



**Office for Standards  
in Education**

# **Improving City Schools**

**How the arts can help**

**HMI 1709**

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## Introduction

### Purpose of the report

1. For this report HMI looked in detail at a small sample of some of the lowest-attaining primary and secondary schools in the country, schools which, despite low attainment in many areas of the curriculum, are achieving above national expectations for one or more of the arts subjects.
2. For the purpose of this inspection, arts subjects include music, art, dance and drama. HMI sought to establish:
  - the elements that make for good **teaching** and the achievement of high standards in the arts, and what is distinctive about arts teaching
  - if pupils have particular kinds of learning experiences in arts subjects or express a preference for specific learning styles. They looked at how pupils felt about the arts in comparison with other subjects.
3. This is a report with a limited focus and on a small scale. It looks especially at work of good quality in the arts and what use can be made of this more widely, for generally low-achieving pupils in particular. The direct evidence refers to a small number of schools and pupils and these should not be thought necessarily representative of the picture of education nationally. Good practice exists in all areas of the curriculum, of course: a focus on the arts does not, by implication, belittle the quality of work in other subjects.

## Main findings

- In many secondary schools with low proportions of pupils gaining 5 or more A\*–C grades at GCSE, arts subjects show some particularly encouraging results, sometimes enabling pupils to achieve greater success than they have in other aspects of the curriculum.
- In Ofsted inspections, the learning and attainment grades for the arts subjects are often higher than those in English, mathematics and science, even in schools where standards are generally low.
- While these findings confirm that many primary and secondary pupils in disadvantaged areas are achieving more success in the arts than in the core curriculum, their learning in the arts subjects is not always systematically reinforced or extended in the rest of the curriculum.
- In schools achieving higher standards in one or more of the arts, there is a well-established school or departmental commitment to the arts, which communicates high expectations to new staff and pupils joining the school. In primary schools, this positive tradition often extends to the whole school.
- Behaviour in arts lessons can be better than in many other lessons in secondary schools. Although behaviour is less of an issue in primary schools, teachers' concerns about control can inhibit the range of arts activities offered to children, especially in dance and drama.
- The most effective primary and secondary teachers have a clear idea of content and progression in arts subjects. Many make good use of Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) subject guidelines, develop their own, or use local education authority (LEA) schemes of work that show clear progression in the skills that are to be learned. In the best secondary schools, particular attention has been given to the Key Stage 3 schemes of work. Common weaknesses identified were the use of information and communication technology (ICT) at Key Stage 3 and subject-specific vocabulary in primary schools in dance and drama.
- In the best lessons, teachers quickly engage pupils in challenging, subject-specific, practical work. Technical vocabulary is acquired and used frequently in arts lessons for pupils of all ages.
- A high proportion of arts teachers are practising artists and performers who regularly model skills and techniques to the pupils.
- Arts teachers in secondary schools develop strong working relationships with pupils; these are often perceived by them as more supportive than in some other subjects. The arts can provide more opportunities for pupils to receive positive feedback about their contributions from both teachers and their peers. This has a strong motivating influence on their subsequent work.

- Pupils in primary and secondary schools often talk positively about the specific styles of teaching and learning and activities undertaken within the arts, comparing them favourably with their experience elsewhere.
- Opportunities to work with professional artists in residence or to visit galleries and performances can have a profound influence on pupils, providing them with additional ideas and strategies to develop their own work. Such experiences have a positive impact on raising pupils' levels of motivation, aspiration and achievement.
- All schools achieving well in the arts offered a good range of purposeful extra-curricular activities in the arts; a high proportion led towards a high-quality presentation.
- Good quality arts provision was more often driven by the headteacher in primary schools and the individual head of department in secondary schools.

## The arts in schools in disadvantaged areas

### An international perspective

4. In December 1995 the Council of Europe conducted a survey into arts education in Europe. Twenty-two member states responded to an initial questionnaire. The survey found that:

*'in all national education systems, there is a positive emphasis on academic education and attainment which continues, in many cases, to be seen as antipathetic to the abilities and sensibilities promoted by the arts. Moreover, the dominant model of intellectual growth continues to be based on assumed polarities between the arts and sciences. Consequently, access to arts teaching is often restricted to those children who are either thought to have particular talent in these areas or, just as commonly, to those whose parents can afford to pay for extra tuition. Despite the rhetoric, the arts are not normally seen as priorities in the long-term development of national educational systems'.<sup>1</sup>*

5. The arts have been used to positive effect in many areas of social disadvantage in this country and around the world. There is evidence to show that art can enable individuals and groups to become more employable, more involved, more confident and more active in contributing to the development of their local communities.<sup>2</sup>

6. The arts can be important in regenerating local communities:

*'They can perform similar functions within local communities as they can within a school community: increasing the individual's personal development by helping their confidence, skills and motivation; assist in social development, as participants can make new friends and become interested in new topics; improve the local image with people feeling more positive about where they live; and help participants feel better and healthier from their involvement in arts projects.'<sup>3</sup>*

7. The evidence concerning the influence of arts participation on academic achievement in terms of measurable outcomes of better scores in non-arts subjects is inconclusive. The results of a three-year study that explored arts education in secondary schools in England and Wales found no evidence that arts participation boosted academic achievement in other subjects as measured by examination results at GCSE.<sup>4</sup> However, the study did establish that pupils studying music, art, dance and drama received benefits, including:

- heightened enjoyment, excitement, fulfilment and release of tensions
- an increase in skill and knowledge associated with particular art forms
- enhanced knowledge of social and cultural issues

- advances in personal and social development
- development of creativity and thinking skills
- enrichment of communication and expressive skills.

8. The study also maintained that many of the effects such as improved self-esteem, and personal and social development, are *'highly pertinent to the task of tackling disaffection and social exclusion amongst young people'*.

9. The Health Development Agency (2000) review of arts interventions that had an impact on health and well-being noted two main benefits in relation to education:

- people go on to be more employable as a result of the project, having learnt specific arts-related skills
- transferable skills such as discipline and co-ordination.

10. In a review prepared for the Arts Council of England, Jermyn commented that:

*'The Health Development Agency report also noted the growing body of opinion that believes arts projects' main value may lie in the fostering of emotional literacy, whereby people use art to express needs, frustrations and feelings that would otherwise remain unarticulated.'*<sup>5</sup>

11. *Bringing Britain Together: A National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* (Cabinet Office, 1998) described the concentration in poor neighbourhoods of a range of interlocking problems such as high levels of unemployment, crime, ill-health and poor education. Following its publication, 18 Policy Action Teams were established to take forward work in key policy areas. Policy Action Team 10's report to the Social Exclusion Unit (Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), 1999) concluded that arts, sport and cultural and recreational activity can contribute to neighbourhood renewal and make a real difference to health, crime, employment and education in deprived communities. One of the issues raised in the report was the lack of evaluation illustrating the impact of the arts. In response, both the DCMS and the Arts Council have initiated evaluation research programmes.

## National picture

12. The Ofsted report *Improving City Schools* (HMI 222, January 2000) identified that most of the more effective secondary schools with low-attaining pupils have strengths in the arts subjects. Ofsted reports on individual schools (section 10 reports) indicate that there are also a significant number of primary schools with low-attaining pupils that have similar strengths.

13. In the 1000 lowest-attaining secondary schools in England (those with the least pupils gaining five or more A\*–C grades at GCSE in 2000), 30% achieved above the national average A\*–C results in at least one of the arts subjects. Among the 500 lowest-attaining secondary schools, 37% achieved above national average A\*–C results for at least one of the arts subjects. This increased to 43% in 2002.



14. In primary schools there are no comparable data, since there are no national tests in arts subjects. However, when schools receive an Ofsted section 10 inspection, inspectors are asked to make judgements about teaching and learning in art and music, though not about drama or dance. Inspection judgements are available for 170 of the 500 lowest-attaining schools over the period of 2000 to 2002. In those 170 schools, there is often a marked contrast between judgements of attainment in the core subjects, which is well below the national average in all of the schools, and those in the arts.

Percentage of schools where art attainment is satisfactory or better	80
Percentage of schools where art attainment is good or very good	22
Percentage of schools where music attainment is satisfactory or better	70
Percentage of schools where music attainment is good or very good	23

15. These data should be seen in the context of the two national strategies which have been introduced in primary schools over the last four years – the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) and the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS). Reports from Ofsted’s own longitudinal monitoring of these strategies, and a series of external evaluations by the University of Toronto, have expressed concern that the practical, investigative aspects of the non-core foundation subjects were being neglected because of pressure to meet higher targets for standards in English and mathematics. However, in the majority of these 170 low-attaining schools the quality of work in music and art is assessed more favourably than that in English and mathematics.

## Schools visited

16. Thirteen secondary schools and six primary schools were visited in the autumn term 2002 and spring term 2003. Forty-five lessons were observed; past and current work was scrutinised. Discussions were held with staff and pupils to establish their perceptions of the role that the arts played in their education and their preparation for life.

17. In addition to the information gained from visiting schools, HMI also analysed data from Ofsted school inspections. The data and the interviews with pupils indicate that many pupils attach a high level of significance to the arts in their lives. Those interviewed were often articulate about their feelings in relation to the arts.

18. All the secondary schools visited as part of this inspection were in the 500 lowest-attaining secondary schools in the country and situated in areas with high levels of social disadvantage.

19. The percentage of pupils gaining five or more A\*–C GCSE grades ranged from 9% to 27%, compared with the national average of 51% in 2002. All schools had at least one, and many had two, arts subjects where attainment was above the national average at GCSE.

20. In the primary schools visited, between 50% and 75% of pupils (the highest incidence) were entitled to free school meals, compared with the national average of 18% in 2002. They were all situated in areas with high social disadvantage. A significant number of the schools had a high proportion of pupils speaking English as an additional language. All schools visited scored well below national averages in English, mathematics and science in the 2001 national tests at the end of Key Stage 2, but all had been judged to have very good attainment in either music or art in a section 10 inspection that year. Whilst several of the schools have subsequently improved their national test scores significantly, it is not possible to link this progress directly to their high-quality work in the arts.

21. In many of the schools the environment for arts work was attractive, with an emphasis on the use of vibrant displays to celebrate the high-quality work often produced. The contrast with the environment outside the school gates was often very marked. There was sometimes also a contrast in the secondary schools, in particular between the environment for arts work and other parts of the school.

## Quality of teaching in the arts

22. The quality of teaching in the arts in the schools visited was satisfactory or better in 95% of the lessons seen. Overall, at all key stages, a quarter of the lessons were very good, and one in eight lessons was excellent.

23. The arts teachers were generally highly committed to the school, the challenging nature of the pupil intake, and the achievement of high standards. They all commented on the good quality support that they received from their headteacher's encouragement and scope to develop their ideas. These senior managers showed a critical and rigorous interest in their work. In the primary schools, many of the headteachers themselves had training or personal experience in the arts and maintained a high profile for the arts in their schools.

24. In all the schools visited, the effective arts teachers, both primary and secondary, displayed similar characteristics. They:

- were practising artists and performers themselves and modelled skills in lessons
- had very high expectations of the pupils
- planned carefully for all the pupils in the class
- took account of the pupil's artistic interests outside school and made the curriculum broad and relevant
- challenged pupils creatively
- celebrated pupils' work in school and with their parents
- made links with professional artists and arts organisations outside school
- ensured that pupils were quickly involved in lessons in the practical nature of the subject
- formed positive relationships with pupils in lessons and in extra-curricular activities.

25. The most effective teachers had a personal commitment to high standards in their own arts work, attending arts functions and courses in their own time. In-service training offered to teachers in Manchester, for example, focused initially on gaining high standards in their own personal responses to arts activities and then transferring that experience to their teaching role.

26. Successful teachers planned carefully for the wide range of pupils' ability and were prepared to take risks in lessons. They allowed pupils a structured freedom that was clearly focused on a purposeful outcome. The comments and suggestions that teachers made built on success and developed pupils' skills and knowledge in the

subject. Thoughtful planning and organisation ensured that skills were taught thoroughly but then, almost immediately, opportunities were provided for those skills to be used creatively within an artistic context of high quality.

27. Much of the successful teaching of older pupils took account of their own culture as young people and the way they engaged with the arts outside school. Teachers had developed schemes of work, or adapted national guidance, which were relevant to the particular pupils' interests. For example, teachers in one secondary school had reviewed the curriculum content for one cohort because of the preponderance of boys. Elsewhere, teachers had developed a strong focus on contemporary activities such as break-dancing and rock music.

28. Effective staff challenged pupils and made each individual feel valued. The secondary pupils frequently spoke of a different type of relationship with their arts teachers, where they felt more comfortable and were treated more personally than in other subjects:

*'I feel personally supported in art. In other subjects I feel I am just one of a crowd.'*

*'In other subjects the teachers are teachers. In music, the teacher is a person.'*

29. The fact that teachers demonstrated work of good quality themselves had an effect on pupils' attainment. One primary music teacher sang unaccompanied and with great skill not only the selected songs to be performed by the children, but also most of his instructions to the class. Elsewhere, art teachers would frequently begin drawing or painting or drama teachers would take on a role, demanding imaginative responses from the pupils.

30. In all the schools visited, arts teachers made frequent, positive contact with parents to celebrate pupils' successes. In secondary schools, these contacts were usually in the form of commendations for good work, awards evenings, school concerts, art exhibitions, and dance or drama productions. Contacts were also made to ensure that homework was being completed and that parents knew the deadlines for coursework completion.

31. Discussion with teachers and pupils in the primary and secondary phases indicated that the arts subjects have, for some pupils, certain intrinsic advantages in capturing pupils' attention and motivating them. The successful teachers in these challenging schools acknowledged these advantages and built upon them. The pupils often viewed arts subjects in a more favourable light, partly because:

- there are usually a large number of practical activities
- there is only a limited amount of writing, an issue which was most specifically mentioned by boys
- much of the activity is immediate and physical in nature – marks are made, sounds produced, movements organised – and it is clear to the pupils that progress is being made
- individual creativity is recognised

- there is less of a perception that there are right and wrong responses.

32. A feature of almost all the teaching was the early involvement in the lesson of pupils in some form of practical activity. For example, in one primary school pupils entered the music room marching in time to recorded music. In a secondary school the teacher started the lesson by comparing and contrasting pupils' first charcoal sketches; these had been displayed informally. Very little time was wasted and lessons were full of artistic activity.

33. Many pupils extended their skills outside lesson times, for example in after school clubs or activities in their local community or those organised centrally by the LEA. Such experiences broadened their understanding of the particular art form and enhanced their attainment within the school curriculum.

34. In all the schools visited, the teachers provided a wide range of extra-curricular arts activities that were well attended by pupils of different ability, gender and ethnicity. They included: a small group of primary children quietly practising still life drawing; rehearsals of steel-pan bands; dance and drama clubs; choirs and instrumental work. In some secondary schools, pupils were able to follow additional, accredited arts courses after school hours. The annual school production was a highlight of most schools, and this was successful in drawing in other members of staff, as well as attracting large numbers of appreciative parents and relations into the school.

35. In many of the primary and secondary schools, the arts curriculum had been designed to take full advantage of the richness provided by cultural diversity. In one primary school, parents and pupils worked together to produce a complex, embroidered wall hanging, making use of the Asian mothers' traditional skills. A school in Manchester had developed strong links with the local Zion Arts Centre. Artists from this centre visited the school regularly to teach African drumming skills and many pupils attended activities at the centre out of school hours.

*'Pupils see the curriculum as relevant. The teaching focuses on where they are coming from.'*

*'I think we are successful because we are in tune with the local culture. We try to support, develop and extend it in the school.'*

36. Both teachers and pupils often spoke of working together for a common purpose. They had a clear, shared objective and often worked very co-operatively. However, the good working atmosphere was not supportive only in terms of pupil and staff relationships. The best examples were founded upon a respect for the high quality of the teachers' personal skills and understanding of the subject. One headteacher commented:

*'The pupils respect the staff as good artists in their own right. They love to see them demonstrate techniques.'*

37. All the arts teachers in the sample schools organised additional artistic stimuli in the form of visits to galleries, museums, concerts, plays and dance performances. Such visits had the effect of widening horizons and raising aspirations.

*'We try to give the pupils a real purpose for their work, joining up the working and the thinking, and experiencing the work of real artists.'*

38. The use of ICT was surprisingly limited in arts lessons in all of the secondary schools visited. Departments often only had enough dedicated computers for small numbers of pupils in Key Stage 4. No work was observed where pupils were using computers in Key Stage 3, a small number of the primary schools were making good use of both personal computers and interactive whiteboards. For example, in one school, a group of Year 5 pupils had photographed 'frozen pictures' of themselves in role, and then used editing software to manipulate the photographs. In the same school, a Year 6 class and their teacher were experimenting with the use of an interactive whiteboard to assist with the process of life drawing.

39. One of the strengths of the high-attaining departments in secondary schools was the teachers' thorough understanding of progression in art, music, dance and drama. This was also a strength in music and art in primary schools, where good use was made of QCA guidance in these subjects. As a result, teachers were able to lead the pupils on to the next skills to be mastered or knowledge to be gained. One secondary headteacher summarised the reasons for his school's success in these terms:

*'We get high standards with the long-established staff who set individual pupil targets and deliver a curriculum that has a clear sense of continuity and progression.'*

40. However, in dance and drama in primary schools, teachers used less subject-specific vocabulary and had less understanding of how to ensure pupils made progress.

41. Attainment was higher when teachers gave pupils the freedom and challenge to work with others and, particularly in secondary schools, to establish a positive image in front of their peers. Higher standards were achieved where pupils worked towards a presentation of their work. Thus they operated as artists, rehearsing for a performance or an exhibition. They were increasingly aware of their own achievements when they received sincere acclaim from their peers. This provided a significant boost to their confidence and self-esteem that was reflected in their attitudes and subsequent attainment in the subject.

42. The realisation that an audience would be seeing or hearing the finished piece gave an urgency and immediacy to dealing with the artistic issues which the pupils needed to resolve. They often had to work to tight deadlines and take account of the expected audience. That audience varied from an informal use of a video camera to record an improvisation during a lesson to a more formal audience of parents waiting to see a finished production.

43. Despite poor accommodation and limited resources in some schools, arts teachers still managed to achieve high standards. In the secondary schools visited, music and art often took place in cramped accommodation that had not been purpose-built. There were rarely sufficient practice rooms for music and there was often a lack of space for three-dimensional work in art or for the storage of work in progress. Dance teachers usually made use of the school hall or the gym. The

accommodation and resources for drama were often better, with appropriate lighting and blackout.

44. Only a few primary schools were able to provide specialist accommodation of any kind for the arts. Most of the two and three-dimensional work took place in classrooms or adjoining practical areas. Dance and drama almost always used a hall required for other purposes during the school day. However, the range of resources, including basic materials and items or illustrations to stimulate ideas, was generally good in the majority of schools.

45. Of key significance in raising attainment is the extent to which these teachers planned the use of visiting professional artists to inspire, extend and support learning. In all cases, this strategic use of external artists had a profound effect both on the pupils' artistic perceptions and the subsequent standards that they achieved. Observation and discussion with such artists improved the pupils' use of subject-specific vocabulary. They were better able to discuss and evaluate artistic ideas and practice.

*'Working with artists in residence steps up my performance.'*

*Year 11 boy*

46. Contact with artists in residence and visits to concerts and galleries provided ideas and inspiration that were used well to develop pupils' ideas when back in the classroom. Such professional influences could be seen in pupils' work and in the confidence with which they spoke of famous artists and musicians and their work. For example, Benjamin Zephaniah had shared his own poems with pupils in a London primary school who then went on to produce their own excellent book of poems and illustrations.

47. Pupils attaining high standards had a good grasp of an extensive arts vocabulary. The majority of classrooms had key subject-specific words displayed on the walls. These key words were used regularly by the teacher and the pupils to describe what they saw and heard, emotions they felt and the subject-specific techniques that they were using.

48. Behaviour management was good. No persistent unsatisfactory behaviour occurred in any of the lessons observed. The teachers allowed the pupils to demonstrate their knowledge and skills and receive regular praise and encouragement. Criticism was couched in constructive terms and designed to extend the task and raise the level of attainment. The pupils' initial energy and enthusiasm were quickly directed into the tasks. One teacher commented that:

*'The subject engages the pupils. They can talk and work at the same time. They want to learn in the structure of a strong class discipline.'*

## Pupils' views about learning in the arts

49. Groups of pupils were interviewed in each of the schools visited. These discussions revealed some significant findings. The pupils responded very positively to this opportunity to discuss their reactions to the arts. Their comments, however, should be taken as reflecting their individual enthusiasm for the arts and not as criticism of other curriculum areas.

50. An overwhelming majority of the secondary school pupils expressed a strong enjoyment of work in the arts and looked forward to the lessons each week. Days that contain an arts subject are often seen as the better days of the week. Pupils said that they even moved more quickly around the school to arrive at arts lessons on time and tried not to be late for fear of missing something. When moving to some other lessons they admitted to dawdling en route.

51. Some of the more disaffected pupils reported that they would not miss a day that contained an arts lesson, whereas they admitted truanting on other days. An analysis of attendance registers suggested that, for such pupils, there were fewer absences for arts lessons.

52. Secondary school pupils believe that standards of behaviour are generally better in arts than in other lessons and that even the most difficult pupils become more involved. An examination of school records showed a lower incidence of referral for poor behaviour in arts lessons than in other subjects.

53. All pupils interviewed claimed that they felt arts subjects were different from other areas of the curriculum, using phrases like 'more relaxed' and 'less stressful'. They were able to make comparisons with other subjects where they felt that there was more pressure, for example in literacy lessons in Key Stage 2.

*'It is different in a way from other subjects. In literacy you always have to finish quickly. In arts you go at your own speed.'*

54. This in part had to do with their perception of the learning environment that was seen as more creative, allowing them to work through their thoughts, ideas and feelings. Little was perceived as 'wrong' and criticisms were seen as positively taking the work forward, developing 'mistakes' to creative advantage. The pupils felt that they received good feedback on their efforts and that this developed their sense of success and the possibility of further improvement.

*'We have got teachers who say you can do it, not you can't. They boost our confidence and get us to aim higher.'*

*'I like the way criticism is given in drama. Suggestions for improvement are given at our level. In other subjects, when you are criticised you feel daft.'*

55. The pupils felt that the biggest pressure in other subjects was to 'get it right', whereas in the arts there was less emphasis on 'right' answers. There was a perception that, at times, teaching in other subjects was preoccupied with information, which they struggled to retain.



56. Some older pupils commented that they knew they were making tangible progress in their arts work as the weeks went by.

*'I always have something to show for my efforts. I can see my progress.'*

*'You do a bit each time (in your sketchbook) and you can see you are getting better and you feel proud.'*

57. They were using their own ideas, but with the careful guidance of the teachers, who supported them with the necessary skills and techniques to advance their work. They admitted to accepting most of these suggestions, but they always had the option to reject them. Lessons seemed to pass quickly, as they became so engrossed in their work, working at their own speed.

58. Different art forms provoked different responses from the pupils.

## Art

59. Many pupils see art as important for their own development. It is a personal record of their achievement and they feel a sense of pride when they see their work on the walls. In their own time they sometimes bring their friends and relations into school to see their work on display. They feel that contact with visual art has given them a more diverse outlook on the world. They look at things in different ways: for example the colours in the sky or the colour of their bedroom. They feel that art has made them more creative and appreciative of the work of other artists.

*'I look at life in a different way now. Things like album covers or watching sign writers at work.'*

## Drama

*'When I perform a play I get a buzz of excitement, like a glowing feeling inside. It makes me happy. Once you've had the buzz you want more, for the compliments you receive and for personal satisfaction. Somehow my standards for myself get higher every time I perform.'*

60. Drama is considered by many pupils to be important for the development of social and communication skills and tolerance when working with others. They feel that they get to know people better, especially as they often work with peers with whom they would not normally associate. This is especially significant when working on large-scale events such as the annual school production, where older pupils commented that they had really got to know and admire the talents of some of the younger pupils.

61. Status amongst one's peers is seen as an important element in drama. Being able and confident to perform in front of the class gives them a higher status with the rest of the group. It is acceptable to 'show off' and be good at something.

*'It's alright to be good in drama – nobody takes the mick.'*

62. This positive reaction contrasted strongly with much more negative comments about some other subjects in the curriculum where pupils spoke of keeping their ability to themselves for fear of being ridiculed.

63. The pupils enjoy opportunities in drama to express their feelings and mould them into worthwhile experiences. One girl spoke of how, when she was angry, her anger could be turned into something creative; she could use something negative in a positive way through a piece of drama.

64. Significantly, the pupils recognise that it is also very important to be attentive and focused as an audience. They spoke of the sense of mutual support, of knowing what it is like to perform, and of the feelings they get from seeing their peers responding to the same task in a different way, which allows them to know what the situation feels like from a different viewpoint.

*'Drama has given me a different perspective on life: for example, what divorce feels like and its consequences. It helped me to understand what my friend was going through when her parents split up.'*

## **Music and dance**

65. Music and dance provided responses that related more to the pupils' personal image. The significance of comments made by peers following a performance makes pupils feel good about themselves. People came up to them and told them how they had enjoyed their performance. The sense of importance brought about by a performance gives pupils a sense of security in their personal image. They could be themselves as individuals, and associate more with the group that has given them recognition.

*'I feel much more proud of myself now, after playing in the band. I know I am fine the way I am. I am not so worried about my image now as I used to be.'*

## **Enjoyment, involvement and quality**

66. Overall, the pupils' perceptions that the arts subjects are enjoyable leads them to seek more contact with them. All the schools in the sample provided numerous opportunities for pupils to engage in extension work, for example developing their art coursework in after school clubs, dance or drama clubs or music ensemble rehearsals. This made some pupils perceive the subject as being 'more like a hobby'. They also considered that they got to know the members of staff in a different way and could relate to them better as people, not merely as teachers in a position of authority.

67. Most of the pupils had had the opportunity to work with an artist in residence or visit galleries, or to attend plays, concerts or dance performances. It was part of the ethos of the arts departments that this type of experience was integral to their development as young artists. Pupils spoke of the significance of this experience in inspiring them with ideas, some of which they had included within their own work.

*'We worked with a sculptor in residence. It was good to know we were working with someone famous. We got a lot of information from him by asking questions.'*

*'Artists in residence inspire and motivate us. We do better work.'*

68. It was not unusual, when interviewing pupils, to discuss with them such topics as sculptures by Henry Moore, or the influence of Georgia O'Keefe. The vast majority of arts teachers are practising artists and performers themselves and pupils spoke of the influence this had on their work. Teachers regularly demonstrated their intentions and pupils spoke of these models of good practice as 'lifting their performance'.

69. Most pupils did not object to arts homework. They reported that they spend more time on this than on homework in other subjects. Again, they felt that this was due to the nature of the work.

*'When I get art homework I do it the same day. Somehow I am unaware of the time passing. Other subjects I put off until they are due to be handed in.'*

70. Art homework was described as work that you could keep returning to at different times and see the progress you were making. You could do art homework while you were listening to music; you could pick it up and put it down; you could spend ten minutes on it one day and an hour the next. Other homework is perceived in a different way. Here the need is, as one pupil put it, 'to do it in one go and finish as soon as you can'.

71. Pupils perceive a similar pattern of progress during arts lessons. The arts usually involve working in a longer time frame. In art and music in particular pupils work individually on paintings or compositions and receive individual support, so that, in the event of absence, the thread is not lost. If you are absent for any reason, you can soon pick up your work and catch up. Non-arts subjects are seen as individual 'units', often similar in structure each lesson but with different content each week.

*'If you miss one week in any other subject you would have missed out a whole chunk of work and it is difficult to catch up.'*

72. The limited use of writing was perceived by arts teachers as a contributory factor in the success of the arts subjects, but this was a point of view rarely expressed by the pupils. Evidence in homework books, sketchbooks and work in progress suggests that pupils are quite prepared to write when they are motivated to do so, when they recognise there is a real purpose for their writing.

73. The positive feelings of pupils about arts subjects, combined with the support of parents and good teaching, are important elements for successful teaching in the arts in disadvantaged areas.

*'I feel more important and confident at home with my family now. My dance gave pleasure to my family.'*

## Conclusions

74. Too many schools serving disadvantaged areas are dogged by low standards overall, yet this report provides clear evidence that low attainment in the core subjects does not always mean low attainment in the arts.

75. The inspection visits provided ample evidence of good teaching and high standards in the arts in schools in disadvantaged areas. Pupils value greatly high-quality arts experiences and see them as relevant and enjoyable. They are strongly motivated, and appreciate the positive tone in which teacher suggestions and criticisms are couched.

76. Direct evidence of the positive influence of arts participation on academic achievement is hard to pin down. Nevertheless, the arts teachers and headteachers HMI met during this survey all spoke positively about the effect of work in the arts on their pupils. In primary schools, the staff were convinced that their pupils grew in confidence, became better motivated and more persistent when tackling other subject areas. There was a tangible pride in finished work in secondary arts departments, and pupils in several primary schools calmly described themselves as 'artists'; they showed great pleasure in escorting visitors around the school to view finished work.

77. Among the issues raised by the visits to schools are the recruitment of staff, transfer from one phase to another and workplace experience.

78. The **recruitment** of good specialist arts teachers remains an issue for many schools in disadvantaged areas. Often headteachers in secondary schools are faced with a very limited field of applicants. A number of the primary headteachers felt that their priority was to appoint a good primary class teacher and saw skills in the arts as an added bonus that may well need cultivating and extending when the teacher is in post.

79. Support for pupils' work in the arts on their **transfer** between the various phases of education was not strong in the schools visited. In none of the schools was there consistent provision throughout and across the phases. There were very few links established between primary schools and secondary schools. Despite the schemes of work now available from QCA and other sources, many secondary arts teachers believe that pupils have had such varied experiences in their primary schools that it is more appropriate to assume little or no previous knowledge and experience.

80. There were similar problems of transition from Key Stage 4 to post-16 education. Art teachers rarely had good contacts with their specialist colleagues in further education. Information about each other's provision is not shared sufficiently. Frequently, the distance between the schools and the colleges was too great and dissuaded pupils from attending courses regularly. Some pupils had started useful FE courses, but had not persevered. Where close links were well established and geographical locations were more conducive, the picture was more positive. Having a sixth form on the campus encouraged more pupils to continue with their studies.

81. The use of **workplace experience** in the arts varied between schools. Some had developed good links with local firms and, for example, regularly placed pupils in recording studios, local theatres or with peripatetic instrumental teachers. These were rich experiences for the pupils concerned and gave them a real insight into the world of working in the arts. At least one pupil in each secondary school visited had been so motivated by their school arts experiences that they continued on to study arts in higher education and to take up careers in the arts.

## Recommendations

82. In order to build on this good practice schools should ensure that:

- successful senior managers and teachers work together to generate a positive ethos for the arts; and to apply the same rigour in planning and monitoring the arts as they do in other subjects
- effective teachers have a clear understanding of progression in their particular art form
- opportunities are given to all pupils to work alongside professional artists, attend exhibitions and performances, and enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular activities
- the skills learned by the pupils have an immediate practical application focused upon an artistic outcome
- every opportunity is taken to celebrate and share work in progress and the finished artistic products
- the application of the lessons learned from successful arts practice is considered in relation to other subjects.

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