



Exploring Quality Principles: School Pilot Programme

Striving for excellence and innovation
Being authentic
Being exciting, inspiring, and engaging
Ensuring a positive and inclusive experience
Actively involving children and young people
Enabling personal progression
Developing belonging and ownership

Seven Quality Principles have been developed as a result of close collaboration between the Arts Council England and arts and cultural organisations that work with children and young people. The Arts Council England commissioned two organisations; the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) and Shared Intelligence to do real world testing of the principles in 2014. One of the recommendations in the report was that '*ACE should develop a shared understanding and vocabulary with both the formal education sector and wider education organisations and workforce to support integration of the QPs in work with schools.*'

Culture Bridge North East, in partnership with **The Forge** developed this programme of work to explore how the Arts Council's Quality Principles could be interpreted in relation to work by and with children and young people in schools. Underpinning this work was an aspiration that the Quality Principles could become a shared language that schools and the arts and culture sector across the North East region could use in relation to cultural activity with children and young people. The work included collaborative research and provided examples of the principles being articulated by teachers in relation to work in a school environment. The case studies that emerged provided a body of evidence that can be shared with other schools and with arts and cultural organisations.

The invitation to participate was sent to schools across the region that were already signed up as Artsmark schools. Schools are encouraged to refer to the Quality Principles as part of their Artsmark journey and this work was intended to enhance that process for schools that were in the Artsmark planning cycle. We wanted to explore with the schools:

- Whether the principles related to and supported the current assessment processes in schools?
- How they manifested themselves in practice, where was the potential common ground between sectors and were there variations in interpretation?
- Could they be used to indicate areas for development of provision for arts and culture in schools?
- Could they provide a basis for planning and evaluation?
- Where and how was the voice of young people captured?

Schools were invited to submit an expression of interest articulating how the Quality Principles related to their core mission and values and how the project would support development in school. (*Appendix 1*) They were invited to attend two facilitated sessions and carry out a school based research project exploring the Quality Principles in their own setting. Participating schools were offered £250 towards costs incurred.

Eight schools expressed an interest in taking part in the project and attended the introductory session.

Brighton Avenue Primary school: Gateshead
Cramlington Village School: Northumberland
Duchess Community High School: Northumberland
The Dales School: Northumberland
Furrowfield School: Gateshead
Ovingham Middle School: Northumberland
Priory Woods School: Tees Valley
Thornaby Academy: Tees Valley

The Pilot Programme

Session 1 An introduction to Quality Principles

This session served as an introduction to the project and the research the schools would undertake. Each school was asked to prepare a short presentation mapping the principles in relation to the arts and cultural offer within their own school, identifying their strongest areas.

The Quality Principles were then examined from two different perspectives; using them as a basis to discuss good practice and assess quality and exploring them as a continuum model.

To use the principles as a basis for discussing practice we discussed the evidence needed to support the seven principles. We then looked at the continuum model, using the principles as a developmental tool rather than a tick box exercise. This approach assumes '3 levels' emerging, confident and expert. They were asked to complete an activity and to take one principle and apply it to their own context to describe the evidence that might be found to support this approach. (*Appendix 2*)

The final part of the session was to identify a focus for their own research in school. As a stimulus the following question were posed:

- How can the QP's support deeper and better, deeper and more meaningful experiences?
- Can the QP's help articulate the value of arts subjects?
- Do the QP's support stronger evidencing for SMSC?
- Can they be used by all staff, and are they applicable across the school?
- Are they useful to evaluate specific projects?
- Can they support personal progression and how do we know?
- Can they support 'actively knowing' do pupils really have a voice?
- Could they be a useful tool for lesson observations?
- Could they be used to evaluate and review the work of visiting artist and arts organisations.

School focused research:

A planning pro forma was suggested to focus the research in school (*Appendix 3*) Each school carried out their own focused piece of work during a five-week period.

Session 2 Reflection and Sharing Practice

At this session each school was asked to present their findings to the group. Three schools were unable to attend this session and one of these submitted information about the work they had undertaken.

Brighton Avenue Primary School: Gateshead

The research focused on using the Quality Principles as a framework for planning a creative programme of work in school. In relation to their Artsmark journey, this work supported the development of relationships with other schools and in promoting high quality teaching of the arts by offering CPD opportunities to their own staff and other schools. Each of the seven principles was mapped during the planning process. The school is looking to review the project using the seven principles.

Duchess Community High School

The principles were used across the school to measure their current provision, either in curriculum content and delivery or in terms of working with outside partners and the impact on students / staff. Feedback highlighted that understanding and interpreting the wording of the principles was a challenge for some staff. Many departments felt reasonably confident in applying the principles and felt that they could be useful over a longer period of time. The next steps identified departments working together to help shape their next steps and curriculum offer with the ethos of the principles at the heart of this process.

The Dales School: Northumberland

Do the Quality Principles support stronger evidence for SMSC? This research was linked to a school development plan priority. They wanted to explore the impact of the arts on engagement and achievement. In this special school for primary age children with a range of individual challenges, the arts are used to enable children to respond to experiences in a variety of ways. They cross-referenced the seven quality principles to the SMSC descriptors and looked retrospectively at a whole school creative programme 'What's in the box'. The outcomes showed clear links between both. The school intends to use this approach to collect evidence each term.

Priory Woods School: Tees Valley

Two members of staff took part in the programme and undertook two separate pieces of research. *Do the Quality Principles provide enough information to be able to both plan and evaluate a creative session for a non arts practitioner?* This approach was used with visiting musicians to the school. The seven principles were collated into two groups. One group that could be applied to the quality of provision and the other applied to pupil progression. In relation to the quality of provision it was clear that a staff / non staff member could relate to these and use them for planning and as an evaluation tool. Those related to pupil progression could be used in dialogue with students as a reflection on their experiences.

How do we use the Quality Principles in a pupil friendly way to assess and evaluate their progress? This research was focused around work the school were doing with the RSC. The quality principles were recreated in 'pupil friendly' language. Each pupil had a target wheel to assess how they felt at the beginning of the creative project and worked with staff to identify their own responses. Following their experiences, the pupils returned to the wheel to reassess how they felt. The outcomes showed a huge shift in their thinking and perceptions of their experience. The school sees the value of both approaches in developing their provision

Ovingham Middle School: Northumberland

'Promoting the Arts in school's primary issue, is the perception of priority and confidence in delivery'. The quality principles were applied to test this hypothesis. They were given to a staff across three schools. For some they were marked as Artsmark principles for others as Literacy principles. The outcomes of this research has highlighted even more questions for exploration. Why were literacy returns greater than Artsmark ones, are the principles specific enough for the arts, could they be used to support teacher development, do teachers feel more confident in delivering more inspiring arts lessons than literacy? The next steps for this school is to continue this dialogue in the development of the arts within school.

What did we discover, were surprised by, impressed by?

Whether the principles related to and supported the current assessment processes in schools?

- *There was little direct evidence to support this from the work that was carried out. However, in discussions with the teachers it became clear, particularly around pupil voice and progression that there is a close link and potential for further exploration.*

How they manifested themselves in practice, where was the potential common ground and were there variations in interpretation between sectors?

- *The schools adopted these principles very easily. A culture of reflective practice in schools with teachers looking at their own practice in relation to the outcomes for pupils meant that the teachers were able to apply the principles in many differing contexts.*

Could they be used to indicate areas for development?

- *There were clear indications that the principles were and could be used to indicate areas for development. What also emerged was how the principles could be used to support the professional development of staff. One of the schools had used the principles to form the basis for a staff development session as part of the preparation for their project. Another indicated that they saw the potential to use them in the future.*

Could they provide a basis for planning and evaluation?

- *There was very strong evidence to support this with one school using the principles as a planning framework and others, as a result of the work they had done, that would do so in future.*

Where and how was the voice of young people captured?

- *The focus and the outcomes of some of the work indicated ways in which the principles relating to 'Actively involving children and young people, enabling personal progression and Developing belonging and ownership' could be used to enhance pupil voice.*

The commitment of the schools to releasing staff and the teacher's enthusiasm and willingness to be innovative and risk takers in engaging in the activity has been very impressive. We have identified some potentially innovative ways forward from this very small scale piece of research.

Next steps:

- To fully explore the quality principles, the next phase should bring together schools and cultural professionals in a collaborative enquiry
- To have a more specific focus in relation to arts and cultural activity in the planning phase
- To explore further the continuum model
- To explore further grouping the principles i.e. quality of provision and pupils experience

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