



# Creative Schools Partnership

## Year 1 Review

September 2018



# What is the creative schools programme?

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland, with support from Urban Villages Initiative and Education Authority, launched the Creative Schools Partnership in spring 2018.

The aim of the £120,000 pilot programme was to bring more creativity into the classroom to improve educational outcomes for students.

The programme was founded on the partners' shared creative ambition to improve community cohesion, support government priorities and reduce educational inequalities.

Ten post-primary schools located across five urban village areas participated in the one-year pilot scheme. Each school worked with professional artists to develop and deliver a unique arts project linked to school development priorities.

The Creative Schools Partnership directly involved 180 children through arts workshops. Many more students, family members and the wider school community were engaged through performances, publications, exhibitions and conversations.

Feedback from students and teachers collected for the end of programme evaluation report was overwhelming positive.

The full evaluation report on the Creative Schools Partnership pilot programme is available to download at: <http://artscouncil-ni.org/cspevaluation>



## The project engaged with children

and young people living within some of the most disadvantaged areas of Northern Ireland.

## Students involved in projects enjoyed:

- being part of a supportive group
- having ideas valued
- expressing themselves
- operating within a non-judgemental environment
- developing new friendships
- learning in different ways.

  
**14**  
**weeks**

average duration of each project

**10 schools**  
took part in the  
**1 year**  
year pilot programme across  
**5**  
Urban Village areas

  
**£8,000**  
Projects funded up to value of

  
**180**  
children took part

  
  
**£120k**  
invested by Arts Council, Education Authority, Urban Villages Initiative

  
**11-14**  
Target age group

## Outputs



Film



Publications



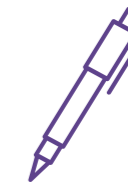
Music



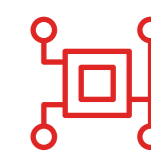
Ceramics



Drama



Creative Writing



Digital Fabrication

## Using creativity to:

- improve outcomes for disadvantaged young people
- strengthen school development priorities
- strengthen connections between young people, post-primary schools and the local community

## The arts raise:

Self-esteem, improve self-confidence, motivation, improve mental health and wellbeing

# Arts Council of Northern Ireland



Our starting point for wanting to develop the Creative Schools Partnership in Northern Ireland is the significant (and growing) body of evidence indicating that access to quality arts experiences in school can improve all aspects of learning. The wider benefits, beyond the study of art as an enriching outcome in itself, include the acquisition of new life skills, advances in personal and social development, better communication and thinking skills, and opportunities for positive interaction with others. These attributes can enhance student confidence, motivation, mental health and wellbeing, and can lead to an increase in engagement and attendance levels. They are also transferable to other contexts, such as learning in other subjects and participation in cultural activities beyond school.

Strengthening of social adaptability and cultural awareness fosters greater appreciation of personal and collective identities and encourages tolerance, understanding and acceptance of others. This in turn impacts on the whole school ethos by helping to cultivate a positive, cohesive atmosphere; with obvious implications for the local community.

With our partners, the Education Authority and Urban Villages Initiative, we set out to test new waters by piloting the Creative Schools Partnership programme in ten post-primary schools across five Urban Village areas, where there has been a history of deprivation and community tension. The creative projects were all very different, but all related to their local area, all were facilitated by professional artists working alongside teachers, and all strengthened relations between the young people, their schools and the local community.

The evidence we have gathered from the pilot, published here in summary form, shows how the arts can add a positive new dimension to the work of our colleagues in education and community relations. Most importantly, through the Creative Schools Partnership, we have been able to successfully engage and enthuse a large number of students and we have set in motion a much wider process of positive transformation.

**Roisin McDonough**  
Chief Executive, Arts Council of Northern Ireland

“Positive activities like this find the positive in the child and open them up to learning. The arts change our way of thinking.”

Martin Moreland, Mercy College

“The kids are buzzing, absolutely motivated and keen to do more, which is the greatest gift we can give them.”

Jo McColgan, Ashfield Boys High School

“What the arts do is give everyone an opportunity to shine. They allow you to be your best self.”

Jim McKeever, Blessed Trinity College



As the largest educational organisation in the region we are responsible for supporting the learning environment for children and young people. Schools are keystones to the local community and this programme affords an opportunity to support creative and shared learning.

The approach has endeavoured to bring together young people and their local community supported by educators and arts practitioners. At its core is the ambition to improve relationships, promote opportunities for learning and creativity and create shared experiential learning that helps understanding and creative expression. But it's not just about young people and their learning, there has also been professional development for school leaders and teachers in terms of supporting and growing creative arts practice in schools.

The methodology also reached out into local communities allowing different generations to become involved in examining themselves and their local community. The projects developed encouraged exploration and exposure to new ideas, new places and the wider cultural/creative context.

The young people who participated will have been stretched by new challenges and been supported by creative practitioners who brought a 'real world' edge to the learning journey.

Educational practitioners will also have encountered alternative means of stimulating creative work and practice. Rewarding communications with parents and inter generational community engagement has also proved beneficial to all those involved.

The breadth and variety of exchanges covered in the story so far is truly ground-breaking, from inter generational communication, conflict family and societal, career aspirations, the effect of Alzheimer's, well being, the past, present and the future...just some of the foot notes to the evaluation of the shared experiences the project created.

Well done to all who made it possible.

**Sharon O'Connor**  
Chair, Education Authority



The Urban Villages Initiative is a headline action within the Together: Building a United Community strategy. It is a programme, led by The Executive Office, designed to improve good relations and develop thriving places in parts of Belfast and Derry-Londonderry which have been among those most affected by conflict and ongoing social and economic challenges.

The programme priorities are to foster positive community identities; build community capacity; and improve the physical environment. This requires working in partnership across government, other public bodies and the voluntary and community sector to improve areas, strengthen communities and help people achieve better outcomes and live better together.

Communities across the Urban Village areas have identified strategic actions spanning themes such as education, enterprise and health and wellbeing. In addition to planned capital investment, a range of projects have been designed and are being led by local communities. All support good relations outcomes which arise from people working together and experiencing and valuing different perspectives, cultures and traditions. A common theme has been local groups using the arts and creativity to engage more people and tackle these issues in more innovative ways.

The Urban Villages Initiative is rooted within the communities which it serves and it is clear that schools are a key part of the community infrastructure and social fabric within and across these areas. Many local community-led projects already involve local schools and the programme is helping more schools serving Urban Village areas to further develop as vibrant hubs working with and supporting the aspirations of their wider communities. The Creative Schools Partnership has supported learning of other cultures, strengthened community networks and promoted understanding of other perspectives and issues which connect our communities. It has shown the value and catalytic potential of such creative and innovative collaborations.

**Linsey Farrell**  
Director, Urban Villages Initiative, The Executive Office

**Malone Integrated College**  
Ceramics with Trevor Woods  
Digital Fabrication with Nerve Belfast

**St Vincent's Centre**  
Ceramics with Ann Marie Robinson  
Drama with Orla McKeagney

**St Colm's High School**  
Production of online cookbook with Wheelworks

**Blessed Trinity College**  
Writing workshops with Fighting Words  
Animation with Nerve Centre

**St Cecilia's College**  
Music and film production with Bounce Culture



**Belfast Model School for Girls**  
Visual arts with Anushiya Sundarlingam

**Mercy College Belfast**  
Drama with Patricia Meir, Syd Trotter and Dr Rosemary Moreland

**St Joseph's Boys School**  
Production of school magazine with journalist Leona O'Neill and photographer Jim McCafferty

**Ashfield Boys High School**  
Writing workshops with Fighting Words

**Ashfield Girls High School**  
Drama with Accidental Theatre

## Creative Schools Partnership

For further information on the Creative Schools Partnership  
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