

Supporting schools to evaluate impact

A guide for Artsmark Partners

Introduction

An aspect of the Artsmark process that schools often find challenging is **evaluation**. Establishing a sound framework for monitoring and evaluation, then ensuring it is implemented fully, gives schools an advantage when they must show evidence of impact in their Artsmark paperwork.

Arts organisations can offer expertise and support in this area. As Artsmark partners, you are also asked about impact on your own practice because you are part of the programme. You can play an important role in:

- Building monitoring and evaluation into your project planning
- Sharing examples of your own methods and approaches
- Being aware of the resources available on both Artsmark and A New Direction's websites
- Acting as a critical friend during the delivery phase and ensuring regular check-ins and review of goals/outcomes
- Providing evidence of the benefits to your organisation from working with the school(s)

You are not required to help write a school's Statement of Commitment and/or Impact. This role is part of the bridge organisation's support offer.

The Artsmark journey in schools

You will know from your briefing that Artsmark is awarded against **eight criteria** as set out in the [Self-Assessment Framework](#). All planning, delivery, evaluation, and evidence-gathering should be targeted to maximise fulfilment of these. Some will be more relevant to partnership working.

Generally, it is not helpful for a Partner to try to help a school achieve a particular Artsmark level. This can set up **false expectations**. By concentrating on how your skills and expertise can help to fulfil specific criteria, you can support the school to make their journey – and your partnership – more meaningful.

Schools are also asked to consider the Arts Council's [Seven Quality Principles](#) in their goals and outcomes. Partners can help them consider these in more depth and share

how they apply in their own practice. Using this **shared language** can enhance a Statement of Impact. The quality principles can form the basis of a useful evaluation framework for both parties.

A New Direction has designed resources that you might find useful, especially “Planning for and Evaluating Impact” and a suite of guides to the eight criteria. You may also be familiar with the Logic Model, Theory of Change, or other models that you can share with the schools you work with.

The Artsmark Partner’s journey

There is an expectation from Arts Council England that impact on your organisation will be documented in the annual review/check-in.

As an organisation, have you been able to measure and evaluate the impact of your AMP offer?

The questions below could help you to review your offer and provide richer responses:

1. What is your offer? How are you marketing it?

Following the Artsmark Partner Briefing, some organisations fail to post an offer specific to Artsmark and some reference it with only a line or two on their website. Schools need to see a clear indication of likely relevance and benefit from working with you. Take advantage of A New Direction’s [LookUp](#) platform and the regular [newsletters](#) that are sent out to our schools network each half-term.

2. Have schools responded? What are the challenges?

Set out clear intentions with schools in the planning stage and make sure they understand the two-way nature of a partnership.

3. How can you review and amend your offer to make impact more explicit as a driver?

Consider reading our resources (as indicated above) so that you have a better understanding of what schools are expected to do on their Artsmark journey. Reframe your offer, putting impact – rather than content/delivery – as a more prominent feature.

4. Where have you worked with schools? How have you documented your journey?

Did you have a robust evaluation framework as part of your project plan? Do you have feedback forms or questionnaires from participants from which you could extract trends and quotes? Do you have film, photos, samples of work?

5. What tools did you use and how did you reference the Self-Assessment Framework criteria and the Seven Quality Principles?

Did you use any models such as the Theory of Change?

6. What evidence do you have to show impact on schools you worked with and for your own organisation's practice?

Data, surveys, quotes, documents, meeting notes, policies, events?

Case studies

Below are two case studies featuring arts organisations who have adapted their offers to be delivered digitally during the pandemic. They offer valuable insight on how to structure your own digital partnership projects.

Pegasus Opera Company

Writer: Sonia Hyams



Pegasus Opera Company is a small arts organisation based in Brixton, South-West London, making a big impact. Our mission as a Black-led organisation is to take opera and music making activities to diverse and underserved communities. We want to ensure that the company thrives during these challenging times by working swiftly and responsively to the needs of our community.

When Covid-19 restrictions were put in place last March, our first action was to check in with our partners to see how we could continue to deliver the wonderful projects we had started. One of these projects is the 'Music Mentoring Programme' for Secondary School students, which works with young people who may feel disengaged with school and may be at risk of exclusion. We then collaborated with a music

practitioner and mentor to use music as a way of helping the students express themselves by creating their own compositions and undertaking an [Arts Award](#).

To continue delivering this programme live, we worked closely with school partners via their online learning platforms. We adapted our activities so students can work independently and have access to all the resources they need to participate. Often this involves pre-recording backing tracks for them to make music with, introducing them to free music applications to make their own backing tracks, and posting videos of our practitioners doing the activity themselves to model the best way to carry out the activity. We rely on the support of our partners to ensure the participants remember to attend sessions and follow up with any students who have not been able to attend.

It was vital that the young people themselves were involved in the planning and design of the site, so we employed a brilliant young web designer and facilitator who led two sessions with the participants to collaborate in creating the design of what became our online music store. The students designed their own album covers and wrote their own songs – all of which were uploaded to the site in our [virtual music store](#). The participants talked about a site that had maximum interactivity, so in addition to sharing their music, the web designer created instruments, which can be clicked on to hear the instrument being played as well as a juke box that includes a music quiz.

Pegasus also continued to deliver Primary School projects over this period. Our project entitled 'Confident Creators' delivered regular face-to-face INSET sessions with non-arts teachers to develop skills to use music and drama as a creative approach in teaching core subjects. With teachers facing many challenges with online learning, we ran a number of online 'live' INSET sessions and have now created a [series of videos](#) for teachers to use as a creative toolkit in their classroom as an online resource. Feedback from Lambeth teachers illustrated that warm-ups focusing on breathing, well-being, and music activities linked to specific curriculum topics would be most useful. These audio-visual assets, which are a helpful resource to further embed the arts and creativity across the school curriculum, can be used online and in the classroom for years to come.

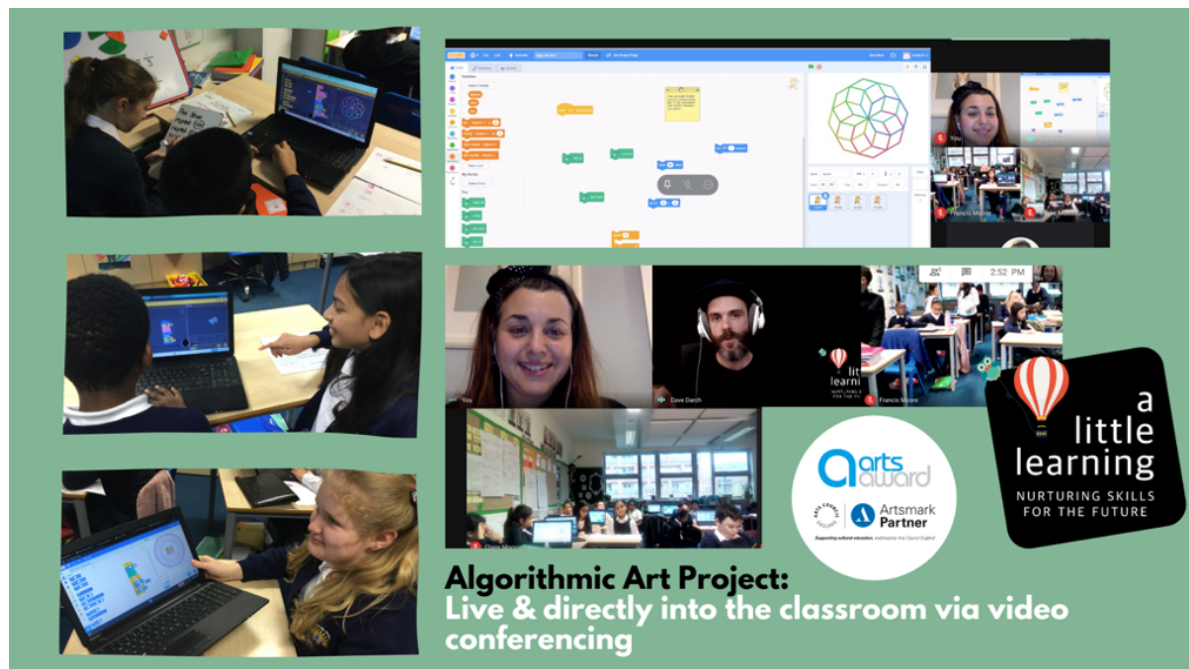
As we navigate 2021, we will continue working closely with our school partners to maintain our partnerships, ensuring that we keep the lines of communication open so that we can stay flexible and responsive to their needs.

Find out more: <https://www.pegasusoperacompany.org/artsmark-schools-offer>

Contact: admin@pegopera.org

A Little Learning

Writer: Francesca Gkotsi



A Little Learning is a programme of arts and culture, technology, and young leadership provided in partnership with schools and organisations to nurture skills for the future in children and young people. We partnered with Keir Hardie Primary to deliver Algorithmic Art, a tried and tested project and CPD popular for its truly interdisciplinary nature and its ability to engage learners. It is a cross-curricular arts, mathematics, and digital project (computing) designed to expose children to digital art whilst increasing enjoyment of teaching and learning about mathematics through technology. Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the project could not take place in person as planned. Algorithmic Art was pushed to the Autumn term for the project to be adapted to be delivered digitally via video conferencing platforms.

Openness to new ways of working, adaptability, and a can-do attitude from both Keir Hardie's and A Little Learning's teams meant that the pandemic did not put a pause to their Artsmark journey or the creative opportunities for teachers and students. Instead, it enabled them to try new and exciting ways of working in partnership.

Our team, along with the school's Artsmark Lead and a member of SLT, began with a planning session to ensure the project would respond to the school's needs, fit with the Artsmark aims and objectives, and challenged the school to try new and innovative ways to embed creative learning throughout their Artsmark journey. Further sessions were planned with other members of staff to ensure the project could run remotely as well as address any safeguarding concerns.

A Little Learning facilitators then ran a two hour online briefing for key staff, talking through how the entire programme will run, the [Arts Award](#) element, and the digital requirements for the project. The teachers then tested some of the practical tasks and

examined the mathematical and computing element of the programme to ensure it was pitched at the right level of the students' prior learning. [Padlet](#), a digital platform used to share resources, updates, extension activities, inspirational videos, and Arts Award information and resources, enabled children to work independently and at their own pace, taking responsibility for their own learning journeys.

At last, the whole of Keir Hardie's Year 5 cohort was taught weekly for six weeks by the facilitators between November and December 2020. Lessons took place simultaneously online using [Google Classrooms](#) and in physical classrooms with teachers and support staff. The benefits of the programme being delivered digitally meant that children isolating were included as they were able to join the session from their homes as well.

The feedback from teachers tells us that the project and the way it was run enhanced their practice (and A Little Learning's for that matter). They commented how exposing the children to real content had sparked an interest in digital creative industries and they wanted to find out more – an unexpected result for teachers but an integral part of the project's design. The teachers and students developed a range of skills from coding to design and composition, as well as artistic process and team working.

Through this process, A Little Learning developed their digital delivery programme and was commissioned to run a series of CPD sessions on Digital Learning for East London primary schools via the Creative Schools Programme, delivering a whole programme of exciting, creative digital projects for schools involving literacy, numeracy, games design, animation, and music technology.

Find out more: <https://www.alittlelearning.org/>

Contact: info@alittlelearning.org

Further reading

These are just some of the ways you can support schools to evaluate impact. The full Artsmark Partners resource library is available [here](#).

For more information on how to establish and sustain partnerships with schools, especially with the current pressures related to the Covid-19 pandemic, please check out our [Building partnerships during Covid-19](#) resource.

For any further questions or support, please email us at artsmark@anewdirection.org.uk.