

Artsmark and SEND Provision

Education consultant Andrew Fox has been supporting the development of our East Midlands SEND school arts network over the last couple of years and has supported a number of SEND schools on their Artsmark journey. As a result Andrew has produced a research paper looking at Artsmark and how it can support school improvement in SEND settings.

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1. Introduction

This document offers guidance for SEND settings in five specific focus areas when planning for engagement in Arts Council England's Artsmark program and may provide routes to deeper school improvement initiatives in arts and culture alongside the more popular and existing approaches used by mainstream settings.

The Artsmark framework has been developed generically to cater for all types of settings (including mainstream Primary, Secondary, PRU and Youth Offending) but within SEND education there are distinct challenges, variances and curriculum models that should be

taken into consideration when devising a school improvement planning programme. The breadth and scope of SEND education covers many types of disabilities, learning styles with specific challenges for the teachers, the parents, the medical practitioners and for the young people themselves. Amongst these are a wide array of physical and learning impediments such as autism, deafness, multi-sensory impairment, behavioural difficulties, down syndrome, moderate learning difficulties (MLD) and severe, profound and multiple learning disabilities (SPMLD). Consequently, developing both the curriculum, provision and staff development is sometimes approached in notably different ways to that of mainstream education (and whilst there many commonalities, mainstream practice does not always mirror and connect to SEND practice). The following report is a summary of key recurring themes noted during my various visits and development work with SEND settings across the midlands region and has been compiled to help prompt SEND settings to consider the Artsmark program in a way that is closer to their settings own practice, pedagogy and specific challenges.

2. The Curriculum

Approaches to developing an operating model for the curriculum (and not just its content) will vary across SEND settings and in most cases a SEND curriculum is designed to cater for, and to respond to, the specific needs of the pupils (the most notable of these are the mixed age groupings based on individual pupils abilities). Within mainstream settings, Artsmark schools are encouraged to develop the presence of arts and cultural opportunities across the curriculum and beyond, through extra curricula clubs and opportunities, and there are indeed many similarities as to how the two types of settings would approach achieving these goals. The challenges posed for SEND schools, however, will mean that they are quite often required to look at development pathways in a very different and bespoke way to that of mainstream settings. There were several key points that arose during my development work with SEND schools and these were:

Creativity Across the Curriculum: Arts and creative practice can be inherently found in almost every approach at the EYFS/Primary SEND stage (and upwards) as a means to develop response, speech, self awareness, interaction and an understanding of the world. In many

cases this is overlooked as 'arts practice' and SEND settings should consider all creative and arts practice across the school when reviewing, building and evaluating provision.

Creative Pedagogy: SEND schools should value creative pedagogy and practice within teacher CPD at the core of their provision, and that this should run alongside the more typical Artsmark focus areas of art subjects, art focussed CPD, the range of offer, building partnerships and working outwardly.

Extra Curricula Provision: Offering an extra curricula provision can be a challenge for many SEND schools but developing inclusive lunchtime offers around the arts together with leadership and peer support roles within the school day is a popular way to counteract the lack of after school provision. Seeking to use classrooms, corridors and other spaces flexibly and creatively are also ways to increase and enrich the schools' provision.

Collaborating with Artists and Reciprocity: Developing a wide range of visiting professional artists (including disabled artists as role models) and organisations coming into school can be very rewarding, and in some cases, schools are approaching these partnerships in a collaborative capacity (wherein both parties set out to learn something in the partnership). This appeared to foster a higher level of reciprocal respect for the partners and increased confidence in action research/CPD for the staff, leading to more experimentation across the curriculum. Incorporating creative and cultural career pathways through partnerships is also something that many SEND settings with advanced cultural provision are covering.

Subject Pathways: SEND schools should seek to develop and maintain the presence of the arts subjects in a manner that is recommended by Ofsted. Art, dance, drama and music as pathways for study within the curriculum should be available for all learners (and not just as arts experiences), even if the subjects are developed or modified to cater for different abilities (in a recent visit to an SEND setting, the PE teacher had developed a two-tier dance offer for SPLMD and more able learners). At 14-19, SEND schools can consider offering alternative arts subject accreditation such as Arts Award, or by creating more bespoke qualifications if GCSE is not appropriate. An example of this was observed in a recent school visit where the art teacher had extended the AQA accreditation by creating a bespoke art scheme for the 14-19 students with accreditation tracked throughout the creative curriculum and linked to the EHCP and five engagement areas.

3. Sensory

A substantial part of provision in PMLD and SPMLD schools is focused on specialist methods to support communication, physical development, and deeper engagement into learning. Sensory rooms are very popular and can be viewed as dedicated areas for creative intervention using installation techniques and therapeutic audio/visual backgrounds to create specific atmospheres. It is important for settings to view these methods as critical elements within their arts and cultural provision - techniques will vary from school to school, but they all require an element of creative choice and curation from key staff members (and sometimes visiting practitioners). This also includes other sensory areas such as music being used to support movement and response within Rebound Therapy (gentle bouncing on trampolines), during Hydro Therapy sessions in pools and also through the use of techniques such as Resonant Boards (equipment for generating physical sound experiences that students can feel). For MSI pupils (Multi Sensory Impairment - students that are in some way visually or hearing impaired) arts and crafts can become critical methods for developing engagement and response through tactile based work.

3. Engagement and Participation

Schools are now able to consider the Aspects of Engagement model for SEND (researched by Barry Carpenter through the Complex Learning Difficulties and Disabilities Research Project) which have been refined down to the five areas of:

Exploration - Realisation - Anticipation - Persistence - Initiation

Using arts practices as a vehicle, SEND settings are able report on pupil development in these areas (for example, how a specific arts activity may contribute towards progress and development). Similarly, Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) cover the areas of:

Communication and Interaction - Cognition and Learning

Social Emotional, Mental Health and Well being - Physical and Sensory

Evidence for EHCP targets can be generated in a cross curricula way from play time, pastoral and within the formal curriculum and again, arts and creative learning can provide

stimulus and impetus for pupils achieving in these areas. In many schools, teachers were reporting back to parents progress in EHCP's through arts activities and creative learning.

4. Speech, Language and Communication

Within SEND, there are many children who are non verbal, and in the case of deaf schools there is a complex mixture of factors leading to the teaching of both British Sign Language (BSL) and English language (written and spoken). A small percentage of deaf children have deaf cultural heritage (coming from deaf parents) so the term bi-cultural is used within deaf education because in effect, the pupils will need to learn each. Many PLMD and SPLMD SEND settings will adopt a total communication approach, and as with deaf schools, if a strategy for developing communication is not prioritised then learning and engagement will not happen. This means that speech, language and communication is woven into the provision of an SEND school and can be viewed as just as critical to the successes of the curriculum and the education of the child (if students are unable to express themselves then key concepts and learning will be effected). Many inspiring, creative and artistic approaches have been observed across settings such as Songs of Reference, BSL Newsround and Picture News, thus speech, language and communication should be integral to building artistic and cultural provision across the school.

5. Developing Pupil Voice and Leadership

Placing the pupils at the centre of learning and decision making has proved a successful strategy in many SEND settings (all with varying different approaches and methods). The most common form of pupil leadership is the arts council or student council model, but at the higher end, it was observed that a school were utilising the child led Reggio Emilia approach as a provocation for empowering creativity and agency for pupils with complex needs. In this case, the pupils became co-creators and co-producers of their own learning experiences which led to deeper engagement and staff reported it to be a transformational experience for the school. This process may be combined with arts partnerships and cultural learning

through trips and service providers, but it also can be facilitated by the teachers themselves using their own creative teaching and learning pedagogy (see section 1).

6. Summary

From the research and visits, I propose that SEND schools are able to consider more fundamental and core areas of school improvement when considering developing arts and cultural provision. Within the Artsmark programme, the following summary areas could be considered as an aid for deeper engagement with the program (these are distinct from mainstream and not necessarily made explicitly clear in the Artsmark Self Assessment framework).

Summary considerations:

- The definition of cultural and creative provision within SEND schools should include sensory work, speech, language and communication, EHCP strategies, pastoral and PSHE work (providing that arts, culture and creativity are contributing factors, even if they are refined and less visible than more traditional notions of arts in education).
- SEND schools should seek to develop inclusive multi-tier access approaches to art subject learning in order to cater for varying learning abilities across a setting. Similarly, championing new SEND approaches in specific art subject learning to support SEND learners should be encouraged, documented and evaluated.
- SEND settings should seek to develop their own bespoke versions of artistic and cultural learning led by the needs of the pupils, for example, bicultural provision in Deaf Ed, or sensory process led art in visually impaired schools and SPMLD settings.
- SEND teachers and practitioners creative pedagogy should be considered within CPD, together with their artistic skills development. Action research and CPD for teachers using arts, sensory or creative methodologies should be welcomed, championed and evaluated. Approaching partnerships with artists and organisations collaboratively, can also often lead to shared learning for both the teachers and the artists.

- Technology and IT are often at a more advanced stage in SEND settings and this presents opportunities to develop exciting new media work, installation, multi discipline projects and experimentation in wider art form areas. For example, seeking to develop creative programmes and installations for sensory rooms linked to topic work in-house or through partnerships. Investing in staff time and training in this area could prove to be fruitful and valuable to the schools' provision and the curriculum.
- Space is often used in a much more flexible and fluid way within SEND schools and this can be maximised by using the corridors and classrooms to support ad hoc music, drama and art projects by the pupils during school time and in between lessons. Allowing the arts to permeate freely, led by the pupils, can offer an uplifting environment for all, whilst not curriculum linked, this promotes feelings of well being in the school.
- SEND settings could consider developing approaches to reporting on the '5 levels of participation' and ECHP targets using the arts.
- SEND settings could seek to develop higher quality and authentic experiences within school to support drama and performance (using this regularly each week can have a significant impact across the school). Developing yearly immersive themed or special events linked to the curriculum using installation techniques or the outdoor areas is also recommended.
- SEND schools could seek to evaluate arts experiences in terms of how pupils are able to create, share and reflect and consider developing pupil leadership programs and opportunities across the curriculum where they can co-create and lead on their own learning.
- SEND settings could consider developing articulation, debate and pupil leadership with the art, culture and media as a focal point - where some pupils might not be able to engage, they may be able to observe and offer critique. More able pupils may also be able to peer support less able pupils.

Andrew Fox, BA (Hons) PGDip, MA: Andrew Fox is an Education Consultant, Facilitator and Producer who has worked with organisations such as The Mighty Creatives Leicester

Museums and Galleries, Birmingham Education Partnership. He provides consultancy to schools on school improvement and provision development.

hello@andrewrobertfox.com