

Artsmark toolkit

Tips for completing your
Statement of Commitment



**A NEW
DIRECTION**
We create opportunity

The Statement of Commitment is the first document you'll send to Arts Council England to determine your Artsmark award. It sets a baseline and is a valuable reference point as you progress through the Artsmark journey.

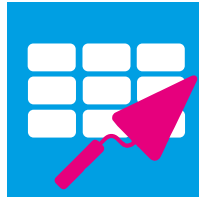
In this toolkit, we would like to offer some tips to help you get the most from the process of completing it. Each statement will be different so we are not offering exemplars, but we will take you through each question and consider what needs to be included.

It's difficult to write anything by committee, but bear in mind that completing the statement shouldn't be the work of one person. It should reflect a whole school vision and be shared as a celebration of strengths and plan of action.

Top 10 tips for your Artsmark Statement of Commitment



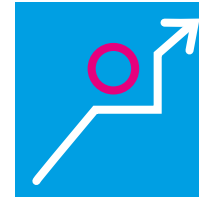
1. **Read** the questions and address **all** elements.



2. **Build** on existing priorities.



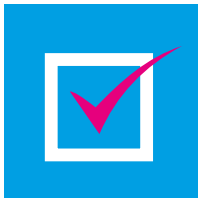
3. Ensure a **logical progression** from one question to the next.



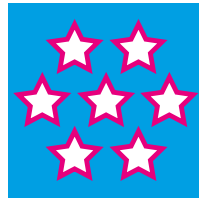
4. Anticipate the case study and **plan** for impact and change.



5. **Share** the statement with your colleagues.



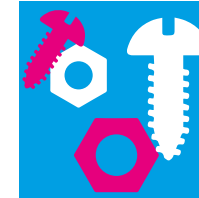
6. **Address all** the areas in the self-assessment tool.



7. Keep the **quality principles** in mind throughout.



8. Take advantage of **ongoing support** from A New Direction.



9. **Get the nuts and bolts right:** the name of your school, your DfE number, word count and signatures.



10. **Celebrate** your offer and **share** your passion for arts and culture.

**If you need a bit
more support with
the individual
questions, here
goes!**

- Question 1** →
- Question 2** →
- Question 3** →
- Question 4** →
- Question 5** →
- Question 6** →

Question 1

Please explain the central importance of the arts to your school both at the level of principle (in terms of values/ curriculum/developing the whole child) and pedagogically (in terms of impact on improving the quality of provision/teaching and raising standards). In your answer, please refer to both:

(i) current provision and (ii) plans for future development of the arts

No more than 500 words

Some schools like to write here about their school context. Keep it brief and relevant to the question. For example, you may want to refer to the school demographic, students' needs or whether the school has a specialism. Ask this question: how will the information I give here support my Artsmark bid?

It's tempting to list all the great things your school is doing in terms of arts and culture but the main point of this question is **why** are you doing these things? What is the value?

The question has several strands. Let's look first at your **current provision**.

Principle: a fundamental truth, a set of values, a belief or ethos that guides you.

Consider the following as prompts you may want to follow in your response (any or all)

- » Personal qualities and skills
- » A rights-based approach, entitlement and inclusion
- » Cultural capital, being a Londoner
- » Making change
- » Addressing bigger issues: social mobility, gender equality, untold stories, the environment
- » Values: core values, Rights Respecting, faith school (or other) ethos
- » Transferable skills, citizens of the future, career pathways
- » Making connections across disciplines

- » Impact on behaviour, aspiration, motivation
- » Wellbeing and mental health

Pedagogy: the art, craft and science of teaching that may include the creative and intuitive aspects, skills and practice and the theoretical underpinning of planning and delivery.

Consider the following as prompts you may want to follow in your response (any or all)

- » Access points: bringing dull or difficult ideas and concepts to life
- » Mastery
- » Metacognitive strategies
- » Impact on attainment
- » Links with educational theories and a growth mindset

In addition, how do arts and culture support the delivery of social, moral, spiritual and cultural education and that of British values?

Now look at **plans for future development** in the arts. This part can be shorter than the first as you will develop your plans later. It can include elements of both principle and pedagogy as appropriate. Give a broad overview at this stage and – as well as indicating **what** you are planning – say **why** you think it's important for your school.

Question 2

Following on from your answer above, please describe how and why Artsmark will contribute to your strategic school improvement plans?

No more than 500 words

Being part of the Artsmark Community enables you to share ideas and practice with other schools and organisations. Here are some of the themes that have featured in statements of commitment we have read:

- » Real-world connections
- » Supporting leadership
- » Putting the A in STEM: STEAM!
- » Artsmark as a driver of change
- » Celebration and reward
- » A catalyst for exploring new art forms
- » A creative manifesto
- » Shared vision and shared ownership
- » Community engagement
- » New partnerships
- » A network of like-minded schools and cultural organisations
- » A framework for self-assessment
- » A call for action research

Perhaps your school improvement plan prioritises 'closing the gap' between groups of students, improving writing, developing a specific art form or increasing staff confidence in teaching arts subjects. These can make a great focus for your Artsmark journey.

By all means quote directly from your school improvement plan and explain how Artsmark can help you to deliver on actions and priorities.

Be selective. It's fine to choose one or two points and develop a detailed plan to address them rather than trying to cover everything in one Artsmark cycle.

**“By all means
quote directly
from your school
improvement plan”**

Question 3

Referring to the self-assessment tool, in your view what Artsmark level best characterises your school at the moment?

No more than 500 words

Is your current level clearly described for each of the eight areas of focus?

8 areas of focus

1. leadership
2. curriculum design
3. CPD
4. pupil engagement
5. range of offer
6. partnerships
7. equality and diversity
8. values and ethos

Is it clear which level you are seeking to establish, or work towards, by the end of this Artsmark cycle?

At the Artsmark Development Day, you were asked to analyse each priority area and then identify a score between 1 and 5 (1 being the weakest and 5 being the strongest). Revisit each of the priorities with another colleague who was not at the development day and see if your school can reach a consensus on where the schools strengths and areas of development lie.

If there are priority areas where your school requires development, you might want to think about addressing these in your action plan so that Arts Council England can see progression in your Artsmark journey.



Question 4

Thinking of your future work, what will your school's action plan look like? What steps will be essential in order for your school to complete your Artsmark journey? This might include, but need not be restricted to:

- » auditing current provision
- » establishing whole-school curriculum planning for the arts – where the arts are used to improve teaching and learning in other curriculum areas, or where other curriculum content links to arts areas of the curriculum
- » developing a CPD programme
- » building partnerships with other schools and other relevant organisations
- » developing approaches to capturing evidence of impact and evaluating progress

No more than 500 words

What are you trying to change?

Try to identify one or two clear aims for your action plan. What do you want to achieve for your school through the Artsmark process?

Are your objectives SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound)? Are you confident to take on your objectives, or are you attempting too much in one cycle?

Do the objectives relate to the development areas already identified in previous questions?

Do you have a clear activity plan with:

- » a timeline
- » allocation of roles and responsibilities
- » a resources plan
- » possible obstacles identified
- » an evaluation framework
- » outputs?

Does your school have a common understanding of what success will look like?

How will you demonstrate the seven quality principles?

What evidence will you gather? How will you document and share your findings?

How will you monitor progress and evaluate outcomes?

Arts Council England has stated that it cannot accept tables or charts in Q4 but you may find it helpful to work from one yourselves before composing your response.

Some schools have found it useful to have their Artsmark Action Plan printed out on a wall in a staff room or department office to ensure that all members of staff involved have access to it and can tick off projects/meetings/milestones as they are completed.

SMART objectives

Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Relevant
Time-bound

Question 5

What support will your school factor in to maximise chances of Artsmark success? This might include, but need not be restricted to:

- » overall funding for the arts in the school
- » investment in CPD
- » opportunities for whole-school planning
- » utilisation of external expertise – technical or otherwise

No more than 500 words

This question offers you the opportunity to review your plans and how you will ensure their successful implementation. Link your response to your previous answers rather than only writing about your support for the arts generally.

You might find it useful to use the headings below to structure your response. You don't have to include them all if they aren't relevant to you.

Space and time: where and when will your activities take place? Is there capacity within the timetable? Will you need a large or special space for some of your activities? Have you factored in planning and evaluation time?

Cost: will your actions be covered from within your existing budget or will you have to bid for/raise more funds?

Human resources: who will be responsible for each element in your plan? Will you have an arts team? What role will students play?

Equipment and materials

Expertise: what skills do the people in your school community already have? What will you need to source from outside?

Systems: will you need to set up new systems, e.g. for tracking, documenting and gathering evidence?



Question 6

Artsmark will help create a network of like-minded schools. In what areas does your school already have strength in the arts and how do you know this? What areas of expertise will you share with other schools in the Artsmark family?

No more than 500 words

Have you identified one or two real strengths? How do you know these are strengths?

Have you made it clear how you can share them and with whom?

If you are a school going for Platinum level, Artsmark assessors will be looking closely at how this sharing of best practice is evident in your action plan.

How can you demonstrate the quality principles in your current strengths?

Remember, throughout the statement you are summarising your current position and future intentions. It is fine to deviate from your plans if you can account for these changes in your case study when the time comes.

The more specific your goals, the easier it will be to structure a plan and evaluate its impact and effectiveness.

And finally...

When it comes to the nuts and bolts, all the practical information you need to be able to submit the statement can be found at the end of the document template. The most common reasons for the statement to be returned by Arts Council England are:

- » the DfE number is wrong or missing a digit
- » one or both of the required signatures are missing
- » the word count limit has been exceeded in one or more responses. This rule is very strictly applied.
- » Charts, tables or photos have been included in the responses. They must all be in free text. Bullet points and sub-headings can be used, but lists can be dry and lacking context so narrative and explanation are welcomed.

If Arts Council England feels that your statement doesn't serve you as a strong baseline for your Artsmark journey, you will be put in contact with us at A New Direction. We can help you to redraft and submit it.

Once your Statement of Commitment has been accepted, you can start to deliver your action plan. Note that any activity delivered before that cannot be included in your case study.

A New Direction helps London create, think and learn.

Through our partnerships we create positive change across schools, education and communities to ensure that young people get the most out of London's extraordinary creative and cultural offer.

We want London to be:

- » a city where cultural education is the best in the world
- » young people are able to access and influence culture
- » the right platforms are in place to identify and nourish young people's creative talents

This is the right of all young Londoners - regardless of wealth, geography or luck.

Find out more about how we work, the programmes and events we run, and opportunities to engage at anewdirection.org.uk.

anewdirection.org.uk

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