increasing SEN presence on the agenda of the Arts & Cultural sector is, many believe, a reflection of slowly changing attitudes in society towards inclusion. It is clear that inclusive Arts & Cultural Provision for SEN learners has a role in challenging public perceptions and attitudes to SEN and inclusion. We are optimistic that, in moving forwards, the fostering of good partnership practice between Organisations and Schools can improve SEN learners' access to Arts & Culture and, in doing so, can play a part in influencing and shaping societal attitudes to SEN. As such, the emerging possibilities for greater collaboration and dialogue between Arts & Cultural Organisations and SEN Schools hold both great opportunities and responsibilities in the future.





## Interviewee List

We are deeply indebted to all of our interviewees who found the time to meet and discuss their work and ideas with us.

### Arts & Cultural Organisations

Jenny Mollica	Head of Learning & Participation	Barbican
Rob Smith	Head of Education & Learning	Bow Arts
Aidan Adams	Education Project Manager	Bow Arts
Katharine Hoare	Schools and Young Audiences Education Manager	British Museum
Ian Crighton	Education Manager	British Museum
Daryl Beeton	London Regional Programme Manager	Drake Music
Jodi-Alissa Bickerton	Creative Learning Director	Graeae Theatre Company
Ella Ritchie	Director	Intoart
Jackie Tait	Primary Programme Manager	National Theatre
Jane Ball	Secondary & FE Programme Manager	National Theatre
Claire Hazell	Team Leader: Interactive Galleries	Science Museum
Dominic Fitch	Creative Director	Shakespeare Schools Festival
Joanne Skapinker	Festival Coordinator	Shakespeare Schools Festival
Kathryn Allnutt	Programme Manager: Learning and Participation	Spitalfields Music
Sue Goodman	Programme & Artistic Director	Step Into Dance
Amy McKelvie	Curator: Schools and Teachers	Tate
Anne Ogazi	SEND Programme Coordinator	V&A Museum of Childhood
Carolyn Bloore	Formal Learning Officer	V&A Museum of Childhood

**Parents**

Anne	Parent	Phoenix School
Lorraine	Parent	Phoenix School

**Pupils**

Cameron	Pupil	Phoenix School
Danny	Pupil	Phoenix School
Jamie	Pupil	Phoenix School

**Schools**

Sally Adams	Head of Humanities	Oak Lodge School
Shanta Amdurer	Creative Arts Coordinator	Oak Lodge School
Stewart Harris	Head Teacher	Phoenix School
Veronica Armson	Senior Deputy Head Teacher	Phoenix School
Rick Nunn	Expressive Arts Coordinator	Phoenix School
Vee McLaughlin	Art Teacher	St Giles School
Paul Pearce	Music Teacher	St Giles School
Katie Payne	English Teacher	St Giles School
Chris Elford	Deputy Head Teacher	Stormont House School
Kevin McDonnell	Head Teacher	Stormont House School
Tracy Edwards	Associate Director of the Teaching School and Research Department	Swiss Cottage School
Ryan McClelland	Art and Senior Teacher	The Bridge School
Gillian Weale	Deputy Head Teacher	The Vale School (Primary)
Niall Deegan	Art & Design Subject Leader	Woodlane High School

## Access

### Justifying Arts & Culture as Access to Learning

Arts & Culture is overwhelmingly seen as an access tool for SEN pupils to engage in their learning. On the whole, SEN teachers recognise that their learners are inherently creative learners, often learning best through doing.

Many schools realise the weight of their responsibility to their learners, recognising that they are often able to provide Arts & Cultural Activities that would be impossible for their families to arrange.

Though some schools offer Arts & Cultural Activities like Dance and Music solely as extra-curricular clubs after school, the vast majority of SEN learners are engaged in a creative-led curriculum that gives them the opportunity to work creatively on their broader learning objectives and personal development targets.

#### Pupils

Pupils from Phoenix School were asked to reflect on their own experiences of Arts & Cultural Activities.

*“It makes you think [...] It helps me with body language, eye contact and facial expressions [...]and] teaches you to be friendly, honest, helpful and careful.”*

Cameron

*“Projects give me confidence [...] It’s good to learn new skills as well as helping with eye contact and body language [...] Sometimes performing is difficult but it teaches you teamwork, following instructions and being able to adapt and be flexible.”*

Danny

*“The discipline can show you another side of life [...] It helps you open up, gives you confidence [...] It can help you with a career. It allows you to express yourself and show the true you.”*

Jamie

Some schools have an independent Arts Policy or Arts & Cultural Programme in place whereas, for most, Arts & Culture formed an intrinsic part of their School-wide Development Plan. The centrality of creativity and Arts & Culture is captured by Ryan McClelland, Art and Senior Teacher at The Bridge School, who notes *“Arts Activities are our bread and butter [...] creativity is a place where everyone can flourish given the time and space.”* Similarly, Stewart Harris, Head Teacher of Phoenix School, maintains *“Arts in schools are a human right [...] The school is made healthy through its involvement in the Arts.”*

Stormont House School

Stormont House School sees Arts & Culture as being integral to the curriculum, across all year bands and learning needs.

*“The Arts are part of what make us human. To have an education system without the Arts is not to have an education system. [...] If we see the Arts as an expression of the human condition then what right do we have to deny that to any person? [...] They should not be an optional extra for any person, let alone for any school,”* reflects the Head Teacher, Kevin McDonnell.

Learners engage in creative art forms throughout their time at Stormont House School. Rather than asking learners to select and specialise in one creative subject as they get older, learners continue to have a range of opportunities available each week from which they may choose, allowing them to take risks with their own creativity.

### Broader Learning Objectives

Not only do Arts & Cultural Activities provide learners with a way to express themselves, they also foster learners’ *“empowerment and a sense of self”* as Ryan McClelland, from The Bridge School, puts it. The Arts should be seen as an *“integral, necessary part of anyone’s life”* reflects Daryl Beeton, London Regional Programme Manager at Drake Music.

Theatre programmes, for instance, are used to deliver a multitude of broad learning objectives. Dominic Fitch and Joanne Skapinker, Creative Director and Festival Coordinator respectively, suggest that working on a production as part of Shakespeare Schools Festival allows SEN learners the opportunity to develop *“communication, confidence, collaboration, teamwork, literacy and storytelling”* skills and competencies. Jodi-Alissa Bickerton, Creative Learning Director at Graeae Theatre Company, similarly remarks *“Through drama you are building self-esteem, confidence, teamwork – all those crucial things you need in life.”*

However, these skills are not confined to those learners involved in acting necessarily. Organisations like Graeae and the National Theatre suggest that a theatre project that takes into account different learners’ needs and preferences should involve opportunities to look at other elements of theatre production – theatre design, for instance. Indeed, these opportunities may sometimes prove to be more accessible for SEN learners who don’t engage verbally, for example.

*“I saw a huge change in my son when he participated in theatre. His confidence is through the roof – not only when he is performing but also in everyday life. He was just more positive and more relaxed,”* recalls Anne, a parent of a Phoenix School pupil.

Arts & Cultural Activities also create an awareness in the pupils that *“there is more in the outside world than just what they are learning in lessons,”* allowing them to learn about their identity and sense of self, as Niall Deegan, Art & Design Subject Leader at Woodlane High School, puts it.

For Jodi-Alissa Bickerton of Graeae Theatre, Arts & Cultural Provision allows SEN learners a sense of expression, giving them a voice to explore their identity. *“Who am I and how do I fit into this world? Those sort of questions,”* she proposes.

Jenny Mollica, Head of Learning and Participation, at the Barbican maintains “*artistic work [with SEN learners] can have a profound effect on how they engage with the world around them and how they feel about themselves.*”

Lorraine, Parent at Phoenix School

*“My son took part in a long term theatre project and I observed many changes in him throughout the months of rehearsing. He has learnt how to be a team player and work towards a goal. He has learnt how to apply himself thoroughly to a task, pushing himself to his limit and sometimes beyond. There has been a marked difference in his behaviour with him showing better understanding and displaying a more positive and mature outlook [...] As a result of the training and rehearsing, he has developed self discipline and is now more willing to sit and focus on a task and confident enough to think up and suggest his own ideas.*

*Giving him the chance to perform in the [...] music event has done wonders for his ego and how he looks at himself. He enjoys performing and appreciates an audience watching him. A year ago he stood up in front of the whole School and parents and sang a song. This is something I never dreamed he would ever want to do or have the courage to do.*

*[After a film project he did] he insisted we buy him a camcorder for Christmas and now films everyone in the house as he wants to make movies and he has recently set up his own YouTube account, as he wants to share his thoughts with viewers. He knows what he wants to do, enjoys it and as a result is a happier boy.”*

Both the Barbican and Bow Arts say that teachers have reported that work on their projects has had a motivating effect on other areas of pupils’ lives and has in fact increased the attendance of pupils who were previously “*school refusers.*”

*“For some individuals it genuinely has a profound effect on how they are engaging with the world around them and how they feel about themselves [...] it affects their motivation and engagement with school [...] it allows them to see just a little bit beyond their daily routine,”* remarks Jenny Mollica of the Barbican. *“I think it can often have an even more profound effect on pupils’ identities or sense of self in a SEN context,”* she adds. Jenny recalls working a few years ago with a student on their photography ‘Art Book’ Project. *“He had very severe learning difficulties,”* she says *“but through the project we discovered that photography was a way in which to engage him. Now he doesn’t go around school without a camera around his neck. So through his camera lens, he is now engaging more in school.”*

Katharine Hoare, Schools and Young Audiences Education Manager at the British Museum, insists, *“The ‘lesson’ is not the only learning they are getting from the visit. The whole day is a learning opportunity and an opportunity to demonstrate a response in some way. Going up the stairs is a PE lesson in itself, getting on the bus teaches them about transportation, etcetera.”*

Many schools stated that partnerships with outside Arts & Cultural Organisations enable their learners to engage with people they are not used to interacting with on a daily basis and so greatly helped their social skills. *“It is important for our students to meet people outside their normal routine. Sometimes, they can live in such a bubble,”*

suggests Shanta Amdurer, Creative Arts Coordinator at Oak Lodge School. In this way, Arts & Cultural Activities are often exercises in interaction. Paul Pearce, Music Teacher at St Giles School, notes that no matter how much planning goes into a project it is the “*moments of interaction between children and artists*” that determine the quality of the project.

Arts & Cultural Activities can be seen as giving learners the chance to generalise their learning: practising what they learn in the classroom in a different context, with different people. Chris Elford, Deputy Head Teacher at Stormont House School, suggests “*The Arts can offer the visual and sensory experience that we can’t offer them in normal school environments.*” “*We can offer a different style activity focused more on the informal side of learning,*” asserts Claire Hazell, a Team Leader at the Science Museum. Jenny Mollica, from the Barbican agrees, commenting “*the world of a SEN learner can sometimes feel 'small' - creative projects have the potential to open up new perspectives on the world.*” For the Tate, this is about using the resources in the gallery to “*make connections with what the pupils already know [... rather than] telling people what they should or shouldn’t know about Art,*” notes Amy McKelvie, Schools and Teachers Curator.

#### Woodlane High School

Woodlane High School has had a long-standing engagement with the Tate Britain, visiting the museum on a regular basis. Niall Deegan, Art & Design Subject Leader, thinks that most importantly the museum offers good accessibility and has sympathetic and supportive staff. Trips are planned to exhibitions with themes that are directly relevant to areas already being studied in Art. For this reason, organisations like the Tate that publicise their programming well in advance are much valued.

Niall suggests that in planning a visit it is important for the teachers to scout out galleries before a trip, not only to ensure accessibility requirements are met, but also to familiarise themselves with the artwork and to plan a suitable trail of activities around the gallery. At the Tate, studios and computer labs are available to the school where his students create a visual response to the work they have seen, in order to bring a memento of the day back to school with them.

As Tracy Edwards, Associate Director of the Research Department at Swiss Cottage School, remarks, “*It extends the range of experiences that children and young people have of the world and it increases practitioners’ repertoire of ways in which to unlock the potential of individual learners with whom there may be barriers to connection and engagement.*” Outside practitioners, she observes, “*Establish new and creative ways of addressing the learning objectives that I wouldn’t have come up with myself.*” So, for instance, for learners with PMLD (Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties) who are learning how to respond to their own name, an Arts Practitioner may offer new creative ways in which they may be able to demonstrate this response.

#### The Vale School

At The Vale School, “*Arts are central to learning and exploration [...] Arts and the curriculum are not separate; the Arts are the curriculum,*” reflects Gillian Weale, Deputy Head Teacher. Partnerships with external Arts & Cultural Organisations are viewed as a central teaching tool that is woven into the fabric of their curriculum. A



range of Arts & Cultural partners are brought in to work with learners on the school's shared curriculum themes.

Why bring in external partners? *"Work with Arts organisations contributes to pupils' exploration of the world. It provides a sensory world for them to learn through. SEN pupils don't learn through counting and reading, they learn through sensory exploration, smell, sight, touch and movement,"* Gillian insists. These creative methodologies *"filter into our teachers' pedagogies [...] adding a different dimension to their teaching."*

Whilst for some learners, a familiar space at school can sometimes be most productive, in the case of off-site activities, it is often the very act of *"Being in a different space and place, away from their own environment"* that provides the greatest learning opportunities reflects Amy McKelvie, of the Tate. *"We don't replace what happens at school – we are providing a different learning environment,"* Amy adds.

Anne, a parent of a Phoenix School pupil, agrees, saying, *"Often being outside the classroom is a really good thing. It gives them the opportunity to work with different people and work in a different environment."*

Anne Ogazi, SEND Programme Coordinator at the V&A Museum of Childhood, suggests, *"It's not about replicating the whole school experience. It's a different environment so we can give them different experiences, the opportunity to handle objects for instance, and they can meet different people."*

#### British Museum

The British Museum offers Taught Handling Workshops for SEN Schools that are delivered through well-resourced 'sensory boxes'. These boxes include a diverse range of tactile handling materials, from replica statues to touch, to perfumes to smell, as well as visual imagery and opportunities for listening and discussion.

Katharine Hoare, Schools and Young Audiences Education Manager, suggests learners are able to access a certain type of learning at the Museum that would be impossible at school. *"It's not a case of me knowing your pupils better than you, but it's a case of me knowing my resources and what they can offer your pupils,"* she says.

In consulting with teachers before each session, practitioners at the Museum seek to ensure they are *"mirroring what the teachers are aiming to encourage;"* a verbal response, for instance. Katharine explains that she even knows *"the points in the museum where we will get the best responses from learners; coming around the corner where there is a blast of cold air, or a bright light"* that will often evoke a response.



The Museum's website also has downloadable resources for SEN teachers; with practical tips and advice for planning a trip, ideas for curricular links, suggested activities for the galleries and social stories to prepare learners for their trip.

A few interviewees also mentioned that engaging in a range of Arts & Cultural Activities allows SEN learners to engage with their own Arts & Cultural taste, their likes and dislikes. Anne, a parent, says, *"It's giving them the opportunity to express what they like and what they don't like that's important – we shouldn't assume they won't like something. Especially with my son; his tastes changed as he has got older. In a sense being pushed to do things, even if it ends up being a bad experience, is a good thing."*

Chris Elford, from Stormont House School, comments that the school values projects where learners are able *"to make opinions and decisions."* At some schools, Arts & Cultural Activities are run that some of their learners perhaps won't like so much, *"but it is important for the children to decide what they dislike and like and form an opinion on it,"* as Vee McLaughlin, Art Teacher at St Giles School, puts it. Amy McKelvie at the Tate adds that fundamental to the success of any Arts & Cultural Activity is the ability *"to be affirmed by your peers about your interpretation."*

Jodi-Alissa Bickerton of Graeae Theatre believes it is often very effective for *"teachers [to] take part as a participant rather than as a disciplinarian."* In this way, it is important not to underappreciate the fact that Arts & Cultural Activities often offer a shared experience between learners and teachers, *"a creative outlet for them [teachers] to engage with their young people,"* as Dominic Fitch from Shakespeare Schools Festival puts it. Veronica Armson, Senior Deputy Head Teacher of Phoenix School, stresses that Arts & Culture provide an opportunity for teachers to take on a role as co-participants and co-create work with learners.

Furthermore, some students might aspire to careers in the Arts & Cultural sector and arranging different activities allows them to get a sense of different career paths that might lead to work experience opportunities.

### Curricular Links

For many learners, access to Arts & Cultural Activities allows for an experiential approach that is a prerequisite to their learning. As many students engage through the Arts, *"It's a way in"* to engaging in the curriculum asserts Ryan McClelland, of The Bridge School. This means many SEN Schools adopt a creative curriculum throughout their school ethos, using Arts, Music, Drama and Dance to support and deliver the whole curriculum rather than solely through the discrete Expressive Arts subject areas.

The possibilities of a creative curriculum are endless. The schools and Arts & Cultural Organisations interviewed show an impressive range of approaches and techniques. For instance, Step Into Dance, uses the physicality of dance with learners who have physical disabilities *"as a way for them to learn about their bodies,"* comments Sue Goodman, Programme and Artistic Director. This enables learners to creatively push their own perceptions about what they can and can't do. Equally, for non-verbal pupils *"Dance is a means of communication and self-expression,"* she remarks.

Similarly, a Drama project may be used in different contexts for very different outcomes. In a role play context, *“Acting out in a safe environment enables pupils to reflect on real life and become more effective in dealings with others,”* remarks Stewart Harris, from Phoenix School. Alternatively, a theatre activity which is more performance focused might be designed towards developing learners’ confidence, presentation and social skills.

Various schools utilise Drama activities, such as role play and puppetry, in PSHE lessons whilst St Giles School uses musical instruments to teach about the senses as part of the Science curriculum and often incorporates music into PE lessons. Stormont House School has initiated creative projects in Science, such as using tessellations to explore what you can see under the microscope and has painted test tubes and petri dishes to help pupils learn the vocabulary of Science. Bow Arts has in the past used the creative outputs of an activity at Phoenix School in a project to support enterprise initiatives, whilst Phoenix and The Vale Schools have also worked with an external Practitioner to create multi-sensory, cross-Arts installations to support the Science and Maths curricula.

Stewart Harris, of Phoenix School, claims Arts & Cultural Activities that *“provide a hook for other activities”* in the classroom are really valued. *“They are often using the visit as a springboard for a project they are doing back at school. So it shouldn’t just stop when they leave the museum,”* comments Anne Ogazi, from the V&A Museum of Childhood.

Most Arts & Cultural Organisations, including Shakespeare Schools Festival for instance, actively assist teachers with linking the activities either to curricular requirements or to broader learning objectives. In some schools, the curriculum links they can garner from an Arts & Cultural Activity mean they actively seek an Arts & Cultural Organisation that may have a programme of work that is directly linked to an existing scheme of work. Others will work in the opposite fashion, developing a term’s worth of work around a theme that is being offered by an Arts & Cultural Organisation or, will design an ongoing in-house creative project around the termly theme that might be being followed by the whole school.

Many Arts & Cultural Organisations match their work with the National Curriculum but equally many don’t. *“It’s about providing an alternative learning environment, not about telling teachers what to teach,”* reflects Amy McKelvie from the Tate.

Kevin McDonnell, Head Teacher of Stormont House School, warns, *“You are not going to be able to tie Maths attainment with learning to juggle. Of course there is research in that area but there is no point bothering yourself with that.”*

Whilst a creative approach was highly valued amongst interviewees for the curricular links it may support, most Arts & Cultural Organisations report that SEN Schools are not overly bogged down in wanting a project to deliver very specific curriculum aims more than exploring the general theme that a class, or the whole school, might be following.

Many organisations find their work with SEN Schools more fulfilling precisely because they are not as concerned with curricular focus as mainstream and they can, therefore,

be much more open to creative risk taking. *“The possibilities always feel a bit more endless with SEN,”* suggests Jenny Mollica of the Barbican. *“Whereas, for mainstream, the teacher will have a real game plan about where the project sits within the broader curriculum and so it’s bound by a specific time-frame and assessment needs, for SEN there isn’t that imperative on results,”* she adds. *“For SEN it’s more about the overall experience of the day,”* says Anne Ogazi of the V&A Museum of Childhood.

## **Shaping Activities to Provide Access to Learning**

The disadvantage faced by SEN learners in accessing Arts & Culture is sometimes overlooked. Whilst Arts & Cultural Activities demonstrate great opportunity for SEN learners to access broader learning objectives, personal development targets and curriculum aims, there are many physical, cognitive and emotional barriers to access that may arise.

Katharine Hoare from the British Museum points out, *“It doesn’t matter who you are or what your needs are [...] If you come as a learner you should be able to access the galleries.”* If Arts & Cultural Activities are to provide such access to learning, they need to be shaped correctly in order to overcome these barriers to access. However, overcoming these barriers in order to create access for SEN learners needs to be recognised as being the joint responsibility of Arts & Cultural Organisations and SEN Schools.

### **Physical Barriers**

Interviewees expressed that physical access requirements remain a large barrier to SEN learners accessing Arts & Cultural Activities. First and foremost, most schools comment that transport and travel limitations are often a deal breaker. For St Giles School, for instance, off-site trips involve bringing the minibus, complete with bed and hoist, along with a nurse who has to be taken off-timetable from the school. Many schools describe finding accessible minibus parking as being one of the major barriers to an off-site trip. For this reason, the location of the school and the availability of nearby Arts & Cultural Organisations sometimes determine what activities their learners will be able to access.

Although most schools in London have wonderful access to different activities, within the capital there is an enormous disparity in how many activities schools are feasibly able to provide suitable transport to and from. Moreover, because many learners are not local to SEN Schools and require afterschool buses to get home, afterschool or weekend Arts & Cultural Activities are not particularly easy for SEN Schools to provide.

Schools tend to look for a variety of on- and off-site opportunities for their learners. On-site activities also allow schools the flexibility of all their own equipment and the opportunity for students to move to somewhere more suitable if they are not engaging with the project. This, combined with physical access and transport limitations, means that for some schools *“it is easier for people to come and do sessions here but it doesn’t mean we prefer it,”* remarks Paul Pearce of St Giles School. *“We want the community to come into the school but we also want our students to get out into the community,”* explains Sally Adams, Head of Humanities at Oak Lodge School.

Schools who have learners who, for whatever reason, are unable to go off-site struggle more than others to work on projects with external partners. For these learners Ryan McClelland, from The Bridge School, suggests that inclusive practice comes from having some sort of school outreach.

Jenny Mollica, from the Barbican stresses the advantages of workshops in schools, *“Sometimes the artist coming into a school is an exceptional moment.”*

Ideally the outreach model would include visits to a school before and after activities or programmes of work, however, budgetary and funding limitations often preclude this possibility at many Arts & Cultural Organisations.

Once a SEN school group arrives at an Arts & Cultural Organisation, physical access may still be limited by a lack of wheelchair ramps and lifts, for instance. Some Arts & Cultural Organisations demonstrate a willingness to adapt their space and/or invest in new equipment. The British Museum, for instance, will provide small hand-held screens for learners to follow any visual slideshow presentations.

On other occasions such adaptations might not be possible because of funding, space or other organisational limitations. A school trip to the theatre, for example, may be impossible if there are only a handful of wheelchair spaces that, tending to be at the back, are unsuitable for learners with visual and hearing problems.

In practice, this means that many teachers will scout out the facilities available prior to any off-site trip in order to work out appropriate physical access routes that may be suitable for their learners. Some Arts & Cultural Organisations are able to meet with teachers on such a trip whilst others may be willing to provide further information and resources at a reception desk. Staff limitations at other Organisations might preclude these possibilities. For this reason, teachers stressed the importance of Arts & Cultural Organisations listing the full range of their access facilities on their website. Some organisations have studios, computer rooms and access lifts that may greatly assist teachers. Nonetheless, this may not be made as clear as it could be on their promotional platforms and is sometimes missed by teachers.

On this note, many SEN Schools also really valued the use of a lunch room, or similar, where they could bring their learners at any point throughout the visit. Organisations like the Tate are often able to provide such a lunch or studio space for learners to rest or attend to personal needs.

Providing access to Arts & Cultural Activities is about much more than simply considering means of improving physical access to facilities. Sometimes providing access to learners with physical disabilities means adapting the physical nature of the Arts & Cultural Activity in question. A great example of this, at St Giles School, is the adaptation of a painting activity for learners unable to hold a paintbrush, but who, nonetheless, are dexterous in controlling their wheelchairs. A room was covered in paper, and remote controlled cars were dipped in paint of different colours, with the learners then able to paint through remote control.

### Cognitive and Emotional Barriers

For many SEN learners, thinking about the cognitive and emotional access to the activity is as imperative as thinking about physical access needs. *"You have got to know how to enable them to learn,"* comments Katharine Hoare of the British Museum.

A broad range of tools and approaches can be used to provide cognitive and emotional access. Jodi-Alissa Bickerton of Graeae Theatre comments that, *"It's necessary to have a toolkit of different tools to adapt to different ways of working. It's not saying this is how you work with a blind person [in any sort of definitive way...] Having a toolkit*

*for working inclusively is just about working responsively, and having things up your sleeve.”*

#### Graeae Theatre Company

Jodi-Alissa Bickerton, Creative Learning Director, describes the “Aesthetics of Access” that drives Graeae Theatre’s work. This translates into theatrical and educational processes that are inclusive from the outset, taking into account various ‘tools’ of access. These tools include, for example, disability awareness, inclusive language, using visual language for audio description, sign language, creative captioning, developing trust and maintaining openness to different learning styles.

*“So many people use the words ‘diversity’ and ‘inclusivity’ but their understanding of those terms are not our understanding of those terms,”* Jodi reflects.

For instance, *“We don’t compromise with venues - they always have to be wheelchair accessible [...] We don’t have specific ‘relaxed’ performances – they are all ‘relaxed’ performances.”*

In this report we have distilled the various and multiple ‘tools for access’, proposed by interviewees, into six main themes: creating a safe space, pre-project familiarisation, using sensory resources and visual aids, allowing suitable time for activities, focus on the holistic experience and flexibility & adaptability.

#### 1) *Creating a Safe Space*

Kathryn Allnutt, Programme Manager of Learning and Participation at Spitalfields Music, describes creating a safe space for SEN learners as *“Creating activities where there might be fewer risks and fewer potential points of failure than might be used for a mainstream class.”*

*“It’s about allowing students to take risks [...] but in a very safe way, with a safety net. It’s about offering young people choices - and allowing them to say no – but it might be a ‘not now’ rather than a ‘never’,”* reflects Ian Crighton, Education Manager at the British Museum.

Jenny Mollica, from the Barbican, also suggests that, *“It’s important that the students identify the organisation with a person”* so that they feel at ease. Allowing the time for learners to get to know external practitioners is, therefore, important in creating a safe space.

#### 2) *Pre-Project Familiarisation*

Off-site visits demand in-school preparation of learners, more so than perhaps would be necessary for mainstream. Having time for pre-project familiarisation where a teacher can lead the learners through a social story, or some sort of visual preparation for the trip, is invaluable.



### Tate

The Tate places a lot of emphasis on ensuring that their galleries are accessible to learners with SEN. “We want it to feel like this is a place for everyone,” explains Amy McKelvie, Curator for Schools and Teachers.

In November 2015, the Schools and Teachers team collaborated with Daytrippers and the artists Ben Connors, Katie Gaudion, Dean Atta and Ifeoma Orjiekwe, to host an event for over 100 young SEND learners called ‘Diggin’ the Gallery’. “*This event was the second within a two-year project seeking to broaden our understanding of, and engagement with, a pan-disability audience of young people and their teachers and carers,*” Amy says. The event saw the participants search for different textures in the gallery, ‘mine’ words from the building with the help of a poet, and create their own collages in response to their experience.

Drawn from the game Minecraft, artist Ben Connors worked alongside a SEN learner, who was exploring the galleries for the first time, to develop a map and survival guide to the galleries. In addition to the pre-existing resource packs that schools can access when they visit the Tate, this map will be available to all visiting SEN and non SEN groups to help them navigate, and feel at ease, in the space.

### 3) *Using Sensory Resources and Visual Aids*

Most Arts & Cultural Organisations like to use tactile, sensory materials for learners to engage with a topic. Organisations like the British Museum and Shakespeare Schools Festival also produce templates for accompanying visual timetables and social stories.

### Barbican

The Barbican adapts its ‘Barbican Box Project’ for SEN Schools. The project supports devised theatre making in schools, with a box of physical learning resources that is sent to schools with everything they might need for the programme.

“The style of object-based learning has proven to be very stimulating for SEN groups,” reports Jenny Mollica, Head of Learning & Participation. As such, only minor adaptations to the mainstream programme have been required for their SEN learners. “It is a very similar learning process but we focus on just one or two aspects of the box,” Jenny says. Some of these objects are substituted and an alternate set of teaching resources, that more suitably supports the SEN learners, are used.

There are more opportunities for Barbican staff to sit in and observe sessions for SEN learners, compared to their mainstream counterparts. This means that staff members are able to get to know each of the SEN learners individually. Not only does this mean the needs of the group can be better addressed, but also they are able to greet them personally when they arrive in the unfamiliar surroundings of the theatre.

“We have a very different feel to the performance day – we curate it very differently for the SEN Schools,” Jenny adds. This is largely about making the whole experience less stressful – dispensing of the need for a ‘tech’ run and ensuring a supportive audience of other schools.

As the majority of Arts & Cultural Organisations already provide interactive resources for mainstream learners, sometimes adapting for SEN learners means using the resources in different ways rather than using different resources altogether.

Furthermore, whilst many organisations deliver excellent hands-on, experiential and sensory-led activities, Ryan McClelland, of The Bridge School, warns “*some educators struggle to deliver sensory work in a non-patronising way.*” Making a project hands-on does not necessarily make it accessible to each and every learner.

Tracy Edwards, from Swiss Cottage School, stresses that it is important that “*the spectacle of sensory learning activities [...does not] obscure the needs of young people.*” Sometimes the learners become “*like a prop in an elaborate piece of theatre,*” Tracy comments, with a project fulfilling the aspirations of the practitioner more than the needs of the student. Sometimes, an empty room is just as useful a resource as tactile objects, if it can allow for solid learning for the young person.

#### 4) *Allowing Suitable Time for Activities*

Whilst this may seem obvious, a significant number of schools report many projects where SEN learners are given the same amount of time to complete tasks afforded to mainstream pupils. Chris Elford, of Stormont House School, warns that in such cases they sometimes “*end up without creating a product and you are sort of left with no output at the end.*” Indeed, Anne, a parent of a Phoenix School pupil, insists that “*it’s important to have something tangible to actually take away.*” Not doing so can make an activity feel incomplete and unrewarding to learners. This does not, however, mean compromising on the programme, nor the high expectations, of SEN learners.

Organisations like the Tate, rather than reducing the number of activities they will do with a SEN group, provides day-long workshops to SEN groups in comparison to the 90 minute slots given to mainstream classes. In terms of expectations, Kathryn Allnutt, from Spitalfields Music, insists that this is “*not lowering expectations because it is a SEN setting but delaying expectations, taking a slower road perhaps.*”

#### 5) *Focus on the Holistic Experience*

The experiential nature of Arts & Cultural Activities means that, for an activity to be successful, the whole experience needs to be designed to be as stress-free as possible. “*It’s about creating a positive experience – anything else they get out of it is a bonus,*” observes Anne Ogazi of the V&A Museum of Childhood. Kathryn Allnutt, of Spitalfields Music, describes this process as “*enabling pupils to get into the right headspace.*”

Common stresses that may arise on an off-site trip include; not having suitable lunch room facilities, insufficiently trained staff not being able to cater for the needs of SEN pupils, and complaints from the general public for the perceived disruption caused by SEN school groups. Some schools also reported that sometimes on off-site visits, their SEN learners are followed around by untrained staff in quite a militant manner which can sometimes irreparably damage the atmosphere of the trip. These problems all need tactful addressing, in order to ensure a relaxed and productive day out for learners.



The atmosphere created on a trip is so important to Oak Lodge School that, where possible, they will carefully plan the details of their arrival with the Arts & Cultural Organisation. A good welcome, with external staff ready to meet them at the entrance, puts learners at ease and makes for a good trip.

Positively, Arts & Cultural Organisations are starting to take this on board and are providing training in inclusive practice and disability awareness to all their staff, not only facilitators but also to receptionists and security guards, for instance. Practitioners working with SEN groups are simultaneously modelling to other frontline colleagues and support staff how best to engage with SEN learners. This training, both formal and informal, not only supports staff in better interacting with SEN school groups but also in suitably dealing with complaints from members of the general public. Sadly, several Organisations reported complaints about noise levels, and even about wheelchairs taking up too much lift space. Such complaints are often best dealt with by explaining to the concerned member of the public the Organisations' commitment to the inclusion of SEN learners.

#### 6) *Flexibility & Adaptability*

Fundamentally, it must be stressed that providing cognitive and emotional access should not be a one size fits all approach. It is important that Arts & Cultural Activities take account of the SEN diversity across different learners and are flexible and adaptable enough to offer differentiated sessions accordingly. In this, it is also important that activities cater both to SEN learners from SEN Schools as well as to SEN learners from mainstream schools.

Schools overwhelmingly decide whether or not to work with Arts & Cultural Organisations according to their adaptability and flexibility to fulfil the learning needs of their learners. Tracy Edwards, of Swiss Cottage School, states that *"It's not a one size fits all approach – their offer needs to be bespoke and offer flexibility."*

The external practitioners need to be very flexible, for example, in pitching things at the right level, making sure they use appropriate language that learners will understand and using visual stimuli. Amy McKelvie, from The Tate, describes how there should be *"a push and pull between providing challenge and support [...] it's about getting that dynamic right."*

In this, it is also important the Arts & Cultural Organisations are not too precious about their art-form, their work or its structure. This means, for example, that Dance might be adapted to be 'merely' about a learner moving their head or lifting their arm. Some schools, for instance, pointed out that a performance could easily be interrupted because of the medical needs of the learners. Indeed, Organisations like Drake Music insist that considering the time it takes for personal care and moving from one space to another, is crucial to the successful planning of a project because the *"music-making contact time is reduced"* says Daryl Beeton.

Sometimes it is just about not being precious with what the Arts & Cultural Organisation, or the teacher, expects the impact of a project will be because learners may take a wholly different impact away from the exercise. A teacher or practitioner might think they know what will work, but many reported often seeing something happen that they didn't expect.

Activities need not only to be designed in a flexible way, but also be implemented and delivered as such. To have truly adaptable practice within the classroom is to have “*a structure there but for the learners not to realise there is a structure there,*” comments Ryan McClelland, from The Bridge School.

A strong example of this approach is Drake Music. The organisation has a rough outline of various projects available for schools, which are then honed into bespoke programmes based on the needs of the learners. Whilst they plan extensively at the start of a project, their week by week plan will have only “*a bit of a heading for each session that allows the programme to develop organically,*” Daryl Beeton notes. Similarly, Bow Arts has no ‘off-the-shelf’ programmes; each is designed in response to specific requests from schools.

In other instances, where Arts & Cultural Organisations are not so flexible, “*Inclusion can be so tokenistic that it can actually be exclusionary,*” comments Tracy Edwards, from Swiss Cottage School. In this way it is important both for Organisations and schools to acknowledge, and accept, when an Arts & Cultural Activity won’t be suitable for a group.

In one example, Swiss Cottage School decided that the proposed inclusion of their PMLD (Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties) learners in a fashion show would be unsuitable, tokenistic and disrespectful. A multi-sensory installation that explored the same themes as the fashion show was deemed to be more suitable for meaningful inclusion.

Paul Pearce, from St Giles School, adds, “*for children and young adults with PMLD, a trip into the community can be just as valuable as going to an art gallery. Schools and art galleries can both provide high quality art activities. Alongside this, children and young people are entitled to be immersed in the culture of their local community. Each experience needs to be appropriate to their point of learning and to provide opportunities for interaction.*” For this reason, schools may sometimes only be willing to partner with Arts & Cultural Organisations for projects with some of their learners, but may seek different partners for others, depending on the intended outcomes for each project.

On other occasions, such as when a teacher is trying to plan a whole-school initiative, planning for a wide audience is welcomed rather than bespoke packages for different pupils. At St Giles School, for instance, flexibility is provided by having various different ‘stations’ of different activities available for learners with different needs and interests, but all within the same room. A similar approach is used at Stormont House School, where during weekly Expressive Arts afternoons, Key Stage 3 learners are given a choice of activities to attend.

## Capital

### Exploiting Schools' Internal and External Resources.

Schools carry with them a great deal of 'capital'. By this we mean the resources already at their disposal that may help them with the provision of Arts & Cultural Activities. Broadly speaking, these can be considered as two discrete, but overlapping, categories: 'In-House Cultural Capital' and 'External Social Capital'.

#### In-House Cultural Capital

We use the term 'In-House Cultural Capital' to describe the Cultural resources and expertise schools already have within their own communities. Gone are the days where 'Art' is purely seen as residing in the Art Room in the sole preserve of the Art teacher. In the current funding climate, schools are increasingly using teachers', parents' and learners' own creativity to create their own in-house Arts & Cultural programmes.

In addition, some schools have, or would like to have, Arts practitioners within the school staff and governance. Rick Nunn, Expressive Arts Coordinator from Phoenix School, suggests that schools could be more flexible when employing teachers who are also artists in their own right – schools should *"allow teachers to be artists as well as teachers,"* he says.

#### Swiss Cottage School

Swiss Cottage places a great deal of focus on *"using the Arts & Cultural capital within our school community,"* with teachers and parents leading, and running, a diverse range of activities from knitting to Bollywood dancing.

Tracy Edwards, Associate Director of the Research Department, estimates that about 60% of the Arts & Cultural Activities for learners is created in-house, utilising the Arts & Cultural resources and expertise of the school community to offer learners activities that might not be financially possible otherwise.

The school's annual international evening, for example, is a huge event that is preceded by small 'satellite' activities. This programme engages the whole school across the age range and SEN diversity and celebrates the Cultural capital of the schools' learners, staff and families.

Although, such initiatives are sometimes planned at a school-wide level, at other times the school's organisational 'nest' model assists with how these activities are planned to be most suitable to learners' needs.

A 'nest', rather than a year-band, is formed with two or three classes with learners of similar needs, though not necessarily of similar ages. The grouping together of classes into 'nests' means that class teachers have greater autonomy and resources at their disposal both to create in-house Arts & Cultural Activities, and to share the expertise of visiting, external Practitioners, that are most suitable to their learners' needs.

### External Social Capital

We define 'External Social Capital' as the network of external contacts that schools have at their disposal to assist them with their provision of Arts & Cultural Activities. These may include, for instance, a close working relationship with external networks, a school governor with philanthropic or Arts & Cultural connections, or simply nearby neighbours who are willing to offer their time or facilities.

St Giles School offers good examples of different Arts & Cultural Activities that are led by local community members rather than established Arts & Cultural Organisations. These include projects such as a Diwali celebration workshop that was developed in collaboration with volunteers from a local Hindu temple and a performance project facilitated by students on placement from a local performing arts school. Utilising such community links has the added benefit of, for example, engaging SEN learners in the community outside the school gates and such projects are also likely to be more feasible financially.

Some schools make good use of various networks, advisory groups and panels by asking a teacher representative to sit in on such meetings. Schools in the Borough of Camden for instance, are able to make use of the Camden Cultural Commissioning Model, a mechanism through which schools and Cultural Organisations are brought together to work on proposed Cultural Activities for learners. Other schools will make use of informal contacts. In our interviews, we found that these informal partnerships ranged from staff collaborating with social connections to garner corporate sponsorship to just negotiating minibus parking for Arts & Cultural Activities in Central London.

#### The Bridge School

The Bridge School offers an excellent example of developing partnerships with a diverse range of external partners. For instance, they have a long running programme in the Visual Arts with Camden Art Centre in which they also collaborate with Swiss Cottage School and The Village School. The project culminates in an exhibition of students' work in June / July each year where school exchange events, parents and family days and public days are held. They have also worked on numerous projects with Art on the Underground, the Shakespeare Schools Festival, Step Into Dance, Drake Music and Corali Dance.

Ryan McClelland, Art and Senior Teacher at The Bridge School, warns that in trying to develop external contacts, *"Knocking at the door of the closest Arts organisation can sometimes be the wrong approach."* That is not to say that local institutions should not be approached, as many SEN Schools have very successful relationships with nearby organisations, but that they might not necessarily be the best fit.

## Investing

### Resourcing Arts & Cultural Activities

It is widely accepted that Arts & Cultural Activities for SEN learners are more dependent on resources (finances, time and staffing) than such provision for mainstream. It is important not to underestimate the additional time requirements, logistical and transport needs, financial resources, materials and technological needs required to make an Arts & Cultural Activity meaningful for SEN learners.

First and foremost, this extra resourcing has financial implications. For many SEN Schools, Arts and Culture, in one form or another, represents a very high proportion of their expenditure. This is connected to the fact that Arts & Cultural Activities are seen as key to the delivery of SEN education. Whilst SEN Schools budget very differently for Arts & Cultural Activities, most are increasingly having to justify financing Arts & Cultural Provision.

Networks and other organisations are well placed to support schools in justifying the need for Arts & Cultural Provision. Reasons why Arts & Cultural Activities are important for SEN learners are discussed in the *Access* chapter. Examples of how schools are linking investment in Arts & Cultural Activities to curriculum and SMSC (Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural) requirements can be found in the *Framing* chapter.

### Value for Money

Regardless of cost the majority of schools commented that it was important that projects provide value for money to the school. Whether an Arts & Cultural Activity provides value for money is most easily judged on the learners' experiences and responses.

Kevin McDonnell, from Stormont House School, suggests that a partnership with an external Arts & Cultural Organisation is about bringing in expertise that the school does not already offer. "Why would you expect expert teachers also to be expert ceramicists or expert dancers?" he says. Daryl Beeton, from Drake Music, reflects that from an Arts & Cultural Organisation's standpoint this means, "*you have to prove that what you are doing is something on top of what schools already provide.*"

Chris Elford, from Stormont House School, insists that it is important to prioritise. "*Sometimes a project might be good to have but you don't necessarily need it.*" Vee McLaughlin, from St Giles School, comments that "*things don't need to be expensive to have an impact at all [...] We are not looking for an organisation's brand name – we are looking for something experiential.*"

### Legacy – Professional Development

"*Legacy is something that is so important,*" says Jodi-Alissa Bickerton, from Graeae Theatre. Projects that leave a legacy, particularly those in which teachers are able to learn and develop new skills and techniques for their own teaching, are particularly valued by schools. Many Arts & Cultural Organisations are well aware of this expectation that their projects should provide a form of CPD for teachers, with some organisations going so far as running afterschool CPD sessions as part of their



workshop provision for SEN learners. *“It’s about empowering teachers to sustain it after the project,”* says Dominic Fitch of Shakespeare Schools Festival.

Spitalfields Music, for instance, consults with schools about their CPD needs right at the outset of the planning stage whilst Drake Music works with SEN teachers on new ways of delivering the music-curriculum through CPD training as well as through the co-delivery of lessons. The National Theatre offers a different model, providing teacher training days before any programme or workshops are available to SEN learners. These are not only focused on offering teachers professional development but also assist teachers in mapping the National’s activities to what they might be doing in the classroom.

In certain cases, this legacy of professional development may be less tangible than the teaching of new skills or techniques but may simply be about letting teachers experiment with their own creativity.

Veronica Armson, of Phoenix School, believes that *“Arts & Cultural Activities with outside organisations enable teachers to work and learn alongside pupils and share and experience [...] it helps teachers to develop their own creative practice”* which then feeds into their own classroom teaching after the project is finished.

### Legacy – Resource Packs

Whilst it was recognised that resource packs are improving, resource packs are not valued to the extent you might imagine. Some teachers will use resource packs as a very rough guide simply to know what they might expect on the day of an off-site trip; others may use a resource pack as a quick reference for inspiration to start creating a Scheme of Work. This is often because the learners’ needs are so varied anyway in SEN Schools, that any lesson plan will have to be modified so that it best suits the learners in the group. In this vein, some teachers would prefer a briefer, editable resource that offers more generalised suggestions rather than a full, in-depth resource pack that is difficult to adapt and edit.

More valuable than traditional resource packs are digital resources, such as those produced by the V&A Museum of Childhood. They offer online resources that can be downloaded and printed prior to a visit in addition to virtual tours of the museum to assist in familiarising learners with their upcoming visit. Moreover, although ‘making’ activities are included in the visits’ programming, the Museum is very diligent at putting these activities into goody bags if schools are unable to stay because of time restrictions. The National Theatre also offers video and audio materials that may be used in class to support learning, such as interviews and mini-documentaries with casts and production teams as well as their ‘On Demand’ resources that are available for secondary schools to stream productions online.

### Finding the Money

For Arts & Cultural Organisations, a large proportion of their time is spent on funding applications. Often, money for SEN work is ring-fenced, or comes from completely separate funding sources to those for mainstream education projects.

Arts & Cultural Organisations will sometimes be able to offer a wholly subsidised programme to SEN Schools but, more often than not, will offer partly funded projects

with schools asked to pay a contribution. Whilst this contribution is often asked for out of financial necessity, it also has the added benefit of ensuring schools are committed and fully on board. Many Arts & Cultural Organisations deliberately won't offer projects for free as free projects are often less valued by schools.

Having said that, a number of free Arts & Cultural Activities for schools do exist within London. Nevertheless, they are not necessarily as well publicised as they could be and are often booked up well in advance by those schools 'in the know'.

Arts & Cultural Organisations sometimes receive core funding for their SEN provision but often will receive funding for specific projects, often from trusts and foundations, but sometimes from corporate sponsorship agreements too.

Many more schools than before are using funding applications as an important means of financing their Arts & Cultural Activities that are not otherwise subsidised. Whilst this is a relatively new development in some schools, others have been doing this for a while and might even have a staff member who may assist, or mentor, other members of staff in applying for grant funding.

The external funding sources utilised by schools range from in-school charities, small trusts and foundations concerned with Culture and/or SEN, grants from networks to Heritage Lottery and European Commission funding. Many schools have realised that external funding may be linked to an awareness raising campaign, for instance, rather than something which is specifically tied to Arts & Cultural Provision.

Some schools also utilise pupil premium for creative endeavours. Some schools and Arts & Cultural Organisations receive funding from just one or two sources, others apply for smaller grants from more sources.

External funding is not necessarily sustainable. Especially when, for small grants, the time taken to fill out the application form often doesn't warrant the result. This, in turn, makes a more strategic approach to funding applications more appropriate.

Whilst some schools are able to fundraise, others do not have the capacity to do so and will only work with Arts & Cultural Activities organisations that have already sourced external funding or who offer a subsidised programme.

More stress is also being put on school PTAs (Parent Teacher Associations) and greater collaboration between teaching staff and the PTA on funding initiatives is proposed as a potential opportunity in this area. Some schools also send letters home to ask parents for voluntary contributions towards off-site visits.

On some occasions, finding means of saving money is more appropriate than fundraising. Some schools, for instance, make good use of the free Transport for London travel for school groups, though this is obviously unsuitable for many schools whose learners' access requirements might prohibit the use of public transportation.

Some funders are reported to hold quite narrow perceptions, both of what Arts & Culture means and what SEN needs are, which is sometimes out of step with Organisations' or Schools' core moral beliefs.

Both schools and Arts & Cultural Organisations reported that footfall is an issue when working with external funders. Whereas funding a mainstream school class might entail 30 students being involved in a project, funders are sometimes less willing to fund SEN groups because they are necessarily smaller. Additional work, therefore, needs to go into defending the case for working with smaller class sizes in SEN Arts & Cultural provision.

### Investing in Teachers

Other than monetary limitations, another large barrier to pupils engaging in Arts & Cultural Activities identified by schools was the time pressure teachers are under and the inability of schools to release teachers for planning, training and networking. Therefore, more than just monetary investment, successful Arts & Cultural Provision for SEN learners also requires schools' investment in staffing.

#### St Giles School

At St Giles School, *"we believe the most important thing is one-to-one interaction with pupils, not equipment and technology,"* notes Vee McLaughlin. Paul Pearce and Vee McLaughlin, the Music and Art leads respectively, are provided with a significant amount of time off-timetable to jointly plan and assist with Arts & Cultural Activities across the school. These activities are attended by an extremely high number of support staff, who are able to provide one-to-one support and mentoring to each individual learner. This high number of support staff enables them to adapt the activities in a unique way for each learner.

The investment in human resources means that the expectation in the school that the curriculum is delivered creatively is achieved above and beyond expectations. *"The teachers are really trusted to meet the needs of the learners in a creative way,"* reflects Vee.

The means of investment in staff is very different in different schools. Some schools approach this by directly appointing an Expressive Arts team that may each have different responsibilities. Others employ a Creative Arts Coordinator, whilst some have a member of senior management who holds Arts and/or Cultural experience.

What is crucial, however, is allowing teachers enough time off-timetable to plan and develop schools' Arts & Cultural Provision. At Oak Lodge School for instance, one member of staff is given two days a week off-timetable in order to co-ordinate the Creative Curriculum across the school, whilst a colleague similarly has one day a week to coordinate, and advise on, off-site trips. At Phoenix School, the Expressive Arts team is given common planning time, to coordinate the Arts & Cultural Provision.

These different approaches to staffing Arts & Cultural Activities have ramifications in how Arts & Culture is delivered. In some schools, the Arts & Cultural offering to students is delivered through dedicated Expressive Arts leads and teams, whereas in others Drama may be the preserve of the English Department or Dance and Circus Skills the PE Department, for example.

More work is needed to make sure *"Art isn't seen as something they only do when they go to Art,"* comments Tracy Edwards, from Swiss Cottage School. In this vein,



schools need to “*juggle between learners having access to Arts expertise and all teachers being Art teachers using their own creativity,*” as Tracy puts it. So whilst most schools have their own dedicated Arts staff, many schools are investing to also support class teachers who aren’t Arts specialists to use the Arts in their teaching. At The Bridge School in Islington, for instance, INSETS are run for non-specialist teachers by the Arts team.

### Investing in Support Staff

Investing in support staff was identified by many interviewees as being crucial to a project’s success. Dominic Fitch from Shakespeare Schools Festival suggests, for instance that “*the wider network of support staff in a school can make or break a show.*”

Sue Goodman, of Step Into Dance, believes that “*TAs [Teaching Assistants] should be more valued and this should be reflected in their salaries and the quality of recruitment,*” as they are an essential resource in the delivery of good Arts & Cultural practice.

This commitment to recruiting a good calibre of Teaching Assistants is shared by many schools. At The Bridge School, for instance, many support staff have an acting and musical background which is particularly useful to assist the classroom teachers in a creative way. Similarly, Phoenix School has an active policy to recruit Teaching Assistants who have careers in the Arts and offers teachers and Speech and Language Teaching Assistants Arts training as part of their INSET. These support staff members are then able to run creative ‘enrichment afternoons’ and participate in school wide Arts & Cultural Activities such as the school band.

In addition to investing in Teaching Assistants, many schools also bring in Art, Music and/or Drama therapists to support the curriculum.

### Bow Arts

Bow Arts is an education arts charity with a mission to take world-class artists into schools across London to improve the lives and learning of children and young people. Projects might include, for instance, a skills-led activity that works towards producing a final outcome, or more school improvement led interventions that support the delivery of the Maths curriculum, social skills or enterprise.

The Organisation places a great deal of emphasis on pre-planning and on consultation with teachers on the design of a project in order to support learners’ needs, curriculum links and Ofsted requirements. A comprehensive evaluation process is also embedded into their activities. Rob Smith, Head of Education & Learning, stresses that this pre- and post-project work is vital to an activity’s success. “*It’s important for schools to recognise what professional artists bring and put a value on planning and evaluation time with them,*” he suggests.

In addition, Rob insists that, “*Support staff are crucial and are key to relationships with children.*” For this reason, Bow Arts encourages teaching assistants to be actively involved from planning and delivery through to review and evaluation.

## Framing

### Marketing Arts & Cultural Activities in a SEN Context

In conducting this research, it was interesting to see the diverse approach Arts & Cultural Organisations take to marketing their work with schools for SEN learners. Some of the Arts & Cultural Organisation only regularly work with one or two SEN Schools in a year in addition to their mainstream programming, others' work involves a significant proportion of SEN Schools whilst some work exclusively with SEN groups.

Some Arts & Cultural Organisations market their work in this sector by explicitly using the 'SEN' label, highlighting the bespoke planning and consideration of SEN learners' needs. For some theatres and galleries, this means providing relaxed performances or relaxed mornings in order to give SEN learners the space and peace and quiet to fully engage in the activity.

#### V&A Museum of Childhood

The V&A Museum of Childhood offers 'quiet days', specifically for SEN learners, once a term. Each day has a different theme and free teaching sessions are available for school groups.

On an average day, the Museum is a very busy environment with school groups and young families, totalling an average of 600 students, going between the exhibits on a normal day. The acoustics of the space mean any inevitable noise is amplified. Whilst some SEN groups feel able to come in on general days, the Museum's 'quiet days' are necessary in order to enable SEN learners to experience the Museum in a calmer, less crowded environment. In running these days, the Museum hopes to build, and maintain, relationships with schools from nearby and further afield, especially those who might not have considered it practical to visit before.

These 'quiet days' are always oversubscribed. The Museum could likely fill another one or two dates a term but is unable to because of the high cost of funding these days. Nevertheless, numbers are tightly limited to 120 SEN students to keep noise at a level that is suitable for highly sensitive learners to have an enjoyable experience.

Other organisations take an alternative approach, regarding their schools programming as being suitably flexible and adaptive to all learners' needs, SEN or not. They deliberately reject the 'SEN' label so as not to delineate their work with SEN learners as being any different from the 'mainstream'. In these cases, organisations may reject the premise of relaxed mornings for fear that this somehow alienates their SEN audiences and discourages them from accessing mainstream Arts & Culture along with members of the public.

However, sometimes this has the effect of turning away prospective SEN Schools who, not finding a 'SEN' section on a website, conclude that there must not be provision available for them. Therefore, like many Arts & Cultural Organisations, at the British Museum, "*We try to strike a balance between letting our audience know what we do [for SEN] and making the experience as similar to mainstream as possible,*" explains Katharine Hoare.

### Science Museum

The Science Museum's SEN provision is split between versatile mainstream programming that is easily adaptable to different learners' needs, and programming specifically designed for SEN learners.

Often SEN learners access the same activities at the Science Museum as their mainstream counterparts - including shows, activities in the galleries and workshop programmes. As the Science Museum has an inclusive policy for all of its activities, this core programming is able to be adapted and tailored to suit a specific group's needs, whether SEN or not.

In addition, the Museum also offers programmes specifically designed with SEN in mind. These include early morning sessions for families with children on the autistic spectrum, SIGNtific sessions which are led by a presenter using British Sign Language and Science Night Sleepovers. Also, one day per month the main interactive gallery is available only to SEN Schools in order to provide a higher level of staff assistance and a quieter environment.

### National Theatre

The vast majority of the National Theatre's work with SEN Schools is not branded as 'SEN' but comes from the same programme of work that is on offer to mainstream schools. As their schools programming is largely comprised of workshop style activities that are delivered to individual groups, the package for schools is continuously re-adapted to the different needs of different learners in the group, whether SEN or not. As Jackie Tait, Primary Programme Manager, explains SEN school groups have within them such a large diversity of needs that even if a standardised 'SEN' package was to be produced, it too would always need adapting to best suit the needs of each new group.

Therefore, their approach is to design all their programmes to be suitably adaptive and responsive to the needs of different learners, a process which begins with a comprehensive consultation period with teachers during the design stage of any new provision for schools.

However, an exception to this, a project where they offer something that is specific to SEN groups, is their 'Curious About Devising' workshop, a programme offered to SEN Schools, as well as to SEN units within mainstream schools. Beginning with the learners going to see the National's show 'The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time', a play that revolves around the central character's autism, the programme offers six two-hour long workshops that, week on week, build into a performance.

This different approach to how activities are framed has ramifications on programme delivery. For instance, whether an Organisation frames its work as being specifically 'SEN,' or an adaptation of their mainstream programme, affects their approach to staff training.

Some organisations do not offer any additional training as they value facilitators' flexibility and adaptability in their work with SEN learners. They argue that is no different from their work with mainstream learners and SEN experience is picked up

'on the job'. Others offer specialised training in inclusive practice and/or disability awareness to support staff in delivering in SEN contexts.

Many Arts & Cultural Organisations find it useful for their practitioners to have introductory training in SEN education, learning not only about ways of providing access but also about the P scales and basic sign language, for example. The Science Museum, for instance, offers comprehensive in-house training, opportunities for staff development through specialist organisations such as the National Autistic Society, and has staff with Makaton and Sign Language experience on the Learning Department Team.

It is useful to recognise that although different practitioners and SEN teachers may be more accustomed to one approach or the other, neither approach is inherently better than the other, and the decision to market programming as 'SEN' or not is bound by many other contextual factors.

## Packaging Arts & Cultural Activities for Learners, Parents, Funders, Accreditation and Ofsted

Arts & Cultural Organisations are not unique in their considerations of how best to frame their activities, with many schools also becoming very aware of how they 'frame' their own Arts & Cultural Activities. Whether a school or an Arts & Cultural Organisation, simply providing an Arts & Cultural activity is not enough. What students, parents, funders and Ofsted require is for the activity to be suitably contextually framed in order to offer the 'whole package'.

Framing activities well to suit the priorities of parents, funders or Ofsted does not presuppose that the activity, designed first and foremost to suit the needs of the learners, should be altered or adapted. Rather, well-framed activities are those that are designed primarily around the learners' needs, and are retrospectively well linked to the priorities of parents, funders, accreditation boards or Ofsted.

We have discussed at length the various ways Arts & Cultural Provision may be framed to outsiders as providing SEN learners with access to learning in the *Access* chapter.

### Packaging for Learners

Above and beyond the considerations in the *Access* chapter, packaging Arts & Cultural Activities for learners also involves situating the Arts & Cultural Activity in the wider context of their schoolwork. Pre-project lessons that cover what they might expect to do on the project, and what they should expect to gain, are often useful in this regard. Linking the Art & Cultural Activities to the curriculum in some way often provides learners with a context for what they are doing, as does linking the activity with their work towards an Arts Award qualification.

Most Arts & Cultural Organisations sampled are aware that some of the activities they deliver for SEN Schools are used for learners' Arts Award portfolios. Rick Nunn, from Phoenix School, believes that linking Arts & Cultural Activities to Arts Award "*provides a focus*" for learners. Schools certainly find the Arts Award an accessible qualification that can easily be tailored to the needs of different learners. However, Rick Nunn warns that it is important to link existing Arts & Cultural Provision to Arts Award requirements, and not to do the opposite of designing the creative curriculum around the Arts Award as this is unnecessary and may "*sanitise the process.*"

Evaluating a project with learners is an important part of a project's 'packaging'. Arts & Cultural Organisations often lead learners through an evaluation process at the end of the project and, fittingly, this is most often through drawing, creating postcards, audio recordings, video recordings, an active drama process, or post-its rather than through form-filling.

Celebrating the results of an Arts & Cultural project with the wider school community is also an important part of the 'framing' for learners and is an effective way of helping a project leave a legacy with learners. Dominic Fitch, Creative Director of Shakespeare Schools Festival, believes that "*At the heart of good practice is celebrating young people whoever they are.*"

Anne, a parent of a Phoenix School pupil, agrees, saying *“It’s important to have some sort of record of these events – even three years on from a production he is still watching it [a film of his performance] and sharing it with other members of the family.”* As well as being used to reinforce learning back at school, photographs and videos are used to document attainment and in school reports. Jenny Mollica from the Barbican recalls how, for one particular student working on their photography ‘Art Book’ Project, *“the book of their photos that was produced at the end [...] was something he had produced that he was really proud of. He carried the book with him in his bag every day after the project was finished.”*

Arts & Cultural Activities are also celebrated in some schools through assemblies, learning journals and merit stickers. Some pioneer schools are also partnering with other local schools to find ways for learners to share or perform their work at each other’s schools.

Arts & Cultural Organisations are also reflecting this practice. Intoart, for instance, collates a professionally printed book of learners’ artwork in addition to holding public exhibitions of their work.

#### Oak Lodge School

Oak Lodge School puts a great deal of effort into comprehensively framing and packaging their Arts & Cultural Provision, both before and after activities.

Prior to an off-site trip, detailed visual resources are created for learners that combine elements of a social story with information that connects the trip to what the learners are doing in the classroom.

After every activity with an external partner, the students all write thank you letters to the Organisation or Practitioner that are collated along with letters and photos from the school. These serve both to reinforce learning and maintain good relationships with partners and funders. To celebrate achievement within the wider school community, a weekly newsletter, which learners take home with them every Friday, is printed with a tremendous number of photos, documenting the trips and activities undertaken that week.

In addition, regular celebration events go on throughout the school year to document learners’ achievements. Every year, for instance, a Creative Arts Afternoon Exhibition is held to celebrate the achievements of the students with family and communities invited.

#### Packaging for Parents

Packaging Arts & Cultural Provision to parents is often seen as more difficult, but is intrinsic to engaging families in their children’s creative endeavours at school. Overwhelmingly, parents are not involved in Arts & Cultural Activities either on- or off-school sites, but are occasionally a part of school assemblies, performances or theme days, for instance. Some schools struggle to entice parents to events, even after offering transport and refreshment in a bid to allow parents to celebrate their child’s achievements. The schools interviewed reported that parent non-attendance at events is common, possibly more so than at mainstream schools as often families of SEN learners will not live so close to the school.



Nonetheless, it remains important for schools to communicate to parents about what Arts & Cultural Activities are on offer and, most importantly, why the activities are so important for their children, in order for parents to best support their child throughout the process. For this reason, many schools send photos, videos and letters of commendation home with learners as they can be shared with family and friends whilst also acting as a memento of the event. Many schools will also include details and photographs of their recent Arts & Cultural Activities in weekly or termly newsletters to the school community and sometimes celebrate their Arts & Cultural Activities online on their websites.

### Packaging for Funders

Photos are considered to be extremely important not only for schools to document and celebrate learners' achievements but also to assist their funders in getting more money for future projects. Photos, as well as quotes from teachers and learners, are often useful for funders. Thus, whilst post-project evaluation forms are widely considered to be tedious they are, in many cases, incredibly important for the future continuation of a project. Some schools however report that confidentiality and child protection issues can sometimes prevent the use of film and photographs.

Both schools and Arts & Cultural Organisations keenly monitor the number of projects and the number of learners involved in each project, to assist in further funding applications.

Anne Ogazi, of the V&A Museum of Childhood, also suggests that, above and beyond framing a project for funders through reports and statistics, funders should be encouraged to visit projects as they take place. *"For a lot of people, they have to experience our SEN work first-hand to see its value. It is one thing to give a report to someone, it is something else when they come in and see students engage. They suddenly get it and they understand where the money is going."* *"It is important to emphasise what the positive outcomes of a trip are. It might be a lot of hard work but it's definitely worth that hard work,"* she adds.

Framing Arts & Cultural Activities for funding purposes also involves demonstrating to funders the impact and value of their money going into the cause. Funders' priorities are obviously very different, some being more focused on disability causes, other on inclusive culture, for instance. Research into what the funders are looking for should be completed in order to package the activity most suitably.

Joanne Skapinker, from Shakespeare Schools Festival, also reflects how often *"Funders want to fund new projects, they don't want to give core funding."* For this reason, many reported that there is constantly a need to repackage and modify projects. Some organisations reported that it is easy to feel pressure to reinvent the wheel and describe the same type of project in new, creative ways in order to appease the funder(s).

### Packaging for Accreditation

Arts & Cultural Provision can also be packaged under different structures of accreditation. The majority of schools sample framed their Arts & Cultural Provision within the context of Artsmark accreditation, in order to recognise, celebrate and



improve their work. Artsmark was praised as being a useful way of demonstrating a school's commitment to creativity with the new accreditation system being widely welcomed and much more preferable than the old format that was widely considered to be over bureaucratic.

However, the equivalent cannot be said of Arts & Cultural Organisations feeling the need to frame their work within the context of Arts Council England's (ACE) quality principles. The vast majority Arts & Cultural Organisations interviewed said that they do not actively frame their work within the published quality principles, but that the nature of their work means they are hitting these targets regardless. As such, the direct relevance of the ACE principles is a moot point.

### Packaging for Ofsted

Whilst it is fruitful to contextually frame Arts & Cultural Activities in relation to Ofsted priorities, most schools do not view Ofsted priorities as posing any real risk or threat to their partnerships with Arts & Cultural Organisations. Indeed, several Arts & Cultural Organisations indicated that they felt they have more freedom in SEN Schools because they are not as restricted as mainstream schools may be to the timetable. Instead, their planning is motivated more by their learners' needs. Rob Smith, Head of Education & Learning at Bow Arts, remarks that in SEN the approach can afford to be "*more open, more pupil centred, more open ended and more organic*" whereas in mainstream the approach is "*more skills driven.*"

Some Arts & Cultural Organisations will specifically link specific activities to curriculum priorities, keenly adapting their provision to changing Ofsted curriculum requirements and packaging learning outcomes together to be easily accessible by teachers. Whilst this is well-received by some schools, it would be worth noting that some SEN Schools are actively put off by this approach, preferring instead a more experiential and less curricular focus.

Furthermore, Sue Goodman, of Step Into Dance, asserts that "*Schools need to respect Dance more as a spiritual activity*" and indeed, schools linking Arts & Cultural Activities to SMSC (Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural) priorities are much less common than might be expected.

## Partnerships

### Fostering Good Partnership Practice

Finding ways of fostering good partnership practice is key to delivering high quality Arts & Cultural Provision for both SEN Schools and Arts & Cultural Organisations.

#### Different Partnerships

Some of the Organisations providing these activities are dedicated to working solely with SEN learners and others work with only one or two SEN Schools in a year, though working somewhere between these two extremes is the norm. Some Arts & Cultural Organisations work with SEN School groups exclusively within the schools' premises with others adopting the opposite approach, being exclusively on their own premises.

Schools say that partnerships with external Arts & Cultural Organisations are important to provide their learners with variety. Indeed, the tremendous variety of partnerships between SEN Schools and Arts & Cultural Organisations that exists makes it difficult to draw comparisons. Most schools offer activities with Drama, Dance, Music, Museums and Visual Arts organisations. Others are engaging with external organisations to offer activities like Circus Skills, Film, Photography and Digital Creativity such as 3D-printing.

#### Phoenix School

In addition to the high levels of internal expertise in Arts & Culture, Phoenix School also partners with an incredibly wide range of external Arts & Cultural Organisations and practitioners in the delivery of their provision. Arts & Cultural Activities are deeply embedded within the programme of events outlined in the school's calendar and timetable.

Every Wednesday afternoon, for instance, is a dedicated 'enrichment afternoon' where external organisations and internal artists deliver Arts & Cultural Activities outside the curriculum.

On top of this, large Arts & Cultural events are held through the year. These range from professional designers being brought in for Christmas assemblies to programmes such as Harvest Festival, an International Week and an Arts Festival where external Arts & Cultural Organisations work alongside teachers to deliver Arts & Cultural projects. Curriculum objectives are directly supported by an outside Arts organisation providing multi-sensory immersive theatre installations every term. In addition, other whole-school initiatives such as UNICEF's Rights Respecting Schools Award, Oxfam's World Shapers and other initiatives are supported by external Arts & Cultural Organisations.

As per our discussion in the chapter on *Framing*, whilst these Arts & Cultural Activities are often directly linked to curriculum objectives the school is also exemplary in demonstrating the Activities' SMSC (Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural) outcomes for learners.

A similarly diverse mixture of both long and short-term partnerships exists between SEN Schools and Arts & Cultural Organisations. As Daryl Beeton of Drake Music comments, "There are partnerships for the purpose of starting on a journey and there

*are some partnerships that go a lot deeper.*” Some schools specifically prefer longer-term deep partnerships with Arts & Cultural Organisations, whereas others look for one-off projects with a fast turnaround that enable them to offer a breadth of provision that would otherwise be impossible.

In response, Arts & Cultural Organisations offer a range of programmes ranging from short afternoon workshops to weekly interventions and termly schemes of work. Some Organisations are based entirely around a long-term model of learners’ creative development. Long-term activities allow learners to form meaningful relationships with external facilitators, and the repetition of a weekly activity allows them to develop their creativity over time. Others, on the contrary, will offer only afternoon or day-long sessions in order to be more financially and logistically viable. Schools also identified short engaging projects to be, on the whole, more successful than a longer-term project if it drags.

### Spitalfields Music

Spitalfields Music operates a diverse, broad programme of different types of partnerships for SEN learners. The SEN programming is very similar to what they might provide for mainstream classes, only adapted to best suit the needs of the learners in the room.

These include partnerships like the Neighbourhood Schools Programme, a creative music-making programme at both primary and secondary level, in which practitioners work closely with learners and develop their creativity and music-making skills over a longer period. At primary level, they also run an annual two-week intensive project for children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health issues, whilst over the Easter holidays they run a secondary level music-making project in collaboration with Drake Music.

In the past the Organisation has even facilitated one-to-one cello performances in-school, demonstrating their adaptability and flexibility to the range of different needs and requirements, from both schools and learners.

### Setting up a Partnership

SEN Schools partner with a whole range of Arts & Cultural Organisations, from large public institutions to local community arts centres and freelance practitioners. Most schools tend to approach Arts & Cultural Organisations for partnerships having either had a word of mouth recommendation through online research or because of contacts and a previous partnership in a prior job. A significant number of partnerships are also born out of teachers’ own experiences and interests within the Arts & Cultural sector.

In choosing an Arts & Cultural Organisation with whom to partner key criteria are: adaptability and flexibility, enthusiasm about making a difference, quality of communication, openness to teacher input and dependability. Ella Ritchie, Director of Intoart, also adds that a successful partnership depends on the *“equality of ‘buy-in’ and a shared ambition,”* whilst Jenny Mollica, from the Barbican, similarly describes the *“joint desire to make a project work”* that is required for a successful partnership.

Jenny believes that a successful partnership is about *“Collaboration, attention to detail and going in with an open mind. It’s important for both sides to invest time and*

*resources, as well as to understand the context of those learners you are working with and how the project fits within their day and their life experiences.”*

Kevin McDonnell, from Stormont House School, comments, *“People often view it in terms of price. But it’s also about quality and impact and it’s about how much blood, sweat and tears it takes to deliver the baby on this end.”* Some schools highlighted that Arts & Cultural Organisations are sometimes unaware of the deadlines faced by schools in planning a trip. Some schools need, for instance, to finalise and send risk assessments to the borough council two weeks in advance of any trip, which means that last minute offers of activities are often unable to be accepted.

Whilst schools want to see evidence that practitioners have some awareness of SEN work, most are not terribly concerned about the level of SEN experience a practitioner might have and are happy to work with a ‘mainstream’ company. It is *“their attitudes to inclusion”* that matters, as Gillian Weale, Deputy Head Teacher of The Vale School, puts it. This includes, for instance, not only adaptability and flexibility as already discussed in the *Access* chapter, but also ensuring the consistency of the facilitating team, so that learners can gradually build up their relationships with external Practitioners.

*“It’s also about making the teachers feel comfortable because what they worry about most on a trip is the comfort of their children – it’s things like knowing that they can eat and drink whenever they want to or that they can leave a lesson at any point for personal care. [...] We always say to teachers: Do whatever you need,”* says Katharine Hoare from the British Museum.

Schools also stated that it is very important for Arts & Cultural Organisations to really take the time to get to know the school. Doing their homework on the school is more than just logging onto a school’s website as this does not communicate the full needs of the young people and their learning needs. Daryl Beeton, of Drake Music, stresses this when he suggests that, as an external partner, you need to know *“how the school operates and breathes.”*

Some Arts & Cultural Organisations are able to facilitate pre-visit meetings, workshops or insets for teachers and this face-to-face interaction is really valued by schools. Shakespeare Schools Festival, for instance, is able to provide additional professional (CPD) training for SEN teachers, compared to their mainstream colleagues, in order to facilitate discussions about the different needs and necessary adaptations.

Most Arts & Cultural Organisations would prefer to spend more time planning with class teachers, but recognise the time pressures they are under mean this is more than likely impossible.

Nevertheless, the need for outside practitioners’ observational periods is particularly important in schools where the needs of their learners are more complex. Daryl Beeton, from Drake Music, and Kathryn Allnutt, from Spitalfields Music, agree that this observation, exploration and planning time are crucial if a project is to be successful. Although observation elements are often vulnerable to funding cuts, Daryl insists that Drake Music would rather plan a shorter project that maintained a decent amount of pre-observation than comprise on observational periods on a longer project. Kathryn

always ensures there is money in the budget to pay for their freelance practitioners' time for observation of SEN classes, something they would not do for mainstream.

Katherine Hoare, of the British Museum, believes that Arts & Cultural Organisations have a duty to support schools to make the best, realistic choices about how to make learning most powerful - even if that means doing oneself out of a booking. Learning about Ancient Egypt, for example, in the British Museum is very powerful for most learners, giving them the opportunity to learn in an alternative, out-of-school environment and see museum objects first-hand. However, for those SEN learners who are more dependent on facilities available at school, the lack of facilities available on an off-site trip might preclude personal comfort and meaningful learning, and so classroom learning might be more appropriate.

### Communication

Communication was identified as the most important factor by far in fostering a good partnership. Good communication encompasses developing trust as well as being honest with the other party not only about what your learners need but also about how you want to work. Having built-in points for formal communication is fundamental to the process before and after, as well as throughout, a partnership.

It is important for Arts & Cultural Organisations to maintain good and regular contact with a key teacher who has Arts & Cultural responsibility at the school. If a suitable relationship is established with the external Organisation, this teacher can become an 'enabler' and 'advocate' at the school, pushing for continued and innovate Arts & Cultural Provision. "*It is important to have a champion in the school who sees the value of what you offer,*" suggests Jodi-Alissa Bickerton of Graeae Theatre. "*They need to be on board as a creative partner rather than just being seen as a co-ordinator,*" she adds.

The key message about communication from interviewees is to keep it simple and stress free. "*Within schools, there is so much pressure on teachers. Moving forwards, we need really straightforward and really simple information about the practicalities: 'What needs to be done?' 'Who do we need to talk to?'*" insists Anne Ogazi, of the V&A Museum of Childhood.

Many Arts & Cultural Organisations also stressed the importance of the Head Teacher, or a member of senior management, being directly involved in co-ordinating external partnerships to ensure that the whole school is on-board with the Arts & Cultural programming being discussed.

Similarly, for schools, having easy phone and email access to a named contact at the Learning or Inclusion Department of the Arts & Cultural Organisation is invaluable. Even the most successful of long-term partnerships are at risk of failing when staff move on. "*We really invest in our contacts and when we lose a contact with a school it takes a lot of time to regain it,*" Jodi-Alissa Bickerton from Graeae Theatre comments. As such, it would be useful both for staff at schools and Organisations to be mindful about passing on contacts and information about past partnerships to colleagues.

In beginning to plan a partnership, "*You need a shared understanding of what you want to achieve,*" says Kevin McDonnell, of Stormont House School. Claire Hazell,



from the Science Museum, agrees saying that *“Shared knowledge between schools and other organisations can very much strengthen partnerships.”* Jackie Tait, Primary Programme Manager at the National Theatre, believes good communication is about *“not making assumptions about the work at any point”* and to consistently check for mutual agreement and clear, realistic expectations for a project.

In doing so it is easy to get lost talking in abstract aims and objectives and so Daryl Beeton, of Drake Music recommends, *“also asking on a human level – Why are you doing this? What do you want your students to get out of it?”*

### Roles & Responsibilities

*“With a shared understanding, there then comes a shared responsibility,”* Daryl warns. Being clear on the roles and responsibilities of all parties is paramount.

Katherine Hoare, from the British Museum, insists *“Teachers know their students best.”* Similarly, Jo Skapinker from Shakespeare Schools Festival suggests that Arts & Cultural Practitioners should effectively be considered as *“facilitators of what teachers want to do [...] Teachers are the experts on their young people – we are there to make creative offers to teachers.”*

Most Arts & Cultural Organisations expect schools to ensure that they provide the conditions that will allow them to deliver the project for maximum output. Daryl Beeton explains that for some projects this might simply mean providing an empty space and making sure the learners are on time to the session. This also includes timetabling an activity suitably within the school day, as several Arts & Cultural Organisations were able to offer anecdotes of activities needing to be significantly adapted if they arrive at a school and find the activity timetabled to be after a PE lesson, for instance.

Katherine Hoare, of the British Museum, points out that whilst *“We don’t expect or need teachers to tell us everything about a child, we need key information [...] the more information they can give in advance, the better we can do to improve the learning experience.”* Katherine offers the example that teachers should *“share behavioural expectations”* with Arts & Cultural Organisations so that external practitioners can respond suitably to different learners’ needs. This includes warning Organisations about any triggers that learners may have, whether this is a word or even a type of material, so these may be suitably avoided.

There is a wide diversity in how teachers and schools like to work with Arts & Cultural Organisations and, indeed in how Organisations like to work in this regard too. Whilst on some projects external Arts practitioners take the reins, with teachers offering very minimal input to a project’s planning and delivery, on other projects teachers take a much more hands-on approach.

In itself, neither approach is any better than the other as they both have their benefits and drawbacks. Katharine Hoare, from the British Museum, agrees. *“Whenever I go to network meetings, there are a myriad of approaches people have that are different from ours [...] That’s not to say other approaches are unsuitable, just different. It is all about finding out what works for you and the students,”* she says.



However, it is important in a partnership between SEN Schools and Arts & Cultural Organisations, that a mutual understanding of the role and responsibilities of teachers are agreed upon and made clear so as not to cause future conflict.

Kathryn Allnutt, from Spitalfields Music, believes that it is important that both teachers and Arts & Cultural Practitioners “*acknowledge the different skill sets and specialist knowledge that they both bring*” to the table. It’s about “*Trusting each others’ professionalism,*” reiterates Katharine Hoare of the British Museum. Daryl Beeton, of Drake Music, adds that “*Artists should not take on the role of teachers*”, but should instead build a more productive relationship whereby they utilise teachers’ skill sets and expertise in the activity and vice versa.

For this reason, it is important that both SEN teachers and Arts & Cultural Practitioners recognise the limitations of their role, and when to utilise the expertise of the other. A simple but effective example of this comes from Jane Ball, Secondary & FE Programme Manager at the National Theatre, who observes that, “*The landscape for schools is constantly changing and whilst we know a lot about what we can offer schools, we don’t necessarily know about the changing landscape,*” which is why the National Theatre invites in a panel of teachers to advise on any new schools programming.

Similarly, Shakespeare Schools Festival, asks SEN teachers with whom they have previously worked for their expertise in guiding professional training (CPD) sessions for other teachers, as well as to volunteer their own adapted scripts and resources to be shared.

As teachers and practitioners bring with them such diverse experience and expertise, many SEN Schools and Arts & Cultural Organisations like teachers to work in collaboration with outside practitioners, to one extent or another. This might be simply about planning together, or might go so far as co-facilitation and co-delivery of activities. Tracy Edwards, of Swiss Cottage School, insists that a successful partnership requires “*reciprocity between the Arts practitioner and the SEN practitioner. Some of the best partnerships have been ones where we have learned something from the Arts practitioner that supports our practice and the Arts practitioner has learned something about how to work with our children.*”

Jodi-Alissa Bickerton, of Graeae Theatre, suggests that, in this way, SEN teachers and external Arts & Cultural Practitioners should be considered as “creative partners.” Amy McKelvie, of the Tate, similarly believes a successful partnership is about creating an atmosphere of “*co-learning and exchange*” between practitioners, teachers and learners; “*It is deadened when you don’t think about what the group has to offer.*” It is important to “*connect to the expertise of teachers,*” she believes in order to create “*a mutual learning experience and a democracy of learning. It’s not like Tate has a body of learning around Art that we are the keepers of.*”

Interviewees also reported many successful projects in which teachers are fully engaged in the activity as a co-participant along with their learners. This mode of delivery allows teaching staff the chance to re-experience what it means to be a learner engaged in a creative experience again. In this way Sally Adams, from Oak Lodge School, explains that off-site “*trips and Arts activities are important for staff well-*

*being.*” Indeed, Anne Ogazi, from the V&A Museum of Childhood, maintains that Arts & Cultural Organisations have a responsibility to make sure that *“just as much as the students get immersed in the experience so too should the teacher.”*

### Challenging Expectations

*“I want, be it an Organisation or the School, for them to push my child and raise the bar with what they can achieve rather than thinking it won’t be possible because they have a disability,”* says Anne, a parent of a Phoenix School pupil.

SEN Schools and Arts & Cultural Organisations both have a part to play in pushing challenges to learners’ expectations of themselves and their own creativity, but in doing so also need to push both the schools’ and Organisations’ expectations of what their learners can achieve.

Jodi-Alissa Bickerton believes this is central to Graeae Theatre’s schools work, stating, *“We work with teachers to show them that they can have those high expectations [...] And suddenly, that means creative risks can be taken.”*

*“Sometimes we will call a school and talk over Shakespeare Schools Festival with them and they will say, ‘Are you sure you meant to call us? Did you know we’re a SEN school?’”* reports Joanne Skapinker. *“We try to instil confidence in teachers who don’t think their children can do Shakespeare,”* says Dominic Fitch, of Shakespeare Schools Festival.

Many interviewees identified the risk inherent in engaging in creative practice generally, but especially in the setting of high expectations for such work. Ella Ritchie, of Intoart, for instance, thinks that, *“We challenge the public’s expectations and schools’ preconceptions of what is possible from SEN students.”*

### Step Into Dance

Step Into Dance maintains an incredibly strong ethos of excellence and artistic quality across the organisation and in their workshops with young people, whether SEN or mainstream.

Sue Goodman, Programme & Artistic Director, explains that, *“We constantly aim to increase aspirations and the standard of dance [...] young people are encouraged to experiment and be brave.”* *“We see a real development with our students and create a really good relationship with the school and their teachers and TAs”*, she says. Dance *“helps pupils experience themselves in a different way”* and in that creation of something beyond even their own expectations, the sense of achievement is palpable.

Sue suggests that holding high expectations and maintaining a strive for rigour and excellence is crucial in working with SEN learners so an artificial divide does not form between 'quality' art for mainstream and 'substandard' art for SEN. As such, Sue insists that "*Schools and artists should share a vision that beginners should have the best teachers*" in the pursuit of creative excellence.

Rob Smith, from Bow Arts, describes how schools are sometimes risk averse at the beginning of a partnership, but that it is important for Organisations to build trust with teaching staff in order to allow learners the opportunity of taking greater and greater creative risks. "*You can take more risks with the longer-term projects,*" says Katharine Hoare of the British Museum.

Gillian Weale, from The Vale School, agrees, saying that whilst the school was once more cautious about the Arts & Cultural Provision they offered, engaging in more unusual and unfamiliar work with different Organisations has meant, "*the experimental has become normal*" in the school.

#### Drake Music

Daryl Beeton, London Regional Programme Manager, is passionate about challenging expectations of what SEN learners can achieve musically. "*We bring a different view of what young people can achieve,*" he asserts.

In SEN Schools, "*teachers often think Music is drums, guitars and pianos so they think their young people can't do it.*" Drake Music's artists "*are there to challenge the teaching assistants who say 'so and so can't do that'*" by demonstrating new and different ways that learners can engage in making their own music in their own way.

The Organisation invests a great deal of time and money on research and the development of new musical instruments that are designed specifically for individual learners. Often using technology, these instruments might range from devices using switches, beams or even buckets that the learner is able to control in order to produce music.

## Networking

### Developing Collaboration

All our interviewees from schools and Arts & Cultural Organisations have expressed that they are encouraged by A New Direction's emerging work SEN Arts & Cultural Provision networks and the collaboration opportunities they offer. There was a call for networks such as A New Direction to take a leadership role in continuing the dialogue around the Arts & Cultural Provision for SEN learners, as well as brokering and advocating for partnerships between Organisations and Schools. Within this work, developing ways of improving access and equity of opportunity should be particular priorities.

### Keeping Abreast

First and foremost, networking involves all parties, parents included, keeping up to date with the Arts & Cultural Provision that is available for SEN learners. Many interviewees, including parents, complained that it is often hard to find or hear about new opportunities and activities for SEN learners. As a parent who wants to maintain her son's links with Arts & Culture, Anne reflects that, *"The hardest thing is finding out what is going on for SEN and disabled young people. Any specific information on SEN provision is buried in a range of different websites."*

#### Anne, Parent at Phoenix School

*"It has changed hugely since he was younger – a lot more activities are available now for SEN."*

*The issue with accessing culture though is just finding out about it. Where can you find out these things? A lot of things I've just heard about through word of mouth. Even when you're proactive about trying to find out about things, it's easy to miss out hearing about opportunities. Often you'll find out at the last minute and there's no time to plan something, having advance notice is really important.*

*Age-banding is also a problem. By the time you find out about a group, often he's already too old to join in.*

*Another issue is having a good point of contact to ask questions about the activity. For example, to find out about aisle access or finding out about what happens in a show – the box office doesn't always know, though they really should."*

SEN teachers also identified that in order to develop future partnerships it is important that Arts & Cultural Organisations maintain comprehensive and well-updated websites that are easy to navigate. There was wide critique of Arts & Cultural Organisations websites as offering only very basic, generic information that is often relevant only to the mainstream. In addition to having 'Primary' and 'Secondary' pages, a specific section on 'SEN' would be useful. Including photos and videos was identified as useful as was having suggestions about what to do on a trip. It was also considered important that Arts & Cultural Organisations use their websites to demonstrate flexibility and adaptability in their practice alongside short case studies or testimonials from their work with other SEN Schools.

### Networking between Schools and Arts & Cultural Organisations

The current work of the the Special Schools Arts & Culture Network, and the commissioning of this research as a starting point, seem to have been widely welcomed by those working in the field. As this work on SEN Arts & Cultural Provision continues, capturing the passion and wealth of experience of those operating within the field should remain a key aim.

However, it has also been expressed that in moving this forward it is important for A New Direction to clarify and publicise its role and its overall aims and objectives as well as its relevance to those working within the field of SEN Arts & Cultural practice. There is a widely held belief that there is a need for such networks to broker and advocate for partnerships between SEN Schools and Arts & Cultural Organisations.

Almost all interviewees stressed the need for greater and more comprehensive networking opportunities, both for SEN Schools and Arts & Cultural Organisations, in order to build new, and maintain existing, partnerships. Many Arts & Cultural Organisations suggested they would be willing to host networking events which would offer an opportunity for “*a continued open conversation*” as Claire Hazell, of the Science Museum, puts it, about how the whole field of SEN Arts & Cultural Provision may develop.

On the whole, staff at both schools and Arts & Cultural Organisations would ideally like to have more opportunities for face-to-face collaboration to talk through ideas and possibilities, as well as to share skills. This could take the form of a pre-project meeting, workshop, seminar or an ongoing meeting series. In this vein, the Camden Cultural Commissioning Model was held in high regard by interviewees and the feasibility of scaling up this sort of framework should be seriously examined.

Those working with SEN within the Arts & Cultural Sector are overwhelmingly generous in the sharing of their practice. At Drake Music, for instance, “*We are a big believer in making everything Open Source. Nothing should be hidden. We share online blogs about how we plan our lessons, for instance [...] our vision is a world where disabled and non-disabled people are all creating music. We can’t be the gatekeepers of this information.*” What is required, however, are more public platforms on which this sharing may take place. Proposals for future networking opportunities between SEN Schools and Arts & Cultural Organisations include regular forums in which schools can discuss the gaps in their Arts & Cultural Provision and where Arts & Cultural Organisations can meet this demand by presenting their SEN offerings to teachers.

Daryl Beeton, of Drake Music, points out that whilst Arts & Cultural Organisations and practitioners “*are really used to going into a school environment, it would be great for teachers to have the chance to come into the Arts Organisation environment.*” To serve this purpose, ‘buddying’ or mentorship schemes between SEN Schools and Arts & Cultural Organisations (akin to those that used to exist under the Creative Partnerships Scheme) were also identified as a potential framework for future networking.



### Overcoming Obstacles Together

In a partnership between a SEN School and an Arts & Cultural Organisation, it is important to bear in mind the limitations, most often financial, that the other party is under. Although some schools reported that the budget for Arts & Cultural Activities was not a major concern, this was rare. It is true to say that interviewees are already feeling the affect of funding cuts, as well as being aware that further cuts to funding are on the horizon. However, in creating partnerships with other parties, it is important to recognise that these cuts are not unique to schools, but are being universally felt across Arts & Cultural Organisations too.

Therefore, in working together, it is important to accept the constraints under which the other party is operating and to put energy into things that can be changed, rather than lamenting about the limited finance, poor staff resourcing and lack of time. Tracy Edwards, from Swiss Cottage School, sums this up when she suggests that *“Creativity around the strategic and operational mechanisms is key to making change happen because there are so many constraints around time, money and space. To just repeat the points we all know is not necessarily helpful.”*

### Collaboration between SEN Schools

Sally Adams, of Oak Lodge School, asserts that it is really important for SEN teachers to *“network and see what else is going on”* in other SEN Schools. Whilst there are many training opportunities and INSETS where teachers are led by external facilitators, there are few opportunities simply to network. *“It’s nice just to share practice,”* comments Ryan McClelland, of The Bridge School. Tracy Edwards, of Swiss Cottage School, seconds this saying, *“Teachers want the professional learning, to innovate and be creative and try out new things but there often isn’t the space to do that. They are focusing on the day-to-day and on survival. In order for there to be a positive future there needs to be some capacity for teachers to spend a proportion of their working week creating and innovating.”*

Shanta Amdurer, from Oak Lodge School, agrees saying, *“It’s all about sharing good practice. Some schools say they are really isolated so having a network where we can sit and share is invaluable. [...] I want to see what is working well, visually, through presentations [...] We need to see more case studies, more visuals about activities schools have done and also have the time to speak to other SEN Schools about their experiences, the real life stories, the struggles and successes of other teachers”* so that teachers can feel reassured about how different partnerships have worked in the past.

Some SEN Schools are already forging partnerships with other SEN Schools, both formal and informal. These partnerships range from informal communication over Twitter, the shared provision of activities for learners from both schools and Arts & Cultural Organisations to the formation of more formal ‘clusters’ of schools whereby staff share Arts & Cultural practice. Tracy Edwards, from Swiss Cottage School, suggests that as well as helping to cultivate new relationships and partnerships, it would be useful for networks to tap into some of these existing informal and formal networks of SEN teachers.

This might include, for example, marketing relevant opportunities and news through the Twitter community or partnering with the existing popular ‘Teach Meets’ that are



regularly held in order to get Arts & Cultural Provision on the agenda. Whilst these existing mechanisms of collaboration are thriving within the SEN teaching community, specific discussion of Arts & Cultural Provision is a theme that is often absent from such forums.

### Collaboration between Arts & Cultural Organisations

Arts & Cultural Organisations are also developing new ways of working together on collaborative projects. In particular, there is a keen interest from practitioners in combining different art forms and creating interdisciplinary projects.

For Arts & Cultural Organisations, the support of existing networks would similarly be just as fruitful as the cultivation of new ones. Whilst few of the Arts & Cultural Organisations that were interviewed had strong relationships with borough councils, those that did seemed to benefit from the additional publicity and being kept 'in the loop'.

Developing greater relationships with local boroughs would, therefore, be prudent whilst consortia such as the newly formed network of facilitators working within SEN practice and Museums and Galleries could similarly offer useful networking.

In the same way, whilst SEN work is reportedly often lacking from their agenda, Music Hubs are a consortia of music organisations within the different boroughs that will often work to broker partnerships between an individual organisation and schools, and would represent a good opportunity for collaboration in moving the SEN Arts & Cultural field forward.

### Student Participation

As further consultation and networking develops, it is important that SEN learners become involved in discussion and debate surrounding Arts & Cultural Provision, and that they have more of a voice in any further research. Ella Ritchie, from Intoart, believes that on the whole *"There is a need for the voice of learning disabled artists and young people. Nobody asks people with disability their opinions."* As some SEN learners are non-verbal it may be necessary for such voice to come via Teaching Assistants, or teachers, through a range of tools such as PECS and other visuals.

Some schools and organisations are pioneering greater SEN student voice. Stormont House School, for instance, flew several of their learners to the United States for a conference on creativity a few years ago.

### Threats to be Addressed

There is a widely held sentiment that bringing SEN Schools and Arts & Cultural Organisations together through networks would provide a suitable collaborative framework through which various key threats to the future provision of Arts & Cultural Activities for SEN learners could be addressed.

The most common threat to future provision identified by interviewees was, unsurprisingly, funding. Anne Ogazi, from the V&A Museum of Childhood, insists, *"I would love to go bigger and better in our SEN offering but we just don't have the financial capacity to do any more."* This is, unfortunately, a phenomenon all too common across the sector. *"It's staff time more than anything,"* adds Jenny Mollica

from the Barbican, *“the challenge for upscaling would be to ensure the students get the high level of detail that they deserve.”*

Tied to this is the concern, shared by many, at the perceived devaluing of the Arts in the National Curriculum. Several interviewees pointed out the need for collaborative advocacy, not only for external funders but also to demonstrate the value of SEN Arts & Cultural provision to those others working within the sector who may not have direct SEN experience.

On a similar note, Stewart Harris, of Phoenix School, also expresses concern about the diminishing role of local authorities and the rise of academies creating uncertainty about future funding in the arts.

Other major concerns to do with wider educational structures include the lack of provision for SEN students within mainstream school settings who often fall through the gaps and the increasing need to collect data and measure the impact of projects. In addition, interviewees had worryingly anecdotal reports of people leaving their jobs in the sector, disillusioned because they can't see anything progressing.

What was also identified, from both schools and Arts & Cultural Organisations, was that *“There are not enough training providers who are inclusive,”* as Jodi-Alissa Bickerton of Graeae Theatre reports. Interviewees identified a need to provide more opportunities for Arts & Cultural Organisations, and particularly early-career Practitioners, to learn more and feel more confident about delivering inclusive practice. Some Cultural Organisations reported that unexperienced practitioners were often unwilling to take on SEN groups simply because of a fear that they would ‘get it wrong’.

Some interviewees called for a semi-formalised structure whereby Practitioners could build their skills, particularly around the themes of facilitating with a child-centred approach, utilising multi-sensory resources, and to learn a range of tools for making their practice adaptable and flexible to those across the SEN diversity. Moreover, publicly available and subsidised professional training (CPD) opportunities would also be extremely beneficial for the many Arts & Cultural Practitioners who work with SEN learners on a freelance basis.

Another key threat that was flagged up by various interviewees was the issue of SEN learners losing access to Arts & Cultural Activities when they leave school. Anne, a parent, remarks that, *“Through schools you are quite well supported, but beyond that there is very little for young people. There seems to be nothing for SEN young people after the age of 19.”* Organisations like Intoart are pioneering programmes for school leavers. Ella Ritchie, Director of the organisation, thinks that, *“schools can be a bubble. We offer a preparation of what's next after school.”*

Similarly, Graeae Theatre recruits Young Artistic Advisors for their Youth Programme from schools in which it has worked previously. *“We need to look at the period after secondary school [...] Schools and organisations like Graeae can start having conversations about what is next so that the young people are not being forgotten after their final year of school. We can't always promise an immediate tangible offer, but we can have a conversation about what the ambitions are and that informs what Graeae could do next,”* says Jodi-Alissa Bickerton.

Nevertheless, the few activities and opportunities that do exist for school leavers are not widely known and are perceived to be very difficult to access. There would certainly seem to be a role for networks to help Arts & Cultural Organisations to develop and publicise these opportunities.

## Visibility

### Raising SEN Awareness through Arts & Culture

#### Visibility of SEN Arts & Cultural Practice

Whilst this report has outlined a snapshot of good, specifically SEN, Arts & Cultural practice there is no reason why many of the recommendations and advice from interviewees should not apply to mainstream Arts & Cultural Provision.

A good SEN Arts & Cultural Activity offering access to the broader learning objectives and the curriculum through a multi-sensory, experiential learning environment, may be equally relevant to mainstream learners.

For this reason, organisations like the British Museum are adapting their SEN resources for use with mainstream groups. *“We take opportunities to develop resources for students with different needs, and then extrapolate out of that good practice that will be useful for other learning groups [...] What starts off as an initiative for deaf students then becomes something which will support a myriad of other learners,”* explains Katharine Hoare.

Rob Smith, from Bow Arts, comments, *“Mainstream has much to learn from the SEN ethos in Arts collaboration.”* This is a widely held sentiment amongst our interviewees. It is felt that SEN practice should be more publically celebrated and shared in the Arts & Cultural sector, instead of being ring-fenced in a rigid manner as has so far been customary with many organisations.

These calls are more pertinent than ever as Arts & Cultural Organisations are finding more and more that their mainstream provision needs to provide for an increasing number of SEN learners in mainstream groups.

Many Arts & Cultural Organisations embed the celebration of learners’ achievements into their practice. Nonetheless, Anne Ogazi, at the V&A Museum of Childhood, believes that Arts & Cultural Organisations should be even more proactive in publicising and celebrating their SEN work than they currently are, saying that we need to focus on *“celebrating the small victories, the examples of good work going on for SEN, is the only way to push forward.”*

This feeling that there is excellent practice in the SEN Arts & Cultural Community that is not as visible, or as widely celebrated, as mainstream practice is widespread. Daryl Beeton, from Drake Music, sums it up when he remarks that, *“I’m starting to get a bit bored that all of this great work is happening in the shadows, in the dark corners, because there is a lot of exciting work going on. Work in school is hidden away from public view anyway, and work in special schools is even more hidden.”* He says that, *“there needs to be more done around visibility and promotion of the stuff that is going on.”*

### Shakespeare Schools Festival

Each year, in working with over 100 SEN Schools, the Festival already does a great deal of work on the visibility of SEN Arts & Culture. Nevertheless, Festival Coordinator, Joanne Skapinker, says that, *“More visibility is something we want to continue to develop for SEN.”*

When schools engage in pre-performance workshops, and ultimately when they stage their productions in professional theatres, SEN Schools and their mainstream counterparts come together to perform and celebrate each other’s work. Teachers from mainstream schools have even, in the past, commented to the Festival team that one of the best things about their involvement in the Festival was the opportunity they had to work with SEN Schools.

The Festival takes great pride in celebrating their SEN work within their wider programming. Care is taken to ensure that photographs of their past work with SEN Schools are shared and celebrated within all their promotional and fundraising materials, for instance. They also ensured that, out of three schools invited on a visit to 11 Downing Street, a SEN school was represented and their performance work showcased.

### Visibility of SEN Role Model and Mentors

Many interviewees also called for greater visibility of SEN role models within the Arts & Cultural sector, beginning with greater representation of adults who themselves have SEN delivering Arts & Cultural Activities for learners.

Graeae Theatre operates with *“a team of Deaf, disabled and non-disabled practitioners. Our outreach work is co-authored by young people and disabled-led. For young Deaf or disabled people it’s sometimes about being able to identify with an artist and how they can forge new ambitions and expectations as a disabled young person,”* reports Jodi-Alissa Bickerton.

Schools who had partnerships with facilitators who had SEN themselves reported these projects as having a particularly strong, lasting impact on their learners. SEN learners like working with these external practitioners and really look up to them as mentors and role models. Chris Elford, from Stormont House School, thinks that, *“When the pupils see someone like them, it gives them empowerment.”*

As practitioners working within the Arts & Cultural sector, they demonstrate to the young people, some of the career opportunities within Arts & Culture in action. Some interviewees recalled careers events held in the past specifically for SEN learners. More opportunities like this to find work experience and job opportunities for SEN learners once they leave school would be well received.

### Intoart

Intoart’s 2-year long programme of delivery in schools is co-facilitated by learning disabled artists who become mentors and artistic influences to the SEN learners in the school. Ella Ritchie, the Director of Intoart, reflects that supporting learning disabled artists in facilitating their schools programme is a *“key priority”* of the Organisation.

Whilst creating meaningful opportunities for learning disabled artists to facilitate in schools might require additional investment for their training and on-the-job mentoring, the process is constructive for all parties involved. *“As our artist mentors come from a SEN background, as an inclusive team, we are more aware of the possibilities as well as the limitations of learners. This means that we are able to value process as much as product and create innovative processes to help learners achieve the best creative outcomes possible,”* she says.

Ella describes how this model of SEN adult facilitators inspiring SEN learners is *“not without its risks in terms of the mentors’ teaching skills and their relationships with pupils,”* so the organisation also provides on site support at every session for the facilitators themselves. This clearly has enormous cost implications and is dependent on substantial contributions from funders.

### Visibility of SEN Learners

A strikingly high proportion of interviewees believe SEN learners’ participation in Arts & Cultural Activities is beneficial not only in their own learning, but may also be beneficial in their visibility and integration with their local communities.

Ryan McClelland, from The Bridge School, reflects that, unfortunately, many members of the public still hold *“a fear of difference”* when they encounter SEN groups on school trips. Nonetheless, Gillian Weale, of The Vale School, points out that *“SEN participation in the Arts can help to chip at perceptions generally.”*

SEN Schools are keenly aware of the role they need to be playing in changing attitudes. *“Visibility in the community is really important [...] it is important for children and young adults with Special Educational Needs to take part in Arts & Cultural Activities outside of school. It is everyone’s right, regardless of whether they have a disability or not, to mix with members of the whole community,”* insists Paul Pearce of St Giles School. *“Everyone is made richer from meeting different people and those with special needs have a lot to offer society. It is a two-way process involving all parties and supports the development of a cohesive community,”* he adds.

Many Arts & Cultural Organisations work tirelessly to publicise and promote the work produced by their SEN learners on public platforms. Intoart, for instance, produces professionally printed books of their work and holds annual exhibitions in public galleries and Higher Education Art Colleges which serve as public platforms for celebrating their work and bolstering disability awareness.

Many Arts & Cultural Organisations are also keenly aware of their role in the integration of SEN projects with mainstream offerings. Whilst Daryl Beeton, of Drake Music, points out that, *“there are a lot of opportunities for SEN Schools to connect with local mainstream schools for project delivery,”* there should be no mistake that integration projects are logistically difficult endeavours, particularly with regards to timetabling and staffing and that there is, therefore, some resistance to them.

Nevertheless, it is becoming increasingly common to use Arts & Cultural Activities for integration projects between mainstream and SEN learners. For example, the LETTA Teaching Alliance in Tower Hamlets runs projects lead by an external Arts



Organisation involving a range of Primary, Secondary and SEN Schools. Teachers from all of the schools involved work closely with each other and with the Arts Organisation to support common curriculum goals through the Arts and are planning a public sharing of the work of all participants at the end of the project.

Arts & Cultural Organisations such as Spitalfields Music and Step Into Dance also hold various events throughout the year in which their SEN participants perform alongside their mainstream contemporaries. Indeed, Sue Goodman, from Step Into Dance, describes how *“Mainstream pupils become other when they mix with SEN pupils.”*

In the past, Spitalfields Music has created separate performance opportunities for SEN Schools. This year they are creating a single, inclusive ensemble at their Summer Festival, getting learners together from different schools to make music.

Similarly, schools such as the The Vale School, have comprehensive inclusion programmes with the mainstream school whose premises they share. Mainstream learners come into The Vale’s classes for lessons, off-site trips and projects with Arts & Cultural Organisations.

## **Moving Forwards**

The increasing SEN presence on the agenda of the Arts & Cultural sector is, many believe, a reflection of slowly changing attitudes in society. *“Museums have really changed in the last couple years and become more lively places where you are allowed to make noise. This really has made it more accessible for our pupils,”* remarks Chris Elford, of Stormont House School.

At the British Museum, for example, SEN groups have even been known to have a picnic in the gallery, giving learners an opportunity to sample some of the foods they discuss in their taught sessions. *“Teachers often worry that museums are full of rules. Part of our job is making teachers realise that we have flexibility that they often don’t think we have,”* reflects Katharine Hoare from the British Museum. *“If I there is a group of autistic children in the gallery they have a right to be as noisy as they need to be,”* Katharine adds.

Anne Ogazi, at the V&A Museum of Childhood, similarly comments that, *“A lot of teachers have expectations about museums, and when they arrive they might be quite surprised. The emphasis should be on creating an environment for everyone - it’s not specifically for mainstream, it’s not specifically for SEN; it’s specifically for everyone,”* she says.

Amy McKelvie at the Tate concurs with this, saying that, *“there is still a fear of noise in the galleries but that’s changing as the institution provides greater training to frontline staff about inclusive practice. As an organisation there is a real desire at Tate to make this feel like a place for everyone.”* The atmosphere of a school group *“taking over the gallery”* feels *“almost celebratory [...] it’s about making the space their own,”* she adds.

In such examples, where working with SEN groups is evidently changing the ethos of very established institutions, it is clear that Arts & Cultural Provision for SEN learners has a role in challenging public perceptions and attitudes to SEN and inclusion.

We are optimistic that, in moving forwards, the fostering of good partnership practice between Organisations and Schools can improve SEN learners’ access to Arts & Culture and, in doing so, can play a part in influencing and shaping societal attitudes to SEN.

As such, the emerging possibilities for greater collaboration and dialogue between Arts & Cultural Organisations and SEN Schools hold both great opportunities and responsibilities in the future.