

Royal Opera House Bridge – How we work with schools

Royal Opera House Bridge works to connect children and young people with great art and culture.

Through research, advocacy and co-investment we nurture networks, share learning and foster innovation within the education, arts and culture sector – particularly in communities where there is limited local provision or experience. ROH Bridge is funded by Arts Council England and is part of a national network of ten ‘bridge’ organisations. We work with schools, arts organisations, museums, libraries, heritage sites and councils across Greater Essex, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and North Kent.

Universal Offer

At individual staff level:

Through establishing local creative networks of education staff from a variety of settings we can get a strong sense of children and young people’s needs and teachers’ aspirations. We can then establish light touch out of school hours events and programmes to inspire and support pedagogy and also connect these networks to infrastructure such as local Cultural Education Partnerships where they can meet local arts organisations interested in partnership working.

At whole school level:

We offer a comprehensive programme of support for individual schools embarking on an Artsmark journey whether Silver, Gold or Platinum. This support includes one to one advice through ‘surgeries’; attendance at online Development Days; follow up work including making introductions to other schools in a similar position and also prospective cultural partners; advice on approaches to evaluating the impact of an Artsmark journey and reading and reflecting back on submissions to the Arts Council. We also celebrate schools which achieve Artsmark. We look to Gold and Platinum schools to demonstrate leadership when we are in a position to resource innovative action research.

Tailored Offer

Leaders for Impact:

Led by Dr Ceri Gorton and Hannah Bird this 6 day course (3 in school time, 3 at the weekend) targets senior leaders in primary, secondary and special schools who are committed to creative and cultural learning and are in a position to make change happen. Using a ‘Design Thinking’ approach 15 senior leaders a year participate in rich training experiences and share their philosophy and creative practice. The course includes both mentoring and coaching elements and visiting experts provide inspiration sessions from both the cultural and education sectors. This well-documented course has been externally evaluated including personal testimony from alumni and reports are available, should further information be required. Recruitment is competitive. In 2020/21 the programme has run predominantly online, but in previous years this has been a face to face course. Individuals meeting selection criteria are interviewed in June to begin the following September. The course is available at a subsidised charge of £495.00. We plan to advertise the fifth programme in April 2021.

School based small-scale action research:

Each year we receive a small grant from the DfE that we are able to spend on specifically tailored creative and cultural learning development work with a small group of schools around a common need

or interest. The criteria for this investment change year on year. This year we are focusing on the creative needs of pupils working at KS3. We look to invest with schools that we are confident have the capacity to project manage. More detailed criteria available on request.

Major projects:

From time to time we develop multi-agency partnerships that are ambitious and have the capacity to manage programmes on a large scale. Sometimes such aspirations arise after a small scale pilot which makes a significant impact. 'Creative Writing Through the Arts' is one such partnership (*see below: How we work in Essex*). Other partnership programmes include:

- *Thurrock Trailblazer*: a major cultural entitlement project with co-investment from ROH, Thurrock Council and annual subscription from participating schools. At the time of writing this has run for five years and has piloted an innovative 'cultural champion training programme' for middle leaders. Evaluation reports are also available for this initiative.
- *Bedford Culture Challenge*: co-developed with head teachers, young people and cultural practitioners, the programme helps schools identify local high-quality cultural learning opportunities, supports cultural partners to be ready to deliver and provide an aspirational 'checklist' for young people.
- *Medway Effective and Enlightening Transition*: a collaboration between schools and arts and heritage organisations in Medway to deliver a range of targeted activities to support children - particularly those at risk of exclusion - through their transition from Primary to Secondary.

Middle Management Training:

We are seeking an influential partner to help us pilot a new middle management training course. When we interview professionals for the *Leaders for Impact* senior leadership course we often find ourselves turning away creative teachers who have much to offer but have not yet developed a strong 'whole school view' or programme management skills. When we work with teachers given responsibility for Artsmark we recognise that they are unfamiliar with how to communicate clearly with the cultural sector or with colleagues about what quality cultural learning looks like or influence colleagues' creative practice. While we have had input to the Thurrock Cultural Champion Training programme that is a unique programme and difficult to scale-up. At this point in the life of our Bridge it is time to build upon what we know and make such a training programme more transferable.

Draft components of reflective CPDL -

- matching creative interventions to pupils' needs
- recognising and discussing good practice and its value and impact
- influencing colleagues' pedagogy
- accessing resources and funding for arts partnerships
- evaluating the impact of an arts partnership both formatively and summatively
- confidently 'leading from the middle' and discussing whole school change

Royal Opera House Bridge - How we work in Greater Essex

Our work in Greater Essex (including the county of Essex and the two unitary authorities of Thurrock and Southend on Sea) is led by:

Roxie Curry: Senior Strategy Manager

Sarah Waterman: Programme Manager – Essex

Adam Morris: School Engagement Manager – Greater Essex

Local Cultural Education Partnerships:

A key focus of our work is to support 7 cross-sector Local Cultural Education Partnerships (LCEPs) to develop a coherent, high-quality, sustainable cultural learning offer for children and young people in their locality. LCEPs are active in: Braintree, Colchester, Chelmsford, Harlow, Tendring, Thurrock and Southend-on-Sea. By Summer 2021 we will have invested £350,000 across the Greater Essex LCEP network enabling each Partnership to attract 100% match funding, employ dedicated LCEP Officers, roll out action research activity and cultural learning programmes for schools and informal education settings and offer teacher and cultural sector CPD opportunities.

Universal Offer:

We have nurtured local Creative Networks for teachers in South Essex, Tendring, Harlow and Epping. Through the pandemic the Epping network has remained active and provided home learning opportunities including the 20/20 Creativity Challenge. In September 2020, we established a virtual Greater Essex Creative Network to help educators stay inspired and connected. Around 50 settings are attending each monthly event. Local, regional and national cultural organisations regularly contribute and help teachers explore digital learning offers. Contributors have included Into Film, Royal Academy of Dance and Royal Opera House Learning and Participation.

Tailored Offer:

Our relationships with schools across Greater Essex has unlocked local leadership for cultural learning. *Leaders for Impact* alumni and Senior leaders from Platinum Artsmark Schools are playing pivotal roles in numerous LCEPs and steering local teacher Networks. A Platinum Artsmark school has managed the *Creative Writing through the Arts* programme. Action research projects have been led by teaching schools (PLN / Braintree) and other school clusters including the Tendring Small Schools Network.

Major Projects:

Creative Writing through the Arts is a three-year research programme that aims to provide evidence of the benefits of creative learning and teaching with and through the arts; specifically focusing on the development of children's writing. Involving five Teaching School Alliances¹ and 45 South Essex primary schools this initiative attracted £238,000 from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. The impact was fully evaluated by Anglia Ruskin University: www.creativewritingarts.org.uk Although this three year programme finished in 2019 its legacy is still evolving.

¹ Billericay, Wickford, Thurrock, SETSA and SETI