

CREATING A CULTURE OF INCLUSIVE OPPORTUNITY THROUGH ARTS AND CREATIVITY

Guide for education colleagues

The problem

- The focus of the school curriculum is narrow, with many children and young people (CYP) disengaged from education.
- Exclusion from creative opportunities exacerbates school disengagement, with rising absence and Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) rates among vulnerable pupils.
- There is a struggle to provide a broad and balanced curriculum, with arts and creative subjects, that are vital for promoting wellbeing, aspiration, and inclusion, often being sidelined.

What you can do as school staff

- **Consider how the curriculum offer as a whole promotes arts, culture and creative expression**, giving children equitable access to art, drama and music as well as building cultural knowledge and hinterland across the curriculum. Promote student voice and student leadership to ensure creative opportunities are diverse and empowering.
- **Partner with local cultural institutions** (e.g., museums, theatres, libraries) to co-deliver creative enrichment through workshops, residencies, or visits. Collaborate to seek funding for these opportunities.
- **Establish or expand extracurricular arts opportunities**, such as after-school clubs, holiday arts camps, and mentoring with local artists. Develop opportunities to partner with other schools from different contexts on shared creative projects.
- **Celebrate and reflect student diversity** in school arts and culture programmes to foster belonging, identity, and pride.
- **Support early-years creativity** through play, storytelling, music, and movement, and ensure inclusive access from the start of schooling.

Evidence-based insights

Engaging in the arts boosts academic progress by up to **3 months** in English, Maths, and Science, especially for pupils at risk of disengagement.

Due to a lack of funding in state schools, **93%** of children are being excluded from arts and cultural education.

Examples of good practice you may wish to explore:

Morecambe Bay Curriculum

A programme that uses place-based education to foster an understanding of sustainability and empower young people as agents of change. It aims to enhance mental and physical health, employment opportunities, the local economy, and community wellbeing.

Theatre Hullabaloo, Play on Prescription and Place to Play

An initiative providing access to creative play and activity sessions, particularly for the most disadvantaged families. It boosts the cognitive, social, and emotional development of children and provides support to families by connecting them with local support services.

Sunningdale School

A specialist school using play, music, and art as the foundation of its curriculum to support self-expression and learning for children with profound needs.

The Royal Armouries

A Leeds museum which offers innovative creative programmes for CYP. Examples include 'Mightier than the Sword', a literacy initiative using storytelling, drama, and artefacts to boost writing and emotional literacy, and 'Hidden Stories', an inclusive exhibition exploring gender and LGBTQ+ histories to diversify representation and foster community engagement.

Check out the innovative approaches outlined in this briefing and **consider implementing these practices into your school.**



Scan the QR Code for the report

Please share this guide and start a discussion in your school about how we can all play our role in building a country that works for all children and young people.