



Ancient House Museum of Thetford Life

Arts Award Good Practice Centre 2014-15

Context

Ancient House Museum of Thetford Life is a local museum housed in a late 15th Century timber framed building, exhibiting collections related to the history of Thetford and the Brecks. Arts Award is delivered across a variety of programmes within the museum with a wide range of young people, including local primary schools, their Young 'Thetford Treasure' volunteers, their afterschool and Saturday morning clubs, Home Educated groups and families over school holidays.

Ancient House have achieved 180 Arts Awards over the last two to three years. They have developed a range of Arts Award delivery models with unitised museum specific art forms, such as exhibition design, and mapping existing formal and informal learning programmes against Arts Award requirements.

Approach

In 2013 Ancient House Museum worked with children from two local schools on a diversity project which aimed to promote multi-cultural understanding. The children visited the museum for a Discover in a Day programme, exploring the story of the Duleep Singh Family.

To achieve **Part A (discover)** of Discover, the children explored the museum using an Art Form Spotter Wheel to identify a range of art forms. Children handled a range of Victorian objects and discussed the art forms used to create the objects. They also took part in Bhangra dance and Punjabi music workshops.

To meet **Part B (find out)**, the children explored the life and work of Prince Frederick Duleep Singh, including looking at some of his original art work and finding out about how he founded the Ancient House Museum.

The children created a poster to share what they had enjoyed and learnt. They shared their posters in pairs and then wrote a witness statement in their partner's arts log to evidence **Part C (share)** of their Arts Award.

Each activity was designed so that evidence would naturally be produced for inclusion in their arts logs. For example, each child wore a bindi for their dance which was easy to add to their arts logs after the session. The Art Form Spotter Wheels provided two pieces of evidence – in both creating them and using them the children demonstrated their knowledge and understanding of art forms.

Ancient House worked with Jaya Dance to provide the Bhangra dance workshop, ensuring the children had an authentic dance experience. All the other activities were run by museum professionals.

Impact

'The role of an Arts Award adviser is full of exciting moments and thrills as young people rise to new challenges. A particular favourite was watching Teenage History Club giving a guided tour of the museum to a group and realising I wasn't needed. The children were confident and fielding questions like professional tour guides.'

Melissa Hawker, Arts Award adviser

Ancient House has been working with young people on a range of projects for many years, but Arts Award has enabled them to offer young people the opportunity to gain a recognised qualification, benchmarking and accrediting their involvement with the museum. Arts Award has also offered a framework to allow young people to 'takeover' the museum, through designing sections of their temporary exhibitions, taking over the window display, running family activity days, teenage events and acting as museum guides.

One of Ancient House's young volunteers who achieved Bronze Arts Award became the first in his family to go to university. He was told it was how he had spoken about his Arts Award in interview which secured him his place. He also said the confidence and communication skills he gained during his Bronze Arts Award helped him find a part time job and fit in with his colleagues.

Ancient House are continuing to develop a flexible Arts Award programme with the library service linked to the Summer Reading Challenge and are also running a series of First World War themed Arts Awards at Discover, Explore and Bronze level linked to a town wide Heritage Lottery Funded project called Thetford Remembers.

Comments

'As an Arts Award adviser I am privileged to see young people rising to new challenges, defying expectations and achieving things they thought impossible all the time.'

Melissa Hawker, Arts Award Adviser

'It has given me much more confidence.'

Luke, Bronze Arts Award achiever

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