



Centre: Woodlands Community College
Arts Award Good Practice Centre 2015-16

Context

Woodlands Community College is a comprehensive community school for 11-16 year olds in Southampton, with 560 students.

They have been offering Arts Award since 2006 and over 200 young people have achieved awards to date. The award is offered at all five levels in a range of art forms, including visual and performing arts, literature and media.

Approach

Typically, young people in Woodlands Community College's local area do not have ready access to arts and cultural activities. A commitment to the arts is central to school life and Woodlands aims to be a hub of creativity, providing a safe environment where all young people can express their originality and imagination.

Despite being a small community school, Woodlands has a strong reputation for its extra-curricular arts offer: in addition to school productions, they have a strong record of performance work outside of the school, including competitions and regional festivals.

Arts Award Discover and Explore are offered through outreach work with Woodlands' feeder primary schools and through the Year 6 into 7 transition summer school.

Bronze Arts Award has been successful as a tool to engage and enthuse students in the school's inclusion unit, and in 2014 Woodlands introduced the Bronze Award to the main school arts provision for all students in Year 9. In the 2014-2015 academic year, over 80% of the Year 9 cohort achieved a Bronze Award - and perhaps as a result, the numbers of students taking one or more arts qualifications at Key Stage 4 has risen.

Since its introduction at Woodlands Community College, Arts Award has been offered as an extra-curricular enrichment opportunity for the most committed and able students, and this offer has continued to grow. The extra-curricular programme involves 1:1 coaching from an Arts Award adviser and is fully tailored to the cultural interests and artistic strengths of the young people taking part.

Woodlands has long standing links with freelance arts professionals, such as choreographers, set builders, sound engineers and lighting designers. These

individuals help to raise the standard of the experiences that the school provides for its students. The school also has an ongoing relationship with Fluid Motion Theatre Company, who are working with Woodlands and its feeder primary schools on engaging projects including The Streetspeare Schools Project, that extend students' Arts Award experiences outside of school. The school has also made links with its local theatres (Nuffield, The Mayflower and The Point) to support extending Silver and Gold Award students' knowledge of the wider arts sector.

Woodlands Community College plans to expand its inclusion provision by using Arts Award alongside its work with SoCo Music Project. They will also incorporate the Silver Award into the Year 9 curriculum, and embed Arts Award into their extra-curricular Rock Challenge project.

Impact

Arts Award engages students at Woodlands Community College, and validates the hard work and commitment they show to arts activities, particularly outside of the classroom.

100% of students who have taken Silver or Gold awards at Woodlands have gone on to study arts subjects further at college, and many at higher education level. One student, Owen, who focused on theatrical lighting and led the school's musical production for his Gold Award, has gone on to study Production Arts at college and is now working on a freelance basis with the professionals that he met through his Gold Arts Award.

The impact of Woodlands' Arts Award work with inclusion unit students is clear from their increased engagement in their academic learning, with 80% significantly increasing their school attendance.

Embedding the Bronze Award into the Year 9 curriculum has increased uptake of arts GCSE/BTEC courses in Key Stage 4. Dance uptake numbers have increased by 25%, Drama by 17% and Music by 15%. The school's Art and Photography courses continue to be oversubscribed.

Lead adviser Rebecca Allen describes 2015's moderation as a highlight of her experience as an Arts Award adviser: *'When I stood in a room full of 107 portfolios – with art collages all over the walls, video playing on the screen and children's music playing and realised just how far we had come from trialling this new scheme with 10 disadvantaged young people to today.'*

Comments

'I became an Arts Award adviser because I wanted to reward and validate the hard work that the young people I work with put into their extra-curricular arts pursuits at my centre. I have developed and expanded upon this over the past ten years because I believe that Arts Award opens the minds of our young people to experiences and possibilities they may not otherwise encounter, and

I find witnessing that excitement, achievement and wonder tremendously rewarding.'

Rebecca Allen, Head of Performing Arts

'The Arts Award qualification has had significant impact on our students. What has particularly struck me has been how the Arts Award has developed the self-confidence and self-belief of many of our young people. For many, the qualification has required them to perform to an audience and work closely with others. In doing so those all important social skills have been enhanced considerably. Furthermore, the Arts Award qualification has widened the horizons of our young people, exposing them to cultural experiences which are new and enriching. Many of our young people have limited exposure to such cultural capital and so Arts Award has been crucial in widening this.'

Toni Sambrook, Headteacher

'It gives us life skills and confidence.'

Jessica, 14, Bronze Arts Award achiever

'Because there are so many levels of Arts Award, you can start from a young age which can prepare you for other qualifications in the future.'

Eryn, 12, Bronze Arts Award achiever

'It helps you understand what you might want to be in the future.'

Harriett, 12, Bronze Arts Award achiever

'It has made a big impact on me because before I was quite shy about sharing work and didn't have a lot of confidence in it. But now I am more confident in sharing my work with people and having confidence with myself.'

Callum, 13, Silver Arts Award achiever

'It gave me extra background knowledge and support in performing arts and also provided another dimension to studying dance. It enabled me to not just study and explore the arts but it also allowed me to make my studies and projects more personal, basing it on my inspirations and future aspirations. I found it also was good to have one to one time with my adviser.'

Victoria, 19, Gold Arts Award achiever

'It's gave me an amazing opportunity to achieve additional qualifications. It's also enabled me to research and find out more about the arts which has really inspired me. It's has opened my mind to so many pathways for my future.'

Owen, 16, Gold Arts Award achiever

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