

Artists working in partnership with schools

**Quality indicators and advice for
planning, commissioning and delivery**

Report by Ann Orfali

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Foreword

Arts Council England, North East has, over the years, placed a high priority on ensuring that the quality of arts education work in schools is of prime importance.

Effective partnership is key to any successful initiative; part of that priority has been to ensure that training is provided for artists/arts organisations to enable maximum benefit to be achieved by both sectors.

This publication aims to set out a framework of quality indicators and measures which can be used to ensure a positive partnership and subsequently a successful project.

Shirley Campbell
Head of Development
Arts Council England, North East

Introduction

There is widespread recognition that active partnerships between an artist and school can offer long-term development opportunities that are central to many government initiatives for raising achievement.

There is no clear guidance, however, on how to create and monitor an active partnership.

This document attempts to provide some best practice guidelines for commissioning practice and effective partnerships for artists working in schools.

It presents a framework of quality indicators and suggested measures that can be applied to commissioning, planning and delivery.

Whilst the information largely refers to artists, many of the suggested practices will be useful for other agencies and sectors working with schools, such as museums and galleries and the architecture, film and creative industries.

In creating the guidelines, a range of parties were consulted including primary, special and secondary schools; artists from a wide range of artforms; pupils, aged 10 to 16; project commissioners and intermediary advisers from agencies and councils.

Guidelines and suggested principles of partnership

Close collaboration between the artist and the school is fundamental to sound partnership planning and effective communications.

The following information is intended to assist effective partnership working and draw attention to issues which can hold up its progress.

A project brief

This outlines the purpose and scope of the project. It can serve as a basis for negotiation between the school and the artist and establish agreement of the project's parameters. It should include:

- aims and objectives for all partners
- agreed benefits and beneficiaries
- details of participating pupils, eg age range, group size
- involvement of school staff members
- venue/school area designated for project
- length of project
- start and end dates
- management and co-ordination responsibilities
- available support resources for artist, eg technical, practical, staffing
- any final product/event/exhibition/performance
- monitoring and evaluation procedures

A contract

This formalises the project and sets out responsibilities. It can minimise misunderstandings and help resolve differences. The contract should include:

- name and address of host school and artist
- start and end dates
- number of days per week/month the artist will work on the project
- details of groups with which artist will work – class size, age range
- location of work area and times that space is available
- outline of the artist's contribution to the project including any time and space for artists to develop creative practice; building regulations; any artwork which is to be retained by the school; copyright and reproduction rights; credits and acknowledgements
- name of artist's main contact in school

- artist's self-employed status and responsibilities for NI and income tax
- payment of artist's fee
- any other budgets to cover artist's materials, equipment, travel, insurance cover, eg public liability
- child protection procedures
- costs relating to final product/event and responsibilities for insurance
- procedure for early termination of project including outstanding fees
- signature of artist and school representative and document dated

A contract model designed for artists in residence during Year of the Artist can be adapted for this purpose. Suggested partnership agreements for out-of-school hours programmes are included in the DfES study support toolkit, *Making it work in schools*.

Budget

In addition to materials and costs associated with publicity and events, a budget needs to support joint planning, review and evaluation.

Funds should be in place for the artist's fee – recommended rates are available from both Arts Council England and industry lead bodies – and should include time for preparation and meetings.

Be aware that funding which is project-based and limited to actual delivery time can be problematic. Artists have often had to subsidise projects due to delays in the funding process and shortfalls caused by underestimating the number of hours required of professional practitioners.

Matching school need with artist

Research carried out by David J Hargreaves and his team into schools' attitudes, plans and achievements for the arts, found that 'effective extended arts experiences depend on good links outside the school'.

The team suggested that 'schools who benefit from contact with the professional worlds of the arts find this extremely beneficial in supporting their in-school arts teaching and activities'.

Arts education agencies, local arts development agencies and arts organisations can all offer advice on managing expectations.

Selection process

References, evidence of previous experience in schools and examples of the artist's work should assist in the shortlisting of candidates. This may take many forms including portfolio, performance piece or video.

An interview will provide the opportunity to explore the idea of working together and to discuss the project proposal prior to finalising the project brief. Although the project brief will outline details of staff and pupils who are expected to be involved, meeting those who will participate in the project may help the artist reach an informed decision.

Preliminary research

Gaining some knowledge of the school and education system in general will greatly assist any artist who is unfamiliar with the school setting. Training courses for artists wishing to further their experience are often available through arts education agencies – contact the Arts Council for details.

Issues such as health and safety, child protection, enhanced disclosure, equal opportunities, public liability insurance and other relevant school policies are vital to the potential partnership discussion.

Evaluation

When, how and who will evaluate the project should be agreed at the planning stage and included in the project brief. All partners and participants should be involved in the evaluation process.

Feedback and assessment during the project enable it to evolve and improve. The evaluation of a completed project helps measure the impact and whether aims and objectives have been met. The results can inform future projects and effective practice.

Indicators of quality – the artist's perspective

Communication

Good communication between artist and school is vital to achieve an effective partnership and successful project.

It is crucial to have either the headteacher or other senior managers within the school present at the initial planning meeting.

Planning

Achievable aims and realistic objectives need to be set and agreed by all partners. There should be equal opportunities for artists and schools to bring their own ideas to the project.

Sound budget planning and financial provision should include funding for planning and development time.

The artist must be aware of the needs of the school and the importance of elements of the project, eg the impact of the end product on raising pupils' self-esteem.

A mutual understanding and respect of each party's responsibilities should be evident from the planning process.

Project structure should not only allow sufficient time to execute the project but also time to reflect on children's work.

Preparation

Teachers should be given sufficient notice so that preparatory work can be carried out to tie the project in with curriculum work if appropriate.

Meeting children prior to delivering the project is invaluable – if that is impossible, pupils should be briefed on what to expect and what will be expected from them.

A presentation from the artist is a good basis on which to establish school/artist relationship.

Materials and resources should be readily available from the start of the project.

Support

It is essential to have a main school contact to liaise with the artist. Encouragement of school staff helps drive a project and related activities.

Staff members' involvement and active support raises the profile of the project and confirms the levels of progress being achieved.

Teachers' involvement gives the opportunity to share skills and knowledge, and provides possibilities for the continuity of similar projects.

Teachers' encouragement of children's participation endorses the value of the activity.

Pupils

Gaining the confidence of pupils is vital to success – all communication and instruction should be pitched at the correct ability level, with consideration for any limitations that may exclude children with special needs.

A manageable group size is likely to be more beneficial, however, at least one artist said 'having a whole class engaged simultaneously in a creative process' was a mark of quality.

Enthusiastic children, motivated by the creative process, are a clear sign of success.

Delivery

Although the end product is important, a balance must be struck between process and end product.

Success can be measured through the new skills and techniques developed by pupils and their introduction to other artists and artforms.

The opportunity to uncover hidden skills and abilities of children who may not usually 'shine' is hugely rewarding.

Work Space

When checking the suitability of an area, include room size, cleanliness, temperature, availability of water and secure storage for tools, materials and work in progress.

Finance

Project funding and procedures for reimbursement of materials should be in place to ensure prompt payment of invoices.

Evaluation

Feedback from the school, parents and pupils should be documented as part of the evaluative process.

The best...

'Real commitment to the project from staff members willing to share their ideas and skills and willing to learn from the artist.'

'Supportive teachers who enthusiastically help with rehearsals and performances.'

'If the process could be exhibited it would achieve the same results as an end product, in terms of raising self-esteem.'

'Parents became involved in the making process when children took puppet kits home – a growing involvement that enhanced school and parent partnership.'

'Cross-curricular links give importance to the project and creative process.'

and the worst

'Turning up where no-one knows you're coming, there's no space or resources.'

'The teacher you're working with is not interested in what you or the young people want to do, but wants you to paint a picture or write a story.'

'Payment long overdue because council/school budget procedures not in place for freelance artists.'

'School staff disinterested in project, reluctant to participate and their reticence rubs off on pupils.'

'Materials and vital resources do not arrive until halfway through residency.'

'Doing a dance workshop in the science lab.'

'Teacher leaves you alone or sits at the back of the classroom marking work.'

Why artists choose to be involved in arts education work

Artists become involved in the education sector for a variety of reasons. Many find that being a valued partner in the learning process with opportunities to share and exchange ideas has developed their own creativity.

Participatory work has strengthened artists' communications skills and provided the framework to consider artforms in a new context.

An early experience with a resident poet in a secondary school greatly inspired one artist, who had not realised how much pleasure could be gained from a career in arts practice.

Exhibiting artists recalled how poorly attended exhibitions led them to find new ways to interest their audience. A career change in theatre brought one artist to arts education work after seeing the impact that creativity can have on a child's development.

In general, artists chose arts in education work because it created opportunities to share skills and expertise while stimulating their own creativity.

Residencies often demonstrate how creativity can play a key role in children's learning while developing an artist's skills and knowledge.

Rising to the challenge of bringing a range of cultural and creative opportunities to children, some artists actively research processes and learning styles in order to come up with fresh approaches to arts practice.

Some artists were of the opinion that working alone should be balanced with participatory work to give structure to their own artistic creativity. In contrast to working in isolation, much can be achieved by working with professionals from other disciplines, involving the community and generating interest for school activities among parents and carers.

Funding initiatives encouraging partnership working have provided an increasing number of opportunities for those seeking arts education work. The benefits for both children and artists alike go way beyond providing a source of employment for artists.

Indicators of quality – the school's perspective

Headteachers and senior members of staff outlined what they believed were crucial to the success of a project delivered by visiting artists and how quality is identified in the school setting.

The artist should have:

- an ability to communicate ideas and share creative processes at an appropriate level
- flexibility to incorporate children's needs and range of abilities
- a rapport with children and staff
- reliability and responsibility
- an awareness of the school environment
- skill in presenting opportunities to broaden experience and increase motivation
- an ability to engage with the curriculum through an interdisciplinary approach
- a willingness to meet the inclusive agenda of the school – equal opportunities for all children often requires good behaviour management skills

The project should encourage a pupil's:

- enthusiasm and interest
- increased knowledge and development of skills
- improved self-esteem, can be particularly striking in children who are less academic
- positive engagement in creativity during and outside school hours
- art work produced at a higher level and materials used with greater confidence
- excited 'buzz' of having a non-teacher in school
- language development – vocabulary of art/dance/music/drama introduced and evidenced in other areas of the curriculum
- willingness to try new approaches
- enjoyment of working with a professional artist

The project should assist in a teacher's:

- professional development opportunities
- increased confidence, skill and knowledge of artforms and related techniques
- help with areas of creativity across the curriculum

School respondents also described factors that would determine quality, including aims and objectives achieved on time and in accordance with the project plan and value for money.

Some schools will have particular needs to fulfil:

A school with a strong community role might expect a successful project to attract community involvement and enhance activities across the generations.

A school with a high percentage of children with special needs may require arts residencies to continue for a length of time that allows children to absorb the experience and to engage with the artist.

Further advice

Almost all participating schools shared the expectation that the school environment would be enriched and the school community stimulated by having a professional artist on site. In general, the contributions made through creative partnerships were regarded as positive. Good practice was exemplified in projects that had been devised in partnership and had agreed aims and objectives. Suggested measures to maximise the benefits, safeguard school projects and avoid pitfalls were offered for consideration:

- look at outcomes previously achieved by artist working in other schools
- in addition to project planning, artists need to set time aside for preparation to meet specific needs of the school
- have clear objectives and agree how they will be achieved
- nurture unexpected outcomes that impact on the progress of children struggling with the curriculum: pupils with language difficulties have demonstrated an enriched vocabulary in their class work after successful arts projects

In addition to successful project outcomes, the practitioner often becomes an important role model:

- children identify with an end product – it symbolises recognition and celebration of achievement and serves as an inspiration to other children
- evaluation should be an integral part of any partnership project to inform future projects and improve practice

Working on the basis that pupils are more confident when they can identify with the artist, one secondary school established a 'bank' of former students who had the skills to deliver projects. The school now relies heavily on these practitioners who are totally familiar with the school.

Although the majority of schools reported on the successes of arts partnership projects, examples of worst-case scenarios were available:

- 'Artist had a cavalier attitude to school policies and a very casual approach to planning.'
- 'Artist would show up late and totally disregard the school timetable.'
- 'We had great difficulty in getting the artist to contribute to the evaluation.'
- 'The artist appeared at school with shocking pink spiked hair and numerous face studs which was totally inappropriate for a primary school with a dress code – one very impressionable child came to school two days later with bright red hair.'

Best practice

Examples of good practice emerged from discussions with senior members of the schools. Some schools had recently benefited from additional funding which had allowed them to extend arts provision and enhance existing programmes.

Schools that had invested in the arts as a means to enhance the curriculum linked their school improvement plan with arts projects.

A primary school that had been described in an OfSTED report as one that, 'made very good use of visiting artists to inspire and motivate pupils', continued to build on that experience for both pupils and staff. Their success is used to illustrate good practice and the positive impact of effective partnerships:

Before

The school commissioned artists and organisations to become involved in the school pantomime. The project involved months of planning to ensure curricular links and children's needs were addressed. Artists were committed to promoting a positive climate for learning in challenging circumstances.

During

School staff and creative partners worked closely together in far-reaching activities. The project and its various strands effectively linked literacy, citizenship, ICT, numeracy, science, art, history, technology, geography, music and drama.

During one lesson, children were asked to focus on the kind of stage curtains and backdrops they might buy or make. They were encouraged to describe texture and durability, which progressed to using descriptive terms in sentences. Further discussion moved to cost, budget and profit margins and extended to problem solving and mathematical tasks. Finally, a test to discover the flammability of materials was carried out as a controlled experiment – reinforcing science teaching. Children were keen to offer information on health and safety and instructions learned from fire service visits.

Sessions with creative partners including costume designer, graphic artist, textile artist and theatre companies were mixed with lessons to strengthen and enliven pupils' learning.

Finale

Every child in school had a role to play in the end product – marked by several performances. The final evaluation, including evidence collection by pupils, gave an overview which will inform plans for future projects. This was a prime example of the integral role that arts play in our education system.

As Chris Smith, former Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, said, 'time spent on the arts is not peripheral, it is absolutely fundamental to all that we are trying to achieve'.

Indicators of quality – the commissioner’s perspective

Local arts development agencies, arts in education agencies and other project commissioners, identified quality indicators and suggested measures to achieve a successful partnership project.

Planning and co-ordination

- a dedicated, committed individual should be elected by senior members of school staff to serve as a main contact and co-ordinator of the project
- meeting to be arranged with artist to determine past experience, portfolio of work and any proven track record
- references should be taken up and/or request to ‘sit in’ on current project
- a half-day trial workshop could be offered to a new practitioner
- needs of the school must be clearly expressed to ensure they fit with the artist’s expectations
- meetings, planning sessions, evaluation and final event should be included in project costs
- create a partnership group comprising artist, co-ordinator, senior member of staff and teachers involved in the project
- the partnership group should agree the project’s structure, aims and objectives; set clear guidelines regarding class size, timing and expectations; establish evaluation procedure which includes documentation and evidence of work in progress as well as the end product

Artists are more likely to deliver a quality project if they have:

- ability to plan a project and to realise their plans
- skills to manage deadlines, relevant documentation and administration
- awareness of health and safety, risk assessment
- ability to communicate with young people and staff to clearly explain processes and procedures
- attended training sessions for artists wishing to work in schools
- ability to work with young people to produce creativity and create a quality experience
- ability to monitor, review and assess progress and contribute to evaluation

Indicators of quality – the pupil’s perspective

Pupils from primary and secondary schools gave their views on the experience of working with an artist in school. They talked about what they enjoyed and what could or should be done to ensure success.

Working with different groups

Children enjoyed the opportunity of working with other classes and ability groups. They enjoyed the teamwork involved in producing a bigger and better end product.

Learning

New techniques were learnt, skills developed and new materials used to produce work that exceeded the children’s original expectations. Whilst they were keen to show their artwork or performance, they were equally proud of the diaries, business plans and letters that formed part of the project. Working with scripts, soundtracks and video helped children develop numeracy and literacy skills. Pupils recalled ‘scary moments’ when they had to focus on dance and music prompts and the importance of ‘counting themselves in’. As one year six pupil put it, ‘you have to learn about sums to get it right on the night’.

Pupils commented on what they had learned about artistic processes, other artists and artforms. A year five pupil said he had ‘learned that there was more than one way to produce a picture’, another added that he had ‘learned that you could make a mistake and there were ways of putting it right without looking like a fool’.

Some children, who were not the usual stars, surprised their classmates by excelling: ‘Come and see this picture, you’ll never guess who did it, it’s brilliant.’

Different learning styles were adopted. ‘I learned so much and remembered how to do it and I never realised I was learning.’

Children had clearly taken the opportunities to interact with learning and to explore their own ideas.

The artist

The majority of pupils had positive experiences of working with several artists and artforms. They described the relationship that they can have with artists as different and less formal than with teachers. This is best summed up in a quote from one pupil who said, 'if you're not keen on school and not very happy, sometimes working with someone like a friend can encourage you to come to school'.

The expertise of the artist is recognised and appreciated in such comments as:

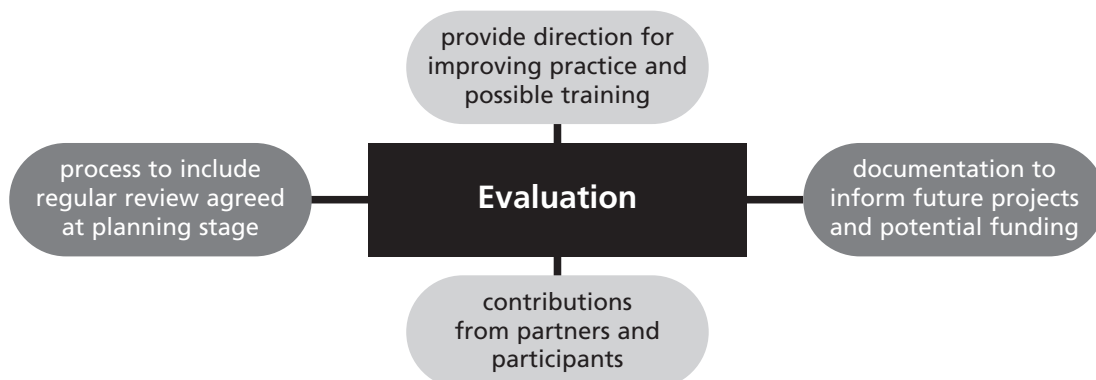
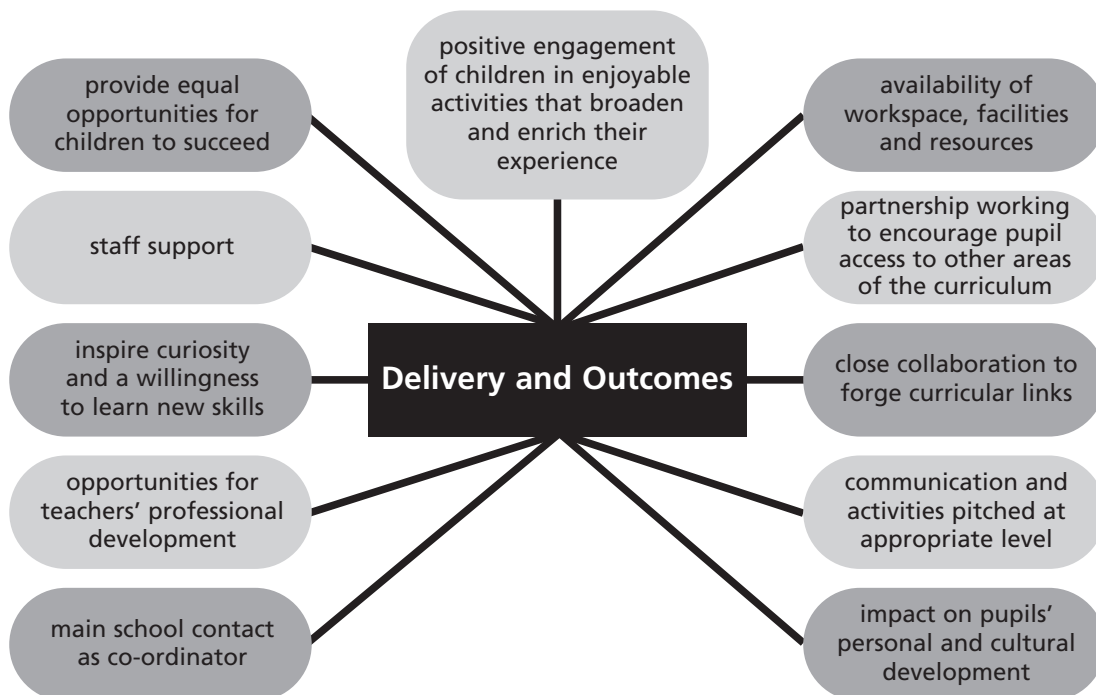
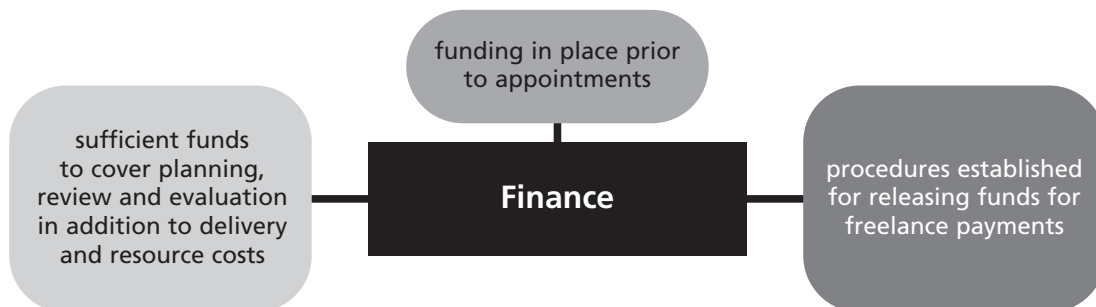
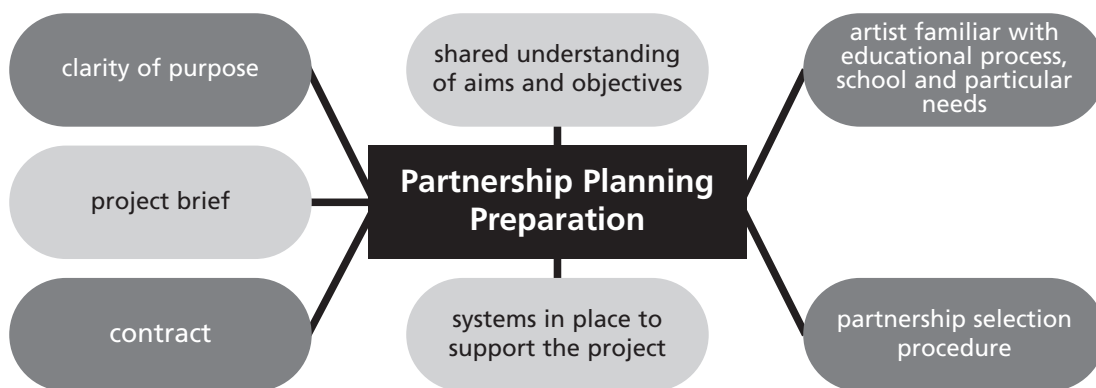
- 'he has loads of experience which he shares with us so that we can put on a better performance'
- 'never runs out of ideas to make things exciting and more interesting to us'
- 'gives us confidence to try new things'
- 'encourages us to explore paintings and stuff'

Pupils suggested that a quality project required an artist who was:

- able to explain things clearly
- not nervous
- an experienced artist
- confident in sharing ideas
- experienced at working with children
- able to help you improve your work
- happy at what they are doing
- able to handle large numbers of children
- able to demonstrate different styles and techniques
- able to create a good atmosphere
- happy being around children
- not bossy
- able to make time for everybody
- able to make work lots of fun
- able to communicate with children

They gave further advice on what the school could contribute:

- make sure materials are available
- check on the artist's past work – check where they've worked and what they've done
- plan well in advance with the artist



Conclusion

Peter Brinson, former director of the Gulbenkian Foundation, described the arts as, 'principal trainers of imagination' and said imagination was, 'the greatest resource possessed by any nation'.

Schools are enlisting the help of creative partners, recognising their expertise as a valuable resource to harness pupils' imagination. Through an enriched curriculum, innovative teaching and learning styles are engaging pupils, including some of those children at risk from exclusion.

Much has been said about the empowering effects of the arts and how they can change the way we see ourselves and the wider world. Arts in education projects are not only demonstrating this through links to the curriculum but also by contributing to pupils' social and cultural development. Encouraging evidence suggests that creative activities are being used as levers for raising achievement, self-esteem and awareness of cultural diversity.

A clear purpose and approach to project planning are underpinning successful projects that can positively impact on pupils' learning.

The creative partnership process that encourages and enables young people will no doubt be subjected to wider scrutiny to determine the outcomes on areas of the curriculum. It is hoped that the contributions from artists, schools and agencies involved in this report will stimulate and further such discussion.

Diagram (opposite)

In summary, suggested measures and identified quality indicators are depicted in the diagram for consideration by those seeking quality in the commissioning and delivery of arts projects in schools.

Bibliography

Existing information relating to commissioning practice and effective partnership working, artists/school sector:

Artists in schools: a handbook for teachers and artists

National Foundation for Educational Research

From policy to partnerships: developing the arts in schools

QCA & The Arts Council

Big arts week

Forward Arts Foundation

Culture & learning: creating arts and heritage education projects

Heritage Lottery Fund and The Arts Council

All our futures: creativity, culture & education

National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education

ARTS alive

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

Building effective arts partnerships

Education Extra

Codes of practice, study support

DfES

The study support toolkit: making it work in schools

DfES

The arts inspected

OfSTED

Guaranteeing an entitlement to the arts in schools

RSA

Keeping arts safe: protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults involved in arts activities

Arts Council England

Partnerships for learning

Arts Council England

Expecting the unexpected: developing creativity in primary and secondary schools

OfSTED

Arts Council England, North East
Central Square, Forth Street
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 3PJ
Phone: 0845 300 6200
Fax: 0191 230 1020
Textphone: 020 7973 6564
Email: enquiries@artscouncil.org.uk
Website: www.artscouncil.org.uk

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