

CASE STUDY: Adding value in an arts active secondary school

Youth leadership and accreditation opportunities in Sarah Bonnell School

Partners

Sarah Bonnell School, Fran Gkotsi (Creative Producer and Arts Award Adviser), Sound Connections and Wired4Music

About the school

Sarah Bonnell School is a busy comprehensive school with 1200 students based in Stratford, Newham

59% of students receive the pupil premium, above UK average (27%)

78% of pupils have English as a second language

The project

A series of connected activities enabled new student leadership opportunities, celebrated creativity already taking place in the school and supported 260 students to gain accreditation through Arts Award.

Young Producers

Sound Connections and Wired4Music Ambassadors worked closely with the school as part of Youth Voice activity. With teachers and pupils, Sound Connections set up a Young Producers programme that showcased creative activity already taking place across the school while testing new accreditation and leadership opportunities for students.

Ten Young Producers (all Y9 and Y10) worked with Sound Connections and Wired4Music Ambassadors to programme the school's Summer Showcase, which in the past had been organised by staff. Young Producers programmed the event with highlights from across the school's existing arts activities, including selections from work developed with Drum Works and Barbican, as well as highlights from school choirs and ensembles, and new youth led pieces.

In addition to programming, students organised invitations, marketing materials, social media channels including designing the poster and flyers for the event. They were also responsible for logistics and tech for the showcase.



The need

Sarah Bonnell joined Creative Schools as the pilot secondary school, enabling a confident exploration of ways to add value in a secondary context. As an arts active schools, the school's priorities included:

- Building on existing partnerships with arts practitioners and organisations
- Taking part in innovative action learning and research

Arts Award Accreditation

All Young Producers worked with Fran Gkotsi towards accreditation through Silver Arts Award.

In addition, 240 primary school students who were to join the school in Y7, achieved a Discover Arts Award through the integration of visual art, music and drama workshops into Sarah Bonnell's transition day.

Existing Y7 pupils also participated in attaining Bronze Arts Award, by planning the transition day with subject teachers and co-leading the sessions for incoming students. Throughout the process Y7 leaders were mentored by the Young Producers.



Impacts

For students...

Y9 and 10 Students who participated in the Young Producers project gave feedback through a creative consultation session with the Creative Schools evaluators before the project began and again afterwards.

260 children and young people gained accreditation through Arts Award as part of the project.

Immense pride in their achievement

"You know it was the first show since, definitely since I've been here, where we've been 100% sold out." – *Secondary Student*

Team work and collective decision making

"And some of the ideas are different, but we managed to merge all of it together, and it was really letting us see the excitement we were building up for, for the showcase, it was a nice experience to put all the ideas together." – *Secondary Student*

"I think patience is really key because you might not like change, you might be really annoyed with someone who is trying to make a change, but you just need to be patient and hear them out. It could be better than what you put forward. Not better, but maybe it's more efficient and it will just help you a bit more." – *Secondary Student*

Stronger peer relationships and mutual support

"At some point everyone was kind of feeling like giving up, but with the kind of atmosphere and the feeling that we had in our team it was really helpful to keep us going, and that's why we had such a successful showcase." – *Secondary Student*

Flexibility and resilience

"Last week, we were planning for the winter fair and then something changed that I couldn't stick to my schedule, and instead of getting frustrated, which obviously I would have been, I just like swapped some things around and like managed to change it and I feel like that was easier because of the whole Arts Award thing." – *Secondary Student*

Transferable skills

"I think because of how in-depth we had to plan everything, that's really helped with other subjects, so when we had working groups and a planning lesson, I would find myself asking similar questions to these, like what are the ideas, what's the main body for this. I think that was really helpful." – *Secondary Student*

For the school...

Sarah Bonnell started the Artsmark journey through Creative Schools Artsmark in 2017/18, building on the partnerships developed in 2016/17.

The school has embedded collaboration with arts organisations and practitioners developed through the programme, including Barbican Theatre Box - with students taking part for a second year running in 2018.

Teachers and students from the school also had the opportunity to share learning from the Young Producers project as part of the 2017 Symposium panel exploring 'Championing Youth Leadership'

For Youth Voice models...

This model of in-depth working is being further developed in a primary setting with Y5 students at Gallions Primary School in summer term 2018.

A key ambition for this project was to test a longer-term Youth Leadership initiative, and explore authentic ways to champion and empower youth voice and decision making within a school context.

"In future, I'd say a big consideration would be to spend a good amount of time with school staff to ensure full buy in, not just in principle but around practically how some of the decision making will happen." – *Sound Connections*