



Ellesmere College

Artsmark Award Gold



"We get to try lots of different things and explore!"

background

Based in the city of Leicester, Ellesmere College is a special school which serves a community of students with a wide range of needs. Its cohort of around 300 students is across primary, secondary and sixth form phases.

the challenges

The school improvement plan identified an area of focus to further understand the drive behind student behaviour. This connected well with Artsmark since the positive effects an arts-rich learning experience had on students had already been observed and valued.

where did the journey begin?

The school wanted to deepen its knowledge and expertise, drawing on the talents of its specialist staff to create positive, inclusive, confidence-building experiences for its students. Ellesmere College is a very vibrant, creative setting. The school signed up to Artsmark in 2018 to further develop its arts provision. This coincided with the school's work with Attenborough Arts on the SENsory Atelier project, and Artsmark was engaged with as a framework to support whole school development, as well as monitor the work of this project.

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at a glance

- Ellesmere is a special school serving a community of students with a wide range of needs.
- The school improvement plan identified an area of focus to further understand the drive behind student behaviour, which connected well with Artsmark.
- Staff CPD was led by external arts professionals and specific staff in school and sought to give every staff member opportunities outside of their comfort zone.
- The curriculum has 9 core areas, of which creative arts is now one.
- It was also noted that students became more willing to take risks in their creative work, especially when trying something for the first time that might be out of their comfort zone and/or perceived abilities.



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what happened

Staff CPD was led by external arts professionals specific staff in school and sought to give every staff member opportunities outside of their comfort zone. For example, accomplished dancers took on visual art training, and drama specialists enjoyed music sessions, with each group being enthused by the passion of the trainer and developing a new set of skills together.

the outcome

After taking part in the Matilda project, in partnership with the Royal Shakespeare Company, performances are held twice a year in school with all students given the opportunity to take part as performers, audiences, and in back-stage roles.

A staff audit taught the Artsmark leads that although some colleagues were very talented in artistic disciplines, they were not confident leading whole staff training. Instead they set up smaller professional development groups where talented staff could share their skills in a comfortable, supportive environment. Staff now know more about each other's disciplines and practice, leading to an increase in confidence and reinforcing the positive working environment of the setting.

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As a result of the CPD, support and partnership projects teachers are taking more risks in their classrooms and are delivering more inclusive and progression focused lessons that acknowledge and build on student's 'spikey profiles'. Follow-up lesson observations showed 100% of lessons had clear learning objectives and next steps that were accurate and personalised to the students.

what advice do you have?

Do it – jump right in!

